
A year without Ricardo

It was on August 16 last year that we lost Ricardo Carrere, the international coordinator of the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) for 15 years.

Those of us at the WRM international secretariat, like the many people around the world who worked alongside him, undoubtedly share the same feeling: it has been difficult to continue struggling for social and environmental justice without Ricardo, who devoted himself to this struggle for so many years. At the same time, through his generosity, he left us with an extraordinarily valuable collection of memories and materials, a reflection of his clear perceptions, his concise reflections, his coherent convictions and his incomparable sense of humour. And so we can continue to draw inspiration and strength from all of this, keeping his presence alive among us.

The “financialization of nature”, the focus of this bulletin, is something that would not have pleased Ricardo in the slightest. It is a concept which is on the whole contradictory and incomprehensible, particularly for the communities and social movements who are already being affected by this process and who therefore need to have a clearer understanding of what it is all about. Our task, one that Ricardo passed down to us as a basic and ongoing commitment, is to talk about this issue in a different way, in straightforward and comprehensible terms. And this is what we hope to achieve in the first article in this edition of the WRM bulletin.

While the agents of capitalism seek to gain ever greater control over nature – which has incalculable value for the communities who depend on it – and to use it for the purposes of financial speculation, the resistance of forest peoples and their allies against this process has grown stronger. Recently, during Rio+20, in addition to the final declaration of the People’s Summit (<http://www.wrm.org.uy/RIO+20/FinalDeclaration.pdf>), various other declarations were drafted to voice categorical opposition to processes including, specifically, the “financialization of nature”, against placing a price on forest conservation – which is already happening through the REDD+ mechanism – and in general against transforming what is sacred for forest peoples into just another commodity.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that we are just one month away from the International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, marked on September 21. The process of the “financialization of nature” could lead to a new and unprecedented expansion of tree plantations. This expansion could exacerbate land grabbing of the territories of local communities in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Today we face the challenge of confronting the same process as always – the appropriation of the peoples’ territories – but now with the added dimension of the involvement of financial markets and often faceless financial agents who have no obvious presence in those territories, but work in close coordination with transnational corporations and private and state banks, with facilities granted by our governments.

Therefore, in the spirit of the People’s Summit at Rio+20, we must work to strengthen and expand

our alliances to build a struggle that reaches farther and fights more effectively against the “financialization of nature” and in defence of the rights of local communities over their lands and forests. And we will do it with the enthusiasm and passion that our dear friend Ricardo always put into everything he did.