

"PROMOTING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN MEXICO: FROM URBAN GARDENS TO MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES"

PHOTO ESSAY

DIGGING IN: FACILITATING DIALOGUE AND ACTION

KEY THEMES AND TERMS

Agronomy, organic agriculture, agroecology, economies of scale, scale of initiative, urban agriculture, *huerto*, community garden, context of violence, food sovereignty, economic viability, inputs, Cosecha en Casa, multinational companies

CATALYZING CONNECTIONS

DECODING QUESTIONS

- *Description*: What did you feel by reading Fernando's story?
- *Personal Connection*: Does this story connect to your personal experience?
- *Common Themes*: What social issues/themes emerge? Is there a common issue that we share?
- *Social Analysis*: What are the historical and social processes that created this situation?
- *Planning for Action*: What can be done? What can I/we do?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Fernando did not learn about organic agriculture while completing an agronomy degree?
- What motivated people to try urban agriculture in Guadalajara? What were the obstacles to its success?
- Fernando suggests that increasing violence in his city was an impetus to start community gardens to bring people together and create community but the insecurity was also a factor that kept people inside and isolated. Are there areas in your town or city that might be considered dangerous or unsafe? What strategies could be used to initiate urban agriculture programs?
- Fernando talks about the challenge of surviving with small scale projects like Cosecha en Casa, of supporting his family, and of spending more time with his

young son. Do you see other young people with similar motives struggling to survive financially and to find a work-life balance?

- How does Fernando's job with the transnational company offer him opportunities to continue training people in agroecology but at a different scale? What are the pros and cons of scaling up?
- What is Fernando's goal in working with farmers who are producing for the transnational? What is his advice to them?

Hands-On Activities

If you live in a city, do a survey of urban agriculture projects in your context. Visit some of the sites and consider: the participants, the safety, the organic methods of production.

According to Fernando, "a good farmer is a farmer who produces soil before producing crops." But he suggests that many "don't know the soil is alive". Pick up a handful of soil and talk about the life within it. View the Legacies video "The Soil is Alive" featuring Fernando and his mentor Dianne Kretschmar, and then talk again about the life within the soil.

INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Fernando met Fulvio Giaonetto of Michoacán through the Legacies exchange. He sees Fulvio's production of organic inputs as one way to lower costs and increase yield. View the Legacies video "The Alchemy of Agroecology" and consider the multiple values of this approach, in economic, ecological and social terms.

When Fernando visited Chandra Maracle at Six Nations in Ontario during the Legacies exchange, he was inspired to organize a community meal with the students he had trained through Cosecha en Casa. Has the tradition of the family or community meal been lost in your context? What cultural practices do you follow around sharing meals?

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

If you are living in a city, research the options for growing food, from indoor, balcony and patio gardens to allotments or community gardens.

Start small and at home. Grow some lettuce or tomatoes in a pot. Or make sprouts in a jar.

Do you have family members or friends who are interested in a more collective process of growing, preparing and/or eating food? Get together and explore possible group projects.

DIGGING DEEPER: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION

VIDEOS

Sánchez, Manuel Antonio Espinosa. "Everardo Pérez Cárdenas: agroecología urbana y posdesarrollo." Universidad de Guadalajara. August 28, 2018. Video, 36:57. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxF3Q3JjAxl>.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

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Altieri, Miguel, Clara Nicholls, and Fernando Funes. "The scaling up of agroecology: spreading the hope for food sovereignty and resiliency." Sociedad Científica Latinoamericana de Agroecología, 2012. https://www.weltagrabericht.de/fileadmin/files/weltagrabericht/The_scaling_up_of_agroecology_Rio.pdf.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "Agroecology Knowledge Hub." Accessed June 24, 2020. <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/home/en/>.

Friedmann, Harriet. "Scaling up: Bringing public institutions and food service institutions into the project for a local, sustainable food system in Ontario." *Agriculture and Human Values* 24, no. 3 (September 2007): 389-398.

Global Alliance For the Future of Food. "Beacons of Hope: Transforming Food Systems." Accessed June 24, 2020. <https://foodsystemtransformations.org/>.

Johnson, Lorraine. *City Farmer: Adventures in Urban Food Growing*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2010.

Joy, LaManda. *Start a Community Food Garden: The Essential Handbook*. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2014.

Rivera, Jairo Restrepo. *The ABC of organic agriculture: phosphites and stone meal*.

Silva, Eduardo González. "La Agricultura Orgánica en México." Mexicampo Internacional. Accessed July 4, 2020.

<https://www.mexicampo.com.mx/la-agricultura-organica-en-mexico-2/>.

The Balcony Gardener. "The Balcony Gardener." Accessed July 4, 2020.

<https://www.thebalconygardener.com/>.

Wilson, Charles and Will Allen. *The Good Food Revolution: Growing Healthy Food, People and Communities*. New York: Gotham Books, 2013.

ORGANIZATIONS

There are many organizations working on these issues. Here are a few. What organizations in your area are promoting urban agriculture and/or agroecology?

American Community Gardening Association. "Home - ACGA." Accessed July 4, 2020.

<https://www.communitygarden.org/>.

Toronto Urban Growers. "Toronto Urban Growers." Accessed July 4, 2020.

<http://torontourbangrowers.org/>.