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The Growing Discussion About Food Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 2

Is There A Food Crisis?

Greece's Road To The Future

by Carlos Huerta

Todern civilization is the result of years of conquests and expansion: an elite dominant group imposing their dominance by pillaging and displacing other groups in order to expand their territory, obtains resources and slaves to extract wealth and goods. In ancient times, the Persians, Romans and the Ottoman Empire, followed by European colonialism during the "Age of Exploration," Manifest Destiny through Western colonial expansion and the genocide of Native Americans, and currently the military imperial policies over the Middle East, are a few examples that outline the

"advance of civilization" through conquests. The subordinate group is either exterminated or submits. When it is not eliminated it leaves room for resistance and liberation struggles to take place.

Smaller conquests of this sort also take place in our own neighborhoods with the subordination of local economies to transnational policies; it has been institutionalized and normalized. Corporate colonialism is a reality. It's seen when corporations like Walmart and Monsanto use their influence on positions of power (i.e. the White House) to pass Free Trade Agreements, to take over Indigenous land and natural resources in Third World countries -- countries considered poor yet rich in resources. It's seen when they go to low-income neighborhoods displacing and eradicating local culture and economies and outsourcing jobs overseas to facilitate child labor practices and pay slave wages (i.e. Apple) while monopolizing the means of production. The problem of corpo-



s there a food crisis? Is there an economic crisis? Is there a climate change crisis? Or are we just Chicken Little afraid that the sky is falling? We will be focusing on this in upcoming issues. You decide.

Claiming Space: Involve the Alternative

Interview with Four of the Organizers of Sobreruedas en el Barrio: A Neighborhood Market

Avital Aboody, Genoveva Aguilar, Marilyn Armenta, and Sara Garcia are four of the organizers of the Sobreruedas en el Barrio: A Neighborhood Market. The interview was conducted (and later edited and translated) by Carlos Huerta and Nic Paget-Clarke on February 2, 2013 in Barrio Logan in San Diego, California. This is Part 1 of the interview. Part 2 will be in the next issue.

Part 1 - To Share Culture

GDAF: What is the Sobreruedas idea?

Genoveva Aguilar: The main idea is to have space for our community to share culture, to share ideas, to have business, to have the opportunity for them to create their own business. And, at the same time, claiming space where community runs. Because we don't have a lot of those spaces anymore in this community. It goes back to the history of this community which has been hit by gentrification for the past ten years. The first thing that we saw was a lot of displacement of the community. The rents went really up with redevelopment and the development of downtown. They took care of downtown but they didn't take care of the surrounding areas.

The market went down so that gentrification slowed down, in terms of housing, but now we are seeing it in terms of busi-

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rate colonialism, a natural growth of capitalism, is its need to profit from the exploitation of land and workers. Those that control the natural resources and means of production control the people.

But, recently, Greece has seen community efforts come together to set up alternative economies, including co-operatives, and reclaim land. Since the 2008 economic crisis, the Greek economy has been the epicenter of the Eurozone financial crisis. In its 6th year of recession, austerity measures have been imposed on the people, drastically cutting many social services, wages, and pensions. Unemployment and the prices of goods have increased, and many workers have gone unpaid. There has been a 90% reduction of pharmaceutical medicines because companies don't see a profit, and access to food has been on a decline. Athens aims to cut 25,000 jobs before the end of this year.

Naturals Resources: Land and Water to Greece Roots

"The land is my strength. I think that when you have the land you can feed yourself, you can produce anything, you can be happy," says Alexandra Tricha a former scientist in Greece in response to the increased number of people returning to the farms. In a time of economic turmoil, as tens of thousands are without jobs and thousands lose their jobs every day, an exodus of Greeks has taken the road back to their farming past. According to an article published by Al Jazeera, the farming sector added 32,000 jobs between 2008 and 2010. There has also been an increase in enrollment in agricultural school as applications for classes such as cheese-making have tripled. In turn, the university distributes food free or at low prices to the people. Access and distribution of food straight through networks of farmers has resulted in food cheaper than if it was bought from the stores.

This increase in mobilization to the land is more noticeable among the middle-aged. The younger generations are, however, going to sea to fish and work on ships. Having a college degree in Greece means that you are overqualified to get a job and many are looking to Greece's rich past in farming, wine-making, and the sea as a step to the future.

Co-ops: Taking Over the Means of Production

While some are going back to Greece's roots, many see workers-run-factories as the way to liberate themselves and provide jobs for the unemployed. On February 13, 2013 striking workers at the Vio.Me factory in Thessaloniki, Greece decided to restart production under workers' control. Due to unemployment being 30%, 57.8% among the youth, and hav-

ing gone unpaid since May 2011, the workers of Vio.Me -through a decision of the general assembly -- "declared their
determination to not fall prey to a condition of perpetual unemployment," and that they would take control of the means
of production, the factory, and operate it themselves. This proposal was brought to the general assembly with the goal of
reclaiming the empty factory as a cooperative being run by the
workers, demanding legal recognition as a co-op, and providing a roadmap for others factories to open up.

Vio.Me has called for factory workers worldwide to reopen bankrupted factories, to take control of them without any bosses, and manage them themselves. Vio.Me state on their official website that "the struggle should not be limited to Vio.Me. In order for it to be victorious, it should be generalized and spread to all the factories and businesses … because only through a network of self-managed factories will Vio.Me be able to thrive and light the way towards a different organization of production and the economy, with no exploitation, inequality or hierarchy."

The alternatives born out of the Greek struggle suggest the wave of a new future, showing that it is through the liberation and networking of the means of production and the reclaiming of natural resources as the universal hereditary gift for all. When this liberation, networking, and reclaiming is run democratically, bottom-up, and horizontally, through the willing cooperation of the people, social and economic justice can be achieved. •



The editors of *The Growing Discussion About Food* newsletter encourage submissions.

Please include your name and contact info so that we can inform you should we decide to publish your submission. Send submissions to: foodassemblySD@gmail.com

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Organizers of Casa de Vecinos Organizados (from left): José Sanchez, Avital Aboody, Sara Garcia, Genoveva Aguilar (with Philip Aguilar) and Marilyn Armenta.

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nesses. Corporations are coming into our community. The Sobreruedas is a space where we allow the community to meet to share culture, to have the opportunity of owning its own business and have that environment before more corporations start coming into our community, start invading. That's how I see the Sobreruedas.

Goods On Wheels

GDAF: What's the origin of the name Sobreruedas?

Genoveva Aguilar: I heard the word in Tijuana with my aunt. People put out their stuff and sell them, a lot. But somebody told me it goes all the way back to the (Mexican) revolution. That they used to bring their goods on wheels and that's why it got the name "Sobreruedas," — wheels are running. They brought their goods on wheels to sell them where the base of the people — who were, involved in the revolution — where the movement was going to be. They would go with their stuff, with the food, or whatever.

If you can describe it in modern words, it's like a swapmeet. It is not a farmers' market. A farmers' market in our community didn't play so really well because with farmers' markets we still need a lot of education on organics, stuff like that. The Sobreruedas is: whatever you need to sell, you can sell at Sobreruedas. It is mostly like a claiming of space.

We used to have a similar thing in the historic Farmers' Market building. The Farmers' Market was like a Sobreruedas but inside doors, where they are building the Walmart. (Editors: In 2012, with strong community opposition, Walmart took over and demolished much of the front of the building that once housed the Farmers Market.)

Improve the quality of life

GDAF: Who is organizing the Sobreruedas?

Avital Aboody: The Sobreruedas is a project that is coming out of a partnership of organizations called the Greater Logan Heights Community Partnership (GLHCP), of which Casa de Vecinos Organizados is a member. Casa de Vecinos Organizados is very connected to a group of resident leaders that they have worked with over the past year through a leadership institute, training residents to understand their rights and to get more involved in organizing the neighborhood around community projects that will improve the quality of life.

Through Casa de Vecinos Organizados, the partnership (the GLHCP) has taken on this project as a way to have residents decide for themselves what kind of project they want to conduct in the neighborhood. We had meetings earlier in the

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year where this project came out as the idea that will really address economic issues in the neighborhood and be a community gathering space, as Genoveva mentioned.

Also, it addresses issues of lack of access to quality foods and lots of different products at an affordable price for residents because, as Genoveva also mentioned, new companies are starting to come into the neighborhood and it's effecting the local businesses. This is a chance for residents to start their own business as a way to combat a lot of unemployment in the neighborhood.

So, it is a resident-led project that is organized by Casa de Vecinos Organizados with the resources and support of a wider coalition of organizations in the neighborhood which include BAME Community Development Corporation, where our offices are based -- that's the fiscal sponsor of Casa de Vecinos. The other partners in the group are MAAC Project Barrio Logan College Institute, King-Chavez Neighborhood of Schools, and we just added the Historic Barrio District CDC. It's very much a community effort.

A learning process

Genoveva Aguilar: It is very different, the Sobreruedas being built in the barrio, because we are in the United States and not in Mexico. In Mexico you just ask the permission from the neighbors. Here there is a lot of stuff that we need to do for us to be on the street and selling our stuff. It is way different. We actually feel responsible that we need to have education on that, and making sure we have all the permits, because we don't want to have a señora or señor to come with their goods and sell at the Sobreruedas and then the next day they can't sell because we didn't teach them about the permits. We want to make sure that we're doing everything the right way for the permits, the process, for them to not be worrying about that.

Marilyn Armenta: It has been a learning process for a lot of the residents. We have invested time in workshops and educating them on how to obtain a seller's permit, a food permit, where to go to class, getting a lot of their input in terms of where they want the Sobreruedas to take place. How often. What they want to sell. Who's allowed to sell.

It's obviously a space for the residents of the neighboring communities but they've opened it up to the surrounding neighborhoods as well. There's a good variety of people participating. So far it's been a great experience. It's been real easy. There haven't been any rocks in the way.

Whatever we do, we've got a good core of people who have a good head on their shoulders and know how to think positively and constructively and see what other options there

are. They are willing to invest their time, their effort, into it. Some of the people that are volunteering are also vendors in the Sobreruedas so they are taking dual roles, switching hats, participating in something that they want to call their own. Once the residents own something, that's when they invest more time

Sara Garcia: More than anything, the Sobreruedas was born out of the community's need to have something which reflects the Latino tradition. The Sobreruedas involves what border communities more commonly identify with, rather than a Farmers' Market, as the concept is very different. People feel that it covers more of the needs of the Latino families living in this area and that they have a greater opportunity to be able to have extra economic access by selling products, whether they be new or second-hand, food or other items. I believe that it provides an important opportunity for businesses which are being displaced by Walmart, and is an opportunity for families to generate some extra income for their homes.

Taking power into our own hands

GDAF: What has been the role of members of the community?

Sara Garcia: I believe that the role of the community is very important and that their involvement has been very good because, primarily, the workshops offered by Casa de Vecinos Organizados gave an opportunity to the community to learn a little more of the importance of taking power into our own hands. They have been participating very actively thinking that there is no other way to be able to make change. It must come from the community. The people are very enthusiastic about this idea, they are participating a lot, and I believe that is important not only for those who participated in the leadership institute, but people that have been informed about this project as stakeholders seeking to participate.

GDAF: How many people are involved?

Sara Garcia: More than 100 people have participated in the workshops. About 60 people continued on, and currently about 40 community members are participating in making decisions about the Sobreruedas, such as the location etc.

It is important to mention that some months ago we formed a board of directors and today they are playing a very important role as a committee to determine what people want to do with the Sobreruedas, because we don't want (Casa de

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Territory As Emancipatory Space

by Raúl Zibechi

Raúl Zibechi is the author of "Dispersing Power" and many other books. Raúl Zibechi is one of Latin America's leading political theorists, an international analyst for Brecha (Montevideo, Uruguay), and a professor at the Multiversidad Franciscana de América Latina. Originally published in Spanish, translation by Carlos Huerta and Nic Paget-Clarke.

Territorial grassroots movements, rural and urban, composed of Indigenous people, descendants of Africans, peasants, and other sectors of the people, have played a decisive role in the resistance to and the delegitimization of the neoliberal model. From their territories they have launched formidable offensives that opened cracks in the party systems based on domination and modified the regional geopolitical landscape. They have directly and indirectly influenced the local, national, regional and global scenes.

They have played and will play a decisive role in building a new world. That world, points out Immanuel Wallerstein, "Will be the result of an infinite amount of nanoscopic actions," the "little butterflies" capable of constructing the new world inhabit territories in which they resist and in which they are able to construct social relations different from the dominant ones. It is not with demonstrations nor declarations, more massive and necessary though they may be, as socialism believes, but with social practices in real-world spaces. Territories in resistance that are at the same time spaces in which the new world is going to be born.

Up until now, these are issues that have been discussed. Capitalism can be defeated if we can expropriate the means of production (and exchange) in a lengthy process. But the matter doesn't end there. The system learned to disorganize, dilute, co-opt, and annihilate by force (all together, not one or the other action) individuals born, rooted in territorial resistance. The combination of brute force (military and political) and social policies to "combat poverty" is part of that strategy of annihilation.

Given this complex and difficult situation grows the temptation to fall back from these territories in which multiple collectives were born, seeking more favorable places where growing can continue. Sometimes this position is taken up by people in the unions, by others in the student movement, and by others in electoral politics. A debate of this type crosses over all movements in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Peru. It is present in almost all countries.

It is true, though, that the territorial approach is not enough.

It is necessary to include different forms of making policy where common people decide and enact: we need to create forms of power distinct from the state; in order to guarantee territorial autonomy it is essential to assure material survival, whether it be health, education, housing, or food for all by all

But we cannot forget that these territories are key to the struggle for a new world for two reasons, shall we say, strategies: it is a matter of creating spaces where we can guarantee life for those at the bottom, in all its multi-faceted dimensions; and because accumulation by dispossession or war - which are the principal means of accumulation of today's capitalism - have converted the territorial movements into the nucleus of the resistance. The mutation of capitalism that we know as neoliberalism is war against life.

A third argument could be added: it is only possible to resist "in" the woven relations around use values, whether they be material or symbolic. If we only maneuver in the realm of exchange values, we limit ourselves to reproducing what already is. The sealed "pores" of life in the factories of post-Fordism are (alive) in the territories, the neighborhoods, the communities, the urban peripheries where -- even those same workers -- link themselves in forms of reciprocity, mutual aid, and cooperation which are social relations molded around the exchange of use values.

It is not a theoretical question and therefore it can only be shown. It must be known and practiced or it won't be understood. To resist today is to protect life and to construct life in territories collectively controlled. The point is that if we abandon the territories, those above win. And on this point there aren't two ways. The only approach remaining is to become strong and autonomous there, neutralizing the social policies which want to destroy the collective by "saving" the poor one by one.

The Mapuche people have resisted for five hundred years, hanging on to their territory. There they defeated the Spanish conquerors, and in them they recovered from the defeat inflicted on them by the Creole Republic in the war of extermination known as the "Pacification of Araucania" in the second half of the nineteenth century. In these territories they withstood the flood of the Pinochet dictatorship and the "antiterrorist" policies of democracy, correctly seasoned with "social policies" to subjugate with scraps what they couldn't do with sticks.

It is not the exception but the rule. Chiapas, Cauca, Caja-

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The Global Food Crisis ... Brought to You by Our Friends On Wall St.

by Pat Herron

ne of the stories that may have been missed by the Global Corporate Media is the fact that again we have more men, women and children dying of starvation in far away places. Places like Africa and Asia. Places that for some reason we don't often hear about. Meanwhile people in Europe and the U.S. are seeing their food prices go up on an almost weekly basis. Parents have to work longer hours and often 2 or 3 jobs just to buy food for themselves and their kids. What has happened to the price of food?

World food prices are now nearing record highs. This year alone they have risen 26%. This is even higher than they were during the "Food Crisis" of 2007-2008 in which rising prices for grain, corn, rice and soy led to food riots in parts of Africa, Asia and South America. Unfortunately, this is part of a multi-year trend. Adjusted for inflation food prices have tripled since 2004.

So what accounts for this sudden rise in prices? Drought? Floods? The use of food grains for bio-fuels? Maybe the rise of China's middle class? Certainly all of these have contributed to some extent but the massive rise in the cost of food goes far beyond a simple case of "supply and demand."

Instead, the rise in food prices and the resulting terrible increase in global hunger and starvation is largely due to another Wall St. created "bubble". Just as Wall St. made money on each transaction as the price of housing and tech stocks skyrocketed, they are now making money each time a Wall St. trader bids up the cost of food "commodities."

These "trades" represent hundreds of millions of dollars to guys in business suits but unfortunately to people in developing countries that are forced to spend the majority of their income on food it represents the very lives of themselves and their children. But then in the eyes of the 1%, maybe they are just, what is the term? Oh yeah, "collateral damage." •

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Vecinos Organizados) just be the voice of the group. They are involved in the community, thinking, participating, giving their opinions as residents, as interested people, and how this project is going to benefit society, and the families. So, their role, their involvement is important, and I believe we have it now.

See the next issue of this newsletter for Part 2 of this interview: Organizing, Education and Crisis

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marca where the Conga Project is being resisted, Belo Monte, El Alto, or the suburbs of Buenos Aires, among many others, show that the combination of war and domestication are the means of sterilizing the resistance. What is different about these territories is that there exists heterogeneous styles of life with which it is possible to create something distinct from the dominant way of life. Let us not deceive ourselves: that possibility doesn't exist today in the factories or in those places which are all about exchange values, (exchanging everything) from time to people.

Because of that, the social policies have been territorialized, because the agents of capital perceive that there they are losing their footing in the presence of the birth of integrated individuals who have nothing to lose; women, men and young people without a future in this system, who, because of the color of their skin, their culture, their way of life, don't fit into the institutions, nor even the so-called Left or the defenders of the workers. There they only exist as representatives, or they are absent.

There are no alternatives to the territorial work, no short cuts to make the road shorter and more bearable. Recent experience shows it is possible to break the encirclement of the system around territories, to overcome the isolation, to survive and continue forward. To persist or not, is a question of pure will. �



People's Questionnaire

Below follows a set of open-ended questions requesting responses about the current state of food in our lives, as individuals, families, and communities. There are also a couple of 'vision' questions calling for imaginative answers, to how we might come together and address issues about food surrounding access, inequality, and sustainability. Your short or detailed response, to any or all questions, is humbly requested and deeply appreciated. We would like to print select responses (with permission by author) in future issues of the Growing Discussion About Food newsletter, so that we may spur further discussion and practice cultivating knowledge together. Please submit responses by email to foodassemblySD@gmail.com.

- 1. How much of your monthly budget (percentage) do you spend on food?
- 2. Has the percentage of your budget spent on food changed in the last five years?
- 3. Do you ever eat cheap fast food to save money? How often?
- **4.** How far do you have to travel to buy groceries? How do you get there and back? Walk, bicycle, public transit, drive, etc.?
- **5.** Where do you usually get your food? A supermarket, a neighborhood grocery store, a farmer's market, a CSA (*Community Supported Agriculture*), your own garden?
- **6.** How often do you purchase foods labeled organic, GMO-free or fair trade?
- 7. If foods containing GMOs (*genetically modified organisms*) were labeled, would you look for that label before deciding to buy food?
- 8. Is lack of money or lack of time to prepare food at home a bigger obstacle to eating healthier for you?
- **9.** If money were no obstacle, how would your eating habits be different?
- 10. Do you feel the food provided in the public schools healthy and adequate for our children?
- 11. What are the biggest obstacles for you to finding culturally appropriate food and eating a healthier diet?
- **12.** Have you ever grown your own food?
- 13. If you had help and the option to work and grow your own food instead of buying it, at a community garden or your back yard, would you do so?
- **14.** Have you ever worked in any aspect of agriculture or the food industry?
- **15.** What are the biggest problems faced by food workers?
- **16.** Would you be interested in running your own small business selling raw or prepared foods?
- 17. Would you be interested in joining/building a cooperative business growing food, or selling raw or prepared foods?
- 18. Would you be interested in participating in moneyless seed and/or food exchange?
- **19.** What are the most significant problems of the global food system not being addressed by big business, the mainstream media, and politicians?
- 20. How can people in San Diego best secure food sovereignty with an uncertain future ahead?
- **21.** What role could/should the *Growing Discussion About Food* and People's Assemblies play achieving food sovereignty in San Diego? Globally?

Farm, Garden and Meet-Up Resources

A Handy List for Bulletin Boards and Refrigerator Doors

List of resources compiled by Mariah Gayler and Carlos Huerta. We keep adding more. Please keep sending them in! If you are reading this online the links are live.

Farms and Gardens

San Diego Farmers Markets

http://sdfarmbureau.org/BuyLocal/Farmers-Markets.php

San Diego Farms (search by city or zip) http://www.localharvest.org/organic-farms/

City Farmers Nursery, City Heights

http://www.cityfarmersnursery.com

Enchanted Garden Intentional Community, *College Area* http://www.lesliegoldman.com/Enchanted_Garden_Intentional_Community

New Roots Community Farm, City Heights

http://www.rescue.org/blog/farm

Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center, National City http://olivewoodgardens.org

Rosa Parks Community Garden, City Heights

http://parks.sandi.net/Pages/Garden/home.html

San Diego Peace Garden, City Heights

http://www.sdpeacegarden.org

Seeds at City Urban Farm, San Diego City College http://sdcity.edu/SeedsAtCity

Suzie's Farm, Border Field State Park

http://suziesfarm.com

Organizations

The Brighter Side Foundation

http://thebrightersidefoundation.org

California Rare Fruit Growers, San Diego & North County http://www.crfgsandiego.org

Food First / The Institute for Food and Development http://www.foodfirst.org

Greater Logan Heights Sobreruedas/ Community Market http://www.glhcp.org/archives/portfolio-items/clean-up-the-greater-

logan-heights-region

Grow Strong, City Heights and Kenya

http://www.growstrong.org

International Rescue Committee (IRC), City Heights

http://www.rescue.org

La Vía Campesina

http://viacampesina.org/en/

National Family Farm Coalition

http://www.nffc.net

Network for Healthy California

http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx

Organizations

Ocean Beach People's Food Co-Op, San Diego

http://obpeoplesfood.coop

People's Produce Project, *Southeastern San Diego* http://www.healthyworks.org/healthy-foods/peoples-produce

San Diego Community Garden Network

http://www.sandiegocommunitygardennetwork.org

San Diego Edible Garden Society

http://www.sdedible.org/

San Diego Cultivating Food Justice

http://www.sdfoodjustice.org

San Diego Food Not Lawns

http://www.sdfoodnotlawns.com

San Diego Food Policy / 1 in 10 Coalition

http://sdfoodpolicy.org

San Diego County Food System Alliance

http://aginnovations.org/alliances/sandiego/

San Diego Hunger Coalition

http://www.sandiegohungercoalition.org

San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project

http://www.sandiegoroots.org/index.php

Shakti Rising, Golden Hill

http://shaktirising.org

Slow Food Urban San Diego

http://www.slowfoodurbansandiego.org

Solana Center for Innovation, Encinitas

http://www.solanacenter.org

Squeeze Play!, San Diego County

http://squeezeplayorganics.org/sandiego.html

Victory Gardens San Diego

http://www.victorygardenssandiego.com

Events/Volunteer Opportunities

World Beat Center Children's Garden

Sundays at noon.

Peace Garden, 3850 Westgate Pl, San Diego, CA 92105 Wed. (9-11am) & 2nd Sat. (9am-noon)

Wild Willow's Farm, San Ysidro/Imperial Beach

http://www.sandiegoroots.org/farm/index.php 1st, 3rd and 5th Saturdays of the Month

Food Not Bombs

Food recovery (Tuesdays), Cooking and Serving (Wednesdays) http://sdfnb.org http://fnbcityheights.wordpress.com