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## Technical vs. Grassroots Experts in Global Water and Forests Governance

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## Technical vs. Grassroots Experts in Global Water and Forests Governance<sup>1</sup>

Since the 2000s, facing the increasing globalization and commodification of common-pool resources, community-based organizations managing water and forests at the local level started to create transnational networks. Their main goal is to get direct representation in global governance arenas and to transform languages of expertise around governance norms and the scales at which they operate. The international involvement of grassroots organizations raises several questions: who are grassroots experts and to what extent are they different from technical experts dominating international arenas? At what scale and in what field is grassroots expertise constructed as legitimate? Finally, is transnational grassroots expertise based on a harmonization or a diversification of knowledge and practices?

### **Grassroots organizations in an era of globalization and commodification of water and forests governance**

While, since the 1970s, some environmental issues are inserted into global management arrangements, such as climate change or ozone layer, the global governance of common goods such as water or forests remains more problematic. Indeed, these resources were traditionally managed at the local or national scale and lack a structured international regime to regulate some important transboundary issues, as deforestation or water depletion and pollution (Gupta, Pahl-Wostl, 2013). However, since the 1990s, water and forests are the object of increasing attempts to

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address these issues at the international scale, especially in the context of rising efforts to fight climate change.

First, the multidimensional nature of forests has encouraged its connection to other international regimes, such as biodiversity and climate change, which benefit from more structured regulatory frameworks (Howlett, 2010). For example, in 2008 the UN-REDD Program (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) was launched under the international climate change regime. UN-REDD, as an emerging powerful technical expert, aims to fight deforestation by creating a financial value for the carbon stored in forests through market mechanisms (McDermott et al., 2012). Another example is the international biodiversity regime, in which an economic perspective on forests, based on ecosystemic services and intellectual property rights, enters in tension with the more social and cultural values of traditional knowledge (Nasi, Frost, 2009).

Second, global water governance includes several NGOs and expert networks, such as the World Water Council (WWC) and the Global Water Partnership (GWP), or international organizations, such as UN-Water (Baumgartner, Pahl-Wostl, 2013). UN-Water, as a coordination body providing technical expertise on water issues, still has a weak mandate and doesn't mitigate the very fragmented nature of global water governance, which therefore remains open to diverse and competing normative initiatives trying to define what "good water governance" should be (Conca, 2005). Some examples of these international paradigms are Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), or water as an economic good (International Conference on Water and Environment, Dublin, 1992).

The high fragmentation of forests and water governance represents both an opportunity for grassroots organizations to enter global arenas relatively opened to civil society, and a constraint, as they have to compete with multiple powerful international actors dominating norm-building processes (Andonova, Mitchell, 2010). Disagreements among these actors revolve around what should be the appropriate scale to govern common-pool resources, and diverging representations on the essence of these resources (from public to economic goods, or local to universal rights). Moreover, global norms and paradigms are the object of increasing transnational protests<sup>2</sup>, mainly directed against the lack of civil society

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<sup>2</sup> Two major examples of these protests are the recent transnational campaign around "Indigenous peoples' rights not REDD", and the "water war" in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2001, against water privatization.

organizations' (CSO) inclusion in decision-making processes (Conca, 2005; Agrawal et al., 2010; Cashore et al., 2012). Indeed, CSO are often represented in global arenas through intermediaries such as international NGOs (McMichael, 2004; Vielajus, 2009; Siméant, 2010). The implementation of a “commodity consensus” on natural resources by international technical experts is also a major point of contestation from CSO (Svampa, 2013).

UN-REDD and UN-Water are two examples of technical experts dominating international norm-building arenas. Technical expertise refers to an epistemic community, defined as *“a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area”* (Haas, 1992: 3). The characteristics of technical experts are professionalization and authority in one domain, as well as scientific knowledge and neutrality (Conca, 2005). The technical character of these international experts is increasingly challenged by the emergence of a more social and local expertise of grassroots movements, defined as *“those who are most severely affected in terms of the material condition of their daily lives”* (Batliwala, 2002: 396). Grassroots expertise then refers to *“a wide range of practical skills and accumulated experience, though without any formal qualifications”* (Jenkins, 2009: 880). To compete with or complement international experts, grassroots organizations are more and more inserted into transnational networks. Foyer mentions the capacity of transnational networks to provide a renewed expertise, by crossing both “expert” and “militant” logics (2012: 155). The rising inclusion of CSOs in UN-REDD decision-making processes is an example of this dynamic of cross-expertise (Wallbott, 2014).

Recently, local communities managing common-pool resources followed this tendency by creating transnational grassroots networks in Latin America, to get a direct representation in global arenas and diffuse an alternative framing of water and forests around community-based principles. Community-based governance can be defined as a third model to manage water and forests, between the public – State – and the private – market. Its main principles are self-management and autonomy from governments, reciprocity between users and horizontality in decision-making (Ostrom, 1990). The particularity of transnational grassroots networks is their membership and self-management, as they are only composed of community-based organizations directly concerned by the issue defended (Guarnizo, Smith, 1998).

An example is the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB) which was founded in 2010, following the international climate negotiations. The alliance consists primarily of community forestry organizations, but also includes indigenous and peasant communities. Its main strategy is directed to the consolidation of territorial rights and autonomy from governments and international actors such as UN-REDD. Another example is the Latin-American Confederation of Community Organizations for Water Services and Sanitation (CLOCSAS), created in 2011 during the second Latin-American Conference of Community Water Management in Peru<sup>3</sup>. The network is composed of community water organizations, structured through sub-national and national federations. Its main objectives are the strengthening of local capacities and the inclusion of water community organizations in international arenas, to achieve the challenge of universal access to drinking water and sanitation.

The international involvement of grassroots organizations raises several interrogations: who are the grassroots experts and to what extent are they different from technical experts dominating international arenas? At what scale and in what field is grassroots expertise constructed as legitimate? Finally, is transnational grassroots expertise based on a harmonization or a diversification of knowledge and practices?

The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews conducted between 2013 and 2015 in Latin America, and on direct observations of regional and international events involving the participation of CLOCSAS and AMPB's leaders. The next two parts aim to present the different ways grassroots expertise is claimed by transnational networks. When CLOCSAS is framing water as a global common and a universal human right, in order to become an alternative international expert, AMPB is framing forests as local territorial rights, in order to differentiate from technical international experts.

### **Claiming grassroots expertise on what?**

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<sup>3</sup> Agreement made between 35 representatives of community water organizations of the 14 countries represented: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and El Salvador.

To transform languages of expertise, natural resources have to be reframed, as to change the perceptions of targeted actors. Framing is defined as the “*strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action*” (Khagram et al., 2002: 12). Actors can seek to reframe global norms that proved to be inconsistent with local realities. On the contrary, local norms can be reframed as global, for example to build a common identity or gain more influence in higher decision-making arenas. Reframing strategies are particularly important in a context where “*discourses of expertise that are setting the rules for global transactions, even in the progressive parts of the international system, have left ordinary people outside and behind*” (Appadurai, 2000: 2).

To analyze CLOCSAS’ strategies to reframe water expertise, it is particularly interesting to focus on the transnational leaders members of the Directive Committee. These leaders are originally members of local water community organizations and therefore possess a direct grassroots experience. They have a decisive influence on water expertise through their circulation in global arenas of discourse production, as the World Water Week or the World Water Forum. The committee is composed of seven community leaders elected in their respective countries and in CLOCSAS’ general assembly:

- Network of Social and Community Organizations of Water Management of Ecuador (ROSCGAE); Paraguayan Federation of Sanitation Organizations (FEPAJUS); National Union of Communal Aqueducts (UNAC) in Costa Rica; Association of Community Aqueducts of Colombia (AQUACOL); Misionera Federation of Drinking Water Cooperatives (FEMICAP) in Argentina; National Federation of Rural Drinking Water of Chile (FENAPRU); National Network of Drinking Water and Sanitation Committees (RED CAPS) of Nicaragua.

One of CLOCSAS’ main objectives is the regional promotion of “*associativity*”, defined as “*an institutional process of articulation, sharing, communication and coordination between the community organizations (OCSAS) of a locality, region, country or continent, as to learn and strengthen their capacities (management, advocacy on public policies, innovation) on a durable way, and oriented toward the common goal of access to water and sanitation to all Latin-Americans*”.<sup>4</sup> CLOCSAS’ leaders and one of its NGO direct partners, Avina

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<sup>4</sup> “La Asociatividad Como Estrategia en la Gestión Comunitaria del Agua en Latinoamérica”, CLOCSAS, 2012.

Foundation, have formulated this concept deliberately. CLOCSAS' Secretary explains that behind this concept, there is a will to differentiate the social character of water community organizations from technical experts: *“associativity [...] gives the opportunity of a change to escape from international external concepts”*.<sup>5</sup>

We can interpret the associativity framework as a strategy to compensate for the limitations of the global norm of universal access to water. This norm is particularly important in Latin America, as it is officially institutionalized in the Constitution of several countries such as Ecuador or Bolivia. However, it suffers from a lack of concrete implementation in relatively conflictive national contexts in which access to drinking water enters in tension with other “extractivist” water uses (agriculture, hydroelectricity, mining) (De Castro et al., 2015). Therefore, the promotion of associativity by CLOCSAS' leaders appears as a strategy to address the shortcomings of the human right to water, opposing a collective and holistic approach to the individualistic vision of the latter (Bakker, 2007). Three points can be raised to demonstrate this complementary approach.

A first objective of associativity is to frame water community organizations as the best suited actors to reach the challenge of universal access to drinking water and sanitation. During the 6th World Water Week in Stockholm in 2013, CLOCSAS' leaders highlighted the capacity of community organizations to “serve the un-served” through their proximity and knowledge of local needs, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Moreover, the organization raised awareness on the need to harmonize the large diversity of local legal statuses and forms taken by water community organizations, to improve their visibility and inclusion in national and international decision-making processes. To do so, they have created the unified category of Community Organizations of Water and Sanitation Services (OCSAS).

The construction of associativity aims to produce a convergence of local practices toward the same level of excellence and productive management as private actors (water quality, sanitation services). The discourse of CLOCSAS' Secretary during the V Meeting of Community Water Management in Costa Rica, in 2014, raises this prioritization: *“if we succeed in decreasing costs and making a better use [of water] in every aspect, by some way we are useful to humanity [...] Climate change is*

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with the Secretary of CLOCSAS, during the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, 03/09/13.

*affecting us unexpectedly, so we have to adopt a more universal vision of what is happening”<sup>6</sup>*

Finally, CLOCSAS is clearly oriented toward a neutral position regarding anti-privatization movements that have emerged in the 1990s against the threat of rising prices and extinction of community organizations (De Gouvello, Fournier, 2002). In fact, anti-privatization movements, often linked to indigenous movements, are perceived as easier to exclude from national decision-making processes because of their radical political character. During CLOCSAS’ 5th General Assembly, Executive Committee’s members reaffirmed their refusal to inscribe anti-privatization in the network statute, to avoid possible misunderstandings on their position regarding water as a service to be paid and their openness to enter into partnerships with public and even private actors of the water sector.

In conclusion, associativity is framed by CLOCSAS as complementary with the universal human right to water through the harmonization of community water organizations. However, this process can be conflictive, as a manager of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) mentions it: *“there are a lot of tensions in this associativity: it is not as easy sometimes, as unproblematic as I see it is presented many times by CLOCSAS representatives. In all parts of society, there are political and cultural differences that create barriers and obstruct the very easy collaboration”<sup>7</sup>*

A really distinct process occurs for the AMPB, which is more oriented towards the promotion of territorial and indigenous rights. The claim for cultural diversity has its roots in the network structure, which is composed of a plurality of members with different identities (peasant, forest or indigenous), and power asymmetries. Indeed, AMPB is composed of two categories of actors:

- Community forestry organizations: Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP) in Guatemala, National Alliance of Community Forest Organizations of Guatemala (Alianza OFC), Honduran Federation of Agro-forestry Producers (FEPROAH), and Mexican Network of Peasant Forestry Organizations (Red MOCAF);

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<sup>6</sup> Idem.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with a staff from the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), 05/09/13, Stockholm, Sweden.

- Indigenous Organizations: Miskitu Asla Takanka (MASTA) in Honduras, Mayangna Nation and YATAMA organization in Nicaragua, Embera-Wounaan Comarca and Guna General Congress in Panama, and Bribri and Cabecar Indigenous Network (RIBCA) in Costa Rica.

The analysis of AMPB's strategies to reframe forests' expertise is based on the discourses of the Executive Commission, composed of one elected leader from each of the ten networks mentioned above. However, some members are more active in the decision-making process, depending on their international recognition or political capacities, such as ACOFOP or the Embera-Wounaan Comarca. As in the case of CLOCSAS, these leaders gained authority from direct experience in forest cooperatives or indigenous communities. Two main divisions exist among AMPB's members regarding the value given to forests and their biodiversity (from cultural to economic values) and UN-REDD programs (from strong opposition to local adaptation). To respect the autonomy and identity of each member, AMPB's leaders have defined two separate agendas, one dealing with territorial rights and the other with forest governance.

At the global scale, AMPB's leaders are more oriented toward the fight for cultural diversity than the recognition of the community-based model of governance, as in the case of CLOCSAS. The acquisition of territorial rights is presented as a prior fundamental step before talking about community forest management models. The prioritization of territorial rights results from the influence of partners who are highly specialized on the strengthening of indigenous rights, such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) or Ford Foundation. It also results from the influence of other transnational indigenous networks, members of a global alliance of forest owners launched during COP20 in Lima in 2014, including the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA), the Network of Indigenous and Local Peoples for Forest Ecosystem Management of Central Africa (REPALEAC), and the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) in Indonesia.

AMPB's leaders link the recognition of territorial rights for indigenous and local communities to three major demands posed to international actors: respect and reconstitution of ancestral territoriality; territorial climate funding; auto-determination and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) linked to the ILO

Convention 169.<sup>8</sup> A national leader of Alianza OFC mentions the opposition between territorial rights and the “carbon-oriented” approach of REDD discussions: *“we have international corporations managed by the World Bank who are pushing for aggressive mechanisms of carbon markets, through a conception that we consider hypocrite, very wrong and very perverse, the one to assign a quantity of prices to natural resources”*.<sup>9</sup> AMPB’s Secretary mentions the opposition to REDD as a political opportunity: *“What matters about REDD is that REDD allows you to seat at the bargaining table with the government and in the international negotiations to position your issues”*.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, AMPB’s global strategy is oriented toward political contestation and not neutrality. As an example, the organization’s leaders have created an international mobile cinema campaign, called “If not us then who?”, aiming to raise global awareness on indigenous rights violations and their vital role in forest conservation worldwide. This campaign shows the reproduction by AMPB’s leaders of an international discourse framing indigenous peoples as local “heroes” in the defense of forests (Dumoulin, 2005). Interestingly, the predominance of the “indigenous rights” framework at the global scale is not only a strategy designed by indigenous representatives but also by forestry leaders, who could benefit from the higher visibility of their counterparts in international debates on REDD to redefine the conditions of their property rights with national governments. Therefore, AMPB fights for a better security of collective property rights and autonomy by framing forests as a local common good, by opposition to a public good that would entail the reinforcement of state’s power on forest management.

The adoption of a universal human right or territorial right framing leads to very different claims of what should be the legitimate scale to govern water and forests resources. When CLOCSAS aims to become an alternative international expert, AMPB claims a more autonomous and local expertise.

### **Who are the legitimate grassroots experts?**

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<sup>8</sup> “Desde los Pueblos-Territorios hacia un Acuerdo Climático Global”, COICA, AIDSESP, Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, REPALÉAC, AMPB, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with the President of Utz’ Che’ Guatemala, member of Alianza OFC, during COP20, Lima, 05/12/14.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with the AMPB’s Secretary, 13/07/14, Mexico.

The concept of scale has been defined in the field of critical geography as an interactional process between actors under power relations (Swyngedouw, 1997; Cash et al., 2006). Actors can either shift decision-making authority from local organizations toward the transnational network, leading to the harmonization of practices and beliefs; or, on the contrary, they can defend local decision-making autonomy, maintaining a flexible transnational structure. Defining certain scales of governance as more appropriate than others depends on the degree of integration or differentiation with existing international experts and paradigms (Dufour, Goyer, 2009).

The framing of water as a universal human right and as a global common facilitates CLOCSAS' claim to be the legitimate representative of Latin-American OCSAS in international arenas. Indeed, CLOCSAS' leaders are seeking to position the network as an alternative international expert on water governance issues. As CLOCSAS' secretary explains it: *"if so many directives impact local policies, supranational organizations are necessary to establish a direct contact with those actors who take the decisions and impose their view of the world politics"*.<sup>11</sup> He also mentions the important value of community-based knowledge in comparison with *"professionals who don't have anything to do with the country. The information that takes the consultant is from the communities which give it to them without getting any profit"*.<sup>12</sup>

Their main objective is to build a social expertise that complements the technical expertise of external partners, mainly international and regional NGOs. As an example, the Director of the Ecuadorian Department of the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS), a direct partner of CLOCSAS, mentions that AIDIS *"can provide opportunities for them to participate in technical and scientific events, access to University to learn what they want, raise awareness, learn technical skills on particular and general aspects, and on how to organize the administrative system"*.<sup>13</sup> The President of FEPAJUS mentions that community leaders are social experts teaching skills to technical actors: *"we are Avina's high professors. What Avina knows about water and sanitation, it owes it to us."*

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with the Secretary of CLOCSAS, during the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, 03/09/13.

<sup>12</sup> Idem.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with the Director of the Ecuadorian Department of the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS), Cuenca, Ecuador, 25/07/14.

*[A staff from Avina] is actually an expert because she spent time learning from us, not only from me, but from all the community managers in Paraguay with whom she works, and also from America”.*<sup>14</sup>

One consequence of this role of direct representation between local and international scales is the professionalization of CLOCSAS. By opening their headquarters in Panama and gaining legal status, it has made a first step into managing funds and projects and to offer services to community organizations (administrative and financial trainings, water quality and sanitation improvements). Some projects are progressively transferred from NGOs to CLOCSAS, leading to a redefinition of expert roles. A report presenting the results of a regional program of capacity-building led by Avina Foundation and CARE mentions *“the high value that have the knowledge and experience of community-based participants in the work of OCSAS in relation to the capacity-building process. In most of the countries, the trainer group was composed of professionals with high-level scientific knowledge and community-based experts in water management”*.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, CLOCSAS’ leaders are building a hierarchical structure to ensure democracy and representativeness, through the adoption of the network statuses and legal form, and the election of leaders in each country. CLOCSAS’ president explains that *“facing the threat to fall into particularisms, it is preferable to maintain formalisms”*.<sup>16</sup> The centralization of authority toward the transnational network represents both a strategy of empowerment from external partners and a threat to the community-based principles of horizontality and reciprocity. The President of the National Federation of Water and Sanitation Cooperatives of Bolivia mentions the fear of CLOCSAS’ professionalization: *“I would hope that CLOCSAS brings me in topics as technology and knowledge with other experiences from other countries, and this is the dream and the experience I have. But until now, it just has benefited to international bodies which are taking advantage from this organization, other financial institutions”*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with the Vice-President of CLOCSAS, Stockholm, Sweden, 03/09/13.

<sup>15</sup> Carrasco Pedro, Toledo Felipe, “Fortaleciendo Capacidades. Para un mejor acceso al agua potable y al saneamiento en zonas rurales”, Fundación Avina, Quito, Ecuador, 2014, 60 p.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with CLOCSAS President, during the IV Latin-American Meeting of Community Water Management, Paraguay, 30/07/13.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with the President of the National Federation of Water and Sanitation Cooperatives of Bolivia, during the V Latin-American Meetings of Community Water Management and Sanitation, Costa Rica, 11/09/14.

In a distinctive approach, one of AMPB's major claims is to differentiate territorial authorities from traditional international experts who until recently, were speaking for them in global arenas. Indeed, "territorial authorities" are framed in opposition to "intermediaries", "paternalism" or "United Nations language". The idea is to regain control on decision-making processes regarding their own reality, "from the territories" and not "for the territories". As the President of the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples of Panama (COONAPIP) explains it, "*now we can release a much more accurate message of what the community wants, what the territories want, and not only what the 'big' experts who were talking for the indigenous peoples want*".<sup>18</sup> One example of the shift from technical toward grassroots expertise are the REDD programs. In the "Mesocarbon community roadmap" elaborated by the AMPB, the expressions of "REDD experts" and "briefcase advocacy" are opposed to "local capacities" and "territorial authorities". The objective is to demonstrate with empirical evidence if REDD mechanisms can function or not.

Beyond the criticism of traditional international intermediaries, AMPB's leaders also criticize actors who represent an "indigenous international bureaucracy". The President of COONAPIP explains that "*indigenous ambassadors from some of us, who are indigenous experts who were in all international arenas, have stayed in a lot of rhetoric about rights, indigenous peoples, previous consent, but what does it mean?*".<sup>19</sup> These actors are compared to the metaphor of "TACA group", in reference to the Latin-American airline, to describe a type of leadership spending most of the time in international events without a legitimate representation of community-based actors.

Based on this opposition to international technical experts, AMPB's leaders are claiming the decentralization of REDD funds and decision-making authority toward local communities, framed as the most legitimate experts to handle climate change and deforestation issues. In the academic field, many scientific studies raise the argument that greater autonomy in decision-making processes at the local scale means higher carbon storage and improved living conditions for the communities (Chhatre, Agrawal, 2009; McDermott et al., 2012). For example, some studies on

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with the President of the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples of Panama (COONAPIP), 06/12/14, Lima, Peru.

<sup>19</sup> Idem.

the region show that forests located on indigenous territories, or governed by community foresters, have lower rates of deforestation (Kaimowitz, 2008).

The objective followed by the AMPB is therefore to strengthen the legal formalization of local organizations avoiding the professionalization of the transnational network. The President of AMPB's executive commission has stated that *"if the Alliance gets into a formal organization, we fall into the risk to separate from our basis"*.<sup>20</sup> However, the lack of professionalization questions the sustainability of AMPB and its role, beyond the promotion of territorial rights, in community forestry improvement and diffusion. The same leader also mentions that *"we are so territorials that we are not selling the regional signature"*.<sup>21</sup>

This comparative analysis reveals a differentiated claim of the scale at which common-pool resources should be governed. While CLOCSAS is claiming its representativeness to speak for Latin-American OCSAS, AMPB's leaders are defending the ability of indigenous peoples and forest communities to speak from the territories unlike traditional technical international actors. In both cases, CLOCSAS and AMPB try to differentiate from international dominant expert, by highlighting their complementarity or demanding their autonomy.

### **Toward a renewed expertise in global water and forests governance**

Considering that expertise is about the construction of a shared and proper epistemology, both CLOCSAS and AMPB intend to redefine existent technical expertise languages by creating their own concepts to qualify common-pool resources. Transnational leaders from CLOCSAS and AMPB talk about the importance to "speak with passion about associativity" and "diffuse the territorial acid".

However, they adopt a different orientation in the process of expertise building. On one side, CLOCSAS claims its social expertise based on the promotion of Latin-American associativity, its contribution to the universal access to human right to water, and a co-management model with public authorities. The construction of water as a global common and the professionalization of the transnational network contribute to legitimize CLOCSAS as a new international

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with the President of RIBCA and of the AMPB's Executive Commission, 15/07/14, Puebla, Mexico.

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

expert on water issues. On the other side, AMPB claims the grassroots expertise of territorial authorities, through the promotion of the diversity of local practices and the framing of indigenous and forest communities as local heroes in the conservation of forests. The construction of forests as a local common and the decentralization of international programs contribute to legitimize territorial authorities as local experts on forest issues.

Finally, the post gives insights to define what is, and how is built, transnational grassroots expertise. Framing strategies appears determinant both to challenge international technical experts and dominant paradigms, but also to convince community members of the importance to engage in transnational mobilization. The two case studies presented reveal that grassroots expertise can be strengthened through transnational action, or that transnational grassroots networks can become new international experts. The scale of expertise appears determinant for the durability of the transnational mobilization of water and forests community organizations. Indeed, while CLOCSAS may lose its connection with its community base because of a centralization process, AMPB suffers from a lack of official recognition from local and forest communities. It results fundamental to go further on the research studying the internal processes of discourses production and tensions, as the analysis presented in this post was limited to the global action of transnational community leaders.

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