31 March 2016 –Polytechnic University of Valencia

WORKSHOP 4: EVICTIONS, RURAL EXODUS, MIGRATIONS, CONSEQUENCES FOR CITIES

Translated from French by Stephen Volante, Translators Without Borders (TWB)

EVALUATION

There is a close relationship between the health of family farming and the state of urban development.

1) Factors driving the disappearance of family farms

These factors are varied but related:

- Climate change is reducing the amount of farm and grazing land;
- Agro-industry and mining are consuming more land (and thus more water and other resources), crowding out family farms and increasing pollution;
- Demand from "developed" countries is diverting farmland that formerly sustained local populations to production of food for export, to feed livestock, and for agrofuels;
- Buyers are more remote, depriving small farmers of income and access to local markets;
- Trade liberalization (e.g. the 1994 agricultural trade agreement, ACP-EU EPA[1]...) favors western agroindustry which has the capacity to export food to urban areas at sharply lower cost prices.

2) Exodus

Rural populations, chiefly small farmers, can no longer earn sufficient income or produce enough to feed themselves. Consequently, each year 65 million small farmers and their family members fall into dire poverty.

Of these 65 million people, only 20 million remain in rural areas, while 45 million rural residents migrate to cities each year. These migrants are the greatest source of urban population growth in cities that are extremely fragile and face great financial strains (migration increases the population of Antananarivo by 100,000 each year). City governments have great difficulty supporting unemployed residents who crowd into slums, though some will try to move on to more distant cities.

National and local governments who manage large cities face tremendous challenges accommodating all migrants, controlling tensions, and providing essential services to residents. Governments must first ensure that residents can feed themselves, but many cities expand in ways that create obstacles to sustainability.

Conclusion: Preventing overdevelopment of cities requires addressing the problems that undermine small farms and drive migrations from rural areas to those cities. Small farmers who can sustain a dignified life may still migrate to cities, but will move voluntarily, not out of desperation.

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[1] Economic Partnership Agreements between the European Union and African, Caribbean, and Pacific Countries.

PROPOSITIONS

Workshop participants agreed to adopt four specific recommendations regarding urbanization, which we have listed below. These recommendations rest on two premises:

- Local governments must be able to reexamine their current planning policies;
- Movements representing small farmers and urban residents must be able to collaborate, especially to highlight the importance of food sovereignty.

1)   Regional policies

Planners, from the neighborhood to the global level, must move beyond an urban focus that only envisions the growth of cities. Planners must instead adopt a regional approach that encompasses the urban, suburban, and rural sectors and considers the complex social role of land.

It is possible to plan and implement regional projects that do not swallow up farmland and natural spaces. Moreover, these projects do not have to burden small farmers with exorbitant interest rates in exchange for credit or with difficulties in accessing markets. Some local governments are implementing programs to support new food production, creating opportunities for small farmers. The resulting new food production also serves to supply community food banks and mass catering that help ensure food security while offering new outlets to producers. These policies and programs can lead to mutually beneficial relationships between cities and rural areas. This strategy also helps achieve regional food sovereignty for cities and the rural communities around them.

2)   Preserving farmland within cities

"Building a city on top of a city" has become a cliché among urban planners. It is a formulaic expression of a truism: cities must densify housing and industry in order to preserve regional capacities to produce food. Moreover, cities must accommodate new migrants, many of them poor, who settle on the periphery of metropolitan areas. Cities can redefine residential areas by densifying them and by redeveloping depressed industrial or commercial areas. These changes are costly, as their critics point out, but planners do not grasp the true costs of urban sprawl, such as investing in networks, operating costs, and amortization. We must also consider the environmental and social costs of sprawl, especially when it encourages speculation in real estate markets.

Local governments must implement smart policies to densify cities so that residents will accept denser development. Towers cannot go up everywhere, crowding out recreational spaces, community gardens and urban farms, or eliminating opportunities for more gradual growth. Food sovereignty means preserving active small farms and promoting non-commercial citizen initiatives to produce food.

3)   Essential alliances

Protecting land at the local level, defending small farmers, achieving food security, and smart densification are all essential. To meet these goals, local governments and elected officials need a combination of clear vision and political courage that are not automatic.

Workshop 4 ended with a focus on the greater need to develop formal, effective alliances between small farmer organizations and other social groups who represent urban residents and consumers. This is indispensable to truly influence legal strategies and local policy, and address the disappearance of small farms and resulting consequences (see analysis above).

INTERVENTIONS

This list is not all-inclusive. We apologize to stakeholders who did not attend the workshop and to participants whose names do not appear on the list. We invite you to contact us so that we can update this report with a complete list: secretariat@landaccessforum.org

Introductory interventions:

CHARRIER, Maurice, France, President of the International Urban Development Association (INTA), France

DJAOMAMY, Association for the Development of Agriculture and Peasant Community of Sanbirano, Madagascar

GBANFREIN, Paul, Urban Land Rights Security Project Manager, Research and Action for Peace Center (CERAP), Ivory Coast

LALANDE, Christophe, Housing Unit Director, UN Habitat, France (by phone)

MARIANI, Maurizio, Eating Cities Project, President of the RISTECO Consortium, Italy

RAPARISON, Eric, Platform Coordinator, Land Stakeholders Solidarity (SIF), Madagascar

ROUILLÉ D'ORFEUIL, Henri, France, French Academy of Agriculture, France

ZARATE, Lorena, President of the Habitat International Coalition, Mexico

Interventions from participants:

BECKH, Charlotte, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Germany

BUISSON, Michel, Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens (ATTAC), France

COSTA MORAIS, María José, National Federation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), Brazil

DA SILVA MATIAS, Willian Clementino, National Federation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), Brazil

FRU NGANG Francis, Secretary General, African Institute for Economical and Social Development (INADES Formation), Ivory Coast

NASCIMENTO SILVA, Adriana, National Federation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), Brazil

WARTENA, Sjoerd, Founder and former President, Terre de Liens, France

WOESSNER, Julien, Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind, Switzerland

Moderators:

LERAS, Gérard, AGTER, France, Former dairy farmer, former elected regional representative and Land Policy Special Councilor, Rhône Alpes Region, France

SIMONNEAU, Claire, Urban Planner, Post-doctoral researcher, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium

Reporter:

FAYE, Iba Mar, Sociologist, Chief of Mission "Family Farms and Land", Research and Technological Exchange Group (GRET), Senegal