



Illustrations created by Anna Loveday-Brown

Editorial - The "green" economy

This June in Rio de Janeiro the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20* will be held, marking two decades since the Earth Summit. The "green" economy will be the main theme of discussion and debates at the *Rio+20 summit*, this concept represents a way of transforming the environmental crisis into a **tool for capital accumulation** – considering that in current times the capitalist system regards markets as the primary medium for responding to the global environmental crisis, and the *green economy* marks an attempt to make this system appear "sustainable". The current edition of the *Nyeléni Newsletter* opens and invites discussion on the *green economy*, adding various elements to the debate and providing alternatives. What is certainly clear is that international capital is organizing to appropriate territories, to transform nature into another form of merchandise, all the while increasing exploitation and privatization. The "green" economy elevates the principles of commerce and profit above any form of social consideration, above even the reproduction of life itself. *Our challenge is to continue building on our mobilization capacities in our territories, based on solidarity, internationalism and the integration of peoples to convert our struggles in realities.*

Our principle tasks are to globalize hope, and to globalize resistance.
CLOC-VIA CAMPESINA



18 June - 6 July

Human Rights Council - Geneva, Switzerland

Support the Rights of peasants!

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session20/Pages/20RegularSession>

20 - 22 June

Earth Summit Rio+20 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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9 - 16 July

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9 August

International Day of the World's Indigenous People

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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Rio +20 – one step forward, two steps back -

In response to the worrying evidence of an ecological crisis, in 1983 the United Nations established the *World Commission on Environment and Development* to investigate the connection between the depletion of the environment and development. In 1987 the Commission published a report called *Our Common Future*¹, better known as the Brundtland Report. The new concept of **Sustainable Development** was launched (Box 3) and became the basis of the negotiations at the *Earth Summit* in 1992².

Governments at the Earth Summit agreed to establish a number of multilateral structures- including the UNFCCC (Global Climate negotiations), the CBD (the Convention on Biological Diversity) and others. **All of these instruments have failed in the last twenty years to address the Earth's ecological crises.** Even worse, the world now faces unprecedented financial, food, energy and environmental threats caused by the development model of a **capitalist system based on infinite growth which Rio in 1992 failed to question.** Despite this, the agenda for Rio +20 is quite clear – governments and transnational corporations (TNCs) are promoting a new framework to take advantage of the crisis and promote new ways of making profit. They are calling it the "green" economy.

1 - <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>

2 - The *UN Conference on Sustainable Development* (UNCSD), that took place in Rio de Janeiro.

Who we are

In the last years hundreds of organizations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organizations were present in the Nyéléni Forum 2007 and feel part of a broader Food Sovereignty Movement, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organizations involved: Development Fund, ETC Group, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, Roppa, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Veterinarios Sin Fronteras.

Now is the time for Food Sovereignty!

What is biomass?



(*The New Biomasssters*, ETC Group, 2010)

Living (or once living) things; narrowly refers to the weight of living matter (plants, animals, bacteria, fungi, etc.) found in a specific area. Now used by industry to refer to the use of non-fossilized biological and waste materials as a feedstock for the production of fuels, chemicals, heat and power. With 24% of the world's annual terrestrial biomass so far appropriated for human use, today's compounding crises are an opportunity to commodify and monopolize the remaining 76% (and even more in the oceans) that Wall Street hasn't yet reached.

The actors: corporate consolidation

(*Who will control the Green Economy?* ETC Group, November 2011)

The gravitational pull of bio-economy is creating **new constellations of corporate convergence across diverse industry sectors**. Major players include: Big Energy (Exxon, BP, Chevron, Shell, Total); Big Pharma (Roche, Merck); Big Food & Agriculture (Unilever, Cargill, DuPont, Monsanto, Bunge, Procter & Gamble); Big Chemical (Dow, DuPont, BASF); and the US military. A new study* shows that in 2007, only 147 companies controlled nearly 40 percent of the monetary value of all transnational corporations.

For its authors, the study shows that TNCs do not carry out their business in isolation but, on the contrary, they are tied together in an extremely entangled web of control. The top holders within the core can thus be thought of as an economic 'super-entity' in the global network of corporations. Existing anti-trust structures are impotent in front of this process.

Three examples of convergence:

- Chemical giant DuPont and Oil giant BP have a joint venture, Butamax, which aims to commercialize fuels derived from seaweed.
- Chemical giant BASF and pharma giant Roche have partnerships with biotech/synthetic biology company Evolva SA (Switzerland). Evolva also partners with the US Army Research Office.
- Procter & Gamble, Chevron, Total, Shell, Mercedes-Benz do Brasil, Michelin Tire, Gruppo M&G (plastics manufacturer), Bunge Ltd. and Guarani are all partnering with California-based synthetic biology company, Amyris.

* Stefania Vitali, James B. Glattfelder, and Stefano Battiston, "*The network of global corporate control*" arXiv:1107.5728v1, arXiv.org, 28 July 2011.

"Green" Economy – how to profit from the crises

It may have an appealing name but in reality the **green economy is an attack to the commons, on peoples' rights and on nature itself**. The *Green Economy* includes a wide range of proposals³ that can be summarized in two trends. On one hand, it promotes the development of a '*post-fossil fuel*' *bio-economy* based on the exploitation of **biomass** (forests, soils, plants and microbes – definition box 1). The biomass will be used both as fuel and as raw material from which to manufacture a wide range of products, including plastics, chemicals and pharmaceuticals – **through the employment of hazardous new technologies**. This means a more intense use of natural resources (the biomass), that will cause – as already occurred with agrofuels production⁴ - more land-grabbing, monoculture, water depletion, soil and biodiversity degradation. On the other hand, the *Green Economy* embraces the "protection" of ecosystems and biodiversity *through the commodification and privatization of nature* and the use of new financial mechanisms. At first the two trends seem contradictory, but both illustrate the **clever attempt of corporations to find new business opportunities and to secure access to land and natural resources**⁵.

The *Green Economy* is an assortment of different proposals that **will succeed only if supported by an international framework of policies that endorse it and subsidize the private agents involved**. The *Earth Summit* is the perfect place to get the necessary international commitment and legitimization. This is why it is also the key time to stop them.

Bio-economy: a haven for new technologies

The *bio-economy* promoted by TNCs aims to appropriate biomass in order to convert it into precious industrial products. **The bio-economy needs the input of several new technologies to succeed**, including genetic manipulation, nanotechnology and synthetic biology. Synthetic biology researchers for example can substantially manipulate DNA to build artificial, self-replicating micro-organisms that have never before appeared on Earth! These organisms will perform as industrial factories, transforming living matter (the biomasses) into transport fuel, electricity, chemicals and plastics, fertilizer and other commodities which are currently petroleum-based⁶. *It is not surprising so that the companies lobbying for this bio-economy to happen are the same ones involved in the current food and climate crises*. It is clear: the **Green Economy is about economic growth, not about the environment**. *Why is it getting so much support?* Fossil fuel companies want to find a solution to the peak oil crisis. Biotechnology companies are looking for a way to make the public accept risky and unpopular technologies. All around the world governments want an "easy" technical solution to the current crises; while agribusiness, forestry, energy and chemical corporations are hunting for new ways to make profit.

Most of the biomass in the World is located in the "South", **safeguarded mainly by peasant farmers, fisher communities, pastoralists and forest dwellers whose livelihoods depend on it**. This means that pressure on land and resources (natural forests, marine ecosystems, wetlands...) in the South will increase further and it will provoke additional land grabs and evictions of local communities from their territories. More poverty, hunger and conflicts are the obvious consequences. Furthermore the bio-economy will encourage **even greater convergence of corporate power** (box 2) and will **set free a suite of untested, proprietary technologies** without any legislation to regulate them.

"To protect we need to enclose!"

TNCs are attempting to commodify nature at an unprecedented rate, using the excuse of "conservation". After trying to privatize natural resources (land, seeds, water,...), they are **now aiming at the commodification of Earth's natural processes**. They call them *Payment for Environmental Services (PES)*. The term "service" is normally used in the market economy: Someone provides a service and someone else uses and pays for it. However, the environmental services are not "provided" by companies, but they are "supplied" by nature⁷. Following the PES logic, an ecosystem as a forest "provides - for example - the service" to store carbon, water, to protect biodiversity, etc... **These services (Nature itself!) are now assets that can be owned, sold and traded!**⁸ A corporation can buy a piece of land, start a "conservationist" initiative, get paid for its *environmental services* such as *biodiversity*, and compensate for the destruction of nature that is causing somewhere else. The PES may possibly become an offset mechanism for environmental devastation.

3 -The *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP)'s report *Towards a Green Economy* highlights the approaches being taken by governments and businesses on the road to Rio+20.

4 - *Bioeconomy vs biodiversity*, Global Forest Coalition, 2012 - (pg. 7) "These problems have been acknowledged in a recently published note from the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which recognizes the importance of many recent reports that show how biofuels frequently result in more rather than less greenhouse gas emissions; create further pressure on limited water resources, increase use of fertilizers and agrichemicals, resulting in soil degradation; and often involve the cultivation of invasive species (CBD, 2012)".

5 - More info in the report *Bioeconomy vs biodiversity*, Global Forest Coalition, 2012

6 - More info in the report, *The New Biomasssters*, ETC Group, 2010

7 - World Rainforest Movement, Newsletter - February 2012, <http://www.wrm.org.uy/index.html>

8 - Two initiatives were of key importance in finding ways to price these "services": *The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (<http://www.maweb.org>) and *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB - <http://www.teebweb.org>). TEEB was aimed at creating a means, a methodology, for determining the economic value of biodiversity. (World Rainforest Movement, 2012)



Many other market-based mechanisms have been created following this logic: *We can destroy a "service" here, if we compensate improving another "service" somewhere else.* The carbon market and its offsets mechanisms have been the first ones to be developed in the fight against climate change, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in 1997, or the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (REDD) in 2007⁹. Following *carbon offsets*, new *biodiversity offsets schemes* are taking shape. The premise is the same, but instead of compensating CO2 emissions, the projects compensate biodiversity loss. A biodiversity conservation project will offset an initiative or a policy that destroys biodiversity somewhere else, using market-based mechanisms - **as if ecosystems around the world are interchangeable!** Several conservationist projects promoted by private companies, governments and some big NGOs have recently proliferated, triggering numerous negative consequences – amongst them **the violation of Indigenous Peoples' rights and the rights of small farmers and local communities to access their territories and the natural resources within them.**

Our world, at a crossroads

Rio +20 is a crossroads. People of the world think that it is an opportunity to choose a *new path*. One path leads – as we have seen - to the implementation of policies and global frameworks **that aim to save a failing system by providing TNCs with one of the biggest business opportunities ever, while discharging all responsibility and costs of climate devastation to society.**

The alternative path begins with Food Sovereignty. Ensuring the *right* of humans to produce, distribute, and consume their own food is a first claim to a future in which food is not an asset in the financial markets but the basis of human life and, as such, an undeniable right for all. Peasant farmers, artisanal fishers, pastoralists and indigenous peoples **still safeguard many of the world's natural resources**, and have traditionally evolved practices to manage the earth's resources in a sustainable way and to live in harmony with Mother Earth. *Peasant agroecological production* itself addresses the cause of poverty, hunger and the current climate chaos. It also integrates many people into meaningful productive activities for the benefit of humanity and not of a few investors. Even more, implementing food sovereignty also lays the basis for a different path of development. This is a development that is rooted in the well-being of all - which protects the commons and natural resources and ensures that they are the source of a *"buen vivir" (good life) for all* and not for the profit of a few. It means a refusal of the industrial over-production and over-consumption model which the green economy framework – if endorsed - would reinforce. **It can only be achieved through increased access and control of the people over land, water, seeds and biodiversity. Agrarian reform is the foundation and first step.** It is a challenge - for all of us - to step out of our present existence into an alternative that reclaims and betters the knowledge lost during capitalism and offers us the opportunity to build a new world which until now we have been told could not exist, which until now was in the hands of a few.

Development – sustainable and green?

The current crises show clearly that a development model based on unlimited growth cannot be sustained by a planet with "limited" resources. Twenty years ago, the Brundtland report introduced the concept of "sustainable development" to overcome this conflict. *"A development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*, based on economic and social development, and environmental protection. This concept failed to tackle poverty and hunger, on the contrary it gave more strength to the neoliberal globalisation, creating the illusion of a "sustainable way". It failed to consider unlimited growth as a obstacle and redistribution as a key factor for global welfare. Since then, national and international inequities have increased further and we are living in an environmental chaos. Despite this, most of the multilateral bodies and governments, just before Rio+20, still show faith in a development model based on neo-liberal capitalist principles. They are irresponsibly putting forward "the green economy solution", an economical framework that considers the conflict between *"environmental sustainability and economic progress [growth] only a myth"*.

*UNEP, Note number 3. (More info in Edgardo Lander, *The Green Economy: the Wolf in Sheep's clothing*, TNI - November 2011)

9 - For more info, *Nyeléni newsletter Num. 1* – www.nyeleni.org

Voices from the field

Short stories from Africa, America, Asia and Europe, resistance and alternatives

REDD in Costa Rica: Privatizing Bribri spirituality

This article is based on an interview with Filidencio Cubillo by Henry Picado (CCOECOCEIBA) for Radio Ceiba and Radio Mundo Real Various Costa Rican governments have promoted PES, assuring that thanks to these policies forest cover in the country has increased. Reality says that this is not in fact true, and that many factors have contributed to the recuperation of the forests. As well as this, the PES instrument does not help to tackle poverty or the distribution of resources. At the moment, the government is also implementing REDD and the indigenous Bribri people – situated in the south Atlantic region – are suffering the consequences. Filidencio Cubillo, a member of the Bribri, says "the community is extremely concerned about the government's intention to apply this mechanism to approximately one thousand hectares of forests". *"The forests of these areas are not simply forests, they are sacred places for our people.* One of these, the Surayo, is the origin of creation, of the seed. They were designated so by Sibú (Holy father of the Cosmvision) to give life to his seed. The same applies to the Namasol hill. It is for this reason that the outside world does not understand our way of seeing, of feeling, of expressing our spirituality. The outside world sees everything as money, everything is merchandise for them (...) so we reject this project which pretends to "conserve" part of these forests, they say one thousand hectares but it could be more. We will defend these forests. They give us food, rivers to drink from, and they belong to future generations. They are trying to put a price on sacred places, and

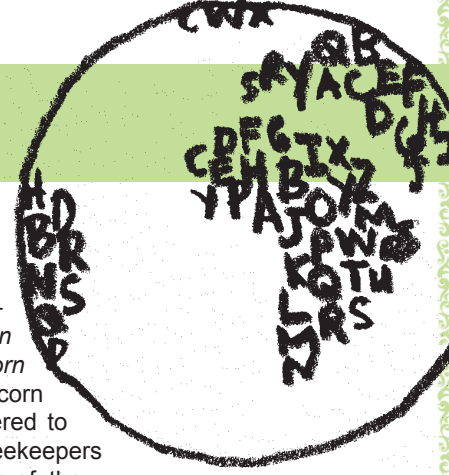
we ask ourselves if the outside world doesn't put a price on its own sacred places, on its churches, its retreats, on its holy ground, why they would put a price on ours." <http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/Putting-a-price-on-Nature?lang=es>

Palm oil in Indonesia is not green

Sarwadi Sukiman, Head of the Indonesian Peasant Union, Jambi Province I belong to the Indonesian Peasant Union (SPI) in Jambi Province, Sumatra. *The past few years, we - farmers in Jambi - are facing increasing competition over land and water with the ongoing expansion of palm oil plantation.* Our area is targeted as suitable land to grow the skyrocketing demand of palm oil. In Jambi alone, there are about 75. 560 hectares of agriculture land being converted into palm plantation annually since 2008. This put Jambi as one of the provinces in Indonesia *with highest food insecurity prevalence*, not to mention the increasing conflict between farmers and palm oil companies. Strangely, the palm oil companies that have destroyed the land and our water resources are now considered to benefit the environment and society, being considered as "green" through RSPO* or other similar instruments. There is nothing sustainable or green in a mode of production that depletes our soil, pollutes our water and forces people to leave our land. While on the other side, we want a small scale family farm as the real solution to cool down the earth, and not to be "forced" to use various forms of biotechnology, agro chemicals and geo-engineering to adapt with the new mantra of green economy. **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.*



THE WORLD IN WORDS



Food Sovereignty, a human right

On the 14th of May during the 11th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Latin American Indigenous Caucus demanded **that Food Sovereignty be considered a basic human right, to be acknowledged and complied with by all States and International Institutions.** The request was incorporated in the caucus' declaration Right to Food and Food Sovereignty. The declaration considers Free Trade Agreements one of the main instruments which jeopardize the livelihood of small food producers and that support agro-exports while increasing food insecurity. The declaration also denounced the grabbing of Indigenous People's territories by TNCs and mega infrastructure projects, and highlighted the importance of Indigenous People's knowledge and the role of women in food production. More info at <http://alainet.org/active/54849>

Tanzanian farmers demand the government halt landgrabbing!

On the 17th of April, the *International day of Peasant Struggle*, the National Small-Scale Farmers Networks Groups in Tanzania (MVIWATA) organized a national conference on land-grabbing. Farmers agreed that the government would soon send the country into chaos by welcoming more investors who grab village lands and they emphasized the need for farmers to jointly defend their rights. In Tanzania there is a longstanding land disputes (for over 20 years) between villages surrounding Tarangire National Park, in which more than 2,000 farmers were evicted without compensation from their land due to the expansion of the park and are not allowed to undertake any activities within it. The recent eviction of pastoralists in other areas of the country has clearly showed how peoples' rights are continuously violated. The conference attracted over 100 participants, mainly women from areas which have a high percentage of land disputes. More info in the MVIWATA website www.mviwata.org

Monsanto banned from Poland!

Vigorous protests of beekeepers in Poland have led to a *ban on Monsanto's MON810 corn in the country.* Monsanto's corn has been genetically engineered to produce the insecticide Bt. Beekeepers have had first hand experience of the *link between the corn and the deaths of honeybees*, and Poland is the first country to acknowledge these deaths with a ban. It is believed that Monsanto's corn is directly related to causing Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), the issue that has been plaguing bees around the world. Seven days after that, France imposed a temporary ban on the MON810 strain. Talks on allowing the growing of genetically-modified plants on EU soil are now deadlocked as no majority has emerged among the 27 member states. Last year Monsanto bought a leading bee collapse research organization, Beeologics, to study the collapse disorder that is thought to be a result—at least in part—of Monsanto's own creation.

One of the secret agreements...

The *Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)* is a proposed free trade agreement - under secret negotiation - between Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam. In Dallas - Texas, from the 8th to the 18th of May the 12th Round of the negotiations went on behind closed doors. *At least 600 hundreds corporate "advisors" were present at the talks, while public, civil society organisations and journalists were left out.* **The secrecy surrounding the partnership is one of the most worrying aspects**, as the governments involved have already indicated that the background documents will be made public only four years after the agreement is reached or fails. People are mobilizing against it. Opposition is growing everywhere. To know more <http://occupytpa.wordpress.com/>

Next edition special on **food and cities** –
Send your contributions - news stories, photos,
interviews to
info@nyeleni.org by the **30th of July!**

"One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk."
Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877

To read, listen, watch and share

- *Bio-economy versus Biodiversity*, Global Forest Coalition, April 2012 <http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Bioecono-vs-biodiv-report-with-frontage-FINAL.pdf>
- *The New Biomasters*, ETC Group, November 2010 <http://www.etcgroup.org/en/node/5232>
- *Who will control the Green Economy?* ETC Group, November 2011 <http://www.etcgroup.org/en/node/5296>
- *The Green Economy: the Wolf in Sheep's clothing*, Edgardo Lander, TNI - November 2011 <http://www.tni.org/report/green-economy-wolf-sheeps-clothing>
- *Combatting Monsanto, Grassroots resistance to the corporate power of agribusiness in the era of the 'green economy' and a changing climate*, LVC, FOEI, Combat Monsanto, March 2012 <http://www.viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/en/Monsanto-Publication-EN-Final-Version.pdf>
 - *Rio+20, Time to Act*, www.timetoactrio20.org
 - *Report of the International conference of peasants and farmers: stop landgrabbing*, LVC - November 2011 <http://viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/en/mali-report-2012-en1.pdf>
 - *Soberanía Alimentaria Biodiversidad y Culturas*, Num.9/April 2012 (only in Spanish) <http://revistasoberaniaalimentaria.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/sabc9.pdf>
 - *Extraterritorial state responsibility, The plundering of resources in sub-Saharan Africa*, Veterinarios sin Fronteras, 2012 http://www.veterinariossinfronteras.org/mm/file/AFRICA_SUB_INGLES_web.pdf part of the campaign: *Parén, aquí vive gente* (Stop, people live here) <http://www.aquivegente.org>
 - Video - *Rio +20: From Sustainable development to green economy, what is at stake? Which alternatives?* <http://vimeo.com/43595716>



For reports and more references www.nyeleni.org