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<a>Chapter 17: Advocating for food sovereignty in the UN Committee on World Food Security: Facilitating young people's participation in policy making

Anisah Madden, Jessie MacInnis, and Nicole Yanes

<b>Introduction

> *…without a reckoning of how resources, land, and power can be redistributed, we [young people] have no future in the food system…[t]o us, 'enabling environments' means having access to farmland, it means ecosystems being protected and not pillaged for extractivism, it means local or territorial, democratically run food systems.* (CSIPM Youth Working Group intervention at the UN Committee on World Food Security, 14 March, 2022)

This chapter explores young people's participation in global food policy discussions – particularly young small-scale farmers, peasants, and Indigenous Peoples.[1] These groups have long contended with the dispossession of their traditional foods, knowledge, culture, and livelihoods, while being excluded from political discussions that affect their lives. After decades of self-organising in territories and building coalitions across sectors and regions, rural and Indigenous Peoples organisations and social movements successfully advocated for the right to participate in policy discussions in the United Nations Committee on World Food Security, through an autonomous platform known as the International Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism (CSIPM). The CSIPM gathers national, regional, and global movements and organisations from 11 global 'constituencies': small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, women, young people, urban food insecure people, landless peoples, consumer groups, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, and food and agricultural workers from 17 subregions across the world (CSIPM, n.d.).[2] Together, they collectively represent more than 300 million small-scale, peasant and Indigenous food producers and workers globally. These groups produce an estimated fifty-three to eighty percent of the world's food (FAO, 2014;

[1] This chapter uses La Vía Campesina's definition of peasants, which includes any person engaged in agriculture, cattle-raising, pastoralism, handicrafts-related to agriculture or a related occupation in rural areas, nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, peasants practicing shifting cultivation, hunters and gatherers, and people with similar livelihoods. See https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/2013/06/update-from-jakarta/ While the term "peasant" may sometimes also imply "Indigenous", Indigenous Peoples have their own distinct identities, cultures and food systems.

[2] These categories support the recognition and representation of people with distinct lifeways and political struggles, while recognising that many people identify with multiple constituencies: for example, a young, woman small-scale farmer, or an Indigenous person whose livelihood is based in fishing activities.

Graeub et al., 2016) yet paradoxically, represent most of the world's food insecure people (IFAD and UNEP, 2013).[3]

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is the only United Nations (UN) body that allows non-governmental actors to intervene in discussions and make recommendations *during* the policy development and negotiation processes - rather than after negotiations have concluded (as is the case typically in other UN spaces). The opening quote of this chapter is an excerpt from one such intervention, made by a member of the CSIPM's Youth Working Group during CFS policy discussions on young people's roles in agriculture and food systems. The right to participate in CFS food policy work means that young people have gained greater access to decision-making processes – an important achievement. However, including young peasants, smallholder farmers, and Indigenous young people as one stakeholder amongst many does not overcome the basic power asymmetries between them and other powerful actors - especially transnational agribusiness corporations - who also have a seat at the policy table (McKeon, 2009; Gaarde, 2017).

The "participatory opportunity" (Brem-Wilson, 2018) in the CFS reflects a broader trend in global governance known as 'multistakeholder governance' (McKeon, 2017). Multistakeholder governance seeks to improve inclusivity and strengthen the legitimacy of decision-making processes by bringing a range of stakeholders to the discussion table (CFS, 2015). However, we argue that 'including' young people in political spaces is not enough (Skelton, 2010). Our account supports other research (e.g., Kwon, 2019; Thew et al., 2022) – showing that multi-stakeholder models of inclusion can actually work against young people's meaningful participation because they work to 'flatten' differences and often gloss over power asymmetries. Noting these issues, Berents' (2022) research on youth inclusion in UN peace and security advocacy argues it is imperative for governments to create mechanisms that support young people's effective participation and leadership and to avoid tokenism. Thew and colleagues (2022) also observe that "the facilitation of participatory opportunities is necessary to ensure that young people's perspectives are given due weight in political processes" (p. 4). While these are important observations, there is a lack of research on what kinds of participatory mechanisms might be effective, or what the 'facilitation of

[3] This wide variation in estimates of how much food is produced by smallholders worldwide is due to uneven and inconsistent country data on a range of factors, including production volumes, crop diversity, distribution channels and post-harvest losses. Much smallholder production is not reported in official statistics.

participatory opportunities' for young people might entail (but see Brem-Wilson, 2017, 2018; CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, 2020; Madden, *forthcoming*). This absence in the literature contrasts with considerable work on young people's activism in other spheres such as digital media (Third et al., 2019); health and well-being (Swist et al., 2022) climate change (Hilder and Collin, 2022) and democratic politics more broadly (Pickard and Bessant, 2018). Further, Soo Ah Kwon (2019) and Thew and colleagues (2022) acknowledge that while there is an emerging body of literature on young people's engagement in global multistakeholder spaces, few studies consider their *experiences* of participation.

In what follows we begin to address these gaps by drawing on the experiences of young peasants, Indigenous Peoples and small-scale farmers who participate in global food policy discussions through the CSIPM's Youth Working Group. This chapter was developed through a series of conversations between the co-authors reflecting on experiences of participation and facilitation in UN food and agriculture policy discussions. Two of the authors are members of the CSIPM Youth Working Group: Jessie MacInnis, a young, first-generation woman farmer living in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia) Canada, who is part of Canada's National Farmers Union and the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina, and Nicole Yanes, a young Indigenous woman and farmer from the Opata Nation (Sonora Mexico and Arizona USA), who is a food sovereignty consultant and a member of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). Jessie's and Nicole's contributions are based on their experiences participating in UN policy spaces, and their reflections on the role played by facilitators in supporting young people's engagement in those processes.

The first author, Anisah Madden, spent two years as a volunteer 'co-facilitator' of the CSIPM's Youth Working Group while undertaking her doctoral research with the CSIPM from 2018 – 2022. Anisah's reflections on facilitating young people's participation are informed by this role, which was shared with her two colleagues, Nadia Lambek and Julia Spanier (graduate students based in Toronto, Canada, and the Netherlands respectively). While the three 'co-facilitators' had some previous experience in UN spaces, they learned how to become Youth Working Group facilitators 'on the job', with considerable support from Teresa Maisano, a member of the CSIPM's three-person Secretariat.[4]

[4] The International Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism is not a formal organisation, but a space of political struggle created by and for smallholder food producers and workers. It is supported by a small, 3-person Secretariat, based in Rome, comprising a Coordinator, a Financial/Administrative Officer

Writing about facilitation as a participatory methodology allowed us to practice solidarity research through co-authorship. Solidarity research seeks to challenge and transform institutionalised power relations (Glesne, 2016) by foregrounding the interests and needs of those on the frontlines of political struggle for social change and working to build relationships of trust and reciprocity (People's Knowledge Editorial Collective, 2017). The insights we share here are drawn from our personal experiences of participating and facilitating participation, but they are strongly informed by our collective work with all the young people who participate in the CSIPM's Youth Working Group. We express our solidarity with all those fighting for food sovereignty at home in their territories and communities, as well as in UN and other policy spaces. We give our heartfelt thanks to all the CSIPM participants, facilitators, interpreters and the Mechanism's Secretariat, and acknowledge their important contributions to this research.

The chapter proceeds by identifying some of the practical and ideological challenges faced by young people seeking to build sustainable, dignified livelihoods in food and agriculture systems. Food sovereignty is presented as a bottom-up political movement that resists colonial, industrial, and neoliberal capitalism while building new democratic possibilities for food systems thinking and practice, and for social relations more broadly. We explain how food sovereignty movement actors entered the UN to fight for their right to participate in policy discussions that affect their lives. The chapter presents what the CSIPM is and how it works as an autonomous platform for smallholder food producers and workers to self-organise their participation in the UN CFS. We note the importance of facilitation practices in supporting participation, focusing on the CSIPM's Youth Working Group as one space where facilitation is practiced. We conclude with some reflections on facilitation as a sensibility and set of practices and propose how it could be strengthened.

Food Sovereignty, youth in food systems and territorial struggles

The concept of food sovereignty was articulated in a declaration developed by 500 representatives from more than 80 countries of social movements and civil society

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and a Programme/Communications Officer.

organisations at the Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty gathering in Sélingué, Mali, in 2007. It declared:

> Food sovereignty 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. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations…food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations (Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007).

This excerpt highlights that food sovereignty is not just about the right to healthy food and environments. It is about the desire to transform social relations and to build sustainable, healthy, and dignified livelihoods from food and agriculture in ways that respect cultural autonomy and ecological integrity (La Vía Campesina, 2021; CSIPM Youth Working Group, 2021). The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) reports that almost 88 percent of the world's 1.2 billion youth live in 'developing' countries; in some countries, young people comprise one-fifth of the population, and a large proportion live in rural areas (FAO, 2016). Rural youth spend fifty percent or more of their time farming (IFAD 2019, Figure 9.6, p. 238, in Arslan, 2019, n.p.). But many young people today struggle to build stable and dignified livelihoods from agriculture. Young people face barriers to owning productive land, accessing appropriate seeds, equipment, and credit, and are confronting the uncertainty and stress of climate change, biodiversity loss, and dysfunctional economic and political conditions (HLPE, 2021; Fieldnotes, 2019 – 2022). Young food sovereignty movement actors identify the roots of these issues in colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, and private property regimes that dispossess agrarian and Indigenous communities of their territories and cultural lifeways and allow exploitation by extractive industries, including agribusiness corporations (La Via Campesina, 2017; CSIPM Youth Working Group, 2021).

Public policies over the last four decades have increasingly catered to corporate agribusiness interests and market-based approaches to development (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009; Clapp, 2021). Many of these firms now promote a discourse of "sustainable" agriculture based on private sector led technological innovation to achieve greater efficiencies in production for

export markets. They wield their economic power and discursive influence to capture ever greater shares of global markets in seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and farm machinery and to obstruct more equitable and sustainable public policies (McMichael, 2009; Clapp and Fuchs, 2009; Clapp, 2021). A recent report by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES Food) identifies how economic and discursive power work together to 'lock' unsustainable and inequitable food systems in place:

> [t]o put it simply, industrial food systems allow unprecedented value to accrue to a handful of actors. This economic power translates into the power to shape food systems, through the marketing campaigns that influence people's diets, through the lobbying campaigns that mould the thinking of policymakers and through the financial flows — public and private — that drive research and innovation (Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development and IPES Food, 2020, p. 11).

In light of these practical and ideological challenges, Fernandes (2009, in Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2012) sees grassroots efforts to advance a different model of food systems as a struggle to regain autonomy over the material basis of food systems, as well as discursive struggles over the meanings of concepts like sustainability and innovation. Food sovereignty movement actors work to build a different kind of consensus in society in support of agroecological peasant and Indigenous food systems. Recognising the urgent need to redistribute power more equitably in all areas of society, they advocate for redistributive agrarian reform, local and territorial markets, and agroecological farming methods (Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2012; La Via Campesina, 2021).

Food sovereignty movement actors also use a human rights "master frame" (Snow and Benford, 1992) to demand that governments uphold their obligations as duty bearers to their populations, rather than catering, as they do, to the interests of transnational corporations (Claeys, 2012; McKeon, 2017). As such, national and sub-national governments remain the primary interlocutors for food sovereignty movement actors, even though, as Keck and Sikkink (1999) observe, "[g]overnments are the primary 'guarantors' of rights, but also among their primary violators" (p. 93). Faced with governments that refuse to recognise rights, or actively breach them, these authors note that grassroots groups may have little recourse than to bring their concerns and claims to global fora. In the following section, we recount how food sovereignty movements have claimed a voice in global food policy arenas

and how their advocacy enabled the creation of a new participatory infrastructure in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

<b>Food Sovereignty movements: Claiming space and voice in global food policy fora The CFS is an intergovernmental committee hosted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome, Italy. It was originally created in 1974 to follow up on food security policy commitments made by governments at the World Food Summit of that year. Following the 2008 global financial crisis and food price spikes that exacerbated poverty and food insecurity for millions of people, governments agreed on the need for a coordinated international response (Mckeon, 2009; Gaarde, 2017). Peasant, Indigenous and small-scale farmers' movements and organisations – who were already active and organised at the global level - advocated to be included in discussions to coordinate the response - after all, it was their lives and livelihoods on the line.[5] After a series of talks with government representatives and UN officials, it was agreed that the CFS would be reformed, and tasked with coordinating global action "towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings" (CFS, 2009, p.2). As part of the CFS reform, five categories of non-governmental actors – including civil society organisations – were given the formal right to participate in policy discussions through a unique "Participant" category. By activating greater civil society representation and participation, the CFS hoped to improve its legitimacy as a decision-making body for global food security governance (CFS, 2015). Olivier de Schutter, then UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, called the CFS reform "perhaps the single most significant development in the area of global food security in recent years" (2014, p. 4).

Securing a seat at the policy table was an unprecedented achievement for food sovereignty movement actors. La Vía Campesina – the "international peasant's voice" - had entered the global arena with force in the mid-1990s, in direct opposition to the incorporation of agriculture into new global trade regimes under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995. Shut out of global trade discussions at the WTO, the organisations and movements of La Vía and their allies began to make their presence felt at UN World Food Summits and other global fora (Desmarais, 2008; McKeon, 2009). In these early days, opportunities for

[5] The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) was the first platform organized by food sovereignty movement actors in 2002, who, with the support of a small group of trusted INGOs formed the Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism in 2010.

smallholders to participate were limited by bureaucratic practices that kept food sovereignty movement actors largely separated from government discussions and placed them in the same category as large agriculture industry groups - which had very different aims and interests (Desmarais, 2008). Over time, grassroots organisations and movements advocated for the right to be included in policy discussions as a distinct group of affiliated organisations, and to autonomously organise their participation (Desmarais, 2008; Gaarde, 2017). Today, the CSIPM is the largest platform in the world for civil society organisations, social movements and Indigenous People's organisations working on issues of food security and nutrition (CSIPM, n.d.). We now consider the opportunities and challenges for young people seeking to engage in global food policy-making arenas.

<b>Young people, political action, and global multistakeholder arenas

> Everyone's talking about youth. But no one's actually going to take the time to consult with youth…. [young] people are really being left behind. They [governments and the UN] need to bring young people into the process, hear them, and begin to interact…to produce meaningful, concrete solutions.
>
> Silvia Dwilli, member of the World March of Women, Mozambique and participant in the CSIPM Youth Working Group (Interview, 18 October 2019).

Food and agriculture policies forged at the CFS articulate ideas and claims about how food systems should be governed and outline what governments should do to realise food security and the right to adequate food. These discussions are particularly salient for young food producers and workers, who are framed as both the would-be beneficiaries of new policy directions as well as the agents who will realise more sustainable and equitable food systems (Glover and Sumberg, 2020; FAO, 2021). Young people are increasingly called on to contribute to global multistakeholder food forums, symposia, and summits, which purport to be more inclusive due to the broad range of actors they involve (FAO, 2022). However, a close investigation of multi stakeholder processes reveals they are designed according to a 'flat' model of inclusion that overlooks the different perspectives, capacities, resources, and needs of young participants (McKeon, 2017).

In her ethnographic study of three UN- based youth conferences, Soo Ah Kwon (2019) found the structure and culture of multistakeholder mechanisms for youth participation worked to

limit the political agency of young people. Plenary sessions were dominated by high level officials, leaving little time for young people to speak; breakout sessions offered more scope for participation and discussion, but government officials were conspicuously absent. Similarly, a three-year study of young people's attendance at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) found that unacknowledged power relations adversely shaped their participatory experiences (Thew et al., 2022). These authors noted there was a lack of funding to support the attendance of young people from the Global South, the privileging of the English language in policy negotiations, and an absence of attention to the material and emotional demands of participation. Previous studies have revealed that young participants in UN fora "lack resources, recognition, and political capital and struggle to effect change, resulting in a pervasive sense of powerlessness and frustration" (Thew et al., 2022, p.2).

Young people from food sovereignty movements participating in the CFS face similar issues to those noted above. The CFS presents itself as an 'inclusive' multistakeholder forum and aspires to prioritise the voices of those most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. However, certain institutionalised practices reinforce existing power asymmetries between participants that undermine that inclusivity. For example, the CFS is supposed to work in all six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese), but during policy negotiations (in which text proposals are shown on a screen), the text shown is only in English, putting other language-speakers at a considerable disadvantage.[i] Meetings are convened at Central European Time, which makes sense for in-person meetings held at the FAO in Rome. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to virtual or hybrid meetings, few adjustments were made to accommodate participants in different time zones. While virtual participation has the potential to make global food policy processes more accessible to young people by reducing the costs and administration associated with international travel, it raises new equity issues related to access to hardware and digital connectivity.

In addition to these technical and logistical factors, advocacy in the CFS is characterised by a constant struggle to centre human rights and the responsibilities of governments to put public goods ahead of private interests. As signatories of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, all member governments of the UN have committed to work towards the realisation of the human right to adequate food, which is the CFS' central mandate. Yet in policy discussions, several CFS member states do not foreground rights-based principles, and some

actively work against including human rights language in policy texts (fieldnotes, 2019 – 2022). Young people encountered this tendency during CFS negotiations on policy recommendations for "Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems" in 2022. Jessie, who participated in those negotiations with other members of the CSIPM's Youth Working Group, reflected on their experience:

> Despite our thoroughly researched and well-articulated text proposals and rationale, the agreed upon policy recommendations were heavily diluted: much of the human rights language we fought for was struck down, and food sovereignty received no mention. As a young person without much experience navigating these formal processes, it's easy to feel defeated when corporate interest and anti-human rights rhetoric tend to dominate the direction of CFS policies.

Soo Ah Kwon (2019) observes that global conferences are not designed to challenge institutionalised power relations, and consequently, young people's participation in them can easily become depoliticised. Young people are often excluded from agenda-setting activities that are dominated by export-oriented governments, powerful private foundations, agribusiness interests and other elites. They are then called on to legitimise processes and decisions they have little to no say in shaping (Kwon, 2019; Thew et al., 2022; field observations 2019-2022). In contrast, young people participating in the CSIPM have the right to engage in agenda setting activities at the CFS, giving them an opportunity to (re)politicise discussions. For example, the CFS policy process on young people's roles in agriculture, mentioned above, was originally titled "Promoting Youth Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems". It was due to the persistent advocacy of young people in the CSIPM – particularly Margarita Gomes, a young Indigenous woman from an Argentinean peasant movement affiliated with La Via Campesina – that the word 'Engagement' was added to the title of the policy process (fieldnotes, October 2018). Marga attended meetings with government delegates, asserting that narrowly classifying young people as "employees" excluded her, and millions of campesinas and campesinos (peasants), who live in autonomous, self-organised communities on the land (fieldnotes, October 2018). Subsequently, the name of the policy process was changed.

Adding the word 'engagement' to the title of the CFS youth policy was a small step towards recognising the diverse roles of young people in food systems. It gave young people in the

CSIPM an opening to advocate for policy language that acknowledges agriculture as a livelihood rather than just a "job". However, young people's efforts to be recognised as more than agricultural "employees" are ongoing, as illustrated by the following two statements from early 2022, almost three years after advocacy work to change the title of the policy on youth. The first statement, an excerpt from the "zero draft" of the CFS policy recommendations on youth, reiterates a narrow framing of young people as workers:

> Young people are one of the keys to achieving sustainable development, in particular in developing countries, where the vast majority of them reside, often in rural areas. There is a large untapped reservoir of employment opportunities in the agri-food sector…Actions are needed to make the agri-food sector more attractive to young people and to promote their capacity to generate incomes (CFS policy recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems, Zero Draft, January 2022, p. 1).

Jessie MacInnis, speaking on behalf of the CSIPM's Youth Working Group, at a CFS session to discuss the zero draft, challenged this narrow representation of young people:

> Youth cannot simply be referred to as pieces of the market that can be engaged and employed. We must also have our rights respected and have agency to ensure that our futures are not being sold to market mechanisms. Rather, we are shaping our own futures by shifting our local food systems towards food sovereignty (Jessie MacInnis, young small-scale farmer from Canada, speaking on behalf of the CSIPM's Youth Working Group at the CFS, March 22, 2022b).

During the CFS policy process, young CSIPM participants also had to fight for recognition of their varied lived experiences, political struggles, and cultural realities. Governments and CFS officials often made sweeping statements about what young people needed or how they should be supported, glossing over important differences between them (fieldnotes 2018-2022, CSIPM Youth Working Group, 2021). These differences include those between young 'agri-preneurs' who are sponsored by agribusiness firms to participate in CFS discussions, and young Indigenous farmers who are struggling to maintain their culturally specific food systems, and between young members of NGOs from Global North countries and urban youth from the Global South dealing with state-sanctioned violence or young peasants defending their territories against the incursion of extractive industries.

Only a few government representatives were willing to engage in productive dialogue with young people on these issues. Many government representatives and CFS officials were strongly resistant to acknowledging the legitimacy of young people who raised the issue of human rights violations or challenged the neoliberal framing of youth as agricultural workers or entrepreneurs (CSIPM Youth Working Group, 2021; field observations, 2019-2021). At several bilateral and regional meetings with governments, young small-scale farmers, peasants and Indigenous people were told to "be more flexible" in their positions toward agribusiness and export-oriented governments to facilitate 'consensus' – comments that were perceived as outrageous by young small-scale food producers, given the power asymmetries at play (field notes 2019-2022). While these experiences were often frustrating and disheartening for young CSIPM participants, they consistently expressed how important it was to them to be there to engage with governments and make their voices heard (fieldnotes, 2019-2022).

Having outlined some of the challenges faced by young people in the CFS, we now demonstrate how the CSIPM supports young people advocating for food sovereignty through facilitation.

<b>Facilitation as a participatory methodology

Facilitating participation in the CSIPM context encompasses structures, principles and practices that seek to "bridge the gap" between territorially based social movements and organisations, and the global policy arena of the CFS (McKeon, 2009, p. 90). It is "part of a political struggle to overcome the historical patterns of people's organisations' exclusion from global food governance, to make sure they are 'seen' and 'heard' by political decision-makers" (CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, 2020, p. 10). Facilitation is also a form of solidarity between NGOs from the Global North and social movements from the South, where the former directs their resources and capacities to support the political protagonism of the latter. It affirms a common struggle while working to rebalance historical power inequities between Northern NGOs and Southern social movements (CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, 2020).

For example, the CSIPM's Coordination Committee, which is responsible for political leadership, is made up primarily of representatives from small-scale, peasant and Indigenous

food producers and workers organisations from the Global South. NGOs are included, but as one "supporting" constituency of eleven, the other ten (detailed in the introduction) are considered "affected" constituencies (Claeys and Duncan, 2019a). CSIPM policy working groups are 'coordinated' by peasant, small-scale farmer, and Indigenous delegates who sit on the Coordination Committee, and a small set of trusted NGO staff and academics provide "technical" facilitation support – the "grunt work" of organising meetings, sending emails, taking notes, and drafting submissions based on political input.

Although there is no definitive account of how these facilitation principles and practices emerged, they can be traced back to encounters between social movements – particularly La Vía Campesina – and NGOs during the mid-1990s. Desmarais (2008) and McKeon (2009) – academic activists who participated in these encounters – explain that in this period, peasant leaders were asserting the right to speak for themselves in global policy spaces. This assertion of voice and space challenged Northern-based NGO representatives to step back from the public speaking and coordinating roles to which they had become accustomed. While some NGOs reacted negatively, others understood and embraced the call for a power shift. Through learning about and attuning to power dynamics, a small group of NGO staff and social movement leaders began to co-create a different way of working together. This collective process of unlearning established ways of working and learning how to work in solidarity informed the structure of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, and later, the CSIPM (fieldnotes, 2019- 2022).

It is this spirit of and commitment to solidarity, developed over years of working together and building trust, that anchors the CSIPM's culture of facilitation. The CSIPM is not a formal organisation, but an autonomous 'convergence space' (Routledge, 2009; Claeys and Duncan, 2019b) for social movements and grassroots groups to self-organise their participation in CFS policy discussions. While NGOs are included as one of the CSIPM's eleven global constituencies, in the CSIPM context their primary role is to provide technical and other kinds of support to social movements and people's organisations. This clear designation of political and technical roles aims to ensure that food producers, workers, and those most affected by food insecurity (especially women and young people from the Global South) are *directly heard* in policy discussions, rather than being *represented* by NGOs and others (CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, 2020). For example, delegates from social movements and people's organisations decide, through a collective and consultative process,

their political positions, and they are the ones who make spoken interventions in policy negotiations with governments.

The CSIPM's approach to facilitating participation centres power relations, highlighting the political dimension of techniques like reflective listening, informing, guiding, debriefing, synthesising information, animating and consensus building (Brem-Wilson, 2018; CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, 2020). Power relations have been a central concern of participatory development scholars, many of whom are increasingly interested in the range of 'intentions, epistemological and theoretical assumptions' guiding facilitation practices (Groot and Maarleveld, 2000, p. 3). Echoing these academic observations, CSIPM participants recognised the need for deeper collective reflection on what facilitating participation means to them. In 2019, 'A common understanding of facilitation in principle and practice' was developed through collective discussion (CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, 2020), a few points of which are presented here:

- Facilitation is political. It seeks to transform power relations and overcome historical patterns of power asymmetry, marginalisation and exclusion…[and] barriers to participation.
- Facilitation is an act of solidarity, between facilitators and those whose active and authentic participation they are seeking to support. It involves self-limitation [and] self-reflection.
- Facilitation is based on an ethic of care. It seeks to build trust, mutual accountability, collective responsibility and meaningful participation.

As these excerpts suggest, facilitating participation is essentially a relational endeavour, requiring reflexivity, responsibility, care and trust (CSIPM Working Group on Facilitation, fieldnotes, 2019-2022). In the next section we offer a few examples of how these principles are practiced in the context of the CSIPM Youth Working Group.

<b>Facilitating the participation of young people in global food policy making

CSIPM working groups are usually formed to follow specific policy topics, agreed on by member governments of the CFS. Any interested global, regional or national organisation working on food security issues can join a CSIPM working group. The CSIPM Youth Working Group provides a dedicated space for young people (loosely designated as those

under 40 years of age) from organisations and movements of all CSIPM constituencies to discuss their specific struggles, needs and aspirations, and to organise collective responses to CFS processes. The organisations and movements that participate in the CSIPM autonomously decide on the youth delegates they will appoint, considering their interest, knowledge of food sovereignty, capacity to participate, and demonstration of leadership in their home territories. Experience in global policy spaces is not necessary, but some understanding of political advocacy is helpful. Emphasis is also given to supporting the participation and leadership of young women, although this remains a challenge in practice.

Peasant, small-scale farmer, and Indigenous delegates, selected by their movements and organisations, are responsible for coordinating political leadership, in consultation with their constituencies. To support them, working group 'technical' facilitators organise meetings to share this information, allow moments for dialogue and exchange, the building of common positions, help to coordinate participation in policy negotiations, and more (Brem-Wilson, 2018). These activities are all performed in the CSIPM's three official languages: English, Spanish and French, with the crucial support of a small but dedicated group of interpreters and translators – who are also attuned to the power relations inherent in processes of 'translation' and are trusted by movement actors to communicate the spirit of their statements faithfully when movement delegates speak in CFS sessions.

<c>Building common positions through consultative processes

Young people participating in the CSIPM can contribute to policy processes in two ways: text-based submissions and in-person or online spoken interventions (for example, in CFS Plenary sessions, or in CFS policy working group meetings). As with all CSIPM participants, young participants' input is based not on individual opinions, but on common positions developed through multi-level processes of internal consultation and exchange. Each CSIPM delegate is responsible for consulting within their organisation and movement to identify priority issues and demands. In our conversations to develop this chapter, Jessie explained that La Vía Campesina's Youth Articulation and Collectives meet regularly to discuss their positions and priorities in relation to struggles in different spaces. Nicole shared that young people in the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) participate in different Treaty Council working groups, as well as their own Youth Working Group. Young people from all CSIPM constituencies and subregions then bring these positions to Youth Working Group meetings for discussion. Young people may or may not be formally trained to consult but are

often ‘enculturated’ into these practices through their movements and organisations. Multi-level and cross-constituency consultation practices are intended to ensure that collective positions are built from the ground up, based on the lived experiences of young people themselves, and not on the opinions of ‘outside experts’ or mediated through the official agencies that promote the agendas of governments, business interests, or institutional actors.

The work of facilitating participation is not only concerned with remedying the exclusion of CSIPM constituencies from global food policy arenas. It also seeks to tackle inequities within the CSIPM - between constituencies, regions, genders, and life stages (Claeys and Duncan, 2019b). As such, the work of facilitating participation is also political. Working group coordinators and technical facilitators work to ensure that the political positions developed in the CSIPM consider the voices of all participants and are attentive to different cultures, languages, ways of knowing and methods of working. As Nicole emphasised:

> The constituencies that participate in the CSIPM, while we might be tackling similar problems, we all come from different experiences, backgrounds, regions, realities…Some focus on women issues, some on youth issues, some on the issues faced by fishers…. At the end of the day, we understand that we cannot do this alone, we need each other, and we need to be in solidarity with each other’s struggles and solutions as they benefit our collective power, self-determination, and future.

Consultative processes are often time consuming, requiring multiple rounds of group discussion and outreach. Yet these processes are crucial to the spirit of the CSIPM’s work and provide a basis for trust and solidarity between young delegates and their constituencies at home, and between young working group participants and technical facilitators. This trust is established over time, in the seemingly small decisions and actions that constitute collective political action – for example, slowing down meetings to make sure young people have a chance to fully express themselves and discuss contentious issues, by endeavouring to find common points and to build shared understandings, while registering dissensus and different viewpoints, and taking extra time to build relationships by talking with young participants one-on-one.

These consultative processes are also crucial to ensure the authenticity and legitimacy of the CSIPM as a space that supports the participation of rural and Indigenous Peoples

organisations in the CFS. But the time required to participate effectively in global policy processes places significant burdens on young people. Nicole highlighted that many young people are juggling responsibilities as food producers along with their educational, work, and community commitments, and have limited capacity to invest in complex, demanding international policy processes that often require long term engagement:

> It is a constant challenge to organise virtually across different time zones, regions, languages and to ensure consistent representation online and in person with limited resources. Many of us do this work as volunteers. When we spend time preparing in online meetings, and travel to attend a session or negotiation in person, we sacrifice time with our families, our community work, and food production.

The pressures described by Nicole are not unique to young people participating in the CSIPM. However, Indigenous youth, young peasants, and small-scale farmers may be in positions of greater precarity, and arguably have more at stake in the future of food systems than those at later life stages. Young food producers often have relatively fewer material and organisational resources at their disposal, and sometimes receive little support for their political advocacy work. Young people working for food sovereignty are raising these issues within their organisations and movements, as well as to government representatives and institutional officials, so that rhetoric about the importance of young people's participation is supported in practice (fieldnotes, 2019 – 2022).

<c>Facilitating participation: relational skills and support

Organising calls, synthesising information, and coordinating policy inputs require technical, practical and political skills, but these are not sufficient on their own. Facilitating participation also requires well developed relational skills to help young people navigate the emotional and psychological demands of participation. Young people from food sovereignty movements are often experts in the issues they face on the ground, and are very clear about their political positions, but the UN can be a confusing and intimidating space for newcomers. It takes time and support for young people to participate with a measure of confidence and authority in UN policy processes. When Jessie attended the CFS annual Plenary in October 2019 with other La Via Campesina delegates, she was asked to chair the

""Special Event on Youth" on the final day, in front of a full plenary hall.[6] Although she was "nervous", Jessie was immediately taken by the "supportive environment" and "compassionate leadership" shown by the CSIPM Youth Working Group facilitators. When asked about her experience of participating in the CSIPM Youth Working Group, Jessie reflected:

> What I value about the CSIPM is the commitment to facilitation that opens the door to meaningful youth engagement. It takes a lot of patience and perseverance to organize youth from around the globe. It takes careful analysis to understand the contexts each youth participant is coming from and to pick out who may need more support feeling comfortable with CFS processes. This, in my view, is the critical care work facilitators offer the Youth Working Group. They not only take on the logistical challenges of connecting people, but they also make sure everyone feels confident in their roles and celebrated for their contributions. This type of environment encourages trust-building, a feeling of inclusion, and for me, a commitment to keep working.

For Jessie, these feelings of confidence, being cared about, and included were evoked through the practical and emotional support offered by the CSIPM Youth Working Group facilitators and others at various moments of participation. When Jessie was drafting interventions that would be read out in meetings, she said that facilitators 'really listened to my ideas and offered constructive feedback on how to share my experiences in a way that will reach policymakers while remaining true to myself and my movement's cause'. Jessie noted that facilitators gave her and others lots of one-on-one time to ensure everyone understood what was happening in the policy process, providing relevant context and background information so they felt more confident in the room. She and other Youth Working Group participants expressed appreciation for the encouragement and support of the facilitation team who provided opportunities for practice runs of speeches and cheered on young people's interventions in group and individual WhatsApp and Skype or Zoom chats.

Even with the support of facilitators and others in the working group, young people who participate in the CFS can often feel frustrated or defeated, especially when their input is not

[6] The CFS 46 Youth Special Event was held on Friday October 18, 2019, 10am-1pm in the FAO Red Room. Mechanism Youth Working Group interventions can be watched here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ela1xAgGnEk.

reflected in policy texts. But both Nicole and Jessie recognised that their presence in UN policy dialogues is part of a long-term process. Nicole, who has been advocating in global governance spaces for several years – both for food sovereignty and for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, reflected on the advocacy work of her elders who have made it possible for her to participate:

> I was very blessed to have had guidance and training as I stepped into these spaces from people who began participating in UN spaces over 30 years ago, who fought with all their hearts for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Who always reminded me that the UN is not our space - but a space where our rights are on the table - and we have to be present…We [young people] are blessed to have this access, this voice, and it is not taken for granted - regardless of it coming with sacrifice, we take the opportunity that was denied to our ancestors.

For Jessie, taking the long view means remembering that change doesn't happen overnight, but that,

> …our movements are contributing to gradual narrative shifts. Acknowledging food sovereignty as a framework to achieve the right to food and food security is not going to happen in one year, or in five. But we need to make sure our voices and our bodies are around the table to deepen the cracks in market-driven, neoliberal narratives and fill those cracks with the lived experiences of the struggle for food sovereignty.

<b>Conclusion: Implications for research and practice

This chapter has shown how young peasants, small-holder farmers, and Indigenous peoples are participating in global food policy discussions at the CFS. Young people face several challenges participating in the CFS that reflect those reported in research on young people's engagement in other global arenas. But through the CSIPM, they are using the CFS's consultative and participatory processes to develop policies that centre food sovereignty, human rights, agroecology, and the needs of smallholders and Indigenous peoples (see https://www.csm4cfs.org/tag/annual-reports/ for examples). The CSIPM's culture of facilitation emerged from the solidarity-building work done by members of civil society organisations and social movements over decades. It continues to be developed today,

representing a dynamic and fertile site of grassroots experimentation to build new ways of working together for social change. Our chapter, co-authored with young participants in the CSIPM, offers insights on a few aspects of facilitation in the CSIPM: more work is needed to develop a deeper analysis. The co-authorship process reflects a commitment to facilitation by foregrounding young people's struggles and efforts in global food policy spaces and by offering insights into their lived experiences. While we wanted to highlight the exceptional commitment of everyone in the CSIPM to support the participation of small-scale food producers around the world, we also emphasise that facilitation has its limitations when left to small NGOs and academic volunteers, who contend with significant capacity and resource constraints. We propose that the CSIPM's principles and practices of facilitation should be given greater attention and support by UN agencies, governments and NGOs to ensure that young people's participation in food policy deliberations is more equitable, meaningful and effective.

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[i] CSIPM Youth were amongst the voices suggesting that text changes should be read aloud and interpreted so that they could be understood by all language speakers (personal communication, CSIPM Youth Working Group member, email, Feb 19th, 2022).