



## Field Report

# The good, the bad, and the ugly of COP26: A conversation with two food sovereignty activists

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## Abstract

The 26th UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP (Conference of Parties) took place in Glasgow, Scotland in November 2021 amidst intersecting global crises. The rising number and intensity of unprecedented extreme weather events in many countries, increased knowledge about industrial agriculture's significant emission contributions to the climate crisis, and the vulnerability of the global food system in the wake of COVID-19 shocks should have positioned food and agriculture as priority items on the agenda. Yet, agriculture and food systems played only a minor role in COP26 negotiations, and vaccine apartheid limited the presence of the food sovereignty movement and broader grassroots voices in Glasgow. Corporate co-optation and flagrant greenwashing via net

zero and false solution narratives dominated, yielding watered-down outcomes instead of the bold actions needed to tackle the climate crisis. In this report from the field, two food sovereignty activists dissect the accessibility of the official COP26 spaces and demonstrate how the negotiations failed to meaningfully integrate grassroots demands related to ecologically and socially just food and agriculture policy. They also reflect on their experiences in civil society-led spaces that fostered social movement building outside the doors of the official UNFCCC conference. It was in these interactions that activists wove threads of hope across sectors, social groups, and movements seeking climate justice.

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## Résumé

La 26<sup>e</sup> Conférence des Parties (COP) de la Convention-cadre des Nations Unies sur les changements climatiques (CCNUCC) a eu lieu à Glasgow, en Écosse, en novembre 2021, dans un contexte de crises mondiales entrelacées. L'augmentation du nombre et de l'intensité des événements météorologiques extrêmes sans précédent dans plusieurs pays, la reconnaissance croissante de la contribution des émissions de l'agriculture industrielle dans la crise climatique ainsi que la mise au jour de la fragilité du système alimentaire mondial sous le choc de la COVID-19 auraient dû rendre l'alimentation et l'agriculture prioritaires dans l'ordre du jour. Pourtant, l'agriculture et les systèmes alimentaires ont occupé une place mineure dans les négociations. De plus, l'apartheid vaccinal a restreint la présence à Glasgow du mouvement de la souveraineté alimentaire et des voix citoyennes. Ont dominé la cooptation d'entreprises et l'écoblanchiment flagrant au

moyen de narrations sur la consommation nette zéro et les fausses solutions, ce qui a donné lieu à des résultats dilués plutôt qu'aux actions ambitieuses requises pour combattre la crise climatique. Dans cette étude de terrain, deux activistes de la souveraineté alimentaire décortiquent l'accessibilité aux espaces officiels de la COP26 et démontrent comment les négociations ont échoué à intégrer de manière significative les demandes citoyennes en matière d'alimentation écologique et socialement juste, et de politiques agricoles. Les auteurs illustrent aussi leurs expériences dans les milieux civils qui ont permis la construction d'un mouvement social en dehors des murs officiels de la conférence de la CCNUCC. C'est dans ces interactions que les activistes ont tricoté des mailles d'espoir entre les domaines, les groupes sociaux et les mouvements pour la justice climatique.

**Keywords:** Food sovereignty; climate justice; COP26; climate crisis; social movements

## Introduction

The 26th UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP (Conference of Parties) took place in Glasgow, Scotland in November 2021 amid intersecting global crises. The ongoing global pandemic coupled with unprecedented extreme weather events in many countries have tipped the globe off its axis, clearly pointing to the need for swift and comprehensive action by policymakers. Nature was yelling *Basta!* and hundreds of thousands of people involved in climate change marches around the world, along with hundreds of scientists, were making their voices heard. Many hoped that, at COP26, government representatives

would no longer deny that immediate and meaningful climate action was acutely necessary. The vulnerability of the global food system in the wake of COVID-19 shocks combined with increased knowledge about industrial agriculture's significant emission contributions to the climate crisis positioned it as an important feature of the UNFCCC proceedings. Yet, agriculture and food systems played only a minor role in COP26 negotiations, and vaccine apartheid limited the presence of the food sovereignty movement in the official and alternative conference spaces. COP26 was a conference of exclusion, opening the doors to

heightened corporate co-optation and flagrant greenwashing via net zero and false solution narratives. Ultimately, the negotiations did not yield the bold actions needed to tackle the climate crisis.

This report from the field discusses the grassroots experiences of two representatives of La Via Campesina (LVC) member organizations at COP26. Jessie MacInnis, a small-scale farmer from Unceded Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia), attended the conference with a delegation from the National Farmers Union of Canada (NFU), a founding member of LVC. Roz Corbett is also a small-scale farmer in Scotland and attended as both a coordinator and member of the Landworkers' Alliance (LWA), a United Kingdom (UK)-wide movement that acted as host for fellow LVC member organizations. In this conversation, Jessie and Roz dissect the accessibility of official COP26 spaces and demonstrate how the negotiations failed to integrate meaningfully grassroots voices and demands related to ecologically and socially-just food and agriculture policy. They also reflect on their experiences in civil society-led dialogues and resistance actions that fostered social movement building outside the doors of the official UNFCCC conference. It was in these spaces that threads of hope were woven together across sectors, social groups, and movements seeking climate justice.

**Annette: What prompted you to participate in the COP26? What were your goals and hopes in participating in this conference?**

**Jessie:** As an agroecological farmer, I was driven to advocate for farmer-led agriculture policy change in Canada and bring to the attention of policymakers and civil society alike that current dominant food systems must undergo radical transformation to minimize agriculture's impact on global climate change. I am not alone in having my farm affected by an increasing

frequency of extreme weather events, nor in the grief I feel when I see the impacts of the climate crisis on peasants, farmers, and Indigenous Peoples around the globe. I wanted to attend COP26 to help raise the alarm about industrial agriculture's role in the climate crisis and to highlight that within agriculture, we must turn to agroecological solutions to protect both our communities and ecosystems and grow resilience from the ground up.

I also wanted to participate in shedding light on the distinct lack of attention being paid to food systems in UNFCCC negotiations. When food/agriculture is discussed, the narrative is overwhelmingly based on productivist agriculture models, led by corporate-led false solutions and market-based net zero schemes. Since its inception, LVC has been struggling against the corporate capture of food systems, globalized markets, and some UN processes. COP26 is not the only UN process infiltrated by corporate capture, as evidenced earlier this year when we witnessed the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) unfold as a caricature of a truly democratic process. Corporate stakeholders and their allies are aggressive in pushing market-based policies ahead of rights-based ones: public-private partnerships are on the rise, while core human rights mechanisms are being underfinanced and weakened (TNI, 2019).

I wanted to be at COP26 to bear witness and call attention to the unraveling of democratic processes in the UN, which threatens not only to break down the fragile democratic, rights-based institutions we do have, but also, more specifically, to increase struggles for food sovereignty. We must keep a critical eye on how corporate narratives are hijacking what little space agriculture occupies in UNFCCC negotiations. Transnational corporations are fearful of how real climate solutions would impact their bottom lines, so they co-opt concepts like agroecology to give their

narratives more legitimacy with governments. We need to understand their strategies and platforms in order to mobilize effectively on the ground in our own regions as well as at global conferences like this one. We need to advocate for multilateralism.

**Roz:** From a young age, I've been interested and actively engaged in how people can work together collectively with, and as an integral part of, their ecological systems. My upbringing has given me a deep love for and interconnection with my surrounding environment, and my climate activism comes from this—from seeing how climate change has impacted my local environment and is also exacerbated by dynamics of power and capital. I came to be a farmer as a powerful way to manifest my climate activism, following the philosophy of being the change that you want to see. Building local food systems based on agroecological principles is a solution to the climate crisis in many ways. This locally based work only fully makes sense to me when it's situated within a global and internationalist context. The food and farming system that we have in the UK is built on a legacy of colonialism and exploitation, which continues to this day (Lang, 2020). This history must be a central part of how we think about climate change and how we build a climate justice movement.

Glasgow has been my home for nearly ten years now, and much of my analysis of COP26 is based on this place-based knowledge and interest in how the geographic location impacts and is impacted by a roving international conference. The announcement that COP26 was to be held in Glasgow made participating an obvious choice, and it felt important to use the opportunity strategically to strengthen grassroots climate justice and food sovereignty organizing in Glasgow and Scotland. The opportunity to make meaningful connections between movements in

Glasgow and Scotland and globally was an important goal for me because this is how I understand you can strengthen solidarity and build effective resistance to corporate control of our lives and livelihoods. The last two years have been isolating for many people; meeting and connecting with international food sovereignty activists gave a strong boost to our organizing in the UK.

**Annette: For nearly fifteen years, LVC has actively engaged in climate change debates and processes. Can you describe La Vía Campesina's presence in Glasgow?**

**Jessie:** This was my first COP experience. My vaccine status, white privilege, English-speaking abilities, and country of origin played an integral role in my ability to attend COP26, as these attributes allowed for easier access in all stages of the conference application process. That these characteristics allowed for easier access to a UN event is deeply problematic: everything we discuss in this interview must be understood in the context of that exclusivity.

With COVID-19 still wreaking havoc around the globe, ongoing vaccine apartheid, and restrictive border access to the United Kingdom, LVC decided for political reasons not to send a formal delegation of peasant leaders. Members of LVC organizations who attended did so via their member organizations. Our small group of fourteen international delegates—representatives from the NFU, Organización Boricua (Puerto Rico), AbL (Germany), Confédération Paysanne (France), and COAG (Spain)—plus nearly 100 local members from LWA, organized together in Glasgow to advance food sovereignty and agroecology. LWA leaders and staff were key in facilitating logistics, renting an event space for the duration of the conference to ensure all in LVC and the wider food

sovereignty movement had a place to organize, gather, share meals, strategize, plan actions, and debrief daily. We also shared this space with other movement activists, such as It Takes Roots and a delegation of Zapatistas as part of their Europe-wide speaking tour.

Despite the size of our group, the food sovereignty movement played a significant role in broadening the climate justice narrative within social movement spaces during the conference. In the context of climate justice, LVC posits that peasant agroecology and food sovereignty together can reduce emissions, while realizing the rights of all peoples and the planet; food systems based in food sovereignty and localized markets and fed by peasant agroecology can offer transformative societal change, while reducing carbon emissions, moving through a just transition to “real zero” instead of net zero (LVC, 2021). Food sovereignty and agroecology cannot be imposed from above, as they are inherently grassroots-led, democratic concepts. These foundational pillars of LVC are what brought our group together in Glasgow and form the basis for LVC’s wider global struggle against global capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.

Climate justice is only one theme with which LVC engages at the UN. Peasants’ rights, youth agency, Indigenous rights, agroecology, the rights of women, gender diverse, and LGBTIQ+ peoples are among others that come to mind. It’s easy to become fatigued with UN processes like the COP, where so much passion and effort is exerted to push for actionable change and justice. But having LVC presence in UN spaces is critical. Social movements are most influential in advocating for human rights and social and political narrative shifts when they speak with their own diversity of voices.

**Roz:** It is difficult for me to compare COP26 with previous COPs, having only attended COP25 in

Madrid, where convergence spaces were held in universities and social centres with the capacity for thousands of people to gather. It was a rich experience for me in Madrid, learning from Indigenous leaders, activists, and researchers alike. The quality of meeting, exchange, and ability to be vocal in debates and discussion with many different organizations was much easier in these physical spaces. In Madrid, I also had the opportunity to meet LVC members from Africa and Asia who brought critical experiences to COP25 negotiations. It impacted the power of our voice not to be able to have such in-person attendance in Glasgow.

In Glasgow, the People’s Summit and other movement spaces were spread across the city at many different, smaller venues. This was partly a decision by the organizers to help minimize COVID risks, partly logistical because some of the larger key community venues in Glasgow were closed for renovations for over a year and delayed reopening because of supply chain problems in the construction industry exacerbated by COVID and Brexit; and also partly political, with some venues choosing not to host “radical” groups or experiencing thinly veiled pressure from the police and the local council. Since the Peoples’ Summit venues were organized by theme—Trade Unions, Indigenous People, Agroecology, and so on—we became a bit siloed as a result. I spoke to many organizers afterward who lamented never being able to leave their venue, and I shared that same sense of frustration, knowing that there is so much to learn from different groups across the climate justice movement, from trade union tactics to deep understanding of reparations campaigns by Indigenous groups. However, having an agroecology hub at COP26 did mean that members of LVC and other food sovereignty activists had a space to meet and learn and strategize, which was invaluable for the LVC members who attended, as it allowed us to organize

collectively and effectively helped to strengthen LVC's voice.

It's also important to understand COPs not as annual events, but rather as ongoing processes. Each year the conference moves to a different country, so a different climate justice movement takes up the baton of organizing. LVC's presence and visibility in the preparations always depends on the strength of the local organizations, their capacity to organize, and assessment of political importance of engagement in establishing social movement spaces. For example, COP21 in Paris was a very strong moment for LVC because Confédération Paysanne was able to mobilize many of its members in a powerful way. Organizing in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow and in the context of COVID was extremely challenging, confusing, and tiring. Dealing with a constant high level of uncertainty was hard. COP25 in Madrid was pre-COVID, and I was able to meet some key organizers of what would become the COP26 Coalition back then to help build initial relationships. We met again in December 2019 and January 2020 in Glasgow and London to build the work of the coalition and the Peoples' Summit, but, after that point, all our organizing moved online. This move impacted those who participated, excluding many without digital access, and affected important processes of trust building. Waves of digital fatigue were palpable at times, and we couldn't engage in some LVC practices, such as *místicas* and sharing food, that are so central to building understanding and solidarity.

**Annette: Over the years, LVC has adopted various strategies depending on what global institution it is dealing with. At times, it works exclusively on the outside. For example, with the WTO, LVC opted not to negotiate and instead mobilized resistance out on the streets. At other times, it works from both the outside and inside. Can you**

**tell us about what it was like to work on the inside at COP26? Did you see any potential in working in the Blue Zone, the main COP26 venue?**

**Roz:** Once inside the huge conference centre where the official COP26 was held, there is the task of navigating the different areas—state exhibition areas, side event rooms for press conferences, plenary areas, negotiation areas closed to most attendees, media hubs. It's interesting to spend time walking around all the different areas and witnessing what the overall conference was like. Many spaces were dominated by corporate sponsorship and advertising opportunities, including display stands with F1 electric racing cars, Virtual Reality tasters, and vertical farms with wilting microgreens. The whole conference has a very corporate feel with thousands of corporate sector attendees. It's important to note that many corporate sector attendees were given access by their governments as "Parties" rather than observers. As Anthony So (2021) explains, "Participants from individual countries ('Parties') can take part in negotiations, while *observers* are permitted to make statements, hold side events and exhibits, provide written submissions on various issues under negotiation, and provide informal expert advice during workshops and intersessional meetings." Examining the attendee list after the event shows how several corporate bodies in the food industry, including Unilever, that attend as official state representatives are given preferential access and greater power in the negotiation process.

To navigate it effectively, we decided on some strategies, including raising the profile of agroecological farming within the Farmers Constituency—a group that is recognized by the UN and able to give formal statements in some negotiations. But, even with this focus, it was still challenging and chaotic. Some constituency meetings couldn't proceed because people



were stuck in queues outside. We were able to nominate an LWA person to deliver the statement of the Farmers Constituency in the opening plenary, which we expected to be at 3:00 pm but was delayed until 10:00 pm.

The possibility of influencing the negotiations directly during COP is really limited, with considerable influence being wielded and decisions happening before the conference, or well out of the way of direct observation. LWA attended for other objectives—both longer-term and wider ones—than influencing the immediate negotiations. These were effectively to disrupt norms and push at the edges with the intention of opening space in the future for food sovereignty positions to gain more traction. This was in part the logic behind investing more time in the Farmers Constituency—to disrupt the dominance of the World Farmers Organization (WFO) in the organization of the constituency group and push at the edges of how it works from the inside. This was felt strongest with Marissa’s speech, to which she brought a political analysis to her personal experience as a peasant farmer and challenged whether it is possible for all farmers to speak with one, albeit heterogenous, voice.

**Jessie:** Let me add to Roz’s comments about the challenges of working within the Farmers Constituency. In theory, it has the potential to be an effective forum in which farmers of all scales and production types may participate, since it is one of several observer-led spaces where different sectoral and/or cultural groups organize to deliver shared analysis and input toward UNFCCC negotiations and initiatives. The Farmers’ Constituency was created in 2015 and was key to pushing the terms “food security” and “food production” into the final negotiation of the Paris Accord. However, the WFO has controlled the chair since then. At COP26, the WFO continued to

organize this space and ensure all statements made on behalf of the constituency maintained a food security narrative. According to the constituency’s terms of reference, the focal point role (effectively, the chairperson) will always be elected by the WFO, leaving little room for LVC or other members of the food sovereignty movement to play a leadership role.

Our involvement with this constituency provided at least one major opportunity for voicing the shared struggles of peasants in LVC. On November 11th, a people’s plenary in the main plenary hall was organized to bring together all the active constituencies. LWA nominated Marissa Réyes-Díaz to deliver an address on behalf of the Farmers’ Constituency. Marissa spoke eloquently about her personal experience as a peasant farmer working to uproot colonial structures and demand land back for farmers in Puerto Rico. She emphasized that, within the Farmers Constituency, there are many different types of farmers with varying practices, and that, for peasant farmers, agroecology and food sovereignty are the real solutions in addressing climate change and food insecurity (Réyes-Díaz, 2021). She informed a packed plenary hall that the “agrifood system needs to be in the hands of the people, and not a handful of agribusiness corporations” (Ibid, 2021). The constituency speeches were followed by a mass civil society walk out, demonstrating our displeasure with the state of negotiations and lack of meaningful commitments by states.

Feeling both drawn to the Blue Zone out of necessity to give voice to food sovereignty, while feeling grief-stricken by the power of corporate co-optation and greenwashing of climate solutions, we sought creative ways to give visibility to LVC demands. On November 9th, we organized a direct action to call out false solution narratives, drawing the attention of a significant number of busy delegates and observers. During the action, we all wore Xs made of black tape

on our face masks to demonstrate how we were being silenced by COP26 processes, while corporate agribusiness took centre stage. We also attended as many corporate-led initiative launches and side events as we could, drafting statements during the panels to present critical interventions during question-and-answer periods. We engaged with the media as much as possible and cornered our respective national government delegates at every opportunity to inquire about how grassroots voices and human rights are being included in climate policies and initiatives. We felt a collective responsibility to challenge COP26 processes and disrupt the many branches of power from within.

**Annette: What do you see as some of the key dynamics and challenges that are making it increasingly difficult for food sovereignty movements to engage in UN spaces? Were any of these clearly evident at COP26?**

**Jessie:** Prior to COP26, many civil society organizations and movements voiced dismay at the lack of governments’ political will—a will that is necessary to drive actionable change. I certainly understand civil society’s frustration with UN processes, especially as of late. A rise in “multistakeholderism” could have something to do with this: it is essentially the allowance of donor-led philanthropic organizations and corporations to play major roles in what is an evolving form of global governance (TNI, 2019). It allows stakeholders to become central actors in policy processes without any clear procedure defining who these stakeholders are and differs from multilateralism, whereby governments make final decisions on global issues (Ibid, 2019). Because there are no agreed upon definitions for stakeholders at the UN, in theory any person or entity has a right to involvement, regardless of power imbalances or questions of legitimacy (Ibid,

2019). The bottom line is that the greater the number of stakeholders around the table, the weaker the influence of elected governments will be.

Of course, this is not to say that multilateralism has been necessarily successful in achieving outcomes—it also requires a deep rethinking. Multilateral processes—and the non-binding nature of UN negotiations—have struggled to achieve the implementation of basic human rights, solve global challenges, and invoke political will to act. However, in the absence of viable alternatives, multilateralism must be protected.

Although unfolding behind closed doors and via soft power channels for years, this shift to multistakeholderism has become more visible since 2019, with the formation of a World Economic Forum-UN partnership prior to the UNFSS. I recently read a very interesting paper by scholar activists in which they argue that, in calling for this “inclusive” summit “in which philanthropies, transnational corporations, and civil society were invited to participate on equal footing,” the UN Secretary General used his power to move away from a multilateral process to initiate a restructuring of international governance, whereby states lose power and legitimacy while the position of corporate and philanthropic interests is strengthened (Montenegro de Wit et al., 2021, p. 154). This raises profound concerns from civil society about the impossibility of “equal footing” when power imbalance is severe (Ibid, 2021). Clearly, we need to challenge multistakeholderism to preserve the integrity of UN processes and ensure human rights—not capitalist markets—are the foundation of negotiations.

Following the UNFSS, it is unsurprising that private-public partnerships led the few food and agriculture-related pledges and initiatives launched during COP26. Two that stood out were the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM4C) and ClimateShot: both are led by powerful neoliberal



states, financed by mega-philanthropies, and guided by agribusiness innovations. AIM4C is a joint \$4 billion initiative created by the United States, United Arab Emirates, fossil fuel corporations, and agri-chemical corporations that seek to “address climate change and global hunger by uniting participants to significantly increase investments in, and other support for, climate-smart agriculture and food system innovation” (AIM4C, 2021). Their intention is to accelerate investment in “technological breakthroughs” for agriculture. The initiative includes “innovation sprints,” fast-tracked investments in collaborations between players like CropLife International, Gates Foundation, PepsiCo, McDonald’s, and more. The AIM4C is a renewed commitment by oil-producing states and philanthropic organizations to fund research and development of “climate smart” agriculture (CSA). They frame increasing investment in “climate smart” technological innovations as the ultimate solution to the climate crisis in the agriculture sector. ClimateShot follows a similar narrative to AIM4C with respect to a focus on CSA-based objectives and funding initiatives. Led by the United Kingdom, Australia, World Wildlife Fund, Syngenta Foundation, Bayer, and CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research), among others, it bills itself as an “agricultural innovation race to save our planet” (ClimateShot, n.d.).

However, CSA, a term first promoted by the World Bank in 2009 and championed by the Food and Agriculture Organization and agribusiness corporations, is a top-down buzzword rooted in the idea that technological innovation is the only way forward, ignoring the demands and knowledge of Indigenous peoples, small-scale farmers, family farmers, peasants, migrant workers, and landless peoples. By putting more power in the hands of private investors, resources are being diverted away from grassroots-led

agroecology initiatives and solutions that both lower emissions and work toward food sovereignty (ETC Group, 2021).

**Annette: Often, the counter-conferences are where the most interesting work occurs. New alliances are formed, there is much creativity and many solutions being explored, and so on. What did you find most interesting about the People’s Summit at COP26?**

**Jessie:** I found hope and resilience at the People’s Summit. It was a space for movement building, not only within LVC, but also across other social movements gathered in Glasgow. The counter-conference was a unique space for a whole lot of cross-sectoral pollination, where movements and organizations had opportunities to learn from one another horizontally, march together, and share collective strategies for challenging current dominant economic and political systems from different perspectives. It was fascinating and inspiring to see these movements—from Indigenous land defenders and disability rights advocates to climate science researchers—converge under the banner of climate justice. It may seem obvious, perhaps idealistic, but the power in this convergence is palpable. When we understand one another and gather a deep and collective understanding of how marginalized peoples face multiple forms of discrimination via the structures of colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy, and then we commit to working together to dismantle these structures, the strength and power of grassroots movements multiplies.

To combat narratives related to net zero and false solutions, we must have a shared understanding of how to halt the climate crisis from multiple, intersecting angles. A just transition rooted in solidarity requires

food systems transformation rooted in food sovereignty, but it also requires broader transformation of political economies that are structured to marginalize social groups, steal land, and take advantage of human labour. Cross-sectoral movement building is key for climate justice, and LVC already engages in movement building with allied organizations. However, these relationships constantly evolve, and prior to the next COP we must evaluate how to best use our strengths as a movement to contribute to the wider struggle against the corporate capture of climate solutions through a collective strategizing process.

It was interesting for me to see, first-hand and for the first time, how the food sovereignty movement is recognized in the wider climate justice movement. Some say that LVC differs from other social actors (namely environmental and development non-governmental organizations and urban social movements), as it gives voice to many on the frontlines of climate change while framing climate justice discourse and struggles through food sovereignty (Claeys, Delgado, 2017). This may have been true a few years ago, but my impression from COP26 was that diverse, grassroots social movements are giving voice to their own distinct frontline experiences, many approaching cross-movement spaces with their own framing. There was a distinct emphasis on LVC's framing of food sovereignty as the pathway to food systems transformation within the climate justice narrative, but simultaneously, workers' movements were advocating for a just transition, and Indigenous movements approached climate justice through an Indigenous rights frame. The coalescence of these frames and how different movements adopt one another's demands into their strategies are a testament to the fluidity and strength of civil society's approach to climate justice.

**Roz:** One of the most positive aspects of the social movement work has been around strengthening migrant justice and racial justice as an essential part of climate justice. Glasgow has a strong migrant justice and asylum seeker movement, partly because the UK Home Office (Scottish branch) is based here, and the only detention centre in Scotland is just south of the city. So many asylum seekers are housed in Glasgow. It is also the most ethnically diverse area of Scotland. This context and strength of local movements was important to the shaping of alliances and exploration of solutions. Both in the run up to and during COP26, an incredible amount of work was done with and by some of the grassroots migrant justice groups in Glasgow to explore what climate justice means for them, platform their campaign work, and bring a stronger anti-racist element into climate justice organizing. LWA also organized a session as part of the Peoples' Summit on migrant justice in agriculture and found it a valuable opportunity to build our campaign work in this area at a critical time for migrant agricultural work because of changing immigration and visa systems as a result of Brexit. To this day, some of the relationships with migrant justice groups and climate justice groups in Glasgow continues as a legacy of COP26—with climate activists joining migrant justice groups on December 20, 2021, to lock themselves onto the Home Office building in Glasgow to protest the Nationality and Borders Bill passing through the House of Commons.

**Annette: To conclude, what are the key lessons learned from your experience at COP26? How do we prepare for the next COP?**

**Jessie:** The spaces where social movements converged and overlapped at COP26 is what stays with me the most, particularly in relation to navigating climate justice at home. Advocating for better agriculture

policies that help farmers better adapt to and mitigate the climate crisis is key, but our efforts are fraught if we don't engage with wider discussions of racial justice and Indigenous rights here on Turtle Island (for Indigenous Peoples, Turtle Island refers to the continent of North America). We can't hope to fight the climate crisis within our own issues, in our own sectors—broad-based, cross-sectoral collective struggle is the only way forward, and this was consolidated for me after COP26. For farmers, this means self-education about settler farmer responsibility in relation to Indigenous rights. It means solidarity as a verb, not a noun. It means having challenging conversations about our definitions of land and food sovereignty compared to Indigenous land and food sovereignty, and incorporating those conversations into our movement work, our farms and communities. This is not easy work, but necessary, and ultimately, I think it's our only path forward. If we, as farmers, consider ourselves people of the land, we must fundamentally understand and uplift the land-based relationships and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

Something LVC can bring to its preparations for the next COP is incorporating a peasants' rights frame into the climate justice movement. As a piece of international human rights law, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) is not only a tool with which communities can make rights claims, but also something we need to activate in policy-making spaces to strengthen food sovereignty objectives. Human rights are a key missing piece from many of the initiatives and pledges we saw announced at COP26: rights-based policies inherently counter market-based profiteering and do not fit into stakeholder approaches to governance systems. Through UNDROP, LVC can and is holding governments accountable not only for their human rights obligations and responsibilities as

related to peasants and rural peoples, but also for their roles in democratic, multilateral policy processes in the UN system.

**Roz:** As the geography shifts again to another place, different people with different local struggles will come on board to organize for COP27 scheduled to take place in Egypt in November 2022. It will be a challenge to organize in Egypt—the spaces for social movements will be tightly regulated, and this will be exacerbated by ongoing waves of COVID-19. What this shifting geography means when organizing is increasingly done online is a huge question for the climate justice movement. The North Africa and Middle East region of LVC is emergent, and so this may be an important point to add strength to organizing for that region. Deciding how LVC will prepare for the next COP is a collective process of analysis and discussion that takes place within LVC, honouring solidarity and the decision-making processes of the international collective and local organizations.

One major positive in COP26 was how many organizations put aside differences to organize together. It was an important moment of unity. That is not to say that differences were not hotly debated, but rather that they were done so within the context of a wider goal. And we saw some wins of the strength of this unity as a result—for example, the First Minister of Scotland removing her support for the new Cambo oil field in Scotland shortly after the conclusion of COP26. Resourcing the work of social movement building is critical and was a huge struggle for COP26 given postponement; it is a place where academic institutions could have added more support. The bridge between academia and activism provides many opportunities to build solidarity with people who are on the forefront of the climate crisis. So, I pose a question for academics and students reading this—how might academia

challenge corporate capture of climate negotiations, and/or strengthen solidarity with and within the climate justice movement? Many things still seem obscure to me in relation to COP26—how did Glasgow City Council benefit financially and what impact did this have on residents? How can we increase scrutiny and transparency of corporate representatives often

acting as “parties” in the negotiations, and what impact does this have on state positions in the negotiation processes? Research must play a strong role in increasing transparency and understanding the impact of the operations of corporate power and flows of capital around COP processes.

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