

Conference: Green Urban Commons

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Abstract:

Within the conflictive borderline between city and country: Periurban solidarity agriculture as a strategy of resistance in Colombia

The border between city and country is object of permanent conflicts in Colombia. Different interests are competing about the line between urban and rural sphere whose definition is contested by these actors such as real estate investors who want to build more Gated Communities. Especially the massive urbanization processes are affecting the surrounding area of Bogotá; the expanding flower export industry and mining projects are causing conflicts about the use of land and water. Moreover, the refugees of the country-side, who are displaced by the violence of the civil war, also arrive in these urban peripheries and surroundings of Bogotá. In this situation, their rural origin contributes to processes of spatial exclusion and social discrimination.

The presentation aims to illustrate the extent to which practices of urban and periurban agriculture as well as communal organization into solidarity economies could constitute a form of resistance in such territorial conflicts between city and rural-side. The first step will be to analyze the conflictive Political Ecology of the urban-rural-relations of Bogotá and his surroundings: It is a matrix of competing interests and power relations on different levels. The social movements are fighting for their right to participate in the city and their right to cultivate their own food. One example is the network for food sovereignty called *Red Raíces por la Soberanía Alimentaria de la Sabana*, which brings together different groups of the surroundings of Bogotá, for example migrants and former female workers of the flower agro-business who try to construct an economic alternative by means of periurban agriculture.

The second step is to ask to which extent the projects of periurban and urban agriculture could constitute a form of resistance vis-à-vis dominant productions of space? In this context, the women in the urban gardens appropriate new spaces for action and gain visibility in the public space both in material and discursive ways, e.g. by participating in regional markets in central places or by acquiring voice in the media. Therefore, the collective organized city gardens of the network *Red Raíces* signify an answer to the multidimensional exclusion processes in the conflictive borderline between urban and rural sphere. At the same time, the groups acquire access to spaces where they try to construct economic alternatives and in doing so they reinterpret the traditionally hierarchical relations between city and country-side.

By using the example of Colombia I will show that the initiatives of community-supported-agriculture are not only relevant for countries of the Global North. The conflicts about the right to the city and the construction of economic alternatives in which groups of the city and the country-side are interacting in new partnerships also provide some inspiring lessons about the organizational processes in the Global South.

Speaker:

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Birgit Hoinle is PhD-student in Geography investigating urban agriculture and empowerment processes in Colombia. During the course of her PhD-project she accompanies the network for food sovereignty *Red Raíces de la Sabana* in their process to organize a project of community-supported-agriculture. Birgit Hoinle is member of the research cluster „Great Transformation“ with a scholarship by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. She has worked as lecturer at the National University of Bogotá and the University of Tübingen. She is activist in a community garden project in Tübingen called „climate garden“ and gives workshops about solidarity economy with participatory mappings.