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Organization : Nova Oikos Project – Brazil

Theme : WORK (21 September)

Sub-themes : AGRICULTURE, POVERTY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Workshop : 38. Thought of degrowth and agricultural models : what connections are needed for a social and cultural transition?

Title : “Permaculture proposals and tools for degrowth process in the fields of rural work and agriculture in Brazil”

Keywords : Work, hunger, poverty, Industrial farming, Permaculture, autonomy

The defense rhetoric for unlimited economic growth uses as argument the need to create new jobs in order to increase life quality. We are in Brazil, the sixth world economy in 2011. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) celebrates the reduction of poverty in the country and thanks its “impressive economic growth” for that. A sixth of world’s population is undernourished, although the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) affirms that actual food production could easily feed all. We verify the same scenario in Brazil - one of the largest producers and exporters of food (grains, fruits and meat), one of greatest biodiversity and freshwater reserve of the planet has 6% of its population undernourished and 8,5% in extreme poverty. In terms of employment in rural areas, agribusiness employs in the country only 15% of the Economically Active Population (PEA), against the remaining 85% that works in family farming. Considered as the great strategy for saving the world from hunger, we will present some reasons why the industrial agricultural model (agribusiness) instead of generating better life conditions, is actually causing more damage than benefits for both environment and society. The mechanization of agriculture, the introduction of new technologies (such as genetically molested organisms) and the monoculture cannot be a part of the solution while it follows an economic logic that works against Nature and Man. The problem remains in the conception of development, centered in economic perspectives and strategies to reach a common welfare and well-being - and which is logically not suitable to man kind needs. Using Brazil as example, we will investigate the industrial agriculture and its relation to unemployment, environment degradation, disorganized urbanization, hunger and violence and therefore, stressing the reasons and ways to revert such situation. We present Permaculture as toolbox for degrowth process in the fields of rural work and the shared characteristics with the Brazilian Solidarity-based Economy working methods as

well as the divergences in terms of market and production relations. Further, we will explore a few contributions of Permaculture for yielding abundance in agricultural production while increasing life quality and the positive externalities offered by small and medium-scale of organic farming.