

Solidarity Economy News

Building Human Solidarity to Sustain Life

Newsletter No. 9 2014

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Editorial

Assessing The Balance of Forces: Advancing The Solidarity Economy Alternative as Part of the Just Transition

Dr. Vishwas Satgar, Chairperson, COPAC Board

Introduction

The Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) has been in the making since 2006 through the work of the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC). COPAC's efforts at rethinking cooperative development, challenging the corrupt nature of BEE, and its own grassroots practice led it to evolve, in a bottom up manner and together with grassroots social forces, a solidarity economy approach in South Africa. Learning from international experience has also been crucial and with the call made to grassroots social forces to advance the SEM from below since 2010, a great deal of progress has been made. Achievements have included piloting solidarity economy practices like SE Education and Communication Cooperatives, worker cooperatives, mapping research, the development of communication platforms (like SE News), campaigns have been initiated and various movements, activists, community organisations and support organisations have been brought into SEM building.

At the same time, regular moments of collective reflection and pause have happened through various assemblies, like two conferences and 4 activist schools, all to clarify practical and strategic ways forward. This document seeks to contribute to a collective conversation to advance and deepen bottom up SEM building and theoretical perspectives. The SEM does not seek to be a hierarchical movement, but rather is about advancing an emancipatory imagination, localised practice and networks of solidaristic learning between spaces and movements. It is a different kind of movement, a transformative movement. That is a movement of movements constantly in a state of becoming to change society on scale and build alternative forms of transformative power.

As we build such a movement we have to ask ourselves if we are winning the struggle for transformation. Where does power lie? Are the dominant classes leading change? Or is their power weakening? What are the weaknesses, limits and contradictions of the power of capital today? What are the opportunities and spaces for us to build our power? How can we take the solidarity economy alternative forward from below?

The Balance of Forces and Crisis-Ridden Capitalism

To deepen our understanding of the way forward we have to understand the terrain on which we struggle and who is

against us. This means we have to understand the power of capital, transnational and monopoly, and the way the US-led bloc of forces is reproducing the power of capital. We have to understand its limits and contradictions in the context of a crisis ridden capitalism, in which inequality, unemployment, poverty and ecological destruction are rampant. There are five forms of capitalist power we have to be alive to and challenge. These forms of power are central to the reproduction of global capitalism and its logic of eco-cide:

Imperial Power: is expressed through the most powerful and dominant capitalist state on the planet, the US, through a bloc of social forces it leads (other capitalist countries, the World Bank etc.). US power today is fragile as it is based on financialised capital which is inherently prone to crisis. It is also the main state that diffuses neoliberal ideology as a way forward for the planet and thus affirms the interests of transnational capital. US imperial power is faced with systemic crisis tendencies such as resource peak and the climate crisis which it does not have solutions for nor can it solve by itself. In addition, there are powerful contender states rising that it is having difficulties containing such as Russia, China and Iran. Moreover, there is a new global left amongst transnational social movements and leading left projects like in Latin America which it cannot crush.

Mediatized Power: is expressed through the global and domestic media which seeks to advance the ideas, interests and perspectives of capital in the public sphere. Capital's solutions are presented as common sense and the only way forward for society. However, the internet, movement information sources and alternative media challenge the monopoly of this form of media and its corporate bias.

Consumerist Power: this is a powerful ideology constantly reproduced by capital through spending on advertising, credit and debt-based purchasing. Today it is not just about presenting consumer choice but about determining how human beings survive, dream, desire and co-exist with others. The market and corporate forces driving this wield a power that undermines our power to make autonomous choices. To shop, to buy, to consume is now a powerful propaganda machine. However, challenges through consumer rights, bringing in state provisioning and bottom up alternatives are crucial to counter this.

Capital's structural power: globally mobile capital uses its control of markets, industry segments, technology and intellectual property to influence states and economies. This is the heart of corporate-led globalisation and the structural power of capital. Through capital's structural power it harnesses the imperial, mediatised and consumerist power to undermine democratic economic policy making. This is being challenged by left movements and governments in different parts of the world. Moreover, there is a growing awareness amongst citizens in the world that corporate power has to be reigned in as it is hollowing out democracy.

Capital's direct power: is about influencing ruling classes and elites directly through finance and hidden deals. Capitalism is inherently corrupt and always seeks to win advantage through extending its influence and reach amongst ruling classes. Again, citizens' actions from Wikileaks, to whistle blowing to movement power like Occupy have exposed the dangerous and corrupt relationship between capital, the US-led bloc and ruling classes.

The Necessity of the Just Transition in South Africa and Beyond

The planetary and domestic crises we face necessitate the need for a transition from the unviable and self destructive path we are on. Capitalism is no longer viable and US imperialism is at its limits. However, the challenge of a

transition beyond capitalism prompts us to ask the following questions: Whose transition? To what? What is the content of the transition? How do we get there?

The debate about the just transition, to a world and society beyond capitalism, attempts to answer these questions. The emergent Solidarity Economy Movement in South Africa has to join this debate but also develop its own perspective on this challenge. Thus far trade unions have started talking about this transition but narrowly in relation to the climate crisis. Moreover, in South Africa the 'just transition' idea is being contested by those who want a shallow transition that will merely save capitalism or make it a little more green; green capitalism!

Whose transition: the notion of a just transition speaks to the needs and interests of those that have been losing out in the current society. Put differently, the just transition is about ensuring the needs and interests of the workers, the poor, the precariat, the landless, the homeless and the progressive middle class come first. It is about ensuring the needs of humanity and nature prevail over that of capital. It is not a transition to produce the class interests of capital. In such a transition capital and elites have to sacrifice.

Transition to what: the just transition is about a post-capitalist society or solidarity society. A solidarity society is driven by the power of the exploited and oppressed to restructure production, consumption and social reproduction to meet the needs of society and nature. Sometimes in our debates we have referred to this as a democratic eco-socialist society that brings to the fore the values and principles of the solidarity economy alternative.

Content of a just transition: a just transition puts into place the elements, building blocs and logics for a solidarity society. This includes deglobalisation, a solidarity economy, deepening participatory democracy, food sovereignty, public transport, socially owned renewables, climate jobs and various other transformative alternatives, that marry state and popular power.

To advance a just transition we have to build forms of transformative power and advance alternatives from below. This brings us to the solidarity economy alternative and our struggle to build it.

Challenges Facing the Solidarity Economy Alternative

For 8 out of the 15 years of its life, COPAC has worked on and advanced the solidarity economy alternative from below with grassroots forces. The time has come for the piloting and experiments to end and for us to move to a new phase of strengthening and consolidating the Solidarity Economy Movement. It also means COPAC has to be less of an organiser and more of a support organisation, within the SEM. It also means those who are committed to advancing the solidarity economy alternative have to confront the following challenges for self-organising from below:

Building transformative power from below: as movements, communities or grassroots social forces champion the building of the SEM, we are trying to build practices, processes and institutions (such as worker cooperatives) to advance structural (controlling markets), movement, direct (influencing society through protest actions and campaigns) and symbolic power (the power of example). It is challenging capitalism and bringing to the fore another way of organising society now. This has to be deepened as we build local food economies, control local finance, advance housing needs, strengthen participatory democratic processes and so on.

Linking as a movement of movements: the SEM is an idea that belongs to all who want to champion its values, principles and transformative practices. Over the past few years we have worked with the Unemployed Peoples Movements, unions, small scale farmers, faith based organisations, the children's movement, youth organisations, community organisations and various grassroots NGOs. These forces all make up the SEM, as a movement of movements, from below. These forces have to deepen links to share experiences, practices, innovation and advance transformative power from below.

Deepening networks of localised SE initiatives: while working directly in 13 township communities and linked indirectly to various others, it is necessary to build tighter localised links inside communities and beyond with other community sites of SEM building. These links have to be between SE enterprises to ensure solidaristic economic activity takes root. Produce, services, knowledge and skills need to be shared as part of building the solidarity economy.

Advancing SEM Campaigns: there are two national campaigns we are championing as part of SEM building: End Hunger Through Food Sovereignty and Create Work Through Worker Cooperatives. These campaigns have

been grounded in activist training, resource development and campaign planning. For the next three years these campaigns have to be the levers that build the SEM, in communities and amongst various movements. The COPAC webpage will be a crucial resource in this regard.

Vishwas Satgar is the chairperson of the board of COPAC and an academic at Wits University.

How You Can Get Involved

There are various ways in which you can get involved as a Food Sovereignty Activist:

1. volunteer with COPAC and the Solidarity Economy Movement to support the building of the campaign;
2. Run community workshops using the food sovereignty activist guide (available on COPAC webpage) and set up local community food sovereignty and solidarity economy forums after doing the necessary education work;
3. Train activists to run such community workshops;
4. Support campaign actions through social media mobilisation, face to face mobilisation and through involvement in the actual actions.

We look forward to hearing from you and advancing this necessary transformative alternative for South Africa.

Feed South Africa Through Food Sovereignty!

End Hunger! Build a People led Food System to realise the Right to Food!

Advance the Just Transition From Below, Now!



National News

Twanano Worker Cooperative: Women Working to End Poverty

Constance Ngoben



Twanano Worker Cooperative began in October 2000. It started with 26 members: 22 women and 4 men. Twanano went through a crisis in 2003, but it was revived by a number of women and it now employs 7 women to this day.

Twanano is located in the heart of Ivory Park, an informal settlement near Midrand, approximately 40 minutes from Johannesburg. It is a community-based initiative that conducts a number of activities: our very popular handmade recycled paper products like animals for display, organic vegetable production and sewing of dresses, curtains, and bed spreads.

The vision of Twanano Worker Cooperative is to alleviate poverty among the disadvantaged community of Ivory park by empowering our members with life skills and creative income-generating activities by building Twanano as a sustainable cooperative. We create democratic work for our members and are contributing to building the solidarity economy.

The initiative of Twanano Worker Cooperative is a direct response to the deplorable unemployment rate which is part of the township life of Ivory Park, with an unenviable rate of over 50%. Such unemployment affects women particularly hard, especially those who are the sole providers of their families. As such our cooperative aims to build the power of women in our community.

The objectives of our cooperative are to continue to provide access to a sustainable future through developing a market for the products that we create at Twanano and thereby



providing secure employment to our members; and to continue team building and training so that all our members attain a high level of competency and training, and develop a life-long learning ethos.

The animal moulds that we make from recycled paper include rhino, hippo, elephant and dog, and they have proven to be extremely popular with customers for decoration at home. We would love you to consider our products as gifts for this Christmas season, thus supporting the building of worker democracy and the solidarity economy in Ivory Park!

Constance Ngoben is a member and the secretary of Twanano Worker Cooperative.

For more information on their products (as well a price list) and to place orders, you can contact Twanano at:

twananocoop@gmail.com

011 261 3803 / 078 610 1384

www.facebook.com/twananomanufacturing



Rural Social Movement Mobilises People, Local Knowledge and Ecological Principles to Build Community Office

Vukile Macingwana



Ntinga Ntaba ka Ndoda is a rural social movement based in the Keiskammahoek South area in the Eastern Cape. Our work focuses on mobilising the rural villages in our area around local development priorities. We are working to build the capacities of our people to be active in the transformation and development of their communities. Our programmes include, education, solidarity economy, agriculture and food sovereignty, heritage and culture, and tourism development. Two years ago Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda got a grant of 5 hectares of land from the community of Lower Rabula. Since then we have had the idea of using the land to build our office on and to create a multipurpose centre that could serve the needs of our communities.

To make this happen we had to appeal to donors by creating a Ntinga 'buy a brick' campaign to raise funds. A friend of Ntinga in Boston, United States donated 5,000 US dollars which allowed us to start the building process. As a community-owned organisation we also promote the use of natural asserts sustainably, preserving our heritage and culture. The way we planned our site design is influenced by eco-village design as we are also encouraging working with the enviroment.

Instead of hiring private builders we decided to work together with the people of our villages so they can feel the ownership of Ntinga and also learn to use the assets we already have. Volunteers from universities and other institutions were invited to play a part in the building process. So far we've had volunteers from Rhodes University and locals working together with the Ntinga fieldworkers.

We started by cutting grass for the roofing, then an Earth Architect workshop prepared us to make proper mud bricks. We also learned natural ways of building using local assets and indigenous skills.

As the organisation we are also working with ECD (Early Childhood Development) centres, some of whom don't have proper building structures. So far we have raised some funds to help one of the oldest ECD practitioners to build her school in Burnshill village. Some of the locals we are building our office with are from Burnshill. The idea is for them to learn the building process so that they can be the ones who will be leading the building of the ECD structure at Burnshill.



The transition from hiring private builders and buying every building material to working with local people and using the local assets has been an eye opener to us as Ntinga and our community. It has not been easy, but it has shown to be very possible.

Vukile Macingwana is a fieldworker with Ntinga Ntaba Ka Ndoda who is working to mobilise and capacitate his community around local development and transformation.

He can be contacted at vkvisual@nokiamail.com

Transformative Adult Education Through the Community Education Programme

Thalia Eccles and Inna Senekal

Much of the work in the post-school sector focuses on higher education, further education and training, and industry-based learning. Research on adult basic education, like its practice, remains on the margins of the post-school policy debate. The Community Education Programme (CEP) of the Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET) at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth started in 2012 with the intention to understand how non-formal community-based approaches to adult education could inform and transform the pedagogy of public adult learning centres. This CEP explores with learners, educators and community activists, how a non-formal popular education programme could be constructed with a community through using the experiences and ideas of community members in creating learning and action that address social inequality.

The programme uses a Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) approach. In theory this means that the curriculum emerges from investigations, and reflections on the lived experiences of community members. As part of this approach, twenty-four Community Investigators (CIs) were recruited from Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) and community organisations in communities adjacent to the Missionvale Campus of the NMMU in Port Elizabeth. In practice, the CPAR started with transect walks through Zwide, Missionvale and Soweto-on-Sea. The community investigators (CIs) planned the walking routes, took photographs of situation and objects and conducted ad-hoc interviews on people's perceptions of and hopes for their communities. Many community members were interested in these activities which generated a vast amount of information about their communities.

Following the transect walk, various public spaces were chosen for a community listening survey designed to understand, in rich detail, the key issues which community members confront in their daily lives. In addition to these, story-telling was used as a tool to document and develop thematic codes. The CIs grouped photos using themes they developed from their observation and generated photo-stories to connect images and comments gathered from interviews. The documentation from the listening survey was also used to expand and deepen understandings of issues in the different communities. We worked with the CIs, each writing and producing a digital story from their own life.

Interactive exhibitions consisting of transect walk photo-stories, digital stories and popular theatre form part of our work. We will continue developing the Community Education Programme with a focus on the mobilisation of

adult learners, educators and community activists as agents transforming Public Adult Learning Centres into Community Learning Centres.

The CEP of the Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET) at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) through the Education Policy Consortium. Material from the Community Education Programme can be obtained from: <http://cipset.nmmu.ac.za/>

This article was written by Thalia Eccles and Inna Senekal. The CIPSET Community Education Team comprises: Anele Dlotto, Inna Senekal, Justicia Jaftha, Rodney Boezacht, Thalia Eccles, and 24 Community Investigators.



Workshop on the Solidarity Economy Held at University of Cape Town (UCT)

Jan Theron

Why, given South Africa's history, and its inability to create sufficient jobs, does it have such a weakly developed solidarity economy? This was the question posed at a workshop attended by representatives from a wide range of civil society organisations, as well as government and academics, held in the Law Faculty of the University of Cape Town (UCT).

The organisers of the workshop, the Labour and Enterprise Policy (LEP) research group, argued that this question had to be addressed at both a practical and theoretical level. At a practical level, it was important to nurture initiatives to build a solidarity economy, especially where they could provide models that could be replicated elsewhere.

There was a presentation by NGO Groundwork on its initiatives to organise workers engaged in activities related to waste management and recycling (sometimes referred to as 'waste-pickers') into associations or co-operatives. There was another presentation by COPAC on its initiative to promote food sovereignty through the solidarity economy.

There was consensus as to the potential of cooperatives to create jobs in such activities, but concerns were expressed about the number of 'cooperatives' being established for the wrong reasons, and how this was undermining the credibility of this form of enterprise. Examples mentioned were of cooperatives being established to access DTI grants, or to enable government functionaries to meet a target. Bogus cooperatives were sometimes established to secure tenders.

There was a need to engage with government in this regard. There was also a need to develop sectoral strategies for cooperative development, that took into account specific problems in specific sectors. For example, in the waste sector, the waste management policies of both national and local government have a direct bearing on the viability of cooperatives engaged in waste-related activities.

At a national level, there are plans to make the separation of waste at source compulsory. This could be a significant opportunity for would-be cooperatives. However at a local government level the policies on waste and toward cooperatives are often not clear. Municipal by-laws are often an impediment.

There were also potential synergies between co-operatives engaged in waste-related activities and food sovereignty initiatives. For example, organic waste could be converted into compost, to support community gardens. In Brazil, members of recycling cooperatives switch to agricultural

activity during seasonal down-turns in recycling.

The intention is that the organisations represented at this workshop remain in contact with one another regarding these and various other issues discussed, and that there will be follow-up events organised.

Jan Theron is the coordinator of LEP. He was once the General Secretary of the Food and Canning Workers Union and Food and Allied Workers Union, and still practices as an attorney. He can be contacted at jan.theron@uct.ac.za.



International News

Ethiopian Coffee Cooperative Benefits Small Scale Farmers



Oromia in Ethiopia is the region where coffee first originated and it is by the Oromo people that the usage of coffee for human consumption started in the beginning of the 5th century. The region is known for its unique native vegetation as well as for being the centre of diversity for many different species of plants. The region is the birth place of coffee. The Oromos historically used coffee as food, drink, for trade, spiritual nourishment and as a tool for peace-keeping.

Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (OCFCU) is a small farmer-owned cooperative union which has members from all the coffee growing regions in Oromia regional state. OCFCU was established in 1999 to facilitate the direct export of coffee produced by small farmers organised in cooperatives. OCFCU works exclusively in Oromia Regional State, which accounts for more than 65 % of the Ethiopia's total coffee growing land.

OCFCU exports traceable fair trade and organic certified coffees. The fair trade premium and support from roasters are invested in social projects like schools, health posts, clean water, bridge etc.

By the fair trade premiums and support from different roasters about 224 different projects have been completed and provided to the farmers. OCFCU pays 70% of its net profit back to the farmers. OCFCU pays 70% of its net profit back to the cooperatives and the cooperatives also pay 70% of their profit to the member farmers. This means that farmers benefit by being paid three times in one coffee season. This has enabled OCFCU to grow from 34 primary cooperatives representing 22,691 household farmers to 274 primary cooperatives representing 254,052 household farmers. The life of farmers has improved and social services in their villages have improved.

OCFCU now has a cupping lab for quality control located at its office and has a massive central facility for technical, financial, administrative as well as a high-tech processing facility with the capacity to process 5–7 tonnes of coffee beans per hour. The processing facility has created jobs for more than 1,200 employees.



OCFCU has recently created its own members' bank which is one of the greatest benefits to its own members for the much needed pre-harvest financing. They also provide their farmers with insurance options to cover coffee against loss.

Article source: <http://www.oromiacoffeeunion.org/>

The First International 'Workers' Economy' Meeting Held in France



Fralib is a herb processing and packaging factory located 20-odd kilometres away from the southern French port city of Marseille. The previous owner of the factory, chemical and agri-food giant Unilever, decided 3 years ago to move production of Lipton tea abroad to save on labour costs. The 80 workers, through protest and boycott campaigns, have demanded that the factory stays open and, after this proved impossible, they decided to take production into their own hands. They have recently restarted the machines of the big factory to produce a test batch of linden tea based on local produce, and they are currently looking for ways to restart production in full capacity. It is one of a handful of European factories that, with or without a radical or transformational discourse, have moved towards workers' self-management of production.

Can this model constitute a viable solution in Europe, not only to growing unemployment and poverty, but also to the very exploitation and alienation that lie at the core of capitalist production? This was the main question that the first European "Workers' Economy" international meeting, held on January 31 and February 1 2014 at the occupied factory of Fralib, tried to address. The idea behind these independent and self-funded events was born 7 years ago in Argentina, with its 2-decade long tradition of factory occupations.

This first European edition of the gathering brought together not only workers of the self-managed occupied factories from around Europe, but also academics, activists, trade unions, and organizations that promote and study self-management. About 200 people coming from a dozen countries attended a complex event held among the blinking lights of the tea packing machinery of the company.

Although the will to democratize production and redistribute wealth "is in the DNA of workers", as Andrés Ruggeri, militant Argentinian researcher and one of the main promoters of the event, pointed out, experiences of factory occupation and self-management are as diverse as the political, economic and historical contexts they take place in. Often the workers have to deal with a production unit that is obsolete or produces products that do not have demand. The inventiveness and creativity of the workers in these cases, and most importantly their close cooperation with the wider community, can help reconvert production towards more useful and environmentally sound products.

Common challenges faced by occupied factories include state repression, huge bureaucratic hurdles, lack of institutional framework, and the hostility of the ex-owners, political parties and bureaucratic trade unions. They often operate within economies that are already in great recession (such is the case of VioMe and most Argentinian factories in the early 21st century) and thus re-entering the market and ensuring an income are tough feats to accomplish.

Dangers also lie ahead in the case of economic success. How can the workers safeguard the radical character of the experiment and avoid becoming an "alternative" multi-shareholder capitalist enterprise guided by the profit principle or using wage labour? In answer to that, many participants pointed towards the close relationship with the wider community. It is not sufficient for production to be worker-controlled, although it is a necessary first step to break the vicious circle of capitalist exploitation. Production should also be socially controlled, it should be environmentally and politically sound and grounded on the values of respect and solidarity.

The workers of VioMe echoed these concerns when they announced that, in the statute of the upcoming cooperative that is aimed at legalising their activity after their first anniversary of workers' self-management, they recognise the figure of the "solidarity supporter". This is any member of the wider community that commits themselves to consuming a certain amount of products of the factory, and in exchange has the right to have first hand information about the struggle, participate in workers' assemblies, and help in decision making through an advisory vote. A bridge is thus built between workers' and social control of production.

Apart from an exchange of ideas and experiences, many concrete projects were set in motion in this first European meeting as well. Workers, activists, academics and supporters initiated campaigns of promotion of the products

of self-managed factories, agreed on direct exchange of goods between factories, put in place instruments of networking and collective decision making, and elaborated projects that advance theoretical understanding of self-management and promote popular understanding of the issues surrounding it, such as the web page workerscontrol.net, a multilingual resource dedicated to the study and promotion of self-managed workplaces. There was even mention of a solidarity fund created out of any surpluses that the occupied factories might have, which will provide funding for new endeavours and will thus help cut the ties with the capitalist financial system.

When it comes to creating a humane economic activity based on equality and solidarity, there are no predefined rules. The workers' imagination and their will to struggle for a better world are the only limits. The "Workers' economy" event at Fralib was inspiring and empowering for everyone involved, and it might well have sparked the creation of a Europe-wide movement of occupation of the means of production and of workers' self-management.

Article Source: <http://www.workerscontrol.net/authors/report-%E2%80%9Cworkers-economy%E2%80%9D-international-meeting-january-31-and-february-1>

Turkish Workers Take Over Garment Factory: 'We Want to Build a Workshop With Our Communion and Solidarity'

DirenKazova – DİH Kazak ve Kültür

On the 31 January 2013 our boss, the Somuncu family, put us on the doorstep. We felt helpless. We were 94 labourers, our 4 months' salaries were confiscated through fraud by the Somuncu family. Some of us just went home, some found new jobs. Our boss had fled with the machines, yarns and the sweaters we had made. They left us with nothing except scrap. We were without a trade-union. Earlier attempts to be union members were suppressed by the pressure of the boss.

But our hands are producing, labourer hands. And we are not hopeless. We started to resist. We started protecting our rights, our labour and honour we'd been working to gain for many years. We did our first march, shouting our first slogans. We gained experience. We came out of our small worlds. Our world grew. We learnt solidarity.

Once we realized the Somuncu family was smuggling goods from the factory, we opened a tent in front of the closed factory to keep watch. Then we occupied the factory. The factory was only producing due to our labour, and we were dispossessed from this. We are 12 workers left resisting after we occupied our factory.

Once we occupied the factory we realised that our boss had left us only with the scrap machines. And the main machines that were not possible to move were ripped apart and the motors taken so we could not use them.

But we didn't give up. We repaired the machines. Then we started to produce in the factory we had occupied. Our resistance carried on with many demonstrations until December 2013 when we finalised it. We had won. We managed to gain the scrap machines that we had fixed in the factory through the courts..

When we started our resistance we said we were not hopeless. And we're still not hopeless.

Our resistance has not stopped, it is still continuing. Only the format, location and conditions have changed. As Kazova labourers we are ready to start producing. We only need machines. We need weaving machines.

The store we opened is called Direnkazova-DİH Kazak Ve Kültür (Resistkazova-DİH Sweater and Culture) in January 2014 proved that with solidarity and resistance we can provide the machines. We Kazova workers, we came all this way with the people through solidarity and hope. We met our production needs for free whilst monopolies and big companies give tens of thousands of pounds to get the job done. But through solidarity our artists paved the floorboards, our labourers drew the pictures. That's the ethic of our store. Our store is in the streets, the street is in our store.

Our resistance became international as well. We manufactured the football shirts that were worn on 15 February 2014 by the Cuban Youth National football team playing against the Basque national youth team.

How we came here with solidarity, we are now saying; we can obtain the machines we need with solidarity. With the machines we obtain we will make good quality but cheap sweaters. Also the workshop we are going to create will symbolise our resistance and solidarity. We want to be an example, to show that we can work as labourers with our honour and dignity and produce. We are aiming to provide collective work from the hours we work, our safety at work, our social rights, our learning of cultural activities. This is why we are making an appeal here.

To find out how to support, go to <http://www.workerscontrol.net/geographical/we-want-build-workshop-our-communion-and-solidarity>.

The Food Sovereignty Campaign

The Unemployed People's Movement and Rethinking Politics

Ayanda Kota



The Unemployed People's Movement is struggling with the question of rethinking politics. When this movement was formed in 2009, it emerged as a fighting and resisting movement, taking up issues of housing, unemployment, electricity, corruption and service delivery.

We have had demonstrations and government conceded to some of our demands. To us this was normal politics – to demonstrate, conduct some political education, discussing topics and texts such as Fanon, Biko and the Communist Manifesto, and learning about our rights.

Through these struggles we have learned a lot. But in this process we have to unlearn some of the things we have usually understood, which is not easy. We have learned that it is the struggles and theory, not theory and struggles. We have learnt that we should be a community organisation rather than a social movement. We are a community organisation because these movements emerge from the community struggles and they should not lose touch with the community.

Our communities are so broken. When these movements emerge, this infuses humanity and social consciousness in our people; it provides a terrain of urgency as opposed to politics of the Messiah. It provides a space for democratisation of our struggle where people are part of decision making. The sites of struggles become pregnant with possibilities. 14 million of South Africans go to bed hungry every day. There is so much brokenness and despair. We live in a sea of inequalities, poverty, hunger and unemployment.

We are experimenting with the solidarity economy; we are encouraging households to have gardening and other initiatives such as people's kitchens. But shouldn't we be fighting for the re-conquest of our land as opposed to gardens and other reformist initiatives? Our struggles have taught us that our people are hungry and live below the poverty line. Can we feed ourselves, rebuild our communities primarily, whilst secondary, we are infusing political and social consciousness?

Can we rethink politics of power, instead of rhetoric's and empty slogans? Can we as these communities identify land, as a community, occupy the land, resist and produce? Can building food sovereignty in a community rebuild some of what we have lost as communities, and give us strength and energy to fight our struggles even harder? I think the gardens and other community initiatives serve as a platform for such occupations and other struggles in the future.

These are experiments from below which I think are worth engaging in. The reality of the matter is, it is time to re-engage in politics, to rethink the politics of emancipation. What does this mean for grassroots movements like UPM?



As part of taking the politics of food seriously, we have started supporting members of our community in food production, like chickens and fresh vegetables. As such, the UPM decided to establish a food garden as a first step towards building the capacity of our community to start feeding itself. This can have important political consequences. As such, members of the UPM spent a few days clearing an

area of land, constructing beds, and planting seedlings in September 2014. The garden has flourished since then, and we started reaping our first harvest in November. We also had a launch of the garden, where we invited members of the community and discussed the politics of food and why we were starting the garden.

It was agreed to have at least 20 community gardens before the end of 2014, and to work towards forming a community kitchen and cooperative, married with other economic activities. We are also working to access a larger piece of rural land outside of the township to establish a farm and agroecology village. We have also linked with organisations such as Umthathi that will provide agroecology training to our members.

The struggle for food sovereignty is an important struggle to unite, politicise and affirm the humanity of our communities in the broader struggle for emancipation.

Ayanda Kota is a founding and current member and activist in the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM) which started in Grahamstown but has spread nationally.

Report on Food Sovereignty Workshop with Small Farmers in Randfontein

Olive Strachan



It was with excitement and trepidation that we, small farmers, prepared for our workshop at Plot 44, Ten Acres in Randfontein – Sophie Nkuna's residence. The group was a diverse one in terms of age and what people are farming, including piggery, crops and poultry (both indigenous and layers).

We all arrived early to prepare and set up. There was a lot of speculation, some were sceptical and others downright negative because they felt some workshops do not provide much information that is beneficial to the farmers.

Andrew Bennie (also known as Andile), the facilitator from COPAC, arrived early and we started on time. The day went well with discussion and interaction increasing as the day went on.

The workshop consisted of 5 different modules, which included understanding why we have hunger and our food system, the alternative to this hunger of food sovereignty and the solidarity economy, and the importance of agroecology in building food sovereignty.

After the lunch break on day one the participants were beginning to have a better understanding of why we have hunger and what food sovereignty is all about. The mood began to be even more eager and optimistic.

The following couple of days were also productive and interactive, as people asked informed questions and were open about their feelings and were free to forward suggestions.



On the last day of the workshop, we worked on planning actions and processes for the way forward. These included:

- **Small Farmer Day** – We want to hold an informative gathering of small farmers, in the area, where we will prepare our traditional meals and discuss our cultures. This will also afford us a networking time where we will share information about planting, seed conservation, soil preparation etc. This may happen on World Food Day next year.

- **Practical action points** – Mobilising the other small farmers in our area – encouraging those who have land to start using it, and linking with other nearby farmers.
- **Training** – We will conduct further training on food sovereignty with other small farmers who did not attend the workshop in our own indigenous languages.
- **Declaration** – once we have brought more small farmers together and done education work together, we will draft a declaration of how we plan to advance food sovereignty in our area.
- **Seeds** – We will work towards our own seed bank (encouraging each other to preserve non GMO seeds and sharing with each other).
- **Water** – Research on water framework in our area, as most small farmers have no water. Municipality supplied water is enough only for household consumption.
- **Water harvesting and conservation** – We intend to organise a workshop on water harvesting and conservation (grey water, black water etc.)

The workshop ended on the 20th on a high note, with the farmers eager to do their bit and to share knowledge and resources with each other.

**VIVA FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, VIVA! VIVA
SMALL FARMERS, VIVA!
THERE IS STRENGTH IN UNITY –
PHAMBILI!!!!!!!**

Olive Strachan is a small farmer in Randfontein. She can be contacted at mydestiny@vodamail.co.za

Food Sovereignty Workshop Produces Action in Bethany, North-west *Kagiso Maokwe*

'Food sovereignty is when people and communities control their own food systems, rather than markets and corporations. Those who produce our food are placed at the centre of food sovereignty and valued highly.'

Food sovereignty is a way to show people what is causing hunger and how it can be prevented. It shows that hunger is very high in the world. It shows people exactly how the markets for food operate.

In South Africa 12 million people go to bed hungry every day. Research shows that only 46% of South African



households are food secure. This means that less than half of South Africans have enough nutritious food to eat each day. In this case 1 out of 4 children will suffer from stunted growth and mental development due to malnutrition. It also means children struggle to concentrate at school. If this carries on our future is in serious danger.

We must learn how the food system of South Africa is working. If we can understand how the food system works, we will be able to come up with a solid plan to conquer the market. We learned that the market is people who are selling and buying. In this case there is not necessarily communication between producer and consumer.

In terms of production of food, we need land. Somebody can ask this question: who has the power over land in South Africa, and who has the power to produce food and benefit from it? If we can find positive answers for these questions we will find a solution to the problem of hunger. According to statistics, 67% of land in South Africa is owned by commercial farmers. 15% is owned by two million subsistence farmers. These subsistence farmers are mostly black farmers located in the old homelands.

In the workshop we learned how important it is to know about industrial farming and farming according to agroecology. Most of our food in South Africa is produced through large scale industrial farming. This type of farming aims at maximum profit from the land, and produces many negative environmental and health impacts. It is becoming more and more on the use of genetically modified seed, which is about corporate control over seeds and therefore food, rather than the wellbeing of farmers and people.

Our plan in Bethany is to teach people in our community to understand the food sovereignty alternative and get them to join us into the struggle. We will target schools, clinics, churches, football teams and mostly households, and bring them together into a Solidarity Economy and Food Sovereignty Forum. People must understand the possibility of reducing this high rate of hunger through our own action.

Kagiso Maokwe is a community activist in Bethany and a member of the Bethany Solidarity Economy Education and Communication Cooperative (SEEC).

Small Farmers and Rural Dwellers Gather for the Masifunde Farmers Education Week, Grahamstown

Nomonde Nolutho



Masifunde Education and Development Project Trust, based in Grahamstown, hosted Farmers Popular Education Week on 20-24 October 2014 as part of the October 16th World Day of Action for People's Food Sovereignty and Against Transnational Corporations. The theme of the week was around 'Food Security and Food Sovereignty to end Hunger, Poverty and Inequalities'. The event focused on topics such as the state of land and agrarian reform in South Africa, understanding why we have hunger and corporate power in the food system, threats to food sovereignty, agroecology, the solidarity economy alternative, and so on.

The farmers week was attended by farmers, women, youth and the leadership of the Rural People's Movement drawn from the areas where Masifunde operates in three municipalities in rural Eastern Cape.

About 45 participants attended the event including resource persons who came in to facilitate on specific sessions. The rural people present at the school therefore learned about a wide range of issues related to agrarian and food issues and were able to link their own experiences and struggles to these broader features.

We even had a guest from the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil and the international peasant organisation La Via Campesina, Augusto Juncal. The MST is the world's largest and most vibrant movement fighting for land and agrarian reform in Brazil. Augusto spoke about the threats to food sovereignty (which included the idea and practice of food security, the features of which he argued undermine food sovereignty). The MST therefore does not talk about food security, but food sovereignty.

There was also engagement and learning about the agroecology alternative and its importance to food sovereignty. Agroecology is part of the need for a local food system that will allow farmers to be food producers and have their own customers, community food system that encompasses production, processing, distribution and consumption, and are integrated to enhance the environmental economic, social and nutritional health of the area. Also important to agroecology is to reclaim our indigenous agricultural practices that capitalism has undermined. We also had important discussions on the solidarity economy and food sovereignty, a small scale farmer taught us about seed saving and sharing, and we focused on the importance of rural social movements in bringing about rural change. We learned that there are three important elements to build a rural social movement that can fight for food sovereignty and rural transformation: firstly, to create a position of ideological clarity by means of constructing a political programme. Secondly, to clarify a clear programme of action that reflects the needs and immediate demands of the rural poor. Thirdly, to undertake a process of cadre identification and training to build a capacitated movement.

All those present at the farmers week also undertook an exciting action of going to all 3 supermarkets in Grahamstown to picket outside them, hand out flyers explaining hunger, and talking to by-passers to raise awareness. The public engagement went very well and was an important practical learning process for the participants.

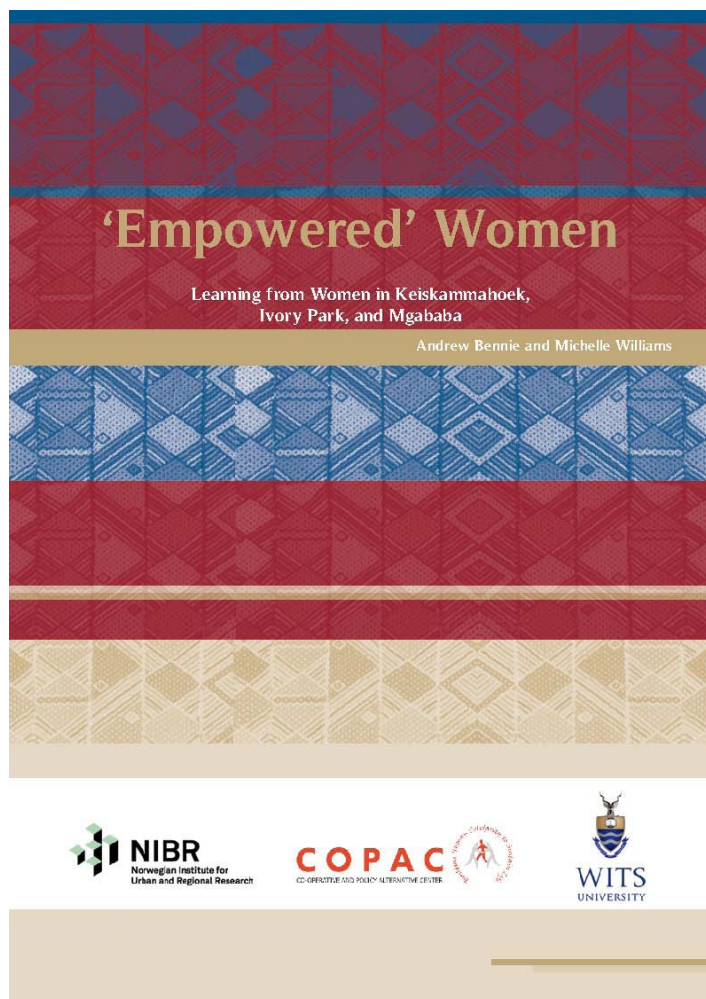
The week was not only about learning, but about taking action based on this learning. Therefore, the following emerged as the resolutions that need to be taken forward by the Rural Peoples Movement:

1. Organise and Mobilise communities and campaigns around water, agricultural support and land before the end of November 2014, targeting Makana Municipality and the Department of Agriculture
2. Continue awareness raising on socioeconomic and political issues
3. Mobilisation of communities towards the National Launch of the rural poor and small farmers
4. Active participation in the Food Sovereignty Campaign

Nomonde Nolutho is a development officer at Masifunde Education and Development Project Trust, based in Grahamstown. She can be contacted at n.waka@yahoo.com.

Activist Resources to Build the Solidarity Economy Movement from Below

New Activist Publication – ‘Empowered’ Women: Learning From Women in Keiskammahoek, Ivory Park and Mgababa.



In the context of the immense personal and social challenges faced by women from marginalised communities in South Africa, thousands of women continue to perform extraordinary acts in their everyday lives and in the process both access and create forms of individual and collective power. Women are not only victims, but many of them form the backbone of communities and are acting to change their communities in positive ways.

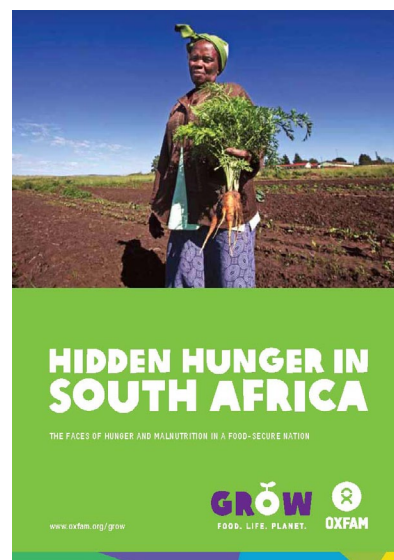
It is in these everyday acts of kindness, courage, and perseverance that we see the strength of women coming to the fore. In this booklet we showcase seventeen women from three different communities all of whom are actively trying to improve their lives and the lives of people in their communities in various ways. In the routines of daily life, these women are challenging the slow violence of poverty by working together with others.

The biographies profiled here show women in their struggles to become agentic actors in their local spaces. They show the different ways and degrees to which women are empowered and the deeply intertwined nature of individual empowerment and larger social goals. The profiles focus on individual histories, goals and aspirations as well as their commitments to social change.

Download the booklet, distribute it, use it!

The booklet can be freely downloaded at: <http://www.copac.org.za/publications/empowered-women-learning-women-keiskammahoek-ivory-park-and-mgababa> or limited hard copies can be obtained from COPAC.

Oxfam Report – Hidden Hunger in South Africa: The Faces of Hunger and Malnutrition in a Food Secure Nation



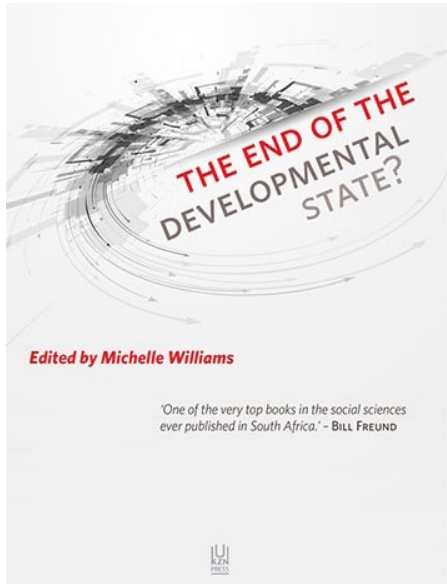
Oxfam South Africa recently released this research report, Hidden Hunger in South Africa: The Faces of Hunger and Malnutrition in a Food Secure Nation.

The report highlights key statistics such as the fact that every day 1 in 4 South Africans goes to bed hungry. However, it also goes beyond these numbers to tell stories of those who actually suffer such hunger, and the daily

struggles that people face in accessing enough nutritious food for themselves and their families. The report makes key recommendations as to what can be done to deal with this hunger crisis, but what it also highlights is the need for fundamental transformation of South African society, and a new, more just food system.

The report can be downloaded at: http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/hidden_hunger_in_south_africa_0.pdf.

Book Review: *The End of the Developmental State?*



The South African state has declared itself a developmental state. But what has traditionally been meant by this term, and is this idea still relevant today? This book, edited by Michelle Williams and bringing together a range of chapters by leading scholars of development, is the result of a workshop hosted by COPAC in 2008.

This workshop aimed to critically interrogate the concept of the developmental state, in the context of the South African state declaring itself as such.

A key argument running through the book is that the historical notion of the developmental state can no longer be the blueprint for states like South Africa that wish to emulate the developmental success of countries like Japan, South Korea and so on. The usual conception of the developmental state refers to a state that exhibits a number of characteristics and plays a number of roles, such as pursuit of development as economic growth, a highly capacitated elite within the state able to direct economic development through strategic and skilled state intervention, a political system where the executive is relatively insulated from democratic and other pressures and so is able to make the 'best' decisions in the interests of development, and the ability to discipline capital and direct it towards its developmental objectives.

However, in contrast to prevailing neoliberal orthodoxy which aims to limit the role of the state in the economy and society as much as possible in favour of the market, this book argues for a renewed and invigorated role for the state in social and economic transformation. The wide-ranging chapters show that for states to play developmental roles in the 21st century, there are a number of contemporary conditions that call for new understandings of the developmental state. Firstly, given the shift in the world economy away from traditional manufacturing and towards the knowledge and service sectors, developmental priorities should focus on developing the latter sectors, as well as the preconditions of building human capacity.

Secondly, states need to take democracy seriously and, in contrast to traditional notions of the developmental state in which some degree of authoritarianism is assumed, the

expansion of both participatory and electoral democracy should be seen as key ingredients of development.

Thirdly, the shifting ideas of development itself need to be recognised, specifically the shift away from development simply as economic growth and towards the expansion of human and social capacities.

Lastly, the global ecological crisis of climate change and environmental degradation mean that states can no longer pursue limitless industrialisation based on fossil fuels. To be a developmental state in the 21st century requires active steps by the state to shift economies away from dependence on fossil fuels and towards ecologically sustainable societies, through the development of renewable energy industries, expanded public transport, and so on.

Each chapter of the book presents lessons from particular countries' developmental state experiences, including China, Brazil, Taiwan, Ireland, India and South Africa. The complex and varied lessons illustrate that there is no fixed blue print for the developmental state, as well as that there are a range of factors and national and international conditions that states will have to confront and negotiate based on context if they are to reproduce a practice of the developmental state for the 21st century.

A key strength of the book is that in its arguments it opens up the space for transformative practice from below, and argues that a key precondition for the developmental state is to democratise and respond to the needs of society by integrating itself more strongly into civil society, rather than only developing linkages with capital as a route to development. That is, for real transformation, civil society, which includes transformative movements like the solidarity economy, need to come to the fore in the process of democratising the state and for the state to play an active and democratic role in social transformation. But we know that simply to democratise the state in this sense is a struggle in itself. We might argue therefore that struggle from below to 'reclaim the state' from capital and predatory elites is a key (but not necessarily sufficient) task in embedding a developmental state in 21st century South Africa. Activists will find much use in reading this book and considering the relationship between renewed notions of the developmental state and the struggles, like the solidarity economy and food sovereignty, to transform capitalism nationally and globally and move beyond its destructive logic.

The book is available at bookshops and online at www.ukznpress.co.za.

contact us

We invite organisations and activists to make contributions to the Newsletter through writing stories, contributing photographs or cultural contributions, such as poetry, art, songs etc.

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