WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT

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The Bulletin aims to support and contribute to the struggle of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities over their forests and territories. Subscription is free.

OUR VIEWPOINT

Untold stories of water theft and pollution

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WATER THEFT:
AN ECONOMIC MODEL THAT DRIES UP LIFE

The massive looting of water

Each year, fleets of aircraft, ships, trucks and trains, as well as thousands of kilometers of pipelines and ducts are used to transport tens of thousands of tons of ore, timber, oil, gas, agro-industrial products, agro-fuels and many other “commodities” extracted, mostly from the territories of the Global South for consumption in the North. To extract and transport these “products”, more and more land must be grabbed and polluted, causing water – in constant movement and deeply-rooted in territories – to be increasingly cornered, uprooted, overexploited and polluted. Those same “products” also require large amounts of water at almost all levels of production. Thus, the economic model of over-production and consumption directly affects the access by local populations to drinking water as well as their livelihoods. Water, essential to life and considered “sacred” by many traditional peoples, is seized from the territories.

Water: stream of life and knowledge

There is a crucial difference between referring to water as a living element and water as a “resource”. The Western point of view makes human beings the centre of everything, a dominant agent of all other living beings. In the same way, capital is (im)posed at the centre of social relations. But water is (part of) a living cycle. It moves, transforms, nourishes and is nourished by other living cycles and provides life. For water, humans are part of other living interconnected cycles. Capital projects instead are imposed. They seek to dominate and be the centre of everything around them; by exploiting, extracting, intoxicating, and killing ... without giving anything back. This idea of water as a “resource” keeps us far away from conceiving the whole: the living cycles.

The tree plantation and paper industry pollutes water: Communities in Indonesia affected by APP

People in Indonesia, particularly in the Banten province, on the island of Java, demand that the government enforce the law and restore river catchment areas (watersheds or river basins) after years of water contamination of the Ciujung river. The contamination results from Asia Pulp and Paper (APP), one of the main pulp and paper company active in Indonesia, releasing waste into the river. This particularly shows how problems such as deforestation, social conflicts, forest fires, corruption and water pollution are entrenched in the business chain of tree plantation and paper industry in Indonesia.

Tree plantations – silently stealing us dry

While much of the world is caught up in economic and political turmoil, there is a far more serious but less obvious issue. As a slow, almost imperceptible process which is difficult to detect or to measure, water theft is seldom viewed as a high priority crime. Yet, beneath our very noses, vast volumes of water are being misappropriated by “silent” thieves that operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Companies setting up monoculture plantations are the culprits, but, how can planted trees behave so differently from natural forests? Most people assume that they are the same. This fallacy however has led to a water crisis wherever “fake forests” of alien trees have been established on land once covered by real forests, or biodiverse grassland and scrublands.

Financialisation of water: what is it all about?

Water is increasingly being financialised through the creation of asset classes based upon the commodity “water” (as in the case of carbon, forests, oil, food etc.). This process is closely linked to the logic that is allowing the generation of new “virtual” commodities through “offsetting mechanisms” that are based on the control of territories to a larger extent. This opens up an almost unlimited horizon for potential financial profit and therefore, this calls upon civil society organizations acting in solidarity with impacted communities worldwide to re-think traditional campaigning and advocacy methods.

PEOPLES IN ACTION

Maputo Declaration of African Civil Society on Climate Justice

Dakar to Tunis: Declaration against water and land grabbing

Brazil: Three indigenous leaders and forest defenders were murdered

Guatemala: neighborhood action against dams that deprive communities of water

ProSavana Plan in Mozambique is out and threatening peasants' land and water

Bolloré and Socfin count their profits in Luxemburg while conflicts persist in their African and Asian plantations

RECOMMENDED

What future for the world's forests?

New publication warns against the impacts of agrotoxics on health

Defending the right to water in Korea

Squeezing Africa Dry: behind every land grab there is a water grab

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Behind many appealing products in the supermarkets of major urban centers in the world, there are countless silenced stories. Behind the good-looking "green label" certification, the content of products and the large amount of paper wrap, there's a story to tell about consumption and water pollution. It would be more appropriate to call this consumption: water theft. Considering that to manufacture these products and to use its raw materials many communities in the South are running out of drinking water. It is important to give visibility to this reality, but it becomes even more crucial when companies such as the transnational company Procter and Gamble hide this robbery behind an action of "social responsibility" that focuses on water..

Some years ago, Procter and Gamble (P&G), one of the largest companies in the world which manufactures products for supermarkets in the United States and other countries, launched its “saving lives” campaign (1). PUR packets or bags with a “purifying” substance that would be able to transform dirty water into clean water are distributed in dozens of countries of the global South to alleviate the plight of those who suffer from the lack of access to clean drinking water. This activity is part of the “social responsibility” policy of the company and won several awards. But P&G does not tell other less glorious stories, in which it is also involved; stories about water consumption and pollution on a large scale in the Global South from the places where P&G obtains its raw materials.

In 2014, P&G had a net profit of US$ 11 billion and it is not a coincidence (2). It is one of the leading manufacturers of disposable paper products such as napkins and tissues. Products are manufactured with wood fiber pulp from companies promoting monoculture plantations of eucalyptus, acacia or pine in the South. P&G is among the main customers of these companies who have their plantations as close as possible to the pulp mill. The result is: areas with tens or hundreds of thousands of hectares of monocultures. The main requirement to buy from these companies is that their tree plantations are certified, preferably by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Today, the vast majority of tree plantation companies already have the FSC label and according to P&G, production is “sustainable” and the pulp purchase is therefore, “responsible”.

Communities directly affected by plantations in countries like Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia are concerned. People living this plantation reality, with trees growing faster and faster, see nothing “responsible” in them. On the contrary, they are astonished to hear that while they are left with little or no clean water to drink or for other domestic activities, companies say there is no impact on water because plantations are managed following strict “technical criteria” approved by an international standard. An article in this bulletin highlights the importance of water for traditional communities, especially for women, giving an idea of its importance, not only for consumption but also for their cultures and their spiritual wellbeing. Therefore, these populations suffer when they lose their water sources. And the suffering grows even more when the water that is still running - despite of the “thirst” of fast growing trees - is contaminated with pesticides used on the plantations. The health of workers and communities are at even more risk, along with local flora and fauna. Another article in this bulletin explains in detail the issues related to tree plantations on a large scale and water. It is unfortunate that certification schemes like the FSC, supported by NGOs, are able to produce and spread an idea of “sustainability”, which is accepted by millions of consumers and contrasts sharply with reality, silences the voice and makes communities that suffer and die due to lack of water and other impacts even more invisible.

But the water problem around P&G production does not end there. The factories that transform wood

fiber into pulp for export are also large consumers of water, and they run 24-hour production days. A pulp mill with its chemical processing requires similar or higher water consumption than a city with over 1 million inhabitants and generally uses water for free. We are not only talking about the exported pulp, but about companies also “exporting” water, because for every ton of pulp there is less water for the local population and more pollution, as shown by the article on APP in Indonesia in this bulletin. The same applies to other production chains in the Global South attached to agribusiness which ends up with products in supermarkets in the Global North, such as meat, fruits and vegetables, which also require huge amounts of water in all production and processing steps.

An example of another problem recently denounced by the South African Water Caucus (SAWC), a coalition of civil society that monitors water issues in South Africa, is the growing pollution of the country's rivers with toxic chemicals used in pulp production and that are present in the disposable paper ending up at the dump. This shows the perverse side of stimulating consumption by companies like P&G in the so-called “new markets” such as the growing urban centers in countries of the Global South. Often these centers lack properly functioning waste collection systems. River pollution is evident in those countries, and yet even more serious to jeopardize the health of more people dependent on the direct collection of water from rivers for their consumption. (3)

There is an interconnected two-way response to the crisis of water shortage and pollution in the countries of the global South. On the one hand, the trend of privatization of water and water treatment companies, as part of the “recipe” given by international bodies like the World Bank and the IMF to many governments especially in the global South has been expanding for years. Behind a discourse promising a more “efficient” management, there is a hidden interest of creating more business opportunities for the corporate sector. On the other hand, this trend is a precursor to a broader one: the growing view that water needs to be "financialized". Financial capital market companies identify a great business opportunity in water, as it is essential for people and for productive activities, but is increasingly scarce. Therefore, one of the articles in this bulletin deals with this topic.

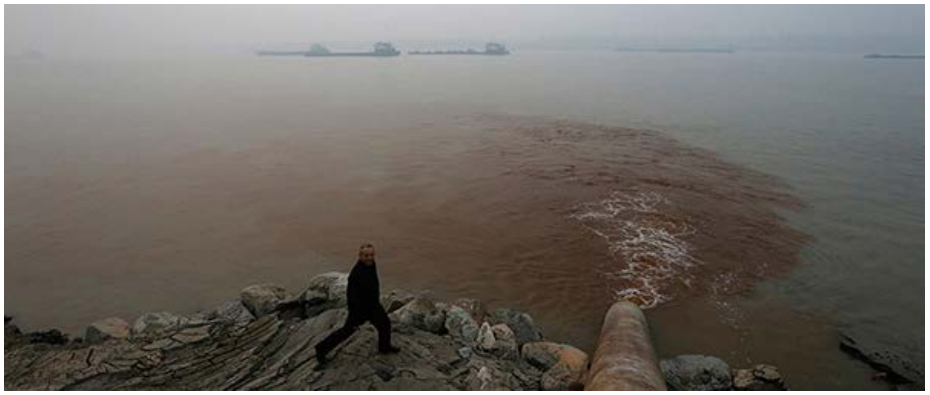
Privatization, commodification and financialization of water are increasing worldwide, as is the number of currently one billion people without access to safe drinking water. A recent FAO report on water consumption in the world stated that the problem of intensification of industrial activities will further increase consumption and water pollution. But FAO stressed industrial agriculture - industrial tree plantations may be included within this category- as the main current and future consumer - and polluter – of water in the coming decades (4). Therefore, if we want to “save lives”, as P&G says, today and in the future, it is necessary not to “certify” but to change the current model of production and consumption. This model is “thirsty” and it is the principal user and polluter of water in the world - and puts much effort in expanding even further.

An important step, to which we hope to contribute with this bulletin, is to not tire of making visible the real impact of this model on populations, because big companies benefiting mostly from it are trying to make those impacts systematically invisible.

We also hope that this bulletin will inspire more people to come together to struggle for clean water for everyone, a struggle now being carried forward in many parts of the world. Privatizing and take-over what in many cultures in the world is a symbol of life has already generated strong popular reaction. Recall the victorious struggle some years ago of the people of Cochabamba, Bolivia, to reverse the privatization of water. A more recent example comes from Jakarta, Indonesia. In March this year, after years of protests, a decision by the country's institutional court cancelled the contract with two companies that managed the water supply of the city since 1998, due to allegations of mismanagement and corruption. The court decision opens the way for the re-municipalization of the system. (5)

Thus, the capitalist economic model, by which capital accumulation is linked to the increasing control and capture of cheap inputs or “natural resources”, is also translated into a massive theft of water. Water, however, as symbol of life, connects many struggles in defence of territories. Therefore, it is also an element of strength and hope against a model of production and consumption that is preying on forests, territories and their networks of life, including the people who live and depend on forests.

1. http://www.pg.com/en_UK/sustainability/social-responsibility/children-safe-drinking-water.shtml
2. http://www.marketwatch.com/investing/stock/pg/financials
3. https://www.facebook.com/GeaSphere?fref=nf
4. FAO: Towards a Water and Food Secure Future, http://www.fao.org/nr/water/docs/FAO_WWC_white_paper_web.pdf
5. http://news.mongabay.com/2015/0417-jacobson-water-two-court-rulings.html



The massive loot of water

Each year, fleets of aircraft, ships, trucks and trains, as well as thousands of kilometers of pipelines and ducts are used to transport tens of thousands of tons of ore, timber, oil, gas, agro-industrial products, agro-fuels and many other “commodities” extracted, mostly from the territories of the Global South for consumption in the North. To extract and transport these “products”, more and more land must be grabbed and polluted, causing water – in constant movement and deeply-rooted in territories – to be increasingly cornered, uprooted, overexploited and polluted. Those same “products” also require large amounts of water at almost all levels of production. Thus, the economic model of over-production and consumption directly affects the access of local populations to drinking water as well as their livelihoods. Water, essential to life and considered “sacred” by many traditional peoples, is seized from the territories.

Forests and water

Wherever we are, in the city or the countryside, we are always within a watershed. A watershed is the land onto which all rainwater and snow drains to form streams, rivers, lakes or wetlands. Watersheds or basins are an essential part of the water cycle. This cycle allows seawater to become fresh water through evaporation and condensation in order to flow into valleys and mountains, and flowing down through the basins on the surface or underground. A healthy watershed protects water supplies, feeds communities, forests, plants and animals and keeps soils fertile (1).

By destroying the forests, their ability to balance the water cycle is also destroyed since their living soils are damaged and lose much of their capacity to retain water and support streams. Many scientists claim that deforestation has a direct effect on water shortages in urban centres. According to Antonio Nobre, a Brazilian scientist who collaborates with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that advises the UN, destruction of forests also destroys local climate systems (2). That means that the perspiration of a large tree in the Amazon, with a ten-meter radius crown, releases vapour amounting to over a thousand litres of water in a day. Now, let’s imagine the entire Amazon. The vapour from trees is a great source of rain and humidity for other places and is greater than the flow of water in the Amazon River, the largest river on earth. With the history of deforestation in the Brazilian “Atlantic Forest” (coastal forests) and the growing deforestation of the Amazon, urban centres like Sao Paulo face a serious water crisis.

Cultivating drought: agricultural and tree plantation industries

“The river that the villagers used cannot be used during rainy season*;* since it collects all agrotoxics used by the company in the plantation (...) we are slaves on our own land.” - Sunny Ajele, Makilolo community, Nigeria, on the expansion of oil palm plantations from Okomu Oil Palm Company. (See Bulletin February 2014)

The agro-industrial and monoculture plantations model depends on a continuous water supply. Investors interested in acquiring large tracts of lands often seek to grab available sources of water as part of the same purchase agreements. Thus, in Mali and Sudan for example, some investors have unlimited access to all the water they need in their projects (3).

Nevertheless, the scale of water plundering can extend far beyond land grabbing. In the Ica Valley, in the south-central Peruvian coast, for example, agribusiness companies have used various strategies to collect water outside their land concessions. Two companies have managed to channel water to their crops with pipes from more than 40 wells located outside their concession areas. Likewise, in the valley of Piura, on Peru's northern coast, agribusiness have installed a huge water pumping station, near canals and artificial lakes, on a strategic point of the river, which is “protected” with barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards (4).

Likewise, monoculture tree plantations on a large scale are also thirsty crops which are devouring forests, eroding soils and leaving them without life. After seventy years of hydrological research in the Jonkershoek Valley, South Africa, a study revealed in 2010 the impact of monoculture tree plantations on groundwater and watercourses (5). Pine plantations use the equivalent of 400 mm of rainwater, which means that there are 400 million litres of water per year per square km which do not return to watercourses. Eucalyptus trees consume more: 600 mm of rainwater. According to the study, every pine tree absorbs an average of 50 litres of water when they are aged between 5-7 years. In the case of Eucalyptus, the average can vary from 100 to 1000 litres, depending on where the plantation is located. However, a eucalyptus plantation, due to its rapid growth, impacts water flows strongly in its early years; when its consumption starts to decrease, it is usually time to cut and plant new trees. Trees planted close to a stream or river can use twice as much water because they have more access to it.

Even worse, monocultures exhaust soil nutrients and as a result chemical fertilizers must be used which, in turn, contaminate remaining soil and water sources (6).

A study focused on Indonesia, the country that produces nearly half of the world´s palm oil, warns about the intensity of oil palm plantation impacts on freshwater streams, which directly affect the availability of drinking water, food production and livelihood activities of local communities (7). The study highlighted that during the process of deforestation, plantation management - including the application of agrotoxics and chemical fertilizers - and fruit processing to produce oil, many sediments and other harmful substances seep into streams crossing plantations, concentrating up to 550 times more sediment than those crossing forests.

Stream temperatures, where new and old palm plantations drain, are almost 4 degrees Celsius higher than in forest streams, which negatively affects the life cycle of many species that live in watercourses. The study also showed that during dry seasons, there is an increase in the stream metabolism - its oxygen

consumption rate, an important way to measure stream health. The impacts on fisheries, coastal areas, and coral reefs - potentially located many kilometres downstream - remain unknown. But what we do know is that, as stated by one of the study's authors, “This [palm plantations] can cause the collapse of freshwater ecosystems and can create social and economic hardships in the region” (8).

The severe consequences of violating the water cycle, poisoning and looting water, are felt by the communities and life systems that depend on watershed streams and territories. From the point of view of water, in constant motion and transformation, plantation impacts affect much larger areas than those of the occupied territories and, therefore, more communities are also affected. Governments, as stewards of water use within their national boundaries, commonly support big business and provide abusive licenses - often illegal - to corporations that pollute and deplete water supplies needed by the people. Moreover, governments also commonly ignore the traditional management, protection and use of water that many communities have preserved for generations. Even worse, when water shortages become acute, people will generally suffer from restrictions, not the industries.

Fossil fuels and their insatiable thirst

“The oil flows, the rainforest bleeds” – graffiti in the city of Quito, Ecuador (9).

All fossil fuel extractive projects (i.e. oil, gas and ore) bring about an abrupt change in streams, pollution and, in most cases, corporate and/or government control of available sources. Oil and gas activities have caused disasters in all areas where they are found: air, water and soil pollution, and together with an accelerated process of interventions and impositions are jeopardizing forests and indigenous territories.

Mining requires large amounts of water for ore extraction and processing and produces lots of wastes that pollute the available sources. To get an idea, 24 bathtubs full of water are needed to extract and wash a ton of coal! (10). Coal plants consume about 8% of the total water demand around the globe. A typical 500MW coal plant extracts every 3.5 minutes the amount of water to fill in an Olympic swimming pool. This water is used for cooling the plant and is returned to its original sources, but at very high temperatures, which kills aquatic life and ecosystems sensitive to changes in temperature (11).

Similarly, the toxic mix run-off of acid mine drainage, i.e. water and air react with the sulfur in deep soil (sulphides) and create acids to dissolve heavy metals, goes into the soil, penetrates groundwater and ends up in rivers and lakes. Poisons in water slowly sicken people, plants and animals, and also destroy the lives downstream up to hundreds of years (12). As a result, mining projects almost always generate opposition from local communities who seek to defend their territories, and with them, their water sources. A recent report of EJOLT, a network of environmental justice organizations, documented 346 cases of social conflicts over mining and shows its main impacts. Among the most frequently impacts are surface and groundwater pollution, as well as reduction in water level (13).

But the theft does not end there. Once the ore is extracted, it must be transported - and not only through an extensive network of roads and highways which also cause deforestation, but also through pipelines for ore (or oil or gas) to the ports. In Brazil, for example, where there is currently serious shortage of water to supply the population, slurry pipelines - pipelines to transport ground iron ore mixed with water – carry the ore to the port. The four mining projects in the state of Minas Gerais with pipelines for iron transportation use enough water to supply a city of 1.6 million inhabitants. Pipelines operate 24 hours a day, every day (14).

Hydropower stations: imprisoning rivers, streams and communities

“The river gives us everything. Fish, with which we can make oil, which we eat and sell, it even pays for my studies. On the riverbanks we can grow crops, and we know what to do here, actually it is all we know, if we are to be moved far from the river we will suffer” – the son of a fisherman affected by Mphanda Nkuwa dam on the Zambezi river in Mozambique (15)

Hydropower generation, strongly promoted by climate policies and financial institutions like the World Bank, also has adverse effects on the water cycle and, therefore, on forests and communities that depend on these territories. The construction of large dams paralyzed water circulation in basin systems and imprisons its streams, fauna and flora. The dams also cause floods in fertile land and surrounding territories. The consequences are devastating. The wall of the dam blocks migrating fish and can even separate spawning from breeding habitats. The dam also traps sediments necessary for the maintenance of physical processes and habitats downstream. The river upstream of the dam is transformed into an artificial water reservoir. Altering or interrupting the flow of water can be as severe as draining a whole river, its reaches and life within it (16).

Rivers, lakes and lagoons are the basis of many cultures and livelihoods, and the backbone of local economies. By the end of the twentieth century, the hydropower industry had blocked more than half of the largest rivers of the Earth with about 50,000 large-scale dams, and displaced millions of people (17). In some of the remaining basins with free-flowing rivers in the world, such as the Amazon, the Mekong, the Congo, and rivers of Patagonia, governments and industry are pushing large-scale dam projects; all on the grounds of “clean” energy.

The water cycle for sale

On top of this capitalist abuse, the water cycle has entered the process called financialization. This presupposes the separation and quantification of the cycles and functions of nature such as the carbon cycle, the water cycle, biodiversity or landscapes - to turn them into “units” or “titles” so that they can be sold in financial or speculation markets (18).

But water is a symbol of life, and therefore, water unites and mobilizes. Deforestation, pollution and construction of large-scale infrastructure damage watersheds and water sources, by altering the ability of the territories to sustain living organisms, including human communities. It is essential to support the struggles in defence of the territories. Territories that are more than land, rivers, trees or villages; but a whole, where an element depends on the other, and where life is sustained.

(1) http://es.hesperian.org/hhg/A_Community_Guide_to_Environmental_Health:Cap%C3%ADtulo_9:_Protecci%C3%B3n_de_las_cuencas_hidrogr%C3%A1ficas
(2) http://xandemilazzo.jusbrasil.com.br/noticias/155175596/estamos-indo-direto-para-o-matadouro-diz-o-cientista-antonio-nobre
(3) http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/17102IIED.pdf
(4) http://www.tni.org/es/primer/el-acaparamiento-mundial-de-aguas-guia-basica
(5) http://wrm.org.uy/es/articulos-del-boletin-wrm/seccion3/sudafrica-resultados-concluyentes-de-investigacion-sobre-los-impactos-de-los-monocultivos-de-arboles-en-el-agua/
(6) http://abrasco.org.br/dossieagrotoxicos/
(7) www.natureworldnews.com/articles/7846/20140701/oil-palm-plantations-threaten-water-quality.htm
(8) http://news.stanford.edu/pr/2014/pr-palm-oil-water-062614.html

(9) http://www.accionecologica.org/petroleo
(10) http://chinawaterrisk.org/big-picture/metals-mining/
(11) www.criticalcollective.org/wp-content/uploads/EndCoalWaterFactsheet2014.WEB-1.pdf
(12) http://es.hesperian.org/hhg/A_Community_Guide_to_Environmental_Health:Agua_contaminada
(13) http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/EJOLT_14_Towards-EJ-success-mining-low.pdf
(14) http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/noticias/539446-em-meio-a-crise-hidrica-minerodutos-utilizam-agua-dos-rios-para-levar-polpa-de-ferro-ao-porto
(15) http://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Economic-drivers-of-water-financialization.pdf
(16) http://www.internationalrivers.org/environmental-impacts-of-dams
(17) http://www.worldwatch.org/node/6344
(18) http://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Libro-Agua-ATI-espan%CC%83ol-web.pdf

Water: stream of life and knowledge

There is a crucial difference when one refers to water as a living element rather than as a “resource”. The Western point of view makes human beings the centre of everything, a dominant agent of all other living beings. In the same way, capital is (im)posed at the centre of social relations. But water is a living cycle. It moves, transforms, nourishes and is being nourished by other living cycles and provides life. For water, humans are part of other living interconnected cycles. Capital projects instead are imposed. They seek to dominate and be the centre of everything around them; by exploiting, extracting, intoxicating, and killing ... without giving back. This idea of water as a “resource” keeps us far away from conceiving the whole: the living cycles.

“Veiled from our eyes in the day, the spirits can be discerned in the roaring voices of waterfalls, in light shining through foam and seed down, in the drip of water from pools in the crotches of giant forest trees and in the calls of animals and birds. The forest is alive.” – Sanema community, Northern Yanomami, Venezuela, Bulletin September 2002

“The territory is mother earth, which is made up of everything. Mother earth gave us the river, which is the milk that nourishes us and gives us water to drink, and the forest, which is our roof and our banquet to feast on” - Babau, chief of the Serra do Padeiro community, Brazil, Bulletin October 2014.

Forests support immense webs of life which connect beings and natural cycles in almost imperceptible but crucial ways. The water cycle, the constant movement of water across the planet in liquid and vapour state, hail or snow, intertwines most of these webs of life. Populations living and depending on forests often compare rivers, rain and streams with the veins and arteries that carry blood and move through human bodies. This symbolizes a different view, where water is not a separate or isolated component from other living cycles, but, on the contrary, the water cycle is an essential part of the people, thus, they know, use and protect it with caution, humility and above all with respect.

“For traditional communities, preserving the forest does not only mean to maintain their rights to land and territory but, fundamentally, to protect their civilization, upon which the essence of their culture depends. Communities’ culture involves cross-generation adaptation processes that balance life and the sustainability of natural cycles.” - Zenzi Suhadi, Walhi, Indonesia, Bulletin November 2014

Other crucial meaning(s) and value(s) transcend(s) body dimension and use needs. These other meanings usually are lived, taught and learnt in traditional communities and are the cultural and spiritual basis for their existence. Over generations, communities share ancient knowledge, memories and identities that are attached to a common body called territory.

“The Elders said that (the Celendín lakes) were sacred, no one was allowed to set foot there, they were the sites for sacred ceremonies and traditional healers came here to collect medicines. The Elders called this place Conga” - Rondera (peasant patroller) from Cajamarca, Peru, Bulletin March 2015.

“We met around the fire. The canopy of coronilla (Scutia buxifolia), rama negra (Senna corymbosa), guayabo colorado (Myrcianthes cisplatensis) and tala (Celtis spinosa) did what it could to protect us from the fine rain that from time to time was accompanied by the wind. There was a feeling, indecipherable to me, a mixture of spiritual grandeur and earthly safety. We enjoyed the silence full of messages, the nearby crystalline and untiring river, the silenced night elves, also the frogs and crickets

leaving time and space to us." – Nelly Curbelo about the third gathering on women cycles and natural medicine, Uruguay, Bulletin February 2004

All rainwater and snow goes downhill to form water bodies - such as a river, a lake or a wetland – feeding along their paths many life systems. However, most of the water runs underground. Forests and pastures located in the upper basins and along the banks of rivers and streams improve and nurture groundwater.

"Were it not for the water in the páramo
There would be no life on our planet and in our country.
Some talk of god, but we do not see him:
We see our Pachamama, our nature" – Josefina Lema, Ecuador, Bulletin March 2015

Furthermore, coastal areas depend on the encounter of freshwater with the sea which produces endless webs of life essential for communities in these areas. Mangroves, for example, are "submerged" forests providing livelihood and culture to coastal towns practicing artisanal and subsistence fishing, as well as shell, snail and crab harvesting.

But above all, the mangrove is territory.

"We consider the mangrove ecosystem to be our mother and this is what we have all learnt. Life is there, the mangrove ecosystem is a maternity and it is a natural industry that God has left us as heritage, so we won't be poor" - women from the Cayapas Mataje Ecological Reserve, Ecuador, Bulletin March 2010

"An open fire is your kitchen
Your children, your entertainment
The forest, your medicine
The shade, your protection
A good fish, your food
Chillangua [1], your seasoning
The mangrove, barrier of life
Protecting it is your reason"
- Part of the poem "Women of the Mangroves", Linver Nazareno, Ecuador, Bulletin July 2013
(1) An aromatic herb, similar to cilantro

When water is scarce or the usual sources are polluted, it is mainly women and girls who have to travel long distances with heavy loads, causing neck, back and hip injuries, among others. Moreover, their connection to the territory is disrupted and violated.

"We used to dig very small wells to irrigate our crops. Now we must dig deeper and bring water from far away. Drinking water has also become scarce. We have to fetch water for our cattle, chickens and goats, besides domestic use water."- Ms. Ziqubu, Sabokwe, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, affected by eucalyptus plantations community. WRM presentation.

"Aracruz [Plantation Company] closed the river, because it planted eucalyptus trees and the water was gone... then the river dried up. Before it had a strong stream, and now, where it is?"- Francisca, Tupinikim woman, Irajá village, Brazil, affected by eucalyptus plantations, WRM Presentation.

Therefore, women with strong roots within their territories struggle to regain their autonomy and knowledge, often even equating the territory with their own bodies.

"Violence is done to the Earth, our mother, in the same way that violence is done to women. They want to exploit her like they exploit our labour, they do not see or recognise her, they make her invisible in the same way that our contributions and our words are made invisible. It is the same pattern of power that oppresses us, because in the Eurocentric capitalist worldview both women and nature can be appropriated, exploited and controlled," spaces for dialogue among women, Peru, Bulletin March 2015

…Brave women protectors of their roots

"At the height of the resistance, we would get up at three o'clock in the morning, we would go around the houses to call people out to the march; later we would fetch donated food from market stalls and shops that supported us. Once the marches were under way we set up communal soup kitchens, no one went without food. Some of us would walk in the front line, singing our marching songs and facing down the repression. We did not mind the weariness, the blows, the frequent railing of our husbands or the incomprehension of our family. We were fighting for water, which is life; for our children, and our children's children," – woman guardian of the lagoons in Cajamarca, Peru, Bulletin March 2015

The tree plantation and paper industry pollutes water: Communities in Indonesia affected by APP

People in Indonesia, particularly in the Banten province, on the island of Java, demand that the government enforce the law and restore river catchment areas (watersheds or river basins) after years of water contamination of the Ciujung river. The contamination is caused by Asia Pulp and Paper (APP), one of the main pulp and paper company active in Indonesia, releasing waste into the river. This particularly shows how problems such as deforestation, social conflicts, forest fires, corruption and water pollution are entrenched in the business chain of tree plantation and paper industry in Indonesia.

In 2014, Indonesia's deforestation rate reached 5.6 million hectares per year. This is triggered by the monopoly of forest concessions - around 57 million hectares - by four industrial sectors: natural resources extraction - especially logging and mining - as well as industrial tree plantations for pulp and palm oil. Monoculture tree plantations now cover 10.1 million hectares of land in Indonesia (1). Their main use is to supply raw materials for the pulp and paper industry in Indonesia.

The PT. Indah Kiat Pulp & Paper Tbk (IKPP) Serang mill, located in the Banten Province, is one of the largest paper mills owned by the plantations company Asia Pulp and Paper (APP), which is processing raw materials from tree plantations in Indonesia (2). Disposal of waste from this mill contributes most of the pollution of the Ciujung river, which flows for 142 km, passing three regencies: Pandeglang, Serang, and Lebak. The mill, established in 1991, produces brown paper/cardboard, carton/white and packaging paper. The annual production capacity is approximately 1.7 million metric tons of cardboard and 480,000 metric tons for conversion products and packaging boxes. Its final products reach countries on all continents in the world: Australia, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, Austria, Brazil, Jordan, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, Canada, Korea, Turkey, China, Malaysia, France, Hong Kong, UK, India, Myanmar, USA, Italy, Vietnam, and Indonesia (3).

APP operates in Indonesia and China and has a production capacity of more than 19 million tons per year. Its products are marketed in more than 120 countries across all six continents (4). The exclusive supplier of raw materials for APP mills in Indonesia is Sinar Mas Forestry, which owns tree plantation companies in Sumatera and Kalimantan. There are at least seven units of forestry companies that are directly controlled by Sinar Mas Forestry (5): PT. Arara Abadi (Riau), PT. Satria Agung Perkasa (Riau), PT. Riau Abadi Lestari (Riau), PT. Wirakarya Sakti (Jambi), PT. Finnantara Intiga (West Kalimantan), and PT Sumalindo Hutani Jaya (East Kalimantan).

Contaminating the water of the Ciujung river

Since 1992, the PT. IKPP Serang mill operates six paper production lines, plus another one that started operations in 2008. The waste generated is discharged into rivers and is responsible for most of the contamination of the Ciujung River (6). This was revealed in 2012 through the mandatory environmental audit report, Management of Wastewater from Pulp and Paper PT. Indah Kiat Pulp & Paper Tbk (PT. IKPP) Serang. The mandatory environmental audit includes an analysis of the river water quality, the wastewater treatment plant as well as of the compliance with regulations and licensing. The information included:

- PT. IKPP Serang has three Wastewater Treatment Plants (IPAL for its acronym in Bahasa): IPAL 1, IPAL 2 and IPAL 3. Those three plants produce waste, either as solid or liquid waste, that must be disposed in the Ciujung river. IPAL 1 has discharged as much as 5,000-6,000 m^3 of liquid waste per day, and IPAL 2 22,000-24,000 m^3 per day. But the performance of those plants is not optimal. According to the Chemical Oxygen Demand and Biochemical Oxygen Demand tests, the IPAL 2 plant exceeds waste concentrations by 26% in relation to the Threshold Limit Value. This threshold is specified in the quality standards of the MOE Decree of 1995 No. 51. The IPAL 3 on the other hand, exceeds the quality standards of the Biochemical Oxygen Demand test by as much as 145% and 143% for the Chemical Oxygen Demand value.
- The company's "efforts" have not been optimal. There are other requirements that have not been done like the provision of emergency ponds. In addition, there have been no efforts from the company to attempt recovering the water quality of the river.
- As the PT. IKPP Serang produces liquid waste, the ecosystems of the Ciujung river are severely affected due to the discharge of this waste, contributing to the river's pollution load of 83.92%.
- The laboratory used by PT. IKPP Serang to take the sampling has not been accredited or standardized.

Waste discharged from the pulp mill site into the Ciujung River at the village of Kragilan flows downstream, to the estuary in the Tengkurak village, district of Tirtayasa. During the dry season (July - October), when the water levels are very low, even null, the company continues to dump waste into the river. Therefore, the waste discharged sediments in the river because there is not enough water to drain the waste out of the river. The river contaminated with industrial waste flows through at least 17 villages

in five districts.

Tens of thousands of people rely on the water from the Ciujung river. They use it for irrigation of 16,000 hectares of land, feeding 6,000 hectares of fishponds, and for bathing and washing. Communities in the downstream region are generally traditional fishermen and rely on the income from the catch of fish in this river. People in these areas are particularly vulnerable and are threatened when consuming water that can affect their health (7). In addition, water pollution has also decreased the number of fish and shrimps in the river.

Residents of the Serang Regency stated, “Today, the water of the river is not good anymore. The water is foaming, stinking, and looks black. It is increasingly difficult for the people to use the water for their daily needs. However, people still use it for bathing and washing because they depend on the water of the Ciujung river. Many people complain because the hives are allegedly due to using dirty river water. The livelihoods based on fishponds became even worse because of the polluted river water. The output from the ponds fell drastically. Why? Because the fish become scrubby or do not grow well. In the past, a four to five months milkfish (Bandeng) was generally weighing about one kilogram. Now, after four to five months the fish is still one ounce and reaches the catch-weight only after 10 months.” (8)

A water quality assessment from 2015 done by the community of the Serang Regency and a team from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry showed that the water of Ciujung River is still polluted due to the waste discharged by PT. IKPP Serang. This problem has been going on for decades, and the affected communities have been repeatedly reporting it to the government. Explicitly, the community of the Serang Regency has demanded to revoke the license as well as to enforce the law for an environmental recovery and holding the company responsible. Ironically, the pollution continues without stronger law enforcement to solve this problem.

Water is the source of life. The contamination of water in the business chain of the tree plantation and pulp & paper industry in Indonesia, or in other countries, must be resolved immediately. Thus, the state must not only enforce the law in the management and protection of forests, but also must ensure the protection of water resources as its responsibility for fulfilling the rights of the entire population to a good and healthy environment.

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Tree plantations – silently stealing us dry

While much of the world is caught up in economic and political turmoil, there is a far more serious but less obvious issue. As a slow, almost imperceptible process which is difficult to detect or to measure, water theft is seldom viewed as a high priority crime. Yet, beneath our very noses, vast volumes of water are being misappropriated by “silent” thieves that operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Corporations setting up monoculture plantations are the culprits, but, how can planted trees behave so differently from natural forests? Most people assume that they are the same. This fallacy however has led to a water crisis wherever “fake forests” of alien trees have been established on land once covered by real forests, or biodiverse grassland and scrublands.

This artificial conversion of the landscape has many negative impacts that so-called “foresters” and plantation companies choose to ignore. Despite there being ample evidence, both empirical and

scientific, the ugly truth about how monoculture plantations affect water sources and biodiversity has been deliberately obscured by those who profit from it.

In many cases, the effect of water taken by industrial tree plantations can be matched only by the worst drought. Experiments conducted in areas where land was converted to tree plantations have proven that their water consumption can exceed the amount of rain that falls where they stand. This has been demonstrated, for example, in South Africa, by measuring the reduction in stream flow that occurs after grassland catchments have been converted to plantations. Reports by researcher Joan Whitmore (1) describe this effect as “water piracy”, due to its impacts on adjacent land users and downstream ecosystems including wetlands, estuaries and coastal marine habitat.

How this works

Evergreen plantation trees consume water throughout the year, unlike natural vegetation which consumes very little in the dry season. In addition, the dense leafy canopy of these plantations prevents rain water from reaching the soil surface. The combination of evaporation from water caught in their foliage, combined with groundwater drawn up from their roots to their leaves is called evapo-transpiration. During the dry season, when there is little or no rain, trees drink from the groundwater table. This results in localised depletion of the aquifer, causing groundwater from adjacent areas to flow towards the depleted aquifer beneath the plantation. This also reduces the flow of water into natural systems when it is needed to maintain downstream habitats and farming communities. Streams and rivers that normally flow throughout the year become seasonal and this creates localised drought, compromising ecosystem functions.

Apart from stealing water from nature and from human communities, tree plantations also cause a state of dehydration in adjacent areas, and this has the effect of increasing the incidence of wildfires. Besides destroying the plantation, such wildfires also devastate the human environment causing deaths and loss of community resources, as recently occurred in parts of Australia, Portugal, South Africa, California and Chile. Public monies must then be spent on the construction of dams and pipelines to replace the water lost due to plantations, and carrying water in tanker-trucks to affected communities.

Conclusion
Plantations are of course not in themselves the real robbers – they are merely one of the tools used by multinational corporations and international financial institutions to steal the “natural resources” of countries in the South, especially of those who live in and depend on forests. Trees are usually industrially processed near to where they were grown, using even more water and energy to churn out millions of tonnes of cellulose and paper, packaging, and other products that generate profits for the owners of the plantations and pulp mills, along with their financial backers. At the other side however, stand the many affected communities that end up with their territories and livelihoods polluted or dried up. Industrial tree plantations severely damage freshwater resources that supply drinking water to millions of people.

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Financialisation of water: what is it all about?

In the past few years, mechanisms aimed to transform fundamental natural components of commons (biodiversity, land, water, forests and their ecological functions, etc…) into tradable financial assets have been expanding rapidly. A growing number of civil society groups therefore strongly engage in trying to unveil the mechanisms, logics and motivations behind the financialization process(es) and what they might mean for communities. In order to revert this trend which jeopardizes the life of millions of people all over the world, it is key to identify driving forces and leading actors.

The process of “financialisation of the economy”, where trading money, risks and the financial products engineered on their basis became more profitable and started outpacing trading goods and services for capital accumulation, has penetrated all commodity markets. But more than that: their reach has expanded from areas like social reproductive systems (pensions, health, education, housing) into nature’s commons. In this framework, the financialisation of the natural commons creates new “assets”,

which can be appropriated and from which financial investors can extract profit, either directly or through creating other possibilities for trading and speculation on financial markets.

When it comes to trying to understand the mechanisms and implications of the financialisation of “water”, we have to consider that we are referring to a vital substance on which life as a whole depends. Depending on the interest pursued, the same water might be classified by different interests as: a common (shared for the benefit of all and detriment of no-one), a public good (society as a whole benefits from a safe public water supply), a private good (i.e. consumption of bottled water), an economic good (important to people but scarce in relation to its demand), a merit good (consumption depends on households' capacity to pay for it), or a welfare good (access to safe water as a contribution to public health).

To what extent can we claim that the natural common water is financialised?

It is important to ask, which new attempts of commodification and marketization of the “commodity” water have been advanced so far as possible building blocks for financialisation to unfold, and what implications will this have for our organising to revert this trend?

While other commodity markets are much further advanced than the water market, it is considered to have a great potential. In 2011 the financial analyst James E. McWhinney wrote “water may turn out to be the biggest commodity story of the 21st century […] Why the interest in water? Like gold and oil, water is a commodity – and it happens to be rather scarce […] there are currently numerous ways to add water exposure to your portfolio - most simply require a bit of research” (1).

In other words, the reason behind financial companies’ investments in water is linked to the idea that a predictable scarcity will put a price premium on water providers. Pressure for control over water, and thus, water rights, is likely to grow in the near future. As a matter of fact, “water trading” has already been introduced in some places where water rights have been created and water markets are already in place. This is the case for some countries, such as Australia, South Africa, western United States, Costa Rica, Spain and, above all Chile.

According to Reuters, China is also about to start a pilot project of water trading. “China has picked seven provinces to host pilot markets for trade in water rights, as the government battles a spreading water crisis that threatens to curtail economic growth and hinder food production. The move is the latest sign that China aims to use market-based mechanisms to handle growing environmental problems. It has already launched seven pilot markets to cut emissions of climate-changing greenhouse gases, and plans to roll out a national scheme later in the decade” (2). Meanwhile in Europe, the European Commission's “Blue Print to safeguard Europe’s water resources” (2012), suggests that water trading could be included as a tool to manage water (3).

The existence of water markets doesn’t lead immediately to the financialisation of water. However, water markets facilitate the creation of new asset classes that can be traded without any evidence that this would contribute to better allocation or management of water.

The worrying example of Chile

A possible transition from commodification to financialisation can be observed in Chile, where the most neoliberal system in Latin America has led to very developed model of financialisation of water, where water is fully regulated by the market and the State plays a mere administrative role.

As Jessica Budds wrote in 2009, “Chile operates a unique system of private tradable water rights. Under the 1981 Water Code, existing water rights (the entitlement to use a certain flow of water under specified conditions) were converted into private property and regulated through economic and market mechanisms” (4).

The 1981 Water Code was approved by Augusto Pinochet’s military regime, within a neoliberal framework based on property rights and market principles. The law, still in force, handed the control of hydric resources to the private sector, free of charge and for an unlimited period of time. Its economic and market features were designed to consider water as a commodity like any other, which entailed separating it from land and territory where it flows. As a consequence, landowners do not automatically own the rights over the water on their land and, therefore, water rights –for all surface and groundwater resources - can be traded separately from the land (5). The imperative is that water can only be used by who owns the corresponding water rights. The Water Code demolished the existing institutional structure and stimulated the creation of a parallel water rights’ market, permitting a free and permanent allocation without restriction of volumes that could preclude its concentration in a few hands.

In 1992, former Chilean president Patricio Aylwin proposed to the Congress a bill to limit water rights’ concessions and previewed their restitution to the State where title holders didn’t use them. The Congress needed 13 years to reach an agreement. The law 20.017 modified the Water Code but the water rights’ restitution to the State was considered a “socialist recipe” and was replaced by a “penalty for non-use”.

This unusual act implied two paradoxes. On the one side, for the first time those holders of water rights who didn’t use water had to pay more than those who consumed it. The “penalty for non-use” forced water rights’ holders to use water, and it created the conditions for making the wasting of it more convenient than its preservation and avoidance of misuse. On the other side, the reform allowed a further concentration of water rights in few hands.

According to a research published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (CEPAL), in central Chilean regions like Valparaiso and Coquimbo, the selling price of water rights can be up to 22 times higher than the fine for not using it. As a consequence, a lot of water rights holders prefer to pay the penalty to keep water rights until their price rises, and therefore, gaining more money later on.

This system has nothing to do with trading real quantities of commodified water for agriculture or urban

services. Rather, it is a financialised market where water rights are sold and bought with the only purpose of accumulating profit. In times of water scarcity or when its demand rises because of, for example, the expansion of industrial mining activities, those rights acquire more value so that the opportunities to profit in the financial markets increase. The impact of this process is absolutely real: the price of water is one of the highest in Latin America, many rural and urban people lack access to water, and water rights holders are increasing their political and economic power, which enables social control.

Implications

The implications of both commodification and financialisation of water for local communities and the environment are real, very real. Finding out where they differ and where financialisation of water hides, and how it relates with the larger transformation of nature into profitable financial assets, has considerable importance in terms of organizing and support communities struggling with the consequences. Understanding these processes is also important for understanding how we can contribute to reverting them.

Water is increasingly being financialised through the creation of asset classes based upon the commodity "water" (as in the case of carbon, forests, oil, food etc.). This process is closely linked to the logic that is allowing the generation of new "virtual" commodities through "offsetting mechanisms" that are based on the control of territories to a larger extent. This opens up an almost unlimited horizon for potential financial profit and therefore, this calls upon civil society organizations acting in solidarity with impacted communities worldwide to re-think traditional campaigning and advocacy methods.

In this wider framework, nature in its entirety is at stake. And the "offsetting mechanisms", trading "ecosystem services", the principle of "natural capital", the "green bonds", the "conservation credits", the "biodiversity banks" and all the related mechanisms and facilities which are based on the idea of putting a price on specific elements or functions of nature are becoming real challenges. These are coupled with the perverse logic and the policy frameworks that are being developed to facilitate the appropriation of nature and territories by today's financial capital. Unveiling the logic explains why these mechanisms must be rejected, plain and simple.

From this changing scenario, new questions arise, which might be useful to try to collectively address: what does this shift imply for communities? To what extent does this scenario represent an opportunity for alliance building to oppose and revert the financialization process? Confronted with this new complexity, how do we effectively identify the targets of our actions? Who do these new logics and mechanisms really benefit? How do we effectively confront them?

These questions are urgent to address, as they are key to advancing the critiques of the wider "financialisation of nature". And by answering these questions we can slowly identify, together with those impacted, the possible strategies to reverse this devastating trend.

Further reading: "Financialization of Water", Re:Common, 2014,
http://www.recommon.org/eng/financialization-of-water-meeting/

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PEOPLES IN ACTION

Maputo Declaration of African Civil Society on Climate Justice

Climate justice advocates and community and movements' representatives met in Maputo, Mozambique from 21-23 April 2015 to reflect on the roots, manifestations and impacts of climate change on Africa and on the responses needed in the face of the crises. The conference agreed, among others, to reject false solutions to the climate crisis, like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), industrial tree plantations, genetic engineering, agrofuels and geoengineering, See full declaration at:
https://ja4change.wordpress.com/2015/05/19/maputo-declaration-of-african-civil-society-on-climate-justice/
The meeting also prepared a "Reader" that includes various articles reflecting on the green economy, UN climate negotiations, agribusiness and fossil fuels in relation to climate change, among others. Read the "Reader" here:

Dakar to Tunis: Declaration against water and land grabbing

The Africa Social Forum that took place in Dakar in October 2014 released the Declaration against Water and Land grabbing, which affirms that “land grabbing is always accompanied by water grabbing”. During the World Social Forum in Tunis in March 2015, the dialogue among African groups continued with movements and organizations from all over the world in order to broaden this convergence. The privatization of water utilities and management, the contamination of water brought about by mining, the eviction of communities for dams, the militarization of access to water points, the dispossession of fishermen and shepherds of their livelihoods, and the penalization of water poverty, are some of the instances where water is being grabbed. Groups are calling upon civil society and social movements worldwide to engage in this discussion, to strengthen this declaration and support its demands.
See full article at: http://farmlandgrab.org/24085

Brazil: Three indigenous leaders and forest defenders were murdered

Three indigenous leaders were ambushed by gunmen hired by loggers and landowners, as reported by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI). These deaths would respond to a revenge for actions and measures that different ethnic groups in eastern Brazil have been carrying out in recent years to eradicate deforestation in their territories. Cleber Cesar Buzatt, Executive Secretary of CIMI, said “these crimes are not isolated; they are within a macro political context of a long process of incitement to hatred and violence against indigenous populations”. Read the full article (in Spanish) here:
http://servindi.org/actualidad/130418?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Servindi+%28Servicio+de+Informaci%C3%B3n+Indigena%29

Guatemala: neighborhood action against dams that deprive communities of water

Communities of the middle and lower basins of Madre Vieja River on the Pacific side of Guatemala are being deprived of water because of dams built by companies planting African palm and sugar cane. Neighbors and organized communities - some of them belonging to the International Redmanglar Network - have repeatedly claimed that these companies are using, retaining and diverting water for their large-scale plantations. “They want us out of our communities to continue expanding the plague of sugar and African palm, they want to dry the mangrove in order to justify the advance of monoculture into this important ecosystem,” they state. Given the lack of response from the authorities and companies, and the despair due to the lack of water, in April 2015, the communities decided to take direct action: with picks and shovels they opened four dams to free the passage of water. Members of the various communities monitored the slow return of the river that after three months regained its natural course. Upon arrival of the river at the sea, they celebrated. See note (in Spanish) at:
http://cpr-urbana.blogspot.com/2015/04/denuncian-que-monocultivos-privan.html

ProSavana Plan in Mozambique is out and threatening peasants’ land and water

Peasants in northern Mozambique are struggling to keep their lands and water sources, as governments and foreign

companies move aggressively to set up large-scale agribusiness projects. The long-awaited ProSavana Plan for agribusiness development in the Nacala Corridor, inspired by the so-called “successful” agribusiness development in the Brazilian Savannah (cerrado) region, is out. Although the Plan is dramatically different from a leaked early draft due to civil society pressure, it still fails to discuss the contentious issue of land grabs and land conflicts. The Plan sees families using more of their land permanently (eliminating rotation systems), raising productivity through “improved seeds and fertiliser” while increasing area with tractor ploughing. The Plan says nothing about the amount of lands that foreign investment is planning to take. It also does not address the urgent water crisis that this agribusiness model has left in Brazil, where serious problems in the water supply are affecting urban centres, ignoring research done by several Brazilian researchers making a direct link between water scarcity and large-scale deforestation due to agribusiness expansion. See note here: http://www.clubofmozambique.com/solutions1/sectionnews.php?secao=business&id=2147488847&tipo=one

A new report from the NGO GRAIN provides detailed information about cases of land grabbing for agricultural production that are already occurring in the Nacala Corridor. It exposes some of the key players involved and shows how foreign investors and their industrial model of agribusiness are wreaking havoc on the local peasant communities and their food systems. These land grabs provide a clear picture of the kind of "investment" Mozambican peasants can expect from ProSavana. See report here: http://www.grain.org/article/entries/5137-the-land-grabbers-of-the-nacala-corridor

Bolloré and Socfin count their profits in Luxemburg while conflicts persist in their African and Asian plantations

While the shareholders of Socfin hold their annual general meeting at the Bel-Air Hotel in Luxembourg on 27 May, 300 people from six affected villages gathered to protest Socfin's failure to respect its commitments in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, and 250 representatives of 13 villages affected by the Socfin plantation in Côte d’Ivoire also mobilized. Earlier, on 16 May, 300 people gathered at the LAC plantation headquarters in Liberia, while 400 mobilised to blockade the Dibombarri plantation in Mbongo from 23 to 28 April. The International Alliance of Plantation Communities demands that Socfin give back the rights to use lands that the communities consider essential to their livelihoods. See full note: http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/24960-in-luxembourg-bollore-and-socfin-count-their-profits-while-conflicts-persist-in-their-african-and-asian-plantations

RECOMMENDED

What future for the world’s forests?

The new issue of the “World Rivers Review”, a magazine from the NGO International Rivers, includes reports about worldwide violations against indigenous peoples for defending rivers and rights; a reflection on the created challenges by framing dams as “solutions to climate change”; and asks what a healthy river means from different perspectives. Currently, no less than 3,700 hydropower projects are under construction or in the pipeline worldwide. See magazine at: http://www.internationalrivers.org/files/attached-files/wrr_april_2015final.pdf

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New publication warns against the

impacts of agrotoxics on health

People may be exposed to excessive levels of agrotoxics at work and through food, soil, water or air. Through the pollution of groundwater, lakes, rivers and other bodies of water, agrotoxics can pollute drinking water supplies, fish and other vital sources to human welfare. The “Alert about the impacts of agro toxics on health” is a huge contribution to the fight against silence. This publication, with over 600 pages, collects information on hundreds of books and articles published in national and international journals, which reveal the scientific evidence and the direct correlation between agro toxic use and health problems. As the preface states, this publication "calls out against the institutionalized lie; calls out to denounce the horror caused by the lethal use of agro toxics in Brazil; calls out to echo the cry of the victims of this horror. To produce it, the Brazilian Association of Collective Health (ABRASCO, for its Portuguese acronym) sets an example of the critical science commitment to structural changes in the society. Access the publication (in Portuguese) here: http://abrasco.org.br/dossieagrotoxicos/

Defending the right to water in Korea

Water justice movements in Asia gathered in Daegu, Korea, for the Alternative Forum “Water for all” on April 13-14 in a common struggle to defend and realize our human right to water and keep water as part of the commons. The Forum challenged “the water privatization and corporatization model that is being imposed on Korea’s public water system and those of many other Asian countries. Already proven as flawed and anti-people, this model of governance that privileges the private sector has continuously been pushed by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other international financial institutions (IFIs), and adopted by governments in pursuit of neoliberal agenda”. Read the Forum’s declaration here: http://www.sentro.org/?p=554#sthash.K2Xpm2yE.dpuf

Squeezing Africa Dry: behind every land grab there is a water grab

Food cannot be grown without water. In Africa, one in three people endure water scarcity and climate change makes things worse. Africa’s sophisticated indigenous water systems are being destroyed by large-scale land grabs amidst claims that Africa's water is abundant, under-utilised and ready to be harnessed for export-oriented agriculture. Most of the land deals in Africa involve large-scale, industrial agriculture operations that will consume massive amounts of water. Nearly all of them are located in major river basins with access to irrigation. They occupy fertile and fragile wetlands, or are located in more arid areas that can draw water from major rivers. A report from GRAIN looks behind the current scramble for land in Africa to reveal a global struggle for what is increasingly seen as a precious commodity: water. Access full report at: http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4516-squeezing-africa-dry-behind-every-land-grab-is-a-water-grab

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