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Disclaimer

The following articles express the views of their author, Chrysi Tsapekou, and do not necessarily represent of Kuminda Il Diritto al Cibo.

About the author: Chrysi Tsapekou is an Erasmus + Placement Student from University of Macedonia, Faculty of International and European Relations, Political Science and Diplomacy. During her traineership at Forum Solidarieta, Parma, she was assigned to assist at the organization of Kuminda Festival and write an Approfondimento regarding the various topics discussed during the Festival. The following is the result of her research during her internship at Kuminda.

1. Summary

Several topics were discussed during Kuminda Festival, and especially during the Conference on 24th October, as the right to food is influenced from and associates with a vast variety of practises, policies and actions, both in the international and the domestic arena. Therefore, in this Approfondimento one can find a list of various articles from financial and food speculation to self-determination in an effort to highlight and elaborate on issues that reflect the different aspects of the same right.

The first four articles focus on economic policies and the results they have. Financial speculation is the first amongst them so as to provide the theoretical background for the articles to come. Land grabbing being the second one and ocean grabbing the third, an understanding on the way third-party practises, including European practises, influence the livelihood and life of many is provided. Last but not least, the article on TTIP aims at informing about the trade agreement between Europe and the US and about the negative outcomes it could have for food security in our continent.

The three articles that follow introduce the topics of climate change, of migration and environmental migration and of GMO and GM food. The last article examines the principle of self-determination and the Palestinian Case to emphasize on the importance of peace and highlight on aspects that disrupt the universal right to food.

Helpful links can be found at the end of the articles, including animated videos that penetrate on the different topics and suggest ways of individual action where possible.

2. Financial Speculation

What is 'speculation'

by Chrysi Tsapekou

Speculation is the act of trading in an asset, or conducting a financial transaction, that has a significant risk of losing most or all of the initial outlay, in expectation of a substantial gain. The distinction between 'speculation' and 'investment' might seem difficult but there is a set of factors, such as the nature of the asset, the expected duration of the holding period, and the amount of leverage used, that can help us understand whether an activity is speculative or investing.

To give an example, buying a house in a bad neighborhood for your own use is a (bad) investment, while bying a house in the same neighborhood to renovate it hoping to sell it quickly qualifies as a speculative activity.

Speculative activities are said to be beneficial for the free economy as they provide market liquidity and narrow the bid-ask spread by hedging price risk for the producers.[1] These activities though are responsible for 'economic bubbles'.

What is an economic bubble

'Economic bubbles' are created by trading in an asset at a price or price range higher than its fundamental value. For example, in 1637 a newly introduced flower was so popular that its price rose to astronomical levels. Three of its bulbs were sold at the same price as a house did. when doubt appeared regarding the fundamental value of the flower, the price fell rapidly causing the bubble to burst.

Other examples of bubbles can be found in the recent years; the 'silver bubble', the '.com bubble' and the 'housing bubble' with the latter creating a worldwide financial crisis in 2008-2009.[2]

What is food speculation

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[1]Investopedia, Speculation, http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/speculation.asp?optm=sa_v2

[2]The Danger of Speculation: What is an Economic Bubble? Made in Germany, DW, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=artBJx8iR9I

Harvests are not only subject to spot markets, where the producer sells their product instantly, but to future ones as well. In the simplest form of a future market, the producer, e.g. the farmer, agrees with the buyer/reseller of the product, e.g. the miller, on the price and the date of delivery of the harvest.

In that simple form of a commodity 'futures' market, intermediaries act as hedgers for both the farmer and the miller of our example. They offer a contract to take over the loses of the farmer if the price falls and to keep the profit if the price rises. The same offer is made to the miller as well. The contract is referred to as 'future'. In return, the intermediary charges a fee for their services causing a slight rise to the price of the product. That rise though is essential for the planning of both the farmer and the miller and in general does not cause any malfunctions to the market.

Established firms with deep knowledge and understanding on the ways the commodity 'futures' market works were the ones trading 'futures' between producers and consumers. Since the early 21st century though, an increasing number of investor from outside the traditional market – such as banks, pension and investment funds- have begun to speculate on agricultural futures exchange.

Loose restrictions and control created the means to huge profit for the speculators, either by issuing new futures or buying and reselling old ones for a higher price. The price of the agricultural 'futures' rose as did the demand, e.g. from 33% demand for wheat futures in 2006 to 100% demand in 2008.

The rising demand for agricultural commodities on spot markets, the decline of the dollar, agricultural neglect, restrictions on exports in key-producer countries, production of bio-fuels, the oil and fertilizer prices and the bad harvest alongside with the hopes of better future price as the commodity 'futures' market showed led to the food crisis of 2007-2008.

Between 2006 and 2008 there was a price increase of 71% in the most essential foodstuff and a price increase of 126% on rice and grain according to FAO data. The developing and emerging countries were the ones hit harder by the crisis. There were hunger revolts in over 30 countries and over 115 million people fell into extreme hunger and poverty.

The prices fell only to rise again in 2011 at the same level of 2008, despite the fact that the harvest of 2010 was the third biggest of all time. The agricultural market is going through “financialisiation”, a process in which the product looses its utility value and becomes a financial investment.

As a financial investment, the agricultural market is affected by the fluctuation of the financial market rather than by the needs of the people, both consumers and producers. The revolt in Tunisia in 2011 that led to the government's downfall, is a strong evidence of the issues the increased food prices create in the developing and emerging world.

As a famous and well-known speculator, George Soros, said when asked to comment on food speculation: “It is like hoarding food in the midst of a famine, only to make profits on rising prices. That should not be possible”. The same attitude was shown by the former US President Bill Clinton in a speech at the United Nations' World Food Day on 16 October 2008: “We were wrong to believe that food was like some other product in international trade, and we have to go back to a more responsible and sustainable form of agriculture”.

A complete “financialisiation” of agriculture would be scandalous, and after the food crisis of 2007-2008 things seem to be improving. Stricter, regulated and transparent commodity exchanges by speculators are in place in the USA as reforms were introduced in July 2010 aiming stricter position limits, i.e. profit limitations.

In September 2010, the EU announced plans to create a new and more transparent trading platforms. Despite the step forward, the EU still views the commodity market as a financial market which could cause problems regarding the definition of transparency alongside with ethical issues.

More have to be done as the price spike of 2011 demonstrated. Food is a right. As such it should be protected and not left in the gambling hands of speculators.

For more information, please visit: http://www2.weed-online.org/uploads/henn_2011_speculators_bread_embo.pdf

For further explanation on “what should be done”, please visit: http://www.weed-online.org/themen/english/5021520.html

For animated explanatory video on food speculation, please visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpM9XxJ-vo4

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3. Land Grabbing

What is land grabbing

by Chrysi Tsapekou

Generally, 'land grabbing' can be described as the act of gaining control over land. As a practice, it dates back to the pre-colonial era with territorial wars; enclosures, mainly in the European North; and dispossession of native people, mainly in North America and Australasia. The contemporary land grabbing though is based on agreements between governments and corporations, both foreign and domestic, and is mainly located in the global South.

The official storyline is that it is a beneficial practice for both parties. On one hand, developing countries get a new wave of international investmets. On the other hand, capital rich countries and corporations gain access to the resousrces and land needed. While the first part of that assumption is easily understood, there is a lot of explanation that needs to be done when it comes to land grabbing of corporations and foreign countries.

After the food price crisis in 2007-2008, food-importing rich in capital countries, such as the Gulf States, as well as countries with high populations and food security concerns, such as India, China and South Korea, started acquiring vast areas of so-called marginal land to produce food for their people. Corporations though have been land grabbing for completely different reasons.

As corporations, their aim is profit. Land acquisition allows corporations to control the benefits of the use of land and their associated resources, like water, minerals and forests. Land has therefore become an economic asset for both international and domestic corporations. Land grabbing is in that sense water grabbing, forest grabbing, resources grabbing. The way each corporation views land as an asset determines the way of its use.

Firstly, land can be seen as a save investment since the collapse of the housing market. Secondly, 'food-scarcity' drives land grabbing as a means of food production and therefore profit. Likewise, 'oil-scarcity' and key policies, like the US's American Clean Energy and Security Act and the EU's Renewable Enegy Directive, fuel land grabbing. In that sense, land is viewed as a way to produce agrofuel feedstock and, due to a future increase on demand, profit. 'Bio' or 'green' economy influence goes beyond biofuels though. Industrial tree plantations (ITPs) that use 'flex trees' are another factor for land grabbing. 'Flex trees', that is trees that have multiple uses, are beeing planted for wood-energy, wood- fuel and pulp and/or carbon sequestering. Carbon sequestering is an environmental friendly technique provided by the UN-run REDD+schemes through which polluting

companies can escape penalties by buying carbon credits or by growing tree plantations. In a similar way, 'flex crops' are increasingly produced. Soya, sugarcane, oil palm and corn can inter-change their use from food and feed to climate change mitigation policies, energy and fuel. What is more, a change in the global diet has also led to their increased production rate.

As mentioned above, the countries where the land grabbing takes place are mainly in the global South and the key reason that corporations proceed to land grabs is profit, whether through food and feed production, climate change mitigation, production of biofuels, or simply as a save investment. Having asnwered where and why land grabbing appears, the next question is how; through agreements between governments or between governments and corporations.

Alhtough the answer might seem simple, that is not quite the case. Land grabbing agreements are highly diversified. As examples will be given later on, a general categorisation would have 3 subcategories. The first is the most rare, if not non-existing; both legal and legitimate. The second, more frequent than not, is the legal but not legitimate, and the third is the illegal in every sense, a rather frequent subcategory as well.

The both legal and legitimate land grabbing agreement is a non-grabbing agreement. The preconditions for such an agreement are firstly, a firm legal framework with established rights for the people and the communities and protection of ownership. Secondly, in such an agreement, consensus amongst the people influenced is obligatory; that means correct and complete information while protection of the people in case of dispute is essential. Compensations, or the appropriate legal means, to all those involved are also part of the legal and legitimate agreement paradigm. Unfortunately, the majority of the countries in which land grabbing takes place lack in ownership and/or peoples rights, civil consensus, and a firm legal framework.

The second subcategory is more frequent than not. Although there is a legal framework, or at least 'a' rule of law in the narrowest sense, that is indeed followed, the agreement is not legitimate. That is the case in many African and South American countries where women's rights, workers' rights and ownership rights are not determined, let alone protected. In this paradigm, there is little, if any, information and consensus is not important. Compensations might or might not be given and there is little, if any, state protection towards the people influenced. To make matters worse, in many of the cases that belong in that subcategory, it is the goverment itself that dispossesses people from their land so as to either strike a deal with a foreign goverment or corporation or proceed to a domestic land grabb. That is the paradigm more often seen in African and South American countries.

Last but not least, the third paradigm lacks any legal obligations. Laws, if existing, are altered, skirted or even redefined. People are forced off of their land and/or their residences, more often than not in a violent way. Consensus is irrelevant as are the compensations.

What all the subcategories have though in common it that reactions to land grabbing vary. Different groups of the society that a land grab takes place have different reactions towards it. Landlords might be in favor while small-scale farmers might oppose. Reactions of the same group can also differ during the stages of the acquisition. While landlords might be in favor in the begining, they could oppose later on.

Another similarity between the subcategories is the large-scale land acquisitions. Although it is indeed difficult to determine the exact number of hectares grabed as not all deals are conducted in public site and the media fail to cover everything, according to the World Bank in 2010, the number is that of 45 million hectares since 2007-2008. Oxfam suggestes a different number; that of 227 million hectares in 11 years from 2000 to 2011. What is more, known land grabbing agreements are based on long-term leases, purchase and other economic arrangements, usually lasting from 30 to 99 years with the option to renew too.

Which are the problems

There are a lot of concerns regarding land grabbing. On one hand, there are the legitimacy problems. As mentioned above, legal frameworks in the countries where such practices thrive are known to be skirted and at case lack any sense of legitimacy. What is more, all arguments in favor of land grabbing fail under close examination.

To begin with, the so-called new wave of international investment in agriculture in the global South is void. There are no actual benefits nor for the people nor for the countries signing such agreements. The portrayed by the World Bank 'marginal' or 'empty' land in the majority of the countries involved is being actually used by the local communities. Problems in ownership rights and land governance, such as the issue of undeclared land use, have caused non marginal land to be grabbed. That led to forbiddance of access to land and in many cases even evictions. To make matters worse, in those cases of land grabbing that there were established ownership rights, promises for future employment have failed alongside with the compensations for the small-scale farmers, the influenced people and the local community, which, if given, did not make up for the actual losses. That is the biggest problematic of the argument stated above. Even in the ideal case where everything was done by the book, the bulk of investment in agriculture is undertaken by the farmers themselves, especially in developing countries. Capital controlled, large-scale agriculture in that sense is set to fail in being an actual investment in the global South.

Having said that, not only land grabbing fails when it comes to food and oil scarcity but also when it comes to being part of any climate change mitigation strategy. To take one thing at a time,

land grabbing causes food scarcity in the communities involved. Small-scale agriculture alongside with subsistence agriculture are the main means of food production and food distribution in the communities and countries where land grabbs appear. The losse of land is therefore translated in food scarcity for those communities. It is indeed common knowledge that food scarcity is already a big problem for the developing world; land grabbing only makes it worse.

Nevertheless, as was explained earlier, land grabbing is said to create the means for food security in foreign countries; that is though another void argument that oversimplifies the true causes of any sign of food scarcity. The food price crisis of 2007-2008 was caused by extreme speculation and was not a problem of mere food supply. There is actually enough food production to feed the entire world; it is the 'financialisation'[3] of the food market that has and will cause problems regarding food security.

Under close examination, the argument of 'bio' or 'green' economy also fails. Let alone the fact that the production of agrofuel feedstock is actually consuming resources previously used for food production and is therefore a cause for food security issues, its production in the global South and then its transportation to the global North so as to be suitable for use are major emitters of greenhouse gases, especially CO2. 'Flex crops' and 'flex trees' have similar outcomes. Not only they add to food security and food scarcity issues, but through the distruction of the already existing forests and fields and their use as fuel, they have a major impact on climate change as their emissions need 35-40 years to be captured by the re-growth of the forest. Carbon sequestering too is an irrational non environmental friendly technique. Planting trees does not make corporations environmental friendly, but it is actually used as a means of abating reactions from the international community.

Besides that all though and as was explained earlier, land grabbing is resources grabbing. As the modern way of any kind of production has shown, the contamination and even the distruction of resources are inevitable. Unfortunately, environmental obligations or restrictions on land grabbing agreements to protect the people and the environment of the region, if any, are poor. Noone truly holds responsibility.

Examples

In this chapter examples of land grabbing agreements are presented so as to give a better understanding on the reasons land grabbing faces such criticism.

The first example is that of Ethiopia. A Bangalore based Indian company, called Karuturi,

[3]'Financialisation' is the process through which the product looses its utility use and becomes a financial investment. Food speculation is the outcome of such a procedure in the food commodity market.

made a land grabbing agreement with the Ethiopian government acquiring more than 300.000 hectares of land for 90 years in Gambella. While one could be shocked by the number of hectares or the duration of the agreement, the truly shocking and indeed a lot revealing fact is the payment. The company is not to pay anything for the acquisition of the land for the first 6 years, while for the remaining 84 years it has to pay 15 birr (equivalent to 0.66 Euro) per hectare per year. One can easily understand that there is absolutely no benefit for Ethiopia nor for the Ethiopians who were dislodged from their land as the official storyline claims.[4]

When it comes to the legitimacy problems, a 'good' example is that of the Guatemala's Polochic Valley. In Guatemala there is the so-called *colonato* labour regime. *Colonos* families are landless families who live and harvest their own crops on the lands of the *patron* , namely the landlord. In return, the colonos provide payments or labour to the landlord. In Polochic Valley though the combination of the colonato labour regime and the land grabbing agreement led to the 'legal' expulsion of the colonos families. The sugar mill 'Chabil Utzaj' bought the land from the landlords that were in economic difficulties due to the international coffee price crisis of 2001-2002. Despite the fact that negotiations had already began between the landlords and the tenant Maya-Q'eqchi' familes so as the latter can buy the land they use, the arrival of the sugar mill and its US$32 million loan by the Central American Bank of Economic Integration put an end to the negotiations. 'Chabil Utzaj' demanded that all labor liabilities are settled, which actually meant that the Maya-Q'eqchi' families were being legally expelled from their land. On March 2011, after a 5-month occupation of fourteen of the estates by the landless and jobless colonatos, the military and police alongside with the 'private security' of the sugar mill, violently evicted 700 families, burning crops and houses. One man lost his life at the scene and two more were assassinated by paramilitaries later on.[5]

Even though when the decision to proceed to such an agreement is made at the lowest level possible, dissatisfaction is still present. For example, in Kpachaa, Ghana, the community chief rented the land he owned to Bio fuel Africa for 0.9 Euros per hectare per year for 50 years. In the contract, it was stated that no farmer of the community was to lose access to cultivable land and that the company was to build community infrastructure, such as a small medical clinic and three water reservoirs, alongside with the installation of a maize-grinding machine and the clearing of new areas. Although that seems like a good agreement, theory and practice are not the same. The members of the community largely expressed their dissatisfaction when the agreement has forced as not only they were obliged to pay for the use of the maize grinding machine but the loss of land

[4] Tinyade Kachika, Senior Legal Researcher, *Land Grabbing in Africa, A review of the impacts and the possible policy responses,* Pan Africa Programme of Oxfam International, Oxfam International, http://www.oxfamblogs.org/eastafrica/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Land-Grabbing-in-Africa.-Final.pdf ,

[5] *The Global Land Grab, A Primer,* TNI Agrarian Justice Programme, revised edition February 2013, https://www.tni.org/en/publication/the-global-land-grab, p.8

could not be truly compensated. Farmers were denied true access to cultivable land and the food consumption of the community was altered. Unfortunately, such examples are rather rare and it could be said that are the exception of how land grabbing takes place.[6]

The rule would certainly be the third subcategory analysed above. The most representative example might be that of Loliondo in Tanzania. There were 8 Maasai villages bordering the Serengeti National Park forming the Loliondo Game Control Area. The villagers were the legal owners of their land and responsible for its use under the Village Land Act No of 1999. Ortello Business Cooperation (OBC) owned by the royal family from the United Arab Emirates though was granted the hunting rights of the same area in 1992. During the hunting seasons, the villagers, mainly pastoralists and farmers, were denied access to grazing land and water, even though they were the legal owners of the land. In 2009, after 17 years of this dual legal jurisdiction over the land, the villagers were notified on the 1st of July that they had to vacate their villages till the 3rd of July. Violent eviction of the people and a complete distruction of their villages started on the 4th of July. For 2 days, the security forces of OBC with the Police Field Force Unit, a paramilitary tanzanian unit, had Maasai men imprisoned, beaten and humiliated in front of their families, Maasai women raped and their livestock killed or left without grass and water. The dislodged people had lost all their properties and all their so-called legal rights.[7]

Conclusion

As was tried to be explained in this article, land grabbing has no true benefits for the countries involved and can solve no problems regarding scarcity and climate change mitigation. On the contrary, it generates scarcity and poverty in already problematic areas of the world while it is clearly driven by corporative profit. A corporative profit with no respect for the environment and the human life.

After 2009, the year the activists storyline became public, the official one changed as well. Seven principles, the "Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture" (PRAI), a World Bank-led advocacy on land grabbing, became the basis on which the FAO Tenure Guidelines for Land, Fisheries and Forests negotiations took place. Being a highly controversial topic, the result was a 50 pages document of contradictory philosophical and political positions. The three resulting

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[6]Tinyade Kachika, Senior Legal Researcher, *Land Grabbing in Africa, A review of the impacts and the possible policy responses*, Pan Africa Programme of Oxfam International, Oxfam International, http://www.oxfamblogs.org/eastafrica/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Land-Grabbing-in-Africa.-Final.pdf , p. 36

[7] Tinyade Kachika, Senior Legal Researcher, *Land Grabbing in Africa, A review of the impacts and the possible policy responses*, Pan Africa Programme of Oxfam International, Oxfam International, http://www.oxfamblogs.org/eastafrica/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Land-Grabbing-in-Africa.-Final.pdf , p. 48

tendencies of the document claim that if implemented will create a 'win-win' outcome.

While all three call for transparency and better land governance, the first two view land grabbing as an inevitable practice and follow the "making a virtue out of necessity" official storyline. The first tendency is closest to the World Bank position. According to it, good governance with property rights and environmental and labour standards alongside with transparency mechanisms and community consultation will lead to a 'win-win' land grabb agreement. The second tendency goes a bit further. Through the second tendency, appears an effort to roll back the negative results for the local societies. The way to succeed that is again through good governance as explained above, adding FPIC, namely the free, prior, informed consent of the people influenced. The second tendency is supported by several FAO members, goverments and a certain parts of the civil society. Last but not least, the third tendency is the most radical. It calls for an end to land grabbing and aims in rolling back the already existing cases of land grabbing. While the same instruments are present here as well, their aim is to promote small-scale agriculture. Social movements and peasant groups are in favor of the third tendency as one can easily understand.[8]

As though every case of land grabbing is different, the tendency that will eventually be implemented is up to the goverment, the corporation and the civil society of the country that land grabbing has or will take place. And since different groups of the same community, like women, small-scale farmers and pastoralists, are influenced in different ways, organising resistance and publically supporting the third tendency, where possible, is truly challenging. La Via Campesina is such a peasant farmer organisation.

La Via Campesina called for a global allinace against land grabbing in 2011 known as the 'Nyeleni Plan of Action' and is ever since trying to put an end to the 'financialization' of food and agriculture in general, i.e. to stop the dominant corporative food chain production. So, a new term was introduced, that of the food sovereignty. As was stated in the Declaration od Nyeleni, food sovereignty is "*the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropiate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations*". Food sovereignty is therefore linked to land sovereignty and agro-ecology.

Land sovereignty is "*the right of peoples to have effective access to, use of, and control over, land and the benefits of its use and occupation.*". Agro-ecology "*is based on techniques that are not delivered top-down but developed on the basis of farmers' knowdelge and experimentation ....emphasizes the capability of local communities to experiment, evaluate and scale-up innovations*

[8] *The Global Land Grab, A Primer,* TNI Agrarian Justice Programme, revised edition February 2013, https://www.tni.org/en/publication/the-global-land-grab, p.20- 28

through farmer-to-farmer research and grassroots extension approaches" [9]. These agro-ecological principles and the food and land sovereignty create the core of the opposition to land grabbing.

Public investment in agriculture and the visibility of small-scale farmers' investment are to way to proceed towards a future where land grabbing belongs to the past alongside with other imperialistic and colonial techniques. Most importantly though, a change in the mentality of the consumers in the global North is mantadory so as to escape on one hand a true food scarcity and on the other all the ethical issues land grabbing produce since 'not knowning' is now simple not possible.

For animated video on land grabbing, please visit :
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExCQlobfAUU

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3.Miguel A. Altieri and Victor Manuel Toledo (2011), 'The agro-ecological revolution in Latin America: rescuing nature, ensuring food sovereignty and empowering peasants', Journal of Peasant Studies, (Vol.38), No.3, 587-612

[9]Miguel A. Altieri and Victor Manuel Toledo (2011), 'The agro-ecological revolution in Latin America: rescuing nature, ensuring food sovereignty and empowering peasants', Journal of Peasant Studies, (Vol.38), No.3, 587-612

4. Ocean Grabbing

What is ocean grabbing

by Chrysi Tsapekou

Besides land grabbing, there is another practice called ocean grabbing. It involves, just like land grabbing, the dispossession and/or reallocation of tenure, access rights and use rights of marine resources and areas of the sea. The term 'marine resources' includes not only the fish stocks but also the non-living entities like sand, rocks, etc., and the habitats, like mangroves, etc. The term 'areas of the sea' includes not only the surface of the sea but also the beaches, the sea floor, the water column, coastal dunes, etc.

The main purpose is the control over the resources in the effort of individuals, corporations and/or governments to make profit out of what-was-once common-access and common-use public space and resource. In many cases of ocean grabbing though, the environmental factor plays also an important role. Marine protected areas, also known as MPA, aim at conserving biodiversity or replenishing fisheries through denying access to local communities and dispossessing them of their previous rights over the area. Other governmental initiatives, like coastal development projects, that have a similar effect, could also be considered ocean grabs.

Not all such initiatives are evil though. For an action to be considered or not as an act of ocean grabbing, there are, according to the literature about land and ocean grabbing, three variables that have to be examined. The first is whether there is "good governance". Governance in general refers to the institutions, structures and processes that are followed for a decision to be made and for an action to be taken. In other words, governance is the contract between the private sector, the state and the civil society on how the actors should behave. "Good" governance is defined by the United Nations Development Program policy document 'Governance for Sustainable Human Development' as "*..participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of Law"* . The quality of governance therefore is the first variable that should be examined in any case of what could be ocean grabbing.

The second variable is whether the human security and livelihoods are endangered. There are seven aspects that define the term "human security"; economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. All these aspects should be examined to determine whether an initiative is grabbing or not. Physical violence, a threat to the identity of a community and/or ethnic group based on a specific livelihoods, a moral acceptance of the action by the community affected, a means to earn a livelihood after the action has taken place, are all important to understand the nature of the action.

Last but not least, is the third variable that examines whether there are negative outcomes for the social-ecological well-being. That variable includes the ecological impacts that an action, initiative or policy has and whether these impacts influence the social net around the area the action takes place and, if yes, in what way. It points out the connection between the surrounding environment and the community and highlights the interdependence of their well-being.

Unfortunately, these variables are hard not only to be fulfilled but also to be examined. Ocean grabbing for that matter does not only take the easily identified form of an individual's investment for personal profit, like a summer resort in a coast line, but also appears as an environmental friendly policy or an international agreement on solid environmental and/or legal grounds. It can also take place after a change in legislation even in countries of the so-called developed West.

Despite the cases that ocean grabbing takes its simple form of personal profit, the rest of the cases are based on the Rights-Based Fisheries (RBF). Since the 1989, certain fisheries economists have pointed out that the only way in their view to prevent an environmental and economic havoc of the fisheries resources is through a vast privatization of the ocean. According to their theory, that is the only way to both protect and govern the existing resources. While one can easily understand that such an argument disregards the already existing systems of governance of the seas, even if not properly legislated, these views turned into policies in the early 90's, only to become worse in the years to come as financial speculation appeared in the fisheries market.

In other words and mainly in the developed and developing countries, the state used to set a total annual quota of a certain fish species. Individuals would be allocated a certain percentage of that quota and therefore were able to exploit it. While with that system the governance of the fisheries and other resources was still under the control of the state, the Rights-Based Fisheries introduced a different way. What is now happening, is that the quota itself has become a financial asset that individuals, corporations and states can lease, sell or buy.

Which are the problems

Ocean grabbing is said to be as "serious a threat as land grabbing" by the former UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter. To begin with, small-scale fishers are immediately affected. Who the small-scale fishers are though is a tricky question. FAO International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries describe the small-scale fisheries as all the pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest activities undertaken by self-employed, seasonal or occasional fishers both men and women who provide food for their families and/or a supplement to their livelihood. The numbers are revealing: 58 million people are actually engaged in fishing activities and 800 million people depend on fisheries in various ways[10].

Having determined who is affected, the next question is how they are affected. The most common way is by lose of the right to access. While in same cases the resources were common-use and common-access, in others the established tenure rights over the resources and the space were altered and/or banished either by legal or illicit means. Although that is the way most easily identified and most often used, is not the only one. Another way that is more difficult to detect is the decline of the resource, either a decline of population or a decline of intensity. As examples will be given latter on, both will be thoroughly explained. The means used vary as well. Whether there will be a violent eviction, a non-violent enclosure of space or an alteration of legislation that will in the future constitute an ocean grabbing policy depends on the actor and the background and the rhetoric they act on.

Examples

The best way to understand what is happening is through examples. The first example is that of lake Victoria in Uganda. In the 1960's, overfishing in the lake led to the introduction of the Nile perch in an effort to revive the fishing industry that was struggling. Till then, local artisanal biodiverse fishery was the main economic activity in the area. After the introduction of the Nile perch and the economic boom that followed, the fishing industry changed to a hierarchical and export-oriented one. Overfishing though appeared again and the competition amongst the small-scale fishers and the industry is very intense. While small-scale fishers and their communities could previously rely on the Nile perch as their daily source of protein, now 60 to 80 percent of the catches are being exported. If combined with the growing tourist industry and the expansion of the

[10]FAO (2014) *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*. Rome: FAO

flower industry on the coast of the lake and their need for and occupation of space and resources, like beaches and land, one can understand the complexity of the issue. Not only the indigenous people have lost an important percentage of their livelihoods but additionally they are expelled from their land and have lost the right of access to that was a common-use resource. To make matters worse but still understandably, the small-scale fishers with no alternative livelihood turned to illicit practises, like illegal methods of fishing and fishing in forbidden waters. The pollution from the growing industries alongside with these illegal activities of the small-scale fishers stress even more the already problematic ecosystem of the lake.

In the example given above, there are many aspects that highlight the complexity of the issue. First of all, one can easily understand the influence private interest has in a society and an ecosystem. Secondly, every action has a reaction; that is usually overseen although special attention should be given. What is more, hopes over an environmental advantage through policies that limit mainly the people's access to the fisheries are proven naive.

The second example is that of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI). The CTI is a marine protected area (MPA) that was established in 2007. It covers areas of Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste and is considered to be the Amazon of the seas due to its high marine biodiversity. The idea of creating a MPA in the region first appeared in the early 1990's by the Federation of Small-Scale Fishers in Calatagan, Philippines, also known as *Samahan ng Maliit na Mangigisda ng Calatagan.* The problem that the Federation was trying to address was the decline of the fish catches and the encroachment on near-shore waters by large scale fishing vessels. The initiative had tremendous success during the first years of its implementation as the fishers themselves could understand that they had to protect *their* waters. By the end of the 1990's, the Federation's MPA expanded even further than before making sure that the fishers still had access to sufficient fishing grounds. Unfortunately, the same can not be said for the CTI. Not only the opinion of the Federation was excluded, but there was no prevision for the small-scale fishers and those depending on the artisanal fisheries. The lack of fishing grounds creates higher competition amongst small-scale fishers who now disregard the environmental aspect of the MPA. As it is stated by the locals, the CTI is in favour of the fishing industry as they are the only ones that can afford to fish further out in the ocean.

The third example that will be given is that of the mangrove forests in Ecuador. Ecuador is the fifth largest producer of shrimp worldwide and the shrimp industry employs 250,000 people. What the shrimp industry needed to expand was land. The expansion was made by destroying the fragile wetlands. The mangrove forests went from 362,000 hectares to 108,000 hectares in just a couple of decades. People with ancestral ties to this land were violently evicted not only once, but in same cases even twice. In the Manabi Province by the Chone river estuary there was a community that formed the Collective El Verdun. Its 70 families were first evicted in a violent way in 1979, when a local businessman bought the area with loans from the Bank of the Pacific to develop shrimp farms. The latter was bankrupted in 1997 and the Collective reclaimed what was theirs. Despite the plantation of new mangrove trees and crops for the Collective's subsistence- as the former mangrove was completely destroyed-, another businessman bought the land in 2010 from the Bank of the Pacific. Even though the Collective managed to prove their ancestral ties to the area and the Ecuadorian Constitution protects indigenous people from being displaced from their ancestral land, the court case that was held in 2012 resulted in a not so promising decision. The businessman had to allocate only a 20% of the property to the Collective. Not only did he fail to do so and the court order is still not enforced, but his property rights stand strong. Despite the clear Constitutional violation that one can detect, there is a profound lack of respect and a stimulating example of financial speculation in water-related issues.

Another also revealing example on how financial speculation can lead to ocean grabbing and can create serious problems to small-scale fishers even through legitimate ways is the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Mauritius signed in 2009. The Agreement allowed European vessels to fish in the waters of Mauritius. The duration of the Agreement was three years and the large-scale fishing fleets of the European Union countries could fish up to 5,500 tones of fish for €660,000 per year. The Mauritius government claimed that the Agreement would not influence the national fishing industry nor the small-scale fishers. That claim was based on their lack of capacity and infrastructure to exploit the resources as the EU vessels would fish in waters out of their reach. While that indeed happened, meaning that the EU fleets were fishing in areas of the Mauritius sea that were not used before due to the lack mentioned above, they targeted the same

fish species. On one hand that meant less catches for the local and small-scale fishers of Mauritius. On the other hand, due to the large-scale fishing vessels of the EU fleets, the by-catch fish and other unintentionally caught marine resources generated an environmental damage that was not predicted. The stress caused to the ecosystem led to the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in the name of environmental conservation. Therefore, the outcome of the Agreement is depleted stocks and loss of fishing grounds for the small-scale fishers of Mauritius. Someone might think that the European Union is supposed to be one of the "good guys" when it comes to international agreements, etc.. Indeed, there was a prevision on how important the opinion of the small-scale fishers is, but their actual opinion was never asked. The irony though is that as of the 23rd February 2012, there is another Agreement covering the period 2014-2017 with the exact same terms.[11]

Through the examples above one can understand how private profit [examples 1 and 3], environmental policies [examples 2 and 4] and international agreements [example 4] can generate ocean grabbing techniques. The last example of this article is one of legislating ocean grabbing inside a state. There are indeed numerous examples of state legislated ocean grabbing policies. As mentioned above, Right- Based Fisheries changed the way the state understood fishing. The example that will be given is that of Denmark, a developed country of the West and of the EU. The RBF that was introduced in 2005 drained the traditional fleet of the country. The majority of the fishing communities have absolutely no fishing activities at the moment, while the remaining ones have lost more than the 50% of their fleet. As a senior official from the Danish fisheries department is said to have stated, that was the intention of the regulation. Nowadays in Denmark, the vessels used are more efficient, larger and harder to finance, creating a special group of people both able and willing to exploit the pelagic resources of the country.

Conclusion

Ocean grabbing is as much of a threat as land grabbing. It affects a great number of people, the majority of whom have no alternative livelihood. As a practise, it is irresponsible when contacted without consulting with the small-scale fishers of the region; irresponsible both environmentally and socially.

The animated video that follows presents the example of South Africa and the results ocean grabbing has: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28Aa0Muds9c .

For more information on the topic, please visit :

a) https://www.opendemocracy.net/nick-buxton-carsten-pedersen-mads-christian-barbesgaard/ocean-grabbing-new-wave-of-twenty-first-cent

b) http://worldfishers.org/

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[11]European Commission, Fisheries, *Mauritius, Fisheries Partnership Agreement,* viewed January 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements/mauritius/index_en.htm

http://www.journals.elsevier.com/marine-policy

5. TTIP

What is TTIP

by Chrysi Tsapekou

TTIP is the acronym for the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership** between the EU and USA. The aim is to create the biggest free trade market in the northern hemisphere. The way to create such a market is to remove tariffs, to cut red tapes, i.e. to reduce the bureaucratic obstacles, and to reduce restrictions on investments, in other words to 'harmonize' standards between the two partners.[12]

As one can easily understand, TTIP is a highly controversial topic. On one hand, the European Commission is claiming that it is beneficial for the European economy. New jobs, more business opportunities, growth through the ongoing economic crisis, lower prices and a bigger variety of products are the arguments in favor of the TTIP.

On the other hand, NGOs and Europeans are not convinced. The self-organized European Citizen's Initiative (sECI) StopTTIP became one of the biggest ECI of Europe with 3,2 million signatures gathered in its one-year-course.

Why Stop TTIP

The argument of those against TTIP is that it is in favor only of big corporations. First of all, TTIP comes with an **Investor-State-Despute-Settlement** (**ISDS**). That means that foreign corporations can sue EU member-state governments and the EU in general for damages if new rules or regulations create losses to their activities; even if those rules and regulations aim in consumer and environmental protection. The worst part though that is not widely known is the creation of **special courts**, called arbitration courts, with corporate lawyers giving verdicts.

That is what happened in Romania on July 22nd 2015. Plans for a gold mine in Rosia Montana were abandoned after years of massive protest. Due to investor protection agreements that Romania had signed with Canada that included ISDS, a request for arbitration was field against Romania by a Canadian Investor.

Secondly, all **negotiations** are conducted in **secret**. That is both undermining democratic

[12]'About TTIP – basics, benefits, concerns', last update:19 Mar 2015, European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/about-ttip/questions-and-answers/

procedures and highly alerting for the civil society of Europe. What-is-more, during the preparatory phase for TTIP, only 8% of the 590 meetings held with the European Commission included consumer and trade union alongside with **lobby representatives.** The rest 92% of those were held once again in secret and with big companies and lobby representatives.

Thirdly, through the "**regulatory cooperation**", corporations are intended to participate in expert groups during the elaboration of new regulations and laws if their interests are to be influenced. Having draft laws influenced by the interests of big business is simply unacceptable for the StopTTIP Initiative as is, till today at least, for the European Law Establishment.

Moreover, TTIP is said to jeopardize the entire Law Establishment of the EU. **Employee rights, consumer and environmental protection policies, foodstuff standards are at stake**. Collective bargaining and works councils do not exist in the USA while in the EU working rights are highly protected. Fracking, i.e. burying gas exports, genetically modified raw materials into foodstuff, chlorinated chickens and hormones in meat are permitted in the USA while in the EU are highly criticized and illegal. All the above are viewed as "not-tariff barriers to trade" by the corporations involved in the negotiations and stand in the way of the 'harmonization' of the two markets.

Last but not least, unless TTIP is stopped today, as an international agreement and more specific, as an investment agreement, it comes with **long-term obligations**; at best a **20-year period** with valid provisions.

For more information, please visit: https://stop-ttip.org/what-is-the-problem-ttip-ceta/

For animated explanatory video on TTIP, please visit:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=83&v=Y4OQeekSD6s

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6. Climate Change

What is man-made climate change

by Chrysi Tsapekou

The climate and environment of our planet has been changing throughout history. Although change is inevitable and generally considered as evolution and part of the course of nature, since the Industrial Revolution the process of environmental and climate change has accelerated, as several scientists claim.

According to them, Industrial Revolution and the use of fossil fuel led to higher emissions of CO2 in the atmosphere intensifying the greenhouse effect. The consequences of the intensified greenhouse effect and those changes in Earth's climate are called 'man-made climate change'.

What is the greenhouse effect

The simplest way to explain greenhouse effect is that of an invisible "blanket" around the Earth. This "blanket", consisting of greenhouse gases in the upper level of the atmosphere, prevents radiation from fully escaping. Radiation, both solar and thermal, is vital for the survival of all forms of life on our planet as it warms the planetary surface creating a habitable temperature.

CO2 is one of the main greenhouse gases. The high emissions of CO2 since the Industrial Revolution have intensified the greenhouse effect. Less radiation escapes the atmosphere causing the temperature to rise.

What are the consequences

The temperature rise has many consequences. The most obvious one is the warmer weather. Heat waves are more frequent and tend to last longer than in the 20th century. The warmer weather leads to the melting of glaciers and ice caps in both hemispheres and the losses of parts of the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarcic. The sea level rise is a result of both the thermal expansion of the water due to the higher temperatute and the fresh water added by the melting of glaciers, ice caps and ice sheets. The fresh water though changes the salinity of the oceans. That endangers marine life in general, taking also in account that the ocean temperature too is higher than before. What is more, as the sea level rise, coastal areas and islands are threatened. Islands being slowly submerged,

like the island nation of Maldives, and islands, coastal and land areas dealing with severe floods, like the Bhola Island in Bangladesh in 2005 leaving homeless more than half a million people, but also in France, Florida, etc, are now part of everyday news broadcast.

As the temperature of the air and the oceans rises, different weather patterns are created. On one hand, wind patterns are a result of the warm and cold air masses in the atmosphere. As now the warm air masses are growing, the wind patterns are changing. On the other hand, water evaporates at a higher pace than before. The combination of those two, can lead to either drought and shortage of water resources in some areas or heavy precipitation and extreme intensity of tropical cuclones in others. Drought destroys productive lands in Africa, Asia and South America and at times leads to desertificaton. Heavy precipitation has a similar effect. Floods destroy crops and cause damages to the entire economic base of the area they hit. So do cyclones.To make matter worst, there is high confidence that in the future wars will be conducted over the water resources as they literally evaporate.

What can be done

According to those with a 'man-made climate change' standpoint, there are things to be done. First of all, lower emissions of CO2 is of great importance. That is the cornerstone of all International Agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol, and of all the environmental policies applied worldwide. Renewable energy is the means towards lower CO2 emissions and mitigating the climate change. Sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves and geothermal heat are the sources of renewable energy and there is the technology to exploit them. Moreover, technology can help control the already emitting CO2 in the atmosphere through special filters, and lessen the negative effects of the climate change with high-tech dams to control the water flow, new more resilient materials and seeds to drought and/or flood, etc.

Although the solutions may seem simple, they require a tremendous change in our lifestyles. In order to successfully implement them, there is the necessity of a change in the mentality of the human race as a whole. Understanding that one's actions affect others, and, that in the long-term will affect all, is a mindset without which nothing significant can happen.

The opposition

Although the fact that our climate is changing is undeniable, there is a large group of scientists that question the significance of the human factor. In their prespective, climate change is a most more complicated issue and can not be explained or solved simply by CO2 emissions. They dismiss the data on which the 'man-made climate change' is based, stating that similar data

regarding the CO2 concentration in the atmosphere and the temperature rise, are to be found even before the Industrial Revolution. What is more, there is no scientific evidence that CO2 and temperature rise are connected; only strong confidence. A scientific fact, on the other hand, is that CO2 has actually helped plants and crops to grow stronger and more resilient in the past 150 years.

The Kyoto Protocol has been criticized and dismissed by the Russian Academy of Science as lacking scientific grounding. Especially after the "Climate-gate", more and more scientists have expressed their hesitation, if not opposition, to the significance and role of CO2 emissions and the human factor in the climate change. The Heidelberg Appeal, a statement in 1992 that scientific and industrial progress alongside with the economic and social development should not be stopped by an irrational non-scientific theory, has already more than 4.000 signatures, including those of 72 Nobel Prize winners. Ecology, as the stock-taking, monitoring and preservation of the Earth resources, according to the Heidelberg Appeal, must "*be founded on scientific critiria and not on irrational pre-conceptions*".

Conclusion

The climate of our planet is indeed changing. The conflict on whether it is a natural or a man-made change, although important, is pointless. Mankind has to change and try to adopt in our ever-changing world. Science and technology can be part of the solution, but without a change in our mentality little can be done.

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7. Migration

What is migration

by Chrysi Tsapekou

Migration is the movement from one place to another in order to either settle temporarily or permanently in the new location. It is conducted throughout history by both humans and animals.[13]

Human migration is set off for various reasons.The reason people move categorizes them as migrants or refugees. The most significant distinction between the two is whether the decision of moving was obligatory/forced or not.

Who is a migrant

Migrants, immigrants and emigrants are people who voluntarely move to another place. The difference between migrants and immigrants is the intention of temporarily settling in the new place on one hand and of permanently resettling on the other. A good example of migration is the migrant workers in Canada, who stay for a specific period of time and eventually return back 'home'.

On the other hand, everyone who moved permanently to the US creating families and a livelihood is an immigrant. An emigrant is the one who left from a place,e.g. an emigrant from England is the one who left England and immigrated to the US.[14]

The reason behind migration, immigration and emigration is the search of a better life and prospects.[15] Economic migrants, such as the ones mentioned above in Canada, and economic immigrants and emigrants are the main subcategory. Other subcategories are education, family reunion and family or individual welfare.

Who is a refugee

All those who are forced to flee their country due to a life and freedom threatening situation and are unable to return as their lifes and freedom remain at stake are refugees. International Law protects refugees through the 1951 refugee convention. War and political, racial, religious and

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[13]Human Migration, wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_migration

[14]Learn English with Emma, Vocabulary-Immigrate,emigrate,migrate , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uicRkouflCE

[15]Michael Marinez and Miguel Marquez, CNN, *What is the difference between imigrant and refugee*, July 16, 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/15/us/immigrant-refugee-definition/

sexual discrimination, prosecution and violence are situations that verify the refugee status.[16]

There is though a subcategory alongside with the 'war and conflict refugees' not yet recognised and protected under International Law; 'environmental refugees'. Environmental refugees are a big subcategory which includes people forced to flee their country due to both natural (environmental) disasters, such as volcanic eruption and tsunamis, and to man-made climate change disasters.

Even though natural disasters can not be predicted and the majority of the people moving due to them stay inside the territory of their country, man-made climate change disasters are said to be an even greater problem when it comes to refugees. The sea level rise caused by the greenhouse effect and the melting of glaciers and ice caps is already threatening coastal areas and entire countries.

Maldives, the island nation in the Indian Ocean, is the country most threatened by sea level rise. An evacuation programm has already been planned as all 1,200 islands of the country are to be sinked in the years to come. Louisiana is losing 65 square kilometres every year and Bangladesh is said to lose 17% of its territory till 2050 leaving 20 million people homeless; in 1995 more than 500,000 people lost their livelihood as Bhola Island was half-submerged. Venice is also in trouble. In the past century, there have been more frequent floods than ever before. While in 1900 the main square was underwater only seven times, in 1996 it was flooded 99 times.

What is more, the melting of the glaciers and ice caps means that the sea is getting less salty. Countries relying on fisheries are therefore already facing an important economic problem. This problem can be added to the problems mentioned above as it is caused due to the man-made climate change disasters.

Submerged and/or eroding lands, floods and destruction of fisheries though are not the only causation of environmental refugees. Drought and desertification already play a significant role in the movement of refugees mainly in Africa and Asia.

The subsistence agriculture[17] suffers the most from drought in countries close to the Horn of Africa. Somalis and Ethiopians facing starvation and poverty have already moved to Kenya in refugee camps. Eritrea that also relies on subsistence agriculture is in trouble.

To make matters worse, thousands of square kilometres of productive land are being lost every year to desertification. Morocco, Tunisia and Libya lose aproximately 1,000 square kilometres of productive land, while the Ghobi Desert in China expands at a rate of 3,600 square

[16]Alan Travis, Home affairs Editor, the guardian, *Migrants,Refugees and Asylum Seekers:what's the difference?* , 28 August 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/28/migrants-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-whats-the-difference

[17]Subsistence agriculture means the production of crops at a sufficient level for self-consumption without the surplus for trade.

kilometres every year. [18]

As it was mentioned above, all these people force to flee due to environmental disasters both natural and man-made are not yet protected under International Law. Even though the international community seems to ignore this subcategory, it is an issue that needs to be addressed today. Otherwise, there will be absolutely no solution available as the results of climate change can not be changed.

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8. Seeds

Genetically Modified Organisms

by Chrysi Tsapekou

Genetically Modified Organism, or GMO, is any organism whose DNA has been altered using genetic engineering. While thoughout the history, people have been using selective breeding or artificial selection to promote the desirable traits, thus genes, in both animals and plants, genetic engineering has taken this process a bit further; it changes the genetic material of the organism on the spot. Although a change in the genetic material still happens through selective breeding, it takes generations to show the results and is based more on luck than certainty; a certainty provided by genetic engineering as the modification of the DNA is instant and secure, promoting all the desirable traits.

This genetic modification can happen by mutation, deletion or insertion of genes. The resulting DNA is called recombinant DNA. When it comes to the insertion of genes, the recombinant DNA falls in two distinctive categories. The first one is known as cisgenic recombinant DNA, which means the insertions of genes from the same or a sexually compatible organism. Ideally, this could have happened in a non genetically engineered way as well. The second one is known as transgenic recombinant DNA and it involves the insertion of genes from an unrelated organism.

The outcome is a new genetically modified organism that has the desired qualities. When it comes to animals there are several implementations. Qualities like thicker, softer, curlier fur for ship, dogs or animals used in the clothing industry, bright colored or fast growing fish, hypo-allergenic pets are some examples on the genetic modification on animals. Plants are also subject to genetic modification.[19]

Genetically Modified Seeds

[19] *Genetically modified organism*, Wikipedia, viewed on December 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically_modified_organism

Food biotechnology is a branch of food science that aims to improve the production and the quality of the food we consume. As was stated above, the way to promote the desirable traits before several scientific innovations was through selective breeding and artificial selection. The genetically modified seeds aim not only to produce better food or food that is suitable to our consumption system, e.g. a potato that produce less acrylamide when fried and a tomato with delayed ripening after picking respectively, but also to create plants with high resistance on diseases.

The best example of disease resistance genetic modification seed might be that of papaya. In the early 1990s the papaya industry was facing a big crisis due to a virus, i.e. the ringspot virus. A new seed of papaya was introduced that being genetically modified could resist the ringspot virus. Today, 80% of the papaya production is based on genetically modified seeds as there is no conventional or organic method to control the deadly papaya virus.

Likewise, GM seeds of corn, soya and sugar are resistant on diseases and torelate various harmfull herbicides, insects and pests. In other words, these seeds need less pesticides and herbicides and are less, if not at all, volnurable to diseases. GM corn, soya and sugar beets are already growing in several countries, like the US, Australia, New Zealand, Russian Federation etc. In other countries though there are strict restrictions and many GM products need to be properly labeled, if not completely forbidden for consume.[20]

As one can easily understand, GM food and GM products in general create high controversies. On one hand, those in favor, namely scientists, corporations and even philanthropic foundations, like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have high hopes of the GMO technology. Their main argument is the better quality of the product. There are many ways to define "better quality". The first one is that the desirable traits are guaranteed in each and every seed put on the ground; taste, colour, size, nutrients, etc. Another aspect of the "better quality" is the reduction on the pesticides and herbicides needed for the plants to grow strong and healthy, which too has two divisions. The first is the financial benefit that the farmer gets from this reduction itself. The second one is the environmental benefit.

Besides though the argument of the better quality, there are plenty of other arguments as well. An end to world hunger and poverty are the ideal that the philanthropic foundations in favor of GMOs stand for. Seeds that are resistant to drought, flood or are able to grow in environments that previously was impossible are and/or could be engineered. There is of course the opposition.

The opposition, a.k.a. Vandana Shiva

[20] *Genetically Modified Food*, Wikipedia, viewed on December 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically_modified_food

Vandana Shiva is a worldwide known activist opposing GM seeds and argiculture. Navdanya Trust is the organisation she founded and directs in an effort to support biodiversity and argoecology and to raise awareness on the matter of GM seeds and food. Through various activities of her organisation and speeches throughout the world, she calls for a shift in our production and consumption paradigm with the trust that such a shift will put an end to the dictatorship of the ONE biotechnology company that is at the centre of her campaign. This corporation is Monsato, the world leader company in biotechnology.

According to Vandana Shiva, GM seeds are an abomination and serve noone but the big corporations. Seeds that should belong to everyone turn into intellectual property making impossible for subsistence or small-scale farmers mainly in the Global South to cope with the extra cost. In that sense, GM seeds and companies of biotechnology aim to create a 'food totalitarianism' that excludes the majority of the people. What-is-more, the relatively new agricultural practice of monocultures[21], destroys what-was-once nutritious soil and pose alongside with the GM seeds a threat not only to conventional agriculture but to the environment as well. Conventional agriculture is threatened as cisgenic GM and conventional seeds are sexually combatible creating an unforeseeable match. Moreover, the resistance that GM plants have on certain diseases is said to trigger mutations on the viruses. Such an event, which can not be excluded, would be disastrous for both the conventional and the GM agriculture. A lack of respect towards the environment is also apparent as water, land and air become commodities to be traded.[22] To make matters worse, Vandana Shiva claims that such seeds are dangerous not only for the biodiversity of fauna and flora but for the people as well[23].

The same concerns are spread amongst different groups of people. Governmental regulators, non-governmental organisations, consumers associations and scientist have hesitations regarding the safety and equivalence of GM food to the non-genetically engineered food and the effect such an agriculture will cause. That is the reason behind the strict regulations, or even forbiddance of GM food in some countries and regions. For example, in the EU GM food undergoes a pre-market authorisation and a post-market environmental monitoring by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The assessment is an extensive, case-by-case evaluation regarding the safety of the product for human consumption and the consequences they will have on the envirinment and the biodiversity of the region. But even if the product is found safe, it needs to be properly labelled.[24] In

[21]Monocultures are vast fields of growing only one crop, plant, livestock species etc.
[22]Anna da Costa, *Vandana Shiva on Sustaining India's Agriculture,* Worldwatch Institute, Vision for a Sustainable World, Updated December 11,2015, http://www.worldwatch.org/node/6189
[23]Michael Specter, *Seeds of Doubt, An Activist controversial crusade against genetically modified crops,* August 25, 2014 Issue, The New Yorker, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/25/seeds-of-doubt
[24]*Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms,* EFSA, viewed on December 2015,

India, mainly thanks to Navdanya Trust, several GM seeds are forbidden and others are growing in specific regions.

Conclusion

Genetically engineered organisms and food are a scientific innovation. As any scientific break-through, they should undergo a lasting testing period during which they will be thorougly tested and re-tested so as we can understand and be certain of their outcomes. On one hand, and as one can easily understand, that is not on the benefit of the corporations that engineer new advanced organisms and seeds. On the other hand, demonising an innovation for the sake of the past alone is also irrational. What is certain, is that we do need a shift in our paradigm as our world is fast changing. That shift should be based on facts and knowledge and mutual respect towards others as well as the environment. And in the future steps, walking hand by hand with science might be of use.

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9. Self-Determination

Introduction to Self-Determination

by Chrysi Tsapekou

Self-determination is the peoples right to self-governance. It implies the ability of a group distinctive from others to be governed in the way the group chooses, in a given territory, without external interference. Self-determination was the principle upon which were based both the formation and the re-emerge of several nation states after World War I.

Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States of America, was the first to refer to self-determination as a right, as a principle of international law and of action during his speech on 11 February 1918: “National aspirations must be respected; people may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. Self-determination is not a mere phase; it is an imperative principle of action..”. Simply put, self-determination, or at least such a promise, was the only available course of action in order to maintain peace.

Although some nation states had already been formed during the 19th century, e.g. the War of Independence of Greece in 1821-1829 against the domination of the Ottoman Empire, and some colonies had gained their independence from the colonial empires of the time, especially in America with the help and applause of the United States of America, this was the first time that self-determination was viewed as a necessity for peace. Despite the fact that the USA had cheered, if not supported, for the decolonization of the countries in the Americas, the Bolsheviks of Russia did play an important role in such a profound and international commitment to self-determination on behalf of the US and therefore the Western Civilization. Radicals as they were, the Bolsheviks acknowledged the right of secession in the Constitution of the Soviet Unit in 1918 stressing Wilson to issue his famous Fourteen Points.

The respect of national aspirations was amongst those Fourteen Points that were more or less adopted during the Peace Conference in Paris 1919. Ever since, there is fierce debate about the status of self-determination. Is it a right or a political principle? If it is a right, how do we determine the beneficiaries? If it is a principle, what are the mechanisms, if any, for implementing it? Despite the debate though, the importance of self-determination is apparent in agreements of international law. Not only can it be found in several documents of international law and agreements, e.g. in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter and in Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, but self-determination has been established as a *jus cogens* principle of international law and has been used as justification for several independence movements.

Whether a right or a principle, the literature on self-determination has not yet clarified the important elements of the term. As stated above, self-determination is a people's entitlement to self-governance in a given territory without external interference. The first problematic of the definition is the group of people it refers to. Although there is a largely accepted opinion that such group should share a common language and/or religion and/or sentiment of community via a common

history and/or moral ideas in order to possess the potential of constituting a “political” community, factors, like economy, should not be left out of the equation. It is easily understood that such a definition of the “group of people” is vague, if not controversial. Even if the group in question appears to fulfil the criteria above, the next problematic is the territory.

There is no agreement on the way the territory can be defined. Let it be historical, economical, geographical considerations or even emotional attachments of the group in question with a given territory, the issue of the minorities in an otherwise solid nation state is still to be addressed. The established inhabitants of a region could be linked to it. Nevertheless though, their establishment does not necessarily guarantee an entitlement to self-determination.

Last but not least, is the problematic of the external interference. Nowadays in a globalized world, external interference seems unavoidable. That was also the case back in the 20th century. The colonial countries of the time proved to be unwilling to let self-determination unfold at its own pace and to truly accept its outcomes. This is apparent throughout the period of decolonization leaving severe issues that trouble areas of the world even today. External interference though can be seen in a different way as well. Given that the group in question fulfils the criteria of entitlement to self-determination, how do the rest of the inhabitants of the region or territory or country that form different groups interfere with the group in question? Is that a positive or a negative interference? To put it differently, does secession fall under the principle of self-determination? In Catalonia, Spain, there is a large population that identifies as Catalans and distinguish themselves from the rest of the Spanish population. The group appears to fulfil the criteria: a)language, b)religion, c)common moral ideas and history, d)self-sufficient economy and e)link to the territory. Does the Spanish government violate the principle of self-determination? Of course, that question can not be answered with a simple yes or no; it is used only to highlight the complexity of self-determination.

Having said that, the importance of self-determination should not be undermined. Being amongst the basic principles of international law and relations, further discussions on its elements and implementation methods, techniques and mechanisms have to be held in order to fully understand such a concept.

The Palestinian Case

The most illuminating example on why self-determination is of such importance to international relations and to the maintenance of peace is that of Palestine. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire for over 400 years. During World War I, combined British and Arab forces ended the Ottoman administration. Despite that according to Wilson's Fourteen Points there “*should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development*” in the liberated regions of the former Ottoman Empire, such a thing did not take place immediately.

Mandatory rule was placed upon many places of the region, splitting it between the British and the French; Palestine going under British administration. There was little knowledge at the time about the exact borders of the historic Palestine. Its importance though to three religious traditions, Christians, Jews and Muslims, was very well known, as was its strategic location linking the Asian and African portions of the Arab and Islamic world. Despite the uncertainty of the precise borders of Palestine, the territory from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan River in the east and from the southern Golan Heights in the north-east to the Negev and Sinai deserts in the south was classified by the newly-formed League of Nations as 'Palestine'.

The inhabitants of the area mentioned above were 800,000 on 1918, Arabs outnumbering Jews ten to one. Had the principle of self-determination been implemented, Palestine would have become an Arab state or part of an Arab state. Expectations though fell short.

The first external interference related to self-determination in the region was that of the Balfour Declaration of 1917. According to the Declaration, the British government under David Lloyd George pledged the creation of a 'national home' for Jews in Palestine. That was the first

significant victory for the Zionist movement. Although the Declaration was talking about "*the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine*", it advocated for a 'national home' for all Jews *per se* and not simply for the Jewish population of Palestine. The inhabitants of the region, both Arabs and Jews, were not even consulted with.

Although the Arab population of Palestine opposed to the Declaration as early as 1919, and the King-Crane Commission had informed of the problems that could occur, Zionism proved stronger. Self-determination would not be the case for Palestine, as according to Lord Balfour there was no need in "*consulting with the present inhabitants of the country."* The suspension of the principle can be also be found in an official memorandum of the British Foreign Office Department to the British Cabinet stating that "*The problem of Palestine cannot be exclusively solved on the principle of self-determination, because there is one element in the population- the Jews- which, for historical and religious reasons, is entitled to a greater influence than would be given to it if the number were the sole test.".*

As soon as the 1919, Palestine started welcoming great numbers of Jewish immigrants. By 1947, the demographic map of the region is illuminating. From 1/10, the Jewish population was now 1/3, counting 1.9 million people. And although the British policy had indeed changed after the uprising of the Arabs in 1936-1938, the end of World War II led to an even more favourable view towards Zionism. After the persecution and genocide of the European Jews, the Western opinion, embodied in the policies of the President of the United States, President Truman, endorsed Zionism.

The partition of Palestine into two different states was proposed and voted upon in September 1947 by the UN General Assembly. Although the Zionist movement approved of the plan, the Arabs rejected it. During the violence that followed in 1948-1949, the Palestinian forces and their Arab allies were outnumbered and outgunned. Hundreds of Palestinian Arabs fled their houses due to the massacres of the Jewish military forces. The state of Israel was declared on 14th May 1948 and was recognised on 1st May 1949.

After the conflict, the newly-formed state of Israel had extended the area that would have formed the Jewish state if the partition was implemented. While there were several conflicts between the Israeli Jews and the Arab Palestinians, the Six-Day-War in 1967 proved the military superiority of Israel. During that war, Israel defeated Jordan and captured the West Bank, defeated Egypt and captured the Gaza Strip and defeated Syria and captured the Golan Heights, pushing even further its borders. Hundreds of Palestinians fled their homes once again, and hundreds of Jews gathered in Israel.

Despite the UN Resolutions regarding the status of the Palestinians as refugees, their right to return to their homeland after fleeing, their civil rights inside the state of Israel, and most importantly, their right to self-determination, little has been done.

The Present Situation and the Settlements

Nowadays, Israel continues to violate the human rights of the Palestinians. All Palestinians who fled or were expelled or displaced from 1947 onwards have no right of returning to their homeland. Palestinian refugee camps, mainly in Jordan and Lebanon, number thousands of Palestinians who are trying for the more than 40 years to return home. The situation though might be worse for those in Palestine.

As the partition plan suggested, Palestinians would be granted a state. The problem is that after 1967, there is an Israeli occupation in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Israeli military forces control the areas.

If someone was naive enough to side-look the military occupation, the Israeli settlement policy can not be as easily disregarded. Over the past decades, Israel has building settlement meant for Jewish people in the occupied Palestinian lands. At the same time, Israel has consistently demolished the houses of the Palestinians, both Muslims and Christians. The legislation itself does not allow Palestinians to build their own houses in the occupied West Bank. And while the

infrastructure surrounding the settlements is of the highest quality, Palestinians are left in oblivion. The same happens when it comes to fertile land and resources, like water. To be precise, only 20% of the water resources of the West Bank is awarded to the Palestinian population, with the remaining 80% to be addressed for the settlers of the West Bank. To make matters worse, there is a 400 miles barrier being built in the borders of the West Bank.

The situation though in Gaza Strip is even worse. Despite the fact that in 2005 Israel retrieve its troops and settlers from the occupied land, the Gaza Strip is completely isolated due to the Israeli sea embargo and a barrier that divides it from Israel and Egypt. The Strip depends on international aid for necessities, like clean drinking water and is often bombed by Israel as retaliation for terrorist attacks on its territory.

Conclusion

It is easily understood that the Palestinians were constantly denied the right of self-determination. From the early 20th century till today, the Middle East is considered to be a troubled area. Maybe afterall, Woodrow Wilson was right about self-determination and maintaining peace.

While the past cannot be changed or undone, the future could be brighter. Allowing Palestinians to determine their fate is of apparel importance; let it be an independent state or a one-state-solution compromise.

For animated videos on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,
please visit: a) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0O2cgmozJA

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