



ERPI 2018 International Conference
Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World

Conference Paper No.31

Disaster Colonialism and Agroecological Brigades in Post-Disaster Puerto Rico

Nils McCune, Ivette Perfecto, John Vandermeer and Katia Aviles Vásquez

17-18 March 2018

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, Netherlands

Organized jointly by:



In collaboration with:



Disclaimer: The views expressed here are solely those of the authors in their private capacity and do not in any way represent the views of organizers and funders of the conference.

March, 2018

Check regular updates via ERPI website: www.iss.nl/erpi



Disaster Colonialism and Agroecological Brigades in Post-Disaster Puerto Rico

Nils McCune, Ivette Perfecto, John Vandermeer and Katia Aviles Vásquez

Abstract

The neo-Chayanovian approach to peasant economy broadens the original's concept of balances, going beyond the consumption-drudgery equilibrium to identify a complex, interactive set of social, ecological, temporal, moral and political balances in peasant decision-making. This framework is at the heart of the survival and persistence of Puerto Rican peasant farmers, despite decades of colonial experimentation and modernization policies with the explicit purpose of undermining peasant production and displacing the population toward the metropolis. An apostle of Latin American populism, Luis Muñoz Marín, carried forward Operation Bootstrap in the 1950s to empty the countryside at the same time as he pushed forward the model of Free Associated State, which remains the official title of Puerto Rico's colonial status. The eventual cementing of the consumerist, dependent position of the population, and the colonial mentality of elected leaders, set the stage for the accumulation of external debt during recent decades and the ongoing saga of the island's 'unpayable' debt. The striking disregard for Puerto Rico's humanitarian crisis after Hurricane María—in the form of racially-tinged, open hostility from the US Executive Branch, and authoritarian denial by the Puerto Rican authorities—laid bare a changing US interpretation of the colonial relationship. This rapidly shifting landscape transformed peasant survival strategies in the immediate and longer terms. Filling the gap left by governmental bureaucracies and abandonment, Puerto Rican social movements expanded a historical model—voluntary work brigades—to bring mutual support to hundreds of farms in the days, weeks and months after the storm. These daily brigades represent two movements of resources and priorities: on the part of popular organizations, they signify a nearly complete shift toward mobilization of people, tools, labor and time into the farms of the Puerto Rican countryside; for peasant families, they have meant a temporary shift toward labor-intensive recuperation of production with a strong basis in moral economies. In this paper, we explore a first round of evidence to corroborate, challenge and deepen our understanding of the connection between the hostile historical conjecture of disaster colonialism, and peasant resistances along neo-Chayanovian balances.

Porto Rico is essentially the land of the farmer, and the most highly cultivated of the West Indies. In fact, it is the only island where agriculture is so diversified that it produces sufficient food for the consumption of its inhabitants, in addition to vast plantation crops of coffee, sugar and tobacco for exportation. Furthermore, the land is not monopolized by large plantations, but mostly divided into small independent holdings...

Robert Hill, 1899

Then the tariff wall was thrown around the island. Sugar became the chief beneficiary and cane spread over the valleys and up the hillsides like wildfire. The Spanish economy had been somewhat haphazardly predicated on small land-holdings. The American economy, introduced by the Guanica, the Aguirre, the Fajardo and other great centrales, was based on the million-dollar mill and the tight control of the surrounding countryside. By now the development of large absentee-owned sugar estates, the rapid curtailment in the planting of coffee—the natural crop of the independent farmer—, and the concentration of cigar manufacture into the hands of the American trust, have combined to make Porto Rico a land of beggars and millionaires, of flattering statistics and distressing realities. More and more it becomes a factory worked by peons, fought over by lawyers, bossed by absent industrialists, and clerked by politicians. It is now Uncle Sam's second largest sweat-shop.

Luis Muñoz Marín, 1929

Introduction

What are the roots of Puerto Rico's unending nightmare? The archipelago (including the main island and Vieques, Culebra and Mona) has been in a downward spiral since at least 2006, when it entered an economic recession that has contributed to a reduction of 10% of its population in just a decade, a poverty rate of 46% and a labor force participation rate of about 40% (González, 2017). In 2016 came the *junta*, the colloquial name for the unelected seven-person fiscal control board currently negotiating, in the name of Puerto Rico, the largest bankruptcy in US history and carrying out an unending austerity program.

With its infrastructure and social services in shambles, two of the strongest hurricanes in Caribbean history struck the islands in 2017. The first, Irma, glanced the main island, leaving people shaken and electrical outages across the country, just long enough for the second hurricane, Maria, to carve a direct path through the cities and towns of Puerto Rico, sparing no one and leaving hundreds of thousands without secure access to food or water for weeks. Due to the 100-year-old Jones Act of the United States (US) Congress, only US-manufactured ships with US flag and crews can land in Puerto Rico, so neighboring countries were unable to send emergency aid to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. Much of the archipelago remains without electrical power five months later, unofficial death counts surpass 1,000 people and post-traumatic stress has led to skyrocketing rates of suicide and depression, as up to 14% of the remaining population of 3.4 million people is expected to leave by 2019 (Robles et al. 2017; Meléndez and Hinojosa, 2017).

Puerto Rico is the world's oldest colony. This fact is anything but immaterial to its current suffering. After the rising US empire used war to grab Spain's few remaining colonies in 1898, over a century of euphemisms, mock democracy and populisms have ultimately helped achieve the key goal of colonialism: dependence. In 1892, the US sold \$2.8 million in goods to Puerto Rico. Less than a decade later and under the absolute authority of the US War Department, Puerto Rico's imports from the US had tripled, totaling \$8.7 million in 1901, making it the fifth largest market for US goods in Latin America. A century later, in 2006, the value of goods sold by the US to Puerto Rico reached \$22 billion and the archipelago was the second-largest market for the US in Latin America (US Department of Commerce, 2007).

Puerto Rico has a higher ratio of Walmart stores to unit land area than any US state or indeed any country where Walmart is present (Cintrón Arbasetti, 2014). Even before Hurricane Maria wiped out 4/5 of the islands' harvest, Puerto Ricans were importing 85% of their food (again, through a

monopoly of shipping companies that use boats with US flag, crew and manufacture). In part due to this food dependency, the cost of living in Puerto Rico is 12% higher than in the US—supermarket prices are about 25% higher (IEPR, 2016). Meanwhile, median annual household income in 2015 was \$18,626, less than half that of Mississippi, the lowest-income state of the US (USCB, 2016). This captive market for US corporations is undoubtedly among the major achievements of US domination of Puerto Rico. Additionally, Puerto Rico serves as a key military post for controlling the Atlantic Ocean, which helps explain the dozens of military and military intelligence facilities the US has in place (Lindsay-Poland, 2009).

The legality of the US' relationship with Puerto Rico is based upon anachronistic and overtly racist Supreme Court decisions and congressional legislation (Torruebla, 2007). The more important democratic veneer has been provided by the gradual creation of a Puerto Rican elected government and an ongoing saga of plebiscites to determine the islands' political status. However, the virtual eradication of the Nationalist political tendency, and the fear tactics associated with discouraging independence, make Puerto Rico an outstanding example of authoritarian governance. This combined with the brilliant populism of Luis Muñoz Marín to produce a hegemonic political force through the Popular Democratic Party, which used short-lived, Roosevelt-inspired full employment policies to produce long-term acquiescence to US power.

The vulnerability of Puerto Rico to climate disaster is only rivaled by the sister islands of the Caribbean. The entire region has been victimized by disaster capitalism since the hurricane season of 2017, as opposition to neoliberal reforms has been literally swept away (Klein and Brown, 2018). As Puerto Ricans wait in the dark, neoliberal politicians invoke the *tabula rasa*. On January 21st, 2018, Puerto Rican Governor Ricardo Roselló announced plans to privatize the electricity company and on February 5th, he announced his plans to promote charter schools and a voucher system as an alternative to the public-school system (Cohen, 2018). Puerto Rico is now among the clearest current examples of manufactured crisis contributing to real crisis: humiliating neoliberal shock therapy combining with climate catastrophe. The fact that this combination is occurring in a nation without sovereignty creates even greater vulnerabilities, in what we refer to as 'disaster colonialism'.

What is to be done? This essay attempts to avoid old impasses, as the political status question has become, to instead focus on the ways that Puerto Rico's *jibaro* peasant economy may hold the solutions to its historic dead-end. The need for food is uniting rural and urban organizing efforts, as a sizable contingent of young people, many of them a generation removed from the countryside, are attempting to access land to produce food (Luscombe, 2016; Félix and Holt-Giménez, 2017). More than 1,700 farms began operations and farm income grew by 24% between 2012 and 2014 (USDA, 2015). Farm sales of organic commodities grew over 1000% between 2007 and 2012 (USDA, 2014). Most of this new enthusiasm comes from people under 35, marking a stark contrast with farming demographics around the world.

Perhaps most importantly, there are movements of people attempting to rescue the *jibaro* knowledge and culture, much of which was destroyed by Operation Bootstrap and similar depeasantization policies of the post-WWII period. Since the hurricane, along with many other grassroots organizations, the Puerto Rican Via Campesina member, *Organización Boricúa*, has been organizing constant agroecological brigades to rebuild farms and develop greater resiliency (Meares-Cohen, 2017). Social movements in Puerto Rico have long challenged the subordination of labor to capital by engaging in volunteer work brigades. There has never been an end to authoritarian rule in Puerto Rico; what is remarkable and worthy of study is 1) how authoritarian populism combined coercion and consent to become a hegemonic force, 2) the political and economic orientation it gave to Puerto Rico, and 3) the structural consequences of that project. This article will also explore the economic basis for resistance, focusing on the peasant economy that for hundreds of years has been the basis for Puerto Rico's *jibaro* culture.

The Specter of the *Jíbaro*

Traditionally, the Antilles and West Indies have identified strongly with European and African roots. The conventional narrative has held that virtually all indigenous culture and bloodline was lost within the first 100 years of European occupation, despite the agroecological, architectural, phenotypical and linguistic evidence to the contrary (e.g. Schroedor et al. 2018). In Puerto Rico, a mixed population of enslaved African-descendent plantation workers on the coasts, and a free peasantry of mostly white-identified *jíbaros* in the mountains, was developed over three centuries, as most Latin American countries won independence and the United States began to exert economic power in the Caribbean. After the consolidation of industrial capitalism following the Civil War, US imperialism began to take shape on the global level. Jorge Crespo Armáiz (2014) argues that by the turn of the 20th century, the publications of printed media, including books, newspapers and, especially, magazines such as National Geographic, took on three purposes: 1) to provide information to the general public about the new territories of US, with text and images; 2) to present an inventory of physical, natural and industrial resources, especially the agricultural sector, for future investors; 3) finally, crucially, to sustain the colonial discourse, using varied tools, by establishing the inferiority or incapacity for self-governance of the inhabitants of the new possession, in this way justifying the “protection” or “guardianship” of the new colonial authorities. In popular US media, this originally took the form of racist political cartoons, poems and essays, portraying “new-caught sullen peoples/ Half devil and half child” (Kipling, 1899; see also Figure 1).

Since the US military occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898, much effort has been dedicated to portray the *jíbaro*, alternatively understood to mean rural worker or free peasant, as malnourished, lazy and unmanly. Notwithstanding rare contemporary descriptions of food self-sufficiency¹, there is a vast literature caricaturing the *jíbaro* as ignorant of his own poverty. In 1896, Liberal politician Luis Muñoz Rivera traveled to Spain to ask for a greater degree of autonomy, rather than independence, citing the peasantry’s abject poverty and illiteracy. The use of distorted images of the *jíbaro* by Puerto Rican elites was also telling: it was he who was to blame for the incapacity for self-governance, but he was also “the truest icon of the Puerto Rican identity” (Franqui-Rivera, 2015). In this process, the indigenous blood of the *jíbaro* was exorcised from the dominant Creole narrative. Even affective portrayals never failed to show a people in need of modernization, “pale, wiry, moustached, sleepy-eyed men [tumbling] out of hammocks [and] pulling up their trousers” and “barefooted women in terribly starched dresses of many colors” (Muñoz Marin, 1929: 136).

¹ Puerto Rican historian Rafael Rodríguez Cruz (2018) contends that after publishing the 1899 report cited in the opening quote of this essay, geologist Robert Hall was pushed by ‘some powerful force’ to retract the parts of his report that suggested that Puerto Rican agriculture did not need US-led modernization, and was still fired by the US Geological Survey in 1903.



Figure 1. Depeasantization, illustrated. “The White Man’s Burden (Apologies to Rudyard Kipling).” Victor Gillam, *Judge*, April 1, 1899. Source: CGACGA, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

The US Congress made Puerto Ricans US citizens in 1917—just a month before they would become subject to the military draft. The proletarianization of the agricultural workforce took place with great speed as the island became fully absorbed into US capital flows and particularly, the transnational sugar industry. By 1934, US sugar companies controlled 14% of the land, causing massive peasant displacement. That same year, cane workers carried out island-wide strikes increasingly associated with an anti-imperialist political vision. Independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos connected the workers’ struggle with the struggle for diversified agriculture and against US empire; he would spend 25 of his last 29 years of life in federal prison along with many labor and nationalist leaders, where he was almost certainly tortured with atomic radiation (Aponte-Vásquez, 2004; Denis, 2015). Massacres and assassinations by police and national guard troops took place throughout the 1930s as J. Edgar Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation tirelessly worked to “cut off the head” of the independence movement. In the three decades after the passage in 1936 of Law 116, which made sterilization free but offered no other legal forms of birth control, rough one-third of Puerto Rican women were sterilized (Presser, 1969; Hansen and King, 2013).

A narrative of racial fusion, obfuscating the Afro-Caribbean culture and flat-out denying indigenous heritage, became part of the construction of Puerto Rican national construction by Creole elites, including those favoring independence. Seeking a simple, mobilizing discourse, the racist character of Puerto Rico’s domination by the US, and the racial division of labor on the island, were erased.

Lifting up the *jíbaro*, the diversity of Puerto Rico became encapsulated into a male, white, free peasant archetype, savior of the nation. When this archetype became instrumentalized and transformed into a tool of a hegemony for a strain of pro-imperialist authoritarian populism in the 1940s, real Puerto Rican peasant communities were abandoned in favor of the creation of a globalist economy in Puerto Rico. A kind of corporate settler colonialism was established, by which the corporate settlers were given economic spheres to control, with the local government respectfully refraining from charging taxes and the imperialist military guaranteeing stable conditions of exploitation.

The Apostle of Populism

In 1939, after a decade back in Puerto Rico and in the thick of the intra-liberal political feuds, Luis Muñoz Marín founded the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD). The *Populares*, as they were known, organized a powerful rural voting block with a slogan of “*pan, tierra y libertad*” (bread, land and liberty): their political platform called for “land reform and rural resettlement, government-sponsored import substitution industrialization, and largely autonomous economic development leading to eventual political independence” (Berman Santiago, 1998). The *Populares* formed an alliance with a new rural labor union, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores*, made up of workers, anti-*latifundio* and anti-imperialist labor leaders fed up with the business-friendly, American Federal of Labor affiliate, the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores*. Offering political appointments and candidacies to labor leaders, the *Populares* went so far as to choose, as symbol of the new party, the silhouetted image of a *jíbaro*. Despite strong opposition by landed sugar interests, the *populares* edged out the Unionist party in tight elections in 1940. Almost immediately, World War II drafted hundreds of thousands of Puerto Rican men and the more radical aspects of the platform were put on hold, although university scholarship programs and free health clinics were created.

Upon the end of the war in 1945, the PPD surprised many by showing signs of a changed policy: state-run factories were sold to private interests, and no moves were made to acquire land for redistribution. Independence leader Albizo Campos suggested that Muñoz Marín had been offered support from the US several years earlier, in exchange for dropping the issue of independence (Berman Santiago, 1998). In any case, rather than develop autonomy and conditions for independence, the PPD shifted towards policies that would guarantee long-term support for the island by the US government. As part of the arrangement, the United States amended the Jones Act in 1947 to allow for Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor in elections won by Muñoz Marín four times in row between 1948 and 1960. The opening salvo of Operation Bootstrap was Puerto Rico’s Industrial Incentives Act of 1947, which offered tax incentives for US companies to relocate to Puerto Rico. A year later, Act 53, the *Ley de la Mordaza* (Gag Law) was put into place. This law made it a crime to own or display a Puerto Rican flag, speak or write of independence, sing a patriotic tune or meet with anyone in favor of Puerto Rican independence. Simultaneously, a new economic model was defined, based on export-oriented manufacture and maximizing neoclassical indicators such as foreign investment, industrial production, and per-capita income, rather than showing consideration for the equitable distribution of income, or indeed non-manufacturing sectors such as agriculture (Berman Santiago, 1998). The policy was a historic defeat for Big Sugar, and for the islands’ already-diminished capacity for food self-sufficiency, as peasant families were emphatically urged to migrate to the emerging manufacturing centers of Ponce, Mayaguez, and the San Juan area.

In 1950, the US Congress passed the Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act, which established the mechanism for a Puerto Rican constitutional government and, at the same time, the law guaranteed that “Puerto Rico would continue to be a territorial possession of the United States, that all three branches of the federal government would continue to exercise veto power over all branches of the Puerto Rican government, and that Puerto Rico would continue to be subject to U.S. laws and tariffs in its commercial relations with other countries” (Berman Santiago, 1998:101). The Puerto Rican Constitution of 1952 assigned the *Estado Libre Asociado* (“Free Associated State”) or Commonwealth status, solving three problems for the US: it gave enough of an impression of self-determination that the United Nations removed Puerto Rico from its list of colonies, it deeply undercut the independence movement, and it avoided granting statehood, which would have ended the tax havens and low wages upon which Operation Bootstrap was premised (*Ibid*).

In the context of the Cold War, Operation Bootstrap was declared a “miracle” and successful model for the non-socialist Third World, before it was even fully implemented in Puerto Rico. Historian James Dietz (1976:5) makes clear that the PPD government “actively encouraged the massive penetration of U.S. capital into Puerto Rico by designing and offering an almost irresistible profit package to investors.” However, persistent unemployment has accompanied the model since its first decade up to the present, creating a constant flow of migration to the United States. The Puerto Rican

government encouraged this migration, especially from rural areas, and, remarkably, nearly a million Puerto Ricans—"perhaps half the rural working class"—went to the United States between 1950 and 1965 (Berman Santiago, 1998:94). The depopulation and depeasantization of Puerto Rico were necessary for the economic model, predicated on impressive industrial statistics and an increasingly dependent consumer population.

By the late 1960s, supermarkets controlled the food trade. In 1974, Puerto Rico was included for the first time in the US National Food Stamp Program, dramatically transforming the entire economy of the islands, and contributing to a long-term decline of the agricultural sector (Carro-Figueroa, 2002). Two years later, the US Congress altered the tax code by creating Section 936, which waived federal taxes on earnings for US corporations operating in Puerto Rico, creating a boom in manufacturing, especially pharmaceuticals. In its effort to counter the influence of socialist Cuba, the United States provided incentives to private capital to relocate to Puerto Rico, as well as massive public spending in military facilities on the islands. The corporate settler model of colonialism was premised upon authoritarian support for US capital's occupation of strategic areas of the Puerto Rican economy. Not surprisingly, Puerto Rico has stricter gun control laws than almost anywhere in the US: rather than a settler colonialism model such as that in the US, where white populations physically displaced indigenous peoples (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2016), the white supremacy inherent to US colonialism in Puerto Rico was implemented through military protection for corporate settlers' grabs.

The breakdown of the authoritarian populist model began in the 1990s, as the threat of communism disappeared and the US began removing the tax breaks for US corporations in Puerto Rico. This severely cut into the profit margins of the island's impressive pharmaceutical industrial complex. By the time the last of these tax breaks were ended in 2006, the manufacturing sector of Puerto Rico was in freefall, and the economy has shrunk every year since then, aside from briefly flatlining in 2012. By 2016, Puerto Rico had lost more than 85,000 manufacturing jobs. A boom in the service sector—predictably, built around the financial services of tax havens—proved short-lived and detrimental to the overall economic stability of the islands. When in 2015, then-Governor Alejandro García Padilla famously declared the \$72 billion debt "unpayable," he also argued that continued austerity would only deepen the crisis. However, in 2016 the US Congress created the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) which establishes an unelected fiscal control board to oversee debt restructuring and carry out an austerity program.

Climate Disaster and *Neojibaros*

The *Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica* (Boricuá) was founded in 1980, as the independence movement waned and food dependency grew to its phenomenal current levels. Its name is a play on *boricua*, the demonym in Spanish for Puerto Ricans: the accent on the final letter was added as an indigenous pronunciation, like how Puerto Ricans tend to pronounce the word "mango": *mangó*. A central thesis of the organization is that Puerto Ricans are descendants of indigenous people—Taino, Arawak or Caribe—and that their urbanization, landlessness, and even migration to the US, are impacts of colonialism. This determination would lower the bar for who could be considered a legitimate peasant and open the road to rural and urban interactions in a back-to-the-land process. A second key idea to the founding of Boricuá was that food self-sufficiency was a necessary ingredient for independence. This was to have a fundamental importance for the next three decades of development of the organization, for it meant, in José Martí's famous words, "Better to do it than to say it." For a generation whose childhood was spent under the Gag Law and who had seen the issue of political status used to divide and conquer their *compatriotas*, refocusing on land-based movement building was strategic.

The founding members of Boricuá used voluntary work brigades to get to know one another and share the skills of agroecological farming. Brigades typically carry out agricultural tasks, such as field preparation, planting or harvesting, for six hours or so, and spend the afternoons in group discussions. Sometimes brigades last several days, so participants bring tents and their families. Timmerman and

Félix (2015) argue for the revaluing of work upon qualitative bases in agroecology, as a continuous source of knowledge, skill and meaning. A just distribution of meaningful work would mean opening up many new spaces for participation and creativity in building material alternatives to capitalist economies. Given that Caribbean and Latin American peoples first experienced alienated work through foreign conquest, voluntary agroecological brigades form an important part of the decolonization process.

These brigades became less common as Boricué matured, but the birth of dozens of new agroecological “projects” in the archipelago since 2006 brought work brigades back as a priority of the organization. The earliest generation of Boricué members continue as active agroecological farmers, mostly spread across the mountainous *Cordillera Central* (Central Range) of the main island. The intergenerational dimension is considered to be highly important in Boricué, and although the brigade groups are filled with university-age youth, there are nearly always at least a couple participants representing the elders of the first or second generation of Boricué members, as well as children who participate in their own way. This provides continuity and allows for a political education process, as the historical memory of the organization is passed on and shared. Equally important, the *ancianos* of Boricué provide examples that young farmers almost always refer to as guiding their strategies.

Today, in the midst of concomitant political, economic, climatic and demographic crisis and dependency, Puerto Rico’s social movements are showing the capacity to quickly shift toward the countryside through permanent mobilization of work brigades to rebuild agroecological farms virtually levelled by the hurricane. As relief from the US and Puerto Rican colonial governments has been elusive, many farmers are cutting their losses and moving to the US to live with relatives. For those who remain, resilience, food sovereignty and agroecology are increasingly explicit goals, and there are clear calls for a just recovery, as part of a just transition to a regenerative economy (Yeampierre and Klein, 2017). Undoubtedly, the diaspora in the US has also played a key role in galvanizing support for grassroots organizing with an eye to system change in Puerto Rico.

The trauma of the hurricane and its aftermath have produced a clarity as to the need to recover food systems and become food independent. Massive layoffs and family expectations are compelling young people to return to family farms, setting up potential long-lasting effects as youth tend to be more connected to urban culture and demands for fresh, healthy food. Of course, there are contradicting tendencies at play. Land remains a commodity too expensive for many would-be farmers. Corporate behemoth Monsanto rents tens of thousands of hectares in southern Puerto Rico from the Land Authority to produce genetically modified corn and soy seeds, and is among the only farm entities in Puerto Rico to have received insurance payments since the hurricane. Small farmers, in contrast, have yet to receive their crop insurance payments, putting farm operation in peril. The Coca-Cola beverage company, through its subsidiary founded in 2008, Puerto Rico Coffee Roasters, has quietly purchased nearly all the Puerto Rican coffee brands, and is drawing, without cost, “fossil water” from strategic aquifers under the Puerto Rican central mountains’ limestone formations.

Although Maria brought a certain awakening for long-term motivations to rely upon local markets and direct relationships between producers and consumers, these were areas particularly impacted by the hurricane. Labor was made quickly available to those in need outside of the commodity system, but crops were mostly lost and unavailable. Agroecological farms, benefiting from increased planned agrobiodiversity and embedded in social networks, were largely able to harvest food crops for family consumption and harness the solidarity of brigades to rebuild, whereas chemical-dependent small farms seem increasingly adrift with unpayable debts and impossible needs. Entrepreneurial, credit-dependent farms are giving way, leaving only food empires and agroecological resistances. In the new circumstances, the construction of resilient, local food systems appears viable only through agroecological strategies.

Conclusions

One of the essential features of peasant agriculture is found in its capacity to produce the conditions upon which it depends; factors such as soil fertility, quality seeds and breeds, and skilled labor are all part of what preceding productive cycles created, rather than commodities which must be mobilized by market mechanisms, as in credit-dependent, entrepreneurial farming. An autonomous reproduction process, part of the production process within peasant farming, is a source of stability and resilience, especially in broader contexts in which markets are not reliable for creating a positive cost-benefit balance for farmers. Peasant survival strategies, theorized by Alexander Chayanov nearly one hundred years ago, include the autonomous reproduction of family capital through productive activities, as well as intricate and flexible balances among diverse interests, such as nutrition, rest, festivities and future generations. Historically, the *jíbaro* culture has been the sanctuary for cultural and material independence.

However, emerging evidence from Puerto Rico may show the need for updated theory of autonomous and collective survival in an era of unprecedented climate vulnerability and porous divisions between urban and rural worlds. The construction of popular territories by collective actors is necessary and a challenge to modern concepts of knowledge, learning and economy (McCune and Sánchez, 2018). Faced with debt peonage and a long-term capitalist strategy to continue the depopulation of their islands, Puerto Ricans are living a moment of decision (Mazzei and Walsh, 2018). The island has all the physical characteristics to grow its own food and there is a generation of young people who do not want to migrate to the United States, preferring to grow roots by producing healthy food. There is every potential for a radical paradigm shift, away from the increasingly unstable state of food dependency and toward a horizon of agroecological food systems embedded in Puerto Rico's dense forest ecosystems (Vandermeer and Perfecto, 2012).

Finally, current academic and journalistic debates on the demise of democracy (Savio, 2017; Foa and Mounk, 2016; Chomsky, 2017) and the rise of autocratic powers are wise to remember the unfinished, and, in many cases, the dismembered nature of democratic political rights in the heart of the ideological center of capitalist democracy (e.g. Gumbel, 2017). Indeed, the very rise of nationalist rightwing politics in the US has been facilitated by unequal voting rights, which impede the possibilities for US citizens of color to prevent racist insurgencies from consolidating into white nationalist power. Nowhere is this clearer than in the US' island territorial possessions, where 4.1 million US citizens, 98.4% of them racial or ethnic minorities, are denied the right to any representation in the US government. The Caribbean and Pacific peoples can no longer be held hostage to disaster colonialism.

References

- Agrifood Atlas (2017) Chemnitz, C, B. Luis, and M. Schimpf, eds. Heinrich Boll Foundation, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and Friends of the Earth Europe.
- Almaguer, T. (2008) *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California, with a New Preface*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Amin, S. (2011) "Food Sovereignty: A Struggle for Convergence in Diversity". In *Food Movements Unite!: Strategies to Transform our Food System*, edited by E. Holt-Gimenez. Oakland: Food First Books.
- Araiza, L. (2009) "In Common Struggle against a Common Oppression": The United Farm Workers and the Black Panther Party, 1968-1973. *The Journal of African American History*, 94(2): 200-223.
- Balz, Dan. (2017) "Rural America lifted Trump to the presidency. Support is strong, but not monolithic." *Washington Post*, June 17. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/rural-america-lifted-trump-to-the-presidency-support-is-strong-but-not-monolithic/2017/06/16/df4f9156-4ac9-11e7-9669-250d0b15f83b_story.html (accessed January 14, 2017)

- Barnes, P. (1975) *The People's Land: A Reader on Land Reform in the United States*. Rodale Press Book Division.
- Barnes, Shailly Gupta. (n.d.) "50 Years of Poor People's Organizing: An Interview with Bob Zellner." Kairos Center. <https://kairoscenter.org/50-years-of-poor-peoples-organizing-an-interview-with-bob-zellner/> (accessed January 10, 2018)
- Berlan, J.P and R. Lewontin. (1986) "The political economy of hybrid corn." *Monthly Review* 38(3). https://archive.monthlyreview.org/index.php/mr/article/view/MR-038-03-1986-07_5/0 (accessed January 11, 2018)
- Brody, D. (1983) "On the Failure of U.S. Radical Politics: A Farmer-Labor Analysis." *Industrial Relations* 22: 141-163.
- Brown, S. and C. Getz (2008) "Privatizing farm worker justice: Regulating labor through voluntary certification and labeling." *Geoforum* 39: 1184-1196.
- Browne, W. (1988) *Private Interests, Public Policy, and American Agriculture*. KS: University of Kansas Press.
- Busch, L. (2010) "Can fairy tales come true? The surprising story of neoliberalism and world agriculture." *Sociologia Ruralis* 50(4): 331-351.
- Buttel, F. H. (1982) "The political economy of part-time farming." *GeoJournal* 6(4): 293-300.
- Buttel, F. H. (2005) "Ever Since Hightower: The Politics of Agricultural Research Activism in the Molecular Age." *Agriculture and Human Values* 22(3): 275-83.
- Campaign for Renewed Rural Development. (2017) "Letter to Congressional Agriculture Leadership." May 15. https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/05/16/document_gw_10.pdf (accessed January 11, 2018)
- Carlisle, L. (2014) "Critical agrarianism." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 29(2): 135-145.
- Carney, J.A. (2009) *Black rice: the African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chrisman, S. (2016) "Want to Understand Trump's Rise? Head to the Farm." *Civil Eats*, October 27. <http://civileats.com/2016/10/27/want-to-understand-trumps-rise-head-to-the-farm/> (accessed January 11, 2018)
- Coates, T. (2017) "The First White President." *The Atlantic*, October. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/> (accessed January 11, 2018)
- Cramer, K. (2016) *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cullather, N. (2010) *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Danbom, D. (1979) *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900-1930*. Ames: Iowa State Press.
- Daniels, J. (2017) "Tough times in the heartland as some farmers hit by losses weigh exiting the business." *CNBC*, December 27. <https://www.cnbc.com/amp/2017/12/27/some-crop-growers-hit-by-losses-are-weighing-exits-from-agriculture.html>. (accessed January 11, 2018)
- Dayen, D. "Democrats Can Win Rural Voters by Taking on Big Agriculture." *The Nation*, August 16. <https://www.thenation.com/article/democrats-can-win-rural-voters-by-taking-on-big-agriculture/> (accessed January 12, 2018)
- Dreier, P. (2011) "Don't add Reagan's face to Mount Rushmore." *The Free Lance-Star*, April 3. http://www.fredericksburg.com/opinionop-ed/don-t-add-reagan-s-face-to-mount-rushmore/article_9a329ef8-6d41-5a80-80b5-085a28f07316.html (accessed January 12, 2018)
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2011) *Forward to Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times*. Amy Sonnie and James Tracy. Brooklyn: Melville House Printing.

- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2015) *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Dyer, J. (1997) *Harvest of Rage*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Emmons, A. (2017) "The Senate's Military Spending Increase Alone Is Enough to Make Public College Free." *The Intercept*, September 17. <https://theintercept.com/2017/09/18/the-senates-military-spending-increase-alone-is-enough-to-make-public-college-free/> (accessed January 10, 2018)
- Fairbairn, M. (2014) "'Like gold with yield': Evolving intersections between farmland and finance." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(5): 777-795.
- Fink, D. (1998) *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. Raleigh, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Food & Water Watch. (2012) *The Economic Cost of Food Monopolies*.
- Fraser, N. (2000) "Rethinking Recognition." *New Left Review* 3 (May-Jun).
- Fraser, N. 2013. A triple movement? Parsing the politics of crisis after Polanyi. *New Left Review* 81: 119–32.
- Fraser, N. (2017) "The End of Progressive Neoliberalism." *Dissent Magazine*, January 2. https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/progressive-neoliberalism-reactionary-populismnancy-fraser (accessed November 13, 2017)
- Fraser, N., and A. Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*. London: Verso.
- Ganz, M. (2009) *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gilbert, J. (2015) *Planning Democracy: Agrarian Intellectuals and the Intended New Deal*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- George-Warren, H. (2005) *Farm Aid: A Song for America*. Rodale Press.
- Goodwyn, L. (1978) *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Guthman, J. (2014) *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Hall, G. (2001) *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930*. OR: Oregon State University Press.
- Hamilton, S. (2014) "Agribusiness, the Family Farm, and the Politics of Technological Determinism in the Post-World War II United States." *Technology and Culture* 55: 560-590. doi:10.1353/tech.2014.0067.
- Hannan, K. (2004) "The Non-Partisan League in Alberta and North Dakota: A Comparison." *Alberta History*: 13-23.
- Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haughney, Christine. (2018) "Older farmers face tough times." POLITICO Morning Agriculture, January 3. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/morning-agriculture/2018/01/03/older-farmers-face-tough-times-063022> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Heffernan, J and W. Heffernan. (1986) "When Families Have to Give up Farming." *Rural Development Perspectives*, June: 28-31.
- Howley, M., A. Howley and K. Eppley. (2013) "How Agricultural Science Trumps Rural Community in the Discourse of Selected U.S. History Textbooks." *Theory & Research in Social Education* 41: 187-218. doi:10.1080/00933104.2013.778715.
- Iowa Development Commission. (1950) Quoted in Fink, Deborah. *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. Raleigh, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Jenkins, J.C. 1985. *The Politics of Insurgency: The Farm Worker Movement in the 1960s*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Judis, J. (2016) *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics*. New York: Columbia Global Reports.

- Klein, N. (2007) *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kopple, B. (1985). *American Dream*, Cabin Creek Production Company, Prestige Films, 100 min.
- Krugman, P. (2016) Twitter post. November 26, 5:30 AM. <https://twitter.com/paulkrugman/status/802504839846621186> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Kurtzleben, D. (2017) “Here’s How Many Bernie Sanders Supporters Ultimately Voted For Trump.” *National Public Radio*, August 24. <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/24/545812242/1-in-10-sanders-primary-voters-ended-up-supporting-trump-survey-finds> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Levitas, D. (2002) *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.
- Lindsay, B.C. (2015) *Murder State: California’s Native American Genocide, 1846-1873*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
- Lipsitz, G. (1998) *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Chicago: Temple University Press.
- Losurdo, D. (2014) *Liberalism: A Counter-History*. New York: Verso Books.
- Marx, K. (1844 [2008]) “On the Jewish Question.” ed. Blunden, A, M. Grant, M. Carmody. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/> (accessed January 14, 2018).
- Mitchell, D. (2010) “Battle/fields: braceros, agribusiness, and the violent reproduction of the California agricultural landscape during World War II.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 36: 143–156.
- Mooney, P. and T. Majka. (1995) *Farmers’ and Farm Workers’ Movements: Social Protest in American Agriculture*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Moore, J. (2014) “The End of Cheap Nature, or, How I learned to Stop Worrying about ‘the’ Environment and Love the Crisis of Capitalism,” in *Structures of the World Political Economy and the Future of Global Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Suter, C. and C. Chase-Dunn. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Moore, J. (2015) *Capitalism in the Web of Life*. London: Verso.
- Moore, J. (2017a) “The Capitalocene Part II: accumulation by appropriation and the centrality of unpaid work/energy.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. Online first May 24: 1-43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1272587>
- Moore, J. (2017b) “World Accumulation and Planetary Life or, Why Capitalism Will Not Survive Until the “Last Tree is Cut.”” Lecture jointly hosted by the Political Economy Research Centre at Goldsmiths, University of London and the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity at the University of Surrey, October 10. Transcript published online: http://www.perc.org.uk/project_posts/world-accumulation-planetary-life-capitalism-will-not-survive-last-tree-cut/ (accessed January 13, 2018)
- National Family Farm Coalition. (n.d.) “NFFC Accomplishments.” <http://nffc.net/index.php/news-events/nffc-accomplishments/> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Naylor, G. (2011) “Without Clarity on Parity, All You Get Is Charity,” in *Food Movements Unite!*, edited by Eric Holt-Gimenez. Oakland: Food First Books: 35-51.
- Nielsen, K. (1989) “Who Were These Farmer Radicals? The Douglas County Farm Holiday Association.” *Minnesota History*, Fall.
- Nosowitz, D. (2017) “Farm Advocates Fear USDA Is Destroying Aid To Rural America.” *Modern Farmer*, May 24. <https://modernfarmer.com/2017/05/farm-advocates-fear-usda-destroying-aid-rural-america/> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Olmsted, K. (2015) *Right Out of California: The 1930s and the Big Business Roots of Modern Conservatism*. New York: The New Press.
- Ortiz, C. (2017) Personal communication, September 6.
- Patel, R. (2013) “The Long Green Revolution.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40:1, 1-63.

- Patel, R. and J. Moore. (2017) *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Perry, Rhonda. (2017) Personal communication, September 28.
- Piven, F.F. and R.A. Cloward. (1978) *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail*. New York: Random House.
- Ray, D., H. Schaffer, C. Hellwinckel, and D. De La Torre Ugarte (2012) "An Analysis of a Market-Driven Inventory System (MDIS)." DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.25529.16484
- Reagan, R. (1964) "A Time For Choosing." Televised speech given October 27th. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXBswFfh6AY>
- Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development [CED]. (1962) *An Adaptive Program for Agriculture*. New York: Committee for Economic Development.
- Rich, F. (2017). "No Sympathy for the Hillbilly." *New York*, March 19. <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/03/frank-rich-no-sympathy-for-the-hillbilly.html> (accessed January 8, 2018)
- Risser, J. (1976) "Why They Love Earl Butz." *New York Times*, June 13. <http://www.nytimes.com/1976/06/13/archives/why-they-love-earl-butz-prosperous-farmers-see-him-as-the-greatest.html> (accessed January 8, 2018)
- Ritchie, M. (1986) *The Loss of Our Family Farms: Inevitable Results Or Conscious Policies?* [4th printing] MN: Center for Rural Studies.
- Robbins, R. M. (1942) *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Rosenberg, N. and B. Stucki. (2017) "The Butz Stops Here: Why the Food Movement Needs to Rethink Agricultural History." *Journal of Food Law and Policy* 13(1): 12-25.
- Said, E. (1979) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Said, E. (2000) "The clash of definition," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 569-90; 577.
- Saxton, A. (1971) *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Schwab, J. (1988) *Raising Less Corn and More Hell: Midwestern Farmers Speak Out*. IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Solnit, R. (2004) *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Solnit, R. (2016) "Falling Together." Interview with Krista Tippett. *On Being*, May 26. <https://onbeing.org/programs/rebecca-solnit-falling-together/> (accessed January 14, 2018)
- Solon, O. (2017) "A right to repair: why Nebraska farmers are taking on John Deere and Apple." *The Guardian*, March 6. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/mar/06/nebraska-farmers-right-to-repair-john-deere-apple> (accessed January 14, 2018)
- Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC]. (n.d.) Online Hate Map. <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Street, R.S. (2004) *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Summers, Mary. (2001) "From the Heartland To Seattle: The Family Farm Movement of the 1980s and the Legacy of Agrarian State Building," in *The Countryside in the Age of the Modern State: Political Histories of Rural America*, edited by Catherine McNicol Stock and Robert D. Johnson. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 304-325.
- Taylor, K-Y. (2016) *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Terkel, S. (1971a) Interview with Harry Tarrell. <http://studsterkel.matrix.msu.edu/htimes.php/terkel-a0a0o4-a.mp3> (accessed January 14, 2018)
- Terkel, S. (1971b). Interview with Oscar Heleen. <http://studsterkel.matrix.msu.edu/htimes.php/terkel-a0a0o5-a.mp3> (accessed January 14, 2018)

- Thompson, G. (2018) "Serfing USA: New 'Bracero' Bill Could Cut Agriculture Workers' Rights and Wages." *Capital & Main/International Business Times*, January 3. <https://capitalandmain.com/serfing-usa-new-bracero-bill-could-cut-agriculture-workers-rights-and-wages-0103> (accessed January 10, 2018)
- Tramel, S. (2016) "The Road Through Paris: Climate Change, Carbon, and the Political Dynamics of Convergence." *Globalizations*, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2016.1173376
- Tsu, C.M. (2013) *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- University of Washington. (2015) Socialist Party Membership by States: 1904-1940, "Mapping American Social Movements Through the 20th Century." http://depts.washington.edu/moves/SP_map-members.shtml (accessed 1/9/2018)
- USDA [United States Department of Agriculture]. (1991) *Agricultural Statistics*. Washington: US Government Printing Office. <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/Agstat/1990s/1991/Agstat-04-23-1991.pdf> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- USDA. (2015) *Agricultural Statistics Annual*. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Ag_Statistics/2015/Chapter09.pdf (accessed January 11, 2018)
- USDA Climate Hubs. (2017a) *Agriculture in the Midwest*. <https://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/hubs/midwest/topic/agriculture-midwest> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- USDA Office of the Secretary. (2017b) "Memorandum: Advancing US Agricultural Trade and Improving Service to Agricultural Producers." <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/secretary-memorandum-advancing-ag-trade-improve-service-ag-producers.pdf> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Vanloqueren, G. and P.V. Baret. (2009) "How agricultural research systems shape a technological regime that develops genetic engineering but locks out agroecological innovations." *Research Policy* 38: 971-983. doi:10.1016/j.respol.2009.02.008.
- Vollan, C. (2011) "Farmers Holiday Association." *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*. University of Nebraska-Lincoln. <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.pd.020> (accessed January 13, 2018)
- Walter, G. (1996) "The Ideology of Success in Major American Farm Magazines, 1934-1991." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 73: 594-608.
- Walker, R. (2004) *The Conquest of Bread: 150 Years of Agribusiness in California*. New York: New Press.
- Weingarten, D. (2017) 'Why Are America's Farmers Killing Themselves in Record Numbers?' *The Guardian*, December 6. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/06/why-are-americas-farmers-killing-themselves-in-record-numbers> (accessed January 8, 2018)
- Welch, C. (2017) "National Land for the People and the Struggle for Agrarian Reform in California." In *Land Justice: Reimagining Land, Food, and the Commons in the United States*, edited by Justine M. Williams and Eric Holt-Giménez. Oakland: Food First Books.
- Wittman, H. (2009) "Reworking the metabolic rift: La Vía Campesina, agrarian citizenship, and food sovereignty." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(4): 805-826.
- Wooster, D. (1979) *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. London: Oxford University Press.

ERPI 2018 International Conference
Authoritarian Populism and the
Rural World

17-18 March 2018

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
The Hague, Netherlands

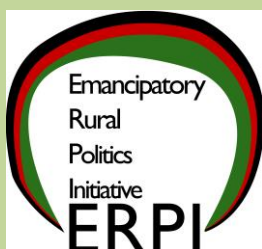
About the Author(s)

Nils McCune is a Research Fellow at the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability. He works with the Central American and Caribbean regions of La Vía Campesina on political and agroecological training methods and processes.

Ivette Perfecto is the George W. Pack Professor of Ecology, Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on spatial ecology of the coffee agroecosystem and, more broadly, on the links between small-scale sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and food sovereignty.

John Vandermeer is the Asa Gray Distinguished University Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Michigan. He has written extensively on ecology, food and agriculture for the past 40 years.

Katia Aviles Vásquez is Director of the Instituto de Carso de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, and member of the Puerto Rican social movement Boricúa, ecological agriculture movement of Puerto Rico.



The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

For more information see: <http://www.iss.nl/erpi>
or email: emancipatoryruralpolitics@gmail.com