

> Thursday, November 26th, 2023

14:00 – 15:30

> ICOR

RESEARCH SEMINAR



EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

‘INTERNATIONAL MONSANTO TRIBUNAL’S PREFIGURATIVE TRANSLATION: CONNECTING ALTERNATIVE INITIATIVES AND STRUCTURAL IMPACT’

SPEAKERS:

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ABSTRACT

Scholars interested in alternative organizing have been discussing the limits of prefigurative initiatives, based on the present enactment of desired futures, in engaging challenging institutional structures. However, research has yet to fully explore how prefigurative needs and demands can be meaningfully connected to structural impact. Our paper explores the role of translating processes into filling this gap. Through our analysis of the International Monsanto Tribunal, we show how prefigurative translation – i.e. process through which alternative organizing principles are converted into enabling policies and laws – connected prefiguring principles to structuring efforts by bridging alternative voices and negating Monsanto’s damaging actions. As a result of bringing together actors’ sharing similar struggles and horizons and deconstructing current problematic structures, they helped translating their principles and practices into political and legal solutions. Our research contributes to the nascent perspective of social movement organizations as translators by exploring the process through which they help to defend and promote alternative organizing with, against, and beyond entrenched hostile structures. Furthermore, we propose the prefigurative translation role of negating actions as essential to creating “concrete utopias” engaged with real-world struggles and deconstructing problematic translations. Finally, our analysis suggests that, in this process, the presence of “translation arbiters” is important in recognizing, connecting and balancing alternative organizing principles that are traditionally hidden or devalued.