States where strong labor coalitions exist, or larger coalitions exist, including other groups, like environmental groups, family farm groups, religious groups, development organizations, immigrant workers groups, sometimes also small business groups that have their own reasons to be concerned about trade agreements. So the coalitions that we have, work often both at the national level but also in every state. There’s also some town meetings where you bring some experts to give some more detailed informations of what is the workers situation in Central America and so on... It’s like turning up the heat on the members of Congress, making sure that they know what the concern is53. It is noteworthy that lobbying campaigns are mainly focused on elected representatives in the Congress or Senate (often aiming to be re-elected in future elections), in a system where they are directly responsible for the approval or the refusal of FTAs.

3.4 Cross-border Trade Union Alliances

The natural step for trade unions facing FTAs, especially for bilateral FTAs, is to build a link with the trade unions of the countries involved. We already explained that trying to speak with one voice is not necessarily simple but sometimes quite difficult. The case of NAFTA, where the main trade union confederations of Mexico were unconditionally supportive of the Mexican government promoting the NAFTA, is the first and most serious case of such problems. Trying to build a common discourse is always challenging especially when labor movements of a country are closely allied with the government. According to the AFL-CIO’s Thea Lee “one of the things you have to do is respect the politics and the constituencies of the different organizations”54. In the case of NAFTA “It was frustrating to us dealing with the Mexican unions (...) because (...) they were supporting NAFTA. We worked with some smaller independent unions like the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT), but it was tiny, and we could not really argue that the friends of the FAT were representing the workers of Mexico. So that was often in front of our face: the Mexican unions think NAFTA is a good idea, who were you to tell them that it is not going to be good for them? That is the challenge. So we would have to work ten times as far, to say that our critique was not because we hate Mexicans or because we do not want Mexico to have good jobs, get richer or to develop. We had to say that we do not think that NAFTA is going to be the right tool to help Mexico develop. But it did sound a little bit like 'We are in the US and know better than the Mexicans'. That is never

53 Thea Lee, Interview on March 16th, 2009, by Bruno Ciccglione
54 Thea Lee, Interview on March 16th, 2009, by Bruno Ciccglione
the situations you want to be in\textsuperscript{55}. In other negotiations promoted by the US government, like the Chile and Singapore FTAs, the unions in both of these countries chose to support the FTA because they seemed to trust their government’s suggestion that this would create economic opportunities. In these cases the attempts to speak a common language only produced some joint statements between US unions and Chilean and Singapore unions, underlining the concerns that the labor movements were sharing, whether they were supporting or opposing to the agreement: “What we would do was to come up with a declaration on labor standards and maybe on the investment chapter that was more targeted, even if we did not take the same position on the FTA”\textsuperscript{56}.

An interesting approach to go beyond this problem, born with the NAFTA campaigns and later used in the CAFTA and the FTAA campaigns, was to start organizing transnational meetings of workers and trade unions, without waiting to have similar conditions and engagement of the official trade union movements in the different countries. As explained by Hector De La Cueva (The Labor Analysis Center and Trade Union Department in Mexico - Centro de Investigación Laboral y Asesoría Sindical en México), “We started to create links and concrete connections with single trade unions, regardless of the formal participation of the confederations, promoting transnational exchanges of trade unions from the three countries. Starting in 1991, for instance, we promoted with CLC and AFL-CIO tri-national meetings of the automotive industry trade unions. We did that in Mexico, in Canada, in the US, allowing workers of General Motors, of Ford, of the three countries, to meet each other and define common strategies and solidarity building. We also promoted tri-national meetings of the communication workers, education workers and so on. In some cases there was the direct participation of the trade unions of the sector, in other cases there were just local sections of the trade unions or independent committees of the workers. We wanted to stimulate the articulation and the contact in the three countries. This worked and was a concrete path that helped, regardless of the bureaucracy of the trade unions, to define common answers to the challenges we faced”\textsuperscript{57}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Hector De La Cueva, Interview on January 27th, 2009, by Bruno Ciccgaglione
\end{itemize}
In other words the approach has often been on two levels: on the one hand the trade unions top officials were trying to develop a common discourse, on the other hand this was often accompanied by the attempt to build an alliance at the basic level of workers and local representatives.

3.5 Building alliances with other social movements

Since FTAs often cover a range of different issues like agricultural products, services, intellectual property rights, investment rules, and migration, trade unions are not the only actors monitoring and often opposing the negotiations or the treaties. As already mentioned, with the major contribution of the Canadian Labor Congress, trade unions in the 90s started implementing strategies to promote broad social alliances to challenge the FTAs. This was consistent with the understanding that the trade agreement was going to change and impact every aspect of social life. Experiences like the Action Canada Network (ACN) and then Common Frontiers in Canada (http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/), the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART, http://www.art-us.org/) in the US, the Mexican Network for Action on Free Trade in Mexico (http://www.rmalc.org.mx/index.shtml), the Brasilian Network for the Integration of Peoples (REBRIP, http://www.rebrip.org.br/_rebrip/), were all going in this same direction: coalition building involving women organizations, development NGOs and environmental groups, trade unions, farmers organizations, religious groups and also some small employers organizations. Multisectoral alliances at the national level, involving different social actors including trade unions, would cooperate with other multisectoral alliances of the other countries involved in the FTAs negotiations. When the proposal for the Free Trade Area of the Americas was launched, going beyond the forms of collaboration already experienced between social movements of different countries, most of these national networks, with an important contribution from the labor movements58, decided to form the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA)59. The reasons for this alliance are evident, as

58 As already mentioned, according to Sheil Katz of the Canadian Labor Congress, the affiliation of the CUT Brasil to the ORIT was a key factor to move in this direction.
59 The first step for the creation of the HSA came with the document signed in Belo Horizonte, Brasil, 1997. The opening paragraph of the document is: “BUILDING A HEMISPHERIC SOCIAL ALLIANCE TO CONFRONT FREE TRADE - On the occasion of the Third Trade Union Summit, held parallel the Trade Ministers’ Meeting on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Belo Horizonte, Brazil from 12 to 13 May 1997, representatives of the trade-union organizations of the Americas, affiliated and fraternal organizations of the ORIT/ICFTU and a number of important social organizations have had the opportunity to share our respective work on the social dimension of economic integration” (http://www.developmentgap.org/americas/Building_a_Hemispheric_Social_Alliance.htm). To know the members of the HSA see on http://www.asc-hsa.org/node/369.