

## SSPARC

### Annual Festival of Social Science 2015

#### **Presentation**

Transforming inequality through agroecological systems

#### **Speaker**

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#### **Abstract**

There is evidence that poor rural peoples can greatly improve their livelihoods by converting from forms of agricultural production which tie them to conventional systems, to ones that are more socially and ecologically fair and responsible, such as those of organic and fairtrade agriculture and more generally those of agroecology [Altieri, 1987, 1995 etc...]. This paper will review the literature and illustrate, with case study evidence, the different possible outcomes of this in practice. Original data from a micro and macro field study carried out among the organic/fairtrade coffee growers of Mexico will be used to illustrate a number of in-built problems. The study was carried out using participatory and interdisciplinary research techniques. The evidence gathered showed that though general immediate conditions for livelihoods are improved overall and doors opened to future improvements from the inside looking out, relative poverty and the ingrained conditions of class, gender and age prejudice still persist within these alternative systems and need to be overcome. Change needs to be driven not just by micro-initiatives but, simultaneously, by appropriate and effective regional, national and global political incentives to overcome the enduring conditions of different types of inequality. Other (regional) studies will be brought in for comparative discussion. Different results are expected especially in cases where wider alternative political initiatives have opened up in response to global neo-liberalism. Conclusions and recommendations are to be drawn on this basis.