

Natural resources – ways towards sustainable use?

We rely and depend on use of natural resources, forest, land, water and the ways of use and management of these resources varied through the history. Nowadays, we are overusing them globally to the extent beyond the limits of the planet. How we can stop this? One of the recent proposals is green economy as presented in the RIO+20 conference on the sustainable development. The idea behind is to shift the big business towards renewable energy and ecosystem services. These proposals, might seem good at the first glance, but they do not deal with overuse or resources, do not tackle property issues and usually exclude local communities from ownership and adequate decision-making. Moreover, ecosystem services, try to include externalities into economic system by putting monetary value on all ecosystem functions, for instance for good air that is produced by forests. While it would not be bad to set aside some money for protection of ecosystems that we use and depend on, creating nature bonds and shares leads to the financialization of the nature, trade with it and depriving poor people from using it. The question is, instead of financialization of natural resources, how can we use, manage and preserve them as commons?

In the workshop we will focus on two out of many natural resources, land and water. We will look the present state of use and management of them, situation world-wide, in Europe and WB countries. We will try to identify existing problems, good examples and possible solutions to eliminate overuse, enable just and equal access to them and preserve them.

Land grab – what is it and how does it reflect in Western Balkans and Europe?

Europe is the second biggest consumer of land in the world after the USA, it consumes roughly 640 million hectares a year – an area equivalent to 1.5 times the size of Europe itself. Moreover, Europe is the continent most dependent on imported land – with roughly 58 percent of land consumed coming from outside Europe, mainly from China, the Russian Federation, Brazil and Argentina. The average European citizen consumes 1.3 hectares of land a year, more than three times the amount of the average Chinese or Indian, and more than six times the average Bangladeshi. Global inequalities in land consumption lead directly to inequalities in health and quality of life.

Europe's huge land footprint is related to both our huge overall consumption of products, but also our rising consumption of products with large land footprints such as meat and dairy, and increasing demand for biofuels. This increase in land demand is driving land-grabs, pushing up food prices, contributing to climate change and biodiversity loss, and exacerbating social inequalities.

Furthermore, with global financial markets in turmoil, agricultural commodity 'futures' have become increasingly attractive to financial investors and speculators. Billions of euros and dollars are flooding in and out of commodity markets, causing sudden price spikes in world food commodity markets, leading to higher prices for consumers. While high food prices hit the most vulnerable the hardest, threatening their right to food, the rapid price swings also affect poor farmers, threatening farm viability and making it more difficult for farmers to maintain a predictable income. The huge growth in financial speculation has led to prices no longer being solely driven by supply and demand, but also increasingly by the actions of financial speculators and the performance of their investments. Excessive speculation has forced food prices to rise in recent years and has increased the frequency and scale of price volatility.

Therefore, in the recent year, we are witnessing massive land- grabbing in Africa and Latin America, where indigenous people and local communities are deprived of their land, which is used to produce monocultures for export including biofuels and food. International companies are purchasing agriculture and forest land expecting the price of the land to increase as the food prices are also expected to increase in the future. At the workshop we will get into the depth of this process and analyze the situation in the Western Balkan countries. Is there is land grab here and in what form? Does land-grab leads to the enclosures of the communal / public land on long-term basis and what does this means for the local communities. In the broader perspective of sustainable use of the natural resources, how does this process undermines the future prosperity of the local communities and its independence in terms of getting access to food and water? And last but not the least, what we could and should do about this?

At the end of the two-day workshop, we should get answers to these questions and hopefully have some concrete conclusions and proposals about the land grab process and sustainable use of the natural resources in the WB and Europe.

Water as a human right, water as a property

Privatization of the water sources, waterways and utilities is a global trend in the past decades, since neoliberalism pushed for privatisation of public services. This trend is still very alive and kicking - the private sector interests, are increasingly seeking ways to make water a profit-driven business, leading to proposals to treat water as a tradeable commodity (commodification), and event to turn it into a financial product or derivative (financialization).

In July of 2010, the Council of Canadians campaigned to get the UN General Assembly to pass an historic resolution, 64/292, recognizing the human right to water and sanitation. Although two thirds of European Union states (including the UK, Denmark, Austria, Greece and Netherlands) joined Canada, the United States (US), Japan, New Zealand, Australia and Israel in abstaining on the vote, the resolution was passed. This is a good basis for claiming water as a common or a public good not as commodity.

There is a long history of communities standing up for their right to water (eg in Cochabamba, in Kerala, in Johannesburg) and wining. They objected privatisation of their water sources and supply. Sometimes, this privatisation is less obvious, and therefore attracts less public attention, because it is done in the form of the public-private partnerships, when the costs are public and profits are private. Contrary to this, in some countries, NGO, citizens initiatives and local government invented public-public partnerships to enable fair and just access to water, but also to provide better water protection.

In the workshop we will look for different initiatives and solutions world-wide, in Europe and WB and learn from Italian case how to fight for the right to the water.

AGENDA WORKSHOP NATURAL RESOURCES

Thursday, August 30th 2012 - 12.00- 18.00

Analysis of the situation in Europe and WB – national examples and local communities

12.00- 12.30 introduction and setting up the agenda of the workshop

12.30-13.00 DRAŽEN ŠIMLEŠA – introduction

13.00-13.30 MARTIN DRAGO – introduction land

13.30 – 14.00 TOMMASO FATTORI– intro water

14.00-15.00 lunch

Further contributions:

15.00 – 15.10. HRVOJE JURIĆ, land and water

15.10- 15.20 - ĐURO CAPOR, land and water

15.20 -15.30 - IVAN GREGOV, land

15.30 – 15.40 - BRUNO POROPAT, land

15.50-16.00 – VJERAN PIRŠIĆ, water

16.00-16.45 – Discussants

MLADEN DOMAZET, land

SAKI BAILEY, water

ARIE VAN DEN BRAND, land

HEIKE SCHIEBECK, land

SONJA KAROGLAN, land

DAVID ELLERMAN, land

TINE DE MOOR, land

Any other input question from participants

16.45- 17.00 break

17.00-17.45 Summary and wrap-up of the day

17.45 – 18.00 Intro of the 2nd day

Saturday, September 1st 2012 12.00- 18.00

12.00- 12.30

Presenting the outcome of the day 1 of the workshop and plan for the day

12.30- 13.30.

Identification of problems (Working in groups)

13.30-14.30 Lunch

14.30 -15.00 analysis of problems (plenary)

15.00-16.00. Identifications of solutions (Working in groups)

16.00-16.30 break

16.30 -17.30 Analysis of solutions (plenary)

17.30 – 18.00 conclusions