

Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future
Topical Lunch Summary

Title: Social Movements and Sustainability: Contributions, Debates, and Outreach

Hosts: Wendy Wolford and Shorna Allred

Date: October 1, 2013

Attendees:

Blesh, Jennifer jmb326
Buck, Louise leb3
Chambliss, Lauren elc55
Dieterich, David dd355
Fifer, Gene etf26
Filiberto, David dmf22
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Lawrence, Mark mal64
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Monger, Bruce bcm3
Rodewald, Amanda adr79
Roy, Devparna dr53
Schmidt, Stephan sjs96
Sexsmith, Kathy kjs256
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This topical lunch featured Judite Stroznake, a member of the Landless People's Movement (MST), one of Latin America's largest grassroots rural social movements. First, Ms. Stroznake spoke about the MST perspective on sustainability, after which the attendees introduced themselves, briefly outlined their research, and raised questions for the speaker and the group more broadly. Tim Shenk, of the Committee on US Foreign Relations (CUSLAR), provided translation.

In her presentation, Ms. Stroznake suggested that definitions of and approaches to sustainability vary greatly depending on the point of view taken. She proposed that two important questions should always be asked when we use the term 'sustainability':

sustainability of what, and, for whom? She suggested that sustainability is best achieved through national sovereignty over food, and provided eight concrete steps to improve food sovereignty for sustainability. These included agrarian reform, agroecology, government prioritization of smallholding food production and small and medium agro-industries over agribusiness, restructured trade policies for greater regulation and more protective tariff structure, support for cooperative enterprises, support for autochthonous research and knowledge sharing, and stopping the private ownership of life and loss of biodiversity through the advance of transgenic seeds.

After Ms. Strozna's presentation, a number of broader questions were raised. First, there was discussion on the question of what kind of property arrangements are most useful for sustainability, and what types of reforms would support such arrangements. The focus of this discussion was on land, but there were also questions about property arrangements regarding other forms of resources as well, including transgenic seeds. Second, there was a brief discussion of the forms of connection between social movements such as the MST and universities, and how universities are able to learn from and support social movements.