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WINS Seminar

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Title of presentation: Food Sovereignty: A Strategy for Environmental Justice in the Capitalocene

Abstract

Dominant approaches to rural development have proven unable to confront the structural challenges posed by a system where progress itself generates hunger and increasing environmental damage. This article places its accent on the direct action of communities to organize themselves to satisfy their food and other basic needs and those of their regions with self-help strategies that could be applied in both rural and urban areas. While generally applicable, this focus draws its inspiration from the experience of La Via Campesina, the largest social organization in the world, with chapters in more than 80 countries and 200 million members.

The food sovereignty approach offers a forward-looking strategy to social mobilization, confronting the scourge of rural disintegration while also addressing the pressing issue of environmental balance. It proposes to direct political and social actions to the collective organization of communities to promote local mobilization and cooperation within and among communities, on a regional as well as on a much broader geographic scale.

It functions by integrating experts into a well-proven farmer-to-farmer approach for the exchange of information and materials conducive to improving productivity and promoting diversity in accordance with local customs while also creating possibilities for improving the quality of foods being produced and their nutritional impact. Most organizations promoting food sovereignty consider agroecology to be the most effective approach to organizing production, emphasizing the use of locally available inputs and technologies as well as a diversity of cropping system adapted to local conditions.

Key words: food sovereignty, justice, environmental justice, social metabolism, La Vía Campesina.

Short bio

Prof. David Barkin (Ph.D. Yale, 1966) is Distinguished Professor at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. He was a founding member of the Ecodevelopment Center in 1974 and was a recipient of the National Prize in Political Economy in 1979. He is a member of the Mexican Academy of Sciences and was appointed as an Emeritus Member of the National Research Council. His numerous books on human-environment related problems focus on Mexican economic development, food systems analysis and sustainable development; they include: *Distorted Development: Mexico in the World Economy*; *Mexican Innovations in Water Management*; and *Urban Water Management in Mexico*. Another of his books, *Wealth, Poverty and Sustainable Development*, enjoys wide circulation and can be downloaded free. His present research focuses on the construction of post-capitalist societies.

He is the 2015 Winner of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation Georg Forster Research Prize for climate relevant Research, and will be with WINS for two years, under the auspices of this award.

The Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation awards the Georg Forster Research Prize on an annual basis to four internationally recognised scientists from developing countries in recognition of their outstanding life's work as scholars and their personal role as leaders in research. The 2015 Georg Forster Research Prize for climate relevant Research has been awarded to Prof. Barkin for his career long engagement, over 40 year, with the environment related issues in Mexico and internationally. The prize is financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.