



Editorial - Food and Cities

"If natural food is expensive, it becomes luxury food and only rich people are able to afford it. [...] Natural food must be available locally at a reasonable price."
Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution*

Urban agriculture: Moving towards food sovereignty?

Nearly a quarter of the world's fresh food is supplied by approximately one billion people who produce fruits and vegetables on urban and peri-urban farms and gardens. While most of this food is consumed by the producers themselves, a substantial part goes directly into urban markets at affordable prices. *Given that over half of the world's economically poor population now live in cities, and given the dangerous volatility of global food markets, this locally-produced food is becoming increasingly important to urban food security.* While much of this urban production takes place in the Global South (e.g., Hanoi: 80% of fresh vegetables, Shanghai: 60% of vegetables, 100% of milk, 90% of eggs, 50% of pork and poultry; Dakar, 60% of vegetables, 65% poultry and 50% milk; Accra, 90% of fresh vegetables; Havana: 2438,7 hectares produce 25000 tons of food each year), increasingly, urban food production is taking root in Northern cities among underserved marginalised groups. In producing their own fresh food, urban communities **are improving their diet and their incomes.** With the recurrent global food price crises, urban agriculture is increasing, as is processing and distribution, and the gradual shift toward **local control over the food system.**

Eric Holt-Gimenez, *Food First*

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

page 2



A world of cities

In 2008 for the first time in human history, the world's population became more urban than rural. At present 3.6 billion people (of a total of seven billion) live in urban centres¹. By 2030 this figure is predicted to increase to almost five billion, with urban growth concentrated in Africa and Asia². This represents a radical social, economic and cultural shift. Access to fresh and nutritious food in big urban centres is already a major problem. **The current global food system fails** – for several reasons - to provide access to healthy and affordable food to city dwellers. Some of the causes of the current situation are: high prices of foodstuffs especially due to *speculation; food deserts* and a lack of availability of local food products; the *concentration of power* in the hands of intermediaries and transnational corporations (TNCs); and local communities being denied *access to land and natural resources*, etc... **Urban Agriculture** (UA) began to gain popularity in the 1970s as one of the answers to this failing food system. Urban and Peri – urban Agriculture (UPA) can be defined as *"an activity that produces, processes, and markets food and other products, on land and water in urban and peri-urban areas, applying intensive production methods, and (re)using natural resources and urban wastes, to yield a diversity of crops and livestock"*³.

1 - *World Urbanization Prospects - The 2011 Revision*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/WUP2011_Highlights.pdf

2 - *State of World Population 2011*, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

3 - Smit et al, UNDP, 1996, *Food, Jobs, and Sustainable Cities*.

Who we are

In the last years hundreds of organizations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organizations were present in the Nyéléni Forum 2007 and feel part of a broader Food Sovereignty Movement, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organizations involved: Development Fund, ETC Group, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, Roppa, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Veterinarios Sin Fronteras.

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Food webs are still strong



In the world there are 1.5 billion peasants on 380 million farms; **800 million more growing urban gardens** [producing 15-20 percent of the world's food]; 410 million gathering the hidden harvest of our forests and savannas; 190 million pastoralists and well over 100 million peasant fishers. At least 370 million of these are also indigenous peoples. **Together these peasants make up almost half the world's peoples and they grow at least 70% of the world's food.** Better than anyone else, they feed the hungry. [...] Most of the world's food doesn't follow a chain; food [still] moves within a web: peasants are also consumers who exchange with one another; urban consumers are also peasant producers growing and exchanging food; farmers are often fishers and foragers and their lands exist within an ecosystem with multiple functions. **85% of the food that is grown is consumed within the same eco-region** or (at least) within national borders and most of it is [still] grown beyond the reach of the multinational chain. (From *Who will feed us?* ETC Group, 2009)

Against the crisis: the potatoes movement

In Greece, where the population is suffering from the economic crisis and associated austerity measures, we are seeing the emergence of **new solidarity – based on links between the countryside and the cities.** On one hand, part of the population, affected by skyrocketing unemployment rates, cannot anymore afford healthy food and is subsequently **heading back to the rural areas to cultivate the fields as a source of self-subsistence and irregular income.** Some researchers say that the rate of active population employed in the agricultural sector may have already grown from 10% to 13% in two years. On the other hand, **those who preferred to stay in the cities are organizing themselves.** The so called potatoes movement has kicked off: people from the same neighbourhood get together and send large collective orders directly to producers. They also organise the distribution themselves. Some of the distribution can represent up to ten 35-tons trucks. Pierre Besse, a French farmer who visited Greece two times this year as part of an exchange program between *Community Supported Agriculture* activists, was surprised and impressed: *"this food is not always organic and it is not always local. They are simply potatoes, for which people can no longer pay the prices at which they are sold in supermarkets. Through the potatoes movement, consumers get potatoes at half price, and producers are paid twice as much"*. The movement started with potatoes and vegetables, but now it includes other products: meat, olive oil, rice, etc. In the last few months it has also obtained local authorities' support.

Urban and rural, opposite or complementary?

The industrialisation of food production processes since the 1950s have resulted in an **increasing disconnection between cities and the places where food is produced.** Especially the availability of **cheap oil** (for transport and machinery) has contributed to the transition from a city connected to and dependent on the availability of local resources to a much bigger and sprawled city completely isolated and detached from its rural environment⁴. This shift, combined with *steady migration to urban centres* (every day about 190.000 people move to cities from the countryside), has generated new food distribution models and new types of intermediaries, such as hypermarkets and other large-scale food retailers. It has also led to a **concentration of power over food production and distribution** in the hands of TNCs which aim to control all the phases of the modern "food chain", from the farm gate to the shopping trolley. By consolidating their position of power, they aim to further separate producers from consumers and to develop a food culture that traps consumers. Even if small scale food producers still provide 70% of the food available in the world and peasants food webs (box - *Food webs are still strong*) are still widespread, TNCs are pushing to gain more space and power.

In poorer countries, this process contributes actively to an increase in *urban hunger*. Although most of the world's poor remain in rural areas (at least 70 per cent of the world's very poor population is rural⁵), hunger is migrating with people into the cities. Rural families move to urban centres to find better opportunities for employment, housing and education, but they do not always succeed. Access to food is a major problem, as many poor families do not have enough money to buy food (poor urban households spend from 60 to 80 percent of their income on food⁶) and do not have access to land to grow their own food. *Consequently, these households often resort to eating the cheapest food available – food which is the end product of agroindustries and has little or no nutritional value.*

In richer countries this situation has created so called "*food deserts*", areas where it is impossible to find local and fresh foodstuffs. **In both instances, city dwellers are deprived of their right to healthy and culturally appropriate food,** and as a consequence diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart conditions have become more and more common. For example in some Asian countries poor working-class families turn to low quality instant noodles (which have negative health affects⁸) when there is a rise in food prices. Instant noodle consumption is so linked to poverty that it can be used as an economic indicator: their consumption increases as incomes fall⁹.

Urban Agriculture and short distribution channels

Since the Seventies Urban Agriculture projects have been thriving around the world, especially in the South where Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture (UPA) is a "*survival strategy*" against poverty but increasingly also in the North. *Everywhere communities are reclaiming disused land to grow vegetables and raise animals.* UPA is not only **a source of fresh food** for many city dwellers but also **a means of income for numerous poor people.** The creation of community gardens and city farms empowers communities and neighbourhoods, and gives people back the right to decide what they eat. It creates *convivial and safe spaces* in the urban centres for sharing experiences, learning together and for bringing back to life local traditions, such as the use of medicinal plants. Furthermore UPA is a way of *protecting the environment* – through increasing biodiversity, the preservation of local seeds, the reuse of urban waste and the managing of grey water for irrigation.

If on one hand cities and their surroundings are blossoming with vegetables and animals, on the other many *initiatives have also developed since the 1960s to bridge the gap between urban and rural* and to restore the link between food consumption and food production in peri-urban areas. The Japanese example of *teikei*, long-term and direct cooperative systems between urban family mothers (frightened by food scandals) and peri-urban organic farmers, is often presented as the first local and solidarity-based partnership between producers and consumers. 50 years later, there are some signs that these movements are experiencing a new and exponential growth in the last ten years. Even if there is no study yet to confirm it, there are common trends that seem to emerge everywhere.

Food, a right not an asset

As we have seen, the current industrialised food system exacerbates the urban and rural division, and it affects especially marginalised communities in urban areas, which end up facing constant food insecurity. **Access to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is a human right and no one should live without enough safe food because of economic constraints or social inequalities.** It is essential that marginalised groups get involved in all projects that enable communities to reclaim control over the production and distribution of the food they eat.

4 - Lopez Garcia D., *Canales Cortos de Comercializacion como elemento dinamizador de las agriculturas ecológicas urbana y periurbana*, 2011

5 - *Rural Poverty Report 2011*, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), <http://www.ifad.org/rpr2011/report/e/overview.pdf>

6 - FAO, *Greener cities*, <http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greencities/en/whyuph/index.html>

7 - A *food desert* is an area, typically a populous urban environment, in the industrialized world where healthy, affordable food is difficult to obtain.

8 - An example from Malaysia,

<http://www.consumer.org.my/index.php/food/nutrition/132-stay-away-from-instant-noodles-to-keep-healthy>

9 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferior_good



Worldwide there are good examples of this engagement, such as community gardens in cities' marginalised areas; urban farms created by specific groups (such as the *Detroit Black Food Security Network*, USA¹⁰), soup kitchens and "mensa populares" in the poorest neighbourhoods of big cities (such as 10.000 community meals centres in Lima, Peru organised in the federation CONAMOVIDI) or several *community supported agriculture* (CSA) schemes. In France for example, the CSA "*De la Ferme au quartier*" of Saint Etienne relies on a sliding scheme: **people contribute proportionally to their income**. The mechanism to be sustainable requires the participation of wealthy consumers and strong links to the poorest areas of the city. So farmers' unions, republican, catholic, protestant and muslim associations have joined their forces to help the CSA create a wide network of people participating in the project.

The urban side of Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty¹¹ has a rural and an urban dimension¹². Both dimensions need to move toward a "new"¹³ model of cities. The link between every urban centre and its rural environment needs to be re-established and reinforced. **Instead current agricultural and trade policies support industrial farming worldwide**. From soya plantations in Latin America which feed animals in Europe¹⁴, to the aggressive trade agreements¹⁵ which force countries to buy subsidised overproduction of meat, grains and dairy, the international food system is geared to ensure that urban areas buy from global food traders, not from their local hinterland. *In response, city dwellers and small food producers have started to reclaim control over the production and distribution of their food, and are showing the direction which policy needs to take.*

Short distribution channels which bring local foods into urban areas and restore the centrality of farming families in food webs are one of the solutions. These channels can take *different forms* depending on local needs and on the communities involved, such as farmers' markets, farmer shops, *Community Supported Agriculture* schemes, consumer/producer groups, food cooperatives and other initiatives.

Another way to increase the proportion of local and regional food in cities is through **public procurement** for institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools and university canteens.

Urban and Peri-Urban agriculture can work against poverty and to improve our cities and the environment. Local authorities should promote it through specific strategies: abandoned land and plots can be offered to communities for food production; along with education on how to recycle urban waste and grey waters, save seeds, rotate crops and grow them without chemicals and so on.

Above all, **farmers need to be kept on the land** and those near cities need to be directly engaged in providing food for those urban areas. Specific policies and collectively managed infrastructure and transport can sustain these producers. The rural exodus is happening mainly due to the difficulties of making a living in rural areas, but this situation can be reversed. For example the *Ministry of Rural Development* in Brazil has created several programs for family farmers to access knowledge, credit, markets, etc. One of these is a public procurement scheme created in 2003: the *Food Acquisition Program* (Programa De Aquisição de Alimentos – PAA). The program addresses the issue of lack of access to markets for family farmers. It gives farmers a guaranteed purchase of specific quantities of products at specific prices that make thousands of farms economically viable¹⁶.

Rural communities can thrive once again together with better and greener cities.

10 - <http://detroitblackfoodsecurity.org/>

11 - The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods.

12 - For more check Veterinarios sin Fronteras, *Acercar el campo a la urbe*, https://www.veterinariossinfronteras.org/news/es_ES/2011/10/14/0001/acercar-el-campo-a-la-urbe

13 - "New" with some previous/former characteristics.

14 - Nyéléni newsletter Num.2 http://www.nyeleni.org/DOWNLOADS/newsletters/Nyeleni_Newsletter_Num_2_EN.pdf

15 - *The Global Food Challenge*, 2009 <http://www.fian.org/resources/documents/others/the-global-food-challenge/pdf>

16 - *Agroecología: única esperanza para la soberanía alimentaria y la resiliencia socioecológica*, Socla, Junio 2012. http://agroeco.org/socla/archivos_documentos_claves/Socla-Rio+20-espanol.pdf

Urban land-grabbing

Over the last ten years foreign governments and private firms have been increasingly investing and acquiring large surfaces of fertile land in other countries – especially in Africa and Asia. Land grabs occur when governments allow outside investors to push small food producers and local communities off their territory to establish plantations for growing food for export, fuel and tree crops (in order to benefit from one of the several market mechanisms invented on the false pretext of fighting climate change) or just to ensure access to limited natural resources, such as water. Often a land grab is simply about investing and speculating on land, an asset less volatile than many others, especially since the financial crisis. *Researchers studying the global phenomena have not yet found any benefits for local communities resulting from these land grabs.* On the contrary, uprooted from land and livelihoods, poor rural people are generally forced to migrate – often to the cities'. Since the crisis, land grabs are not only taking place in poor countries, but are increasingly growing in many urban centres worldwide¹⁷. **Because of land-grabbing and real-estate speculation, housing insecurity amongst urban populations is rising, victims are evicted or forced into high-risk zones.** Public land is passing to private hands, and housing rights are often violated. *Land - rural or urban - is more than just land; it is the space where community decisions are taken and where social, economic and cultural values are shared. It is more than a commodity, it is territory¹⁸ – it is home.* Family farmers, artisanal fisherman, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, networks of inhabitants¹⁹ and city-dwellers are struggling together against these abuses.

Join the Zero Eviction campaign!

At this very moment, a billion people all over the world are either threatened with homelessness or living in bad housing conditions, due to large-scale investments of financial and real estate capital, social, economic and racial discrimination, wars and natural disasters. http://www.habitants.org/zero_evictions_campaign

I - For more on *land grabbing*, Nyéléni Newsletter Num 0 and Num 9.

II - An example of urban land-grabbing, *Detroit: A Tale of Two... Farms?*, E. Holt Jimenez, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-holt-jimenez/a-tale-of-two-farms_b_1660019.html

III - For a definition of "*Territory*" check the Nyéléni newsletter Num.0 http://www.nyeleni.org/DOWNLOADS/newsletters/Nyeleni_Newsletter_Num_0_EN.pdf

IV - International Alliance of Inhabitants, <http://www.habitants.org/>

Voices from the field

Urban organic farming in Cuba

Fernando Funes Aguilar, Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forestry Technicians (ACTAF), La Habana, Cuba

In the last two decades Urban Agriculture has been a successful national program based on agroecological principles. Without any background in urban agriculture, the movement began cultivating roofs, balconies, tires, and disused tanks. The State started to grant areas to the population resulting in a massive response from Cuban citizens. UA began to grow in backyards, orchards, permaculture designs, gardens and bigger spaces in the form of: organopónicos*, intensive gardens, plots, suburban farms, protected and semi protected crops. New farmers started to produce vegetables for their families and to sell the surplus in the neighbourhood. Those efforts created, in less than 20 years, a strong movement. Also, thanks to the *National Program of Urban Agriculture* promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, the production of vegetables, fruits, eggs and small livestock, has multiplied more than a thousand times in a few years,

UA now involves more than 450 000 people. Organopónicos, intensive gardens and semi protected urban crops are producing an average of 1.3 to 1.4 million tons and all types of UA produce approximately 4.5 to 5.0 million tons. Pests and diseases control is based on biological control, repellent plants and a wide use of crop rotation and polycropping, without using any chemicals. Soil conservation and improvement practices are broadly used. **Cuban UPA produces about 75% of the vegetables and fresh condiments of the country.** It is contributing to cover the vitamins and mineral necessities of the population. UA guarantees vegetable supplies to infant circles, maternity and retirement homes, primary schools and hospitals, etc. Our population has access to local and culturally appropriate food and is well-nourished. Health and education services and Urban and Peri-urban agriculture have contributed significantly to these achievements.

*They are systems of urban organic gardens. They often consist of low-level concrete walls filled with organic matter and soil, with lines of drip irrigation laid on the surface of the growing media.

Improving livelihoods through permaculture

John Nzira, UKUVUNA Urban Farming coordinator and director South Africa has already more than 60% of its population that live in cities and as most of the rest of the continent, urbanisation is expected to continue booming in the near future. Most of this increase will be felt in 'townships', poor urban living areas inherited from the Apartheid era which were usually built on the periphery of towns and cities and reserved for the non-white labour force. Townships already face immense challenges in terms of basic services (housing, energy, water and sanitation, access to social and health services), unemployment, and HIV/AIDS. Another worrying issue is food insecurity. Currently, urban dwellers largely depend on processed food they source from well established supermarkets and fast food chains, which not only have consequences on their health (obesity and diabetes have become public health issues in South Africa) but also on the household finances, as most of their money is spent on food. Urban Agriculture is gaining popularity not only as an element in urban food supply systems but also as a livelihood strategy in South Africa. Ukuvuna Urban Farming was established to contribute through permaculture to the twin challenge of enhancing city dwellers' access to quality food and engagement in productive activities while restoring a healthy living environment. We believe communities are the true medium of change and should take responsibility for feeding themselves and caring for the environment, which is key for healthy, fulfilling

and happy sustainable living in these unpredictable and volatile times. Ukuvuna is a Zulu word meaning 'abundant harvest'. <http://urbanfarming.yolasite.com/> Abalimi Bezekhaya (Farmers of Home) is another UA project in South Africa: <http://www.abalimi.org.za/> and <http://harvestofhope.co.za/>

The fight for food justice is a fight for life

Stephen Bartlett, member of Sustainable Agriculture of Louisville (SAL), the Community Farm Alliance and the Family Farm Defenders (FFD), National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC).

I am proud to be part of the food sovereignty movement right here in the midwestern US city of Louisville, Kentucky. The health of people in this city is suffering because of longstanding economic injustice and racism and chronic marginalisation or a general alienation from the land and the sources of life. People are overweight and obese, with "fast food" style diets full of sugars and processed fats. Diabetes and heart diseases kill or maim many people before their time; even children fall ill. We are working to change that through the tough work of experiential education and community organising. We just completed ten years of summer gardening and cooking and swimming day camps for children, we organise collective agricultural production groups producing and processing foods together. And through a "fresh stop" program in marginalised communities we invite local farmers to provide healthy food at wholesale prices to a "fresh stop" which consumers buy into a week in advance, with subsidised food baskets. This is a fight for food justice but also a fight for life itself. It is the work of many hands and people learning to live our solidarity, with awareness of the structural exploitation of our capitalist system.

THE WORLD IN WORDS

Agrarian Reform and the defence of land and territory

La Via Campesina and Global Campaign on Agrarian Reform delegates from 26 countries took part from July 10 to 15 into the international workshop and seminar on *Agrarian Reform in the 21st century: Building a new vision* in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The final declaration of the workshop outlines some of the key elements of a new vision of agrarian reform and the sovereignty of peoples over their territories. Such as: **the importance of broadening alliances with urban dwellers** threatened with impoverishment and evictions caused by real estate speculation, with peoples *who live under military occupation*, with consumers who face ever higher prices for low quality food, with communities facing eviction by extractive industries, and with rural and urban workers; the importance of prioritize the struggle of youth for access to land; the need to develop new tactics of solidarity and protection against the growing criminalization of those who defend their territories.

To read the full declaration check http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1316:-bukit-tinggi-declaration-on-agrarian-reform-in-the-21st-century&catid=23:agrarian-reform&Itemid=36

Urban Social Forum:

Defending the common goods for the future of cities and territories

Over than 250 local, national and international inhabitants' organisations and networks participated into the second *Urban Social Forum* from the 3rd to the 7th of September in Naples, Italy. **The participants engaged in the struggle for decent living conditions** in cities and territories and the forum declares to be collectively committed to defending the right to cities, land and common goods. The forum denounced the failure of neoliberal policies, the stigmatisation of the victims of the current crisis and the criminalization of homeless people, among others. It committed in the rebuilding of beautiful and inhabitable cities and lands open to all and designed on the principle of "buen vivir"; while rebalancing the city-countryside relationship, recognizing the importance of direct participatory democracy, food sovereignty, the direct and shared management of common goods and their defence through responsible resistance.

Read and sign the declaration: http://www.habitants.org/the_urban_way/inhabitants_at_the_usf-wuf/subscribe_the_usf_call/subscribe_the_usf_call_defending_the_common_goods_for_the_future_of_cities_and_territories

Killings worldwide – the toll of land grabbing

A new report from Global Witness "A Hidden Crisis? Increase in killings as tensions rise over land and forests" highlights the intensification of violence against land, forest and mining activists around the world. Global Witness counted the numbers of people killed over the past decade (years 2002-2011 inclusive) defending their human rights or the rights of others related to the environment, specifically land and forests. Across the world, the research found 711 individuals reported as killed in the past decade – an average of more than one killing per week. Of these, 106 people were killed in 2011 – nearly twice the death toll in 2009. It includes those killed in targeted attacks and violent clashes as a result of protests, investigating or taking grievances against mining operations, logging operations, intensive agriculture including ranching, tree plantations, hydropower dams, urban development and poaching. The briefing shows that there is an alarming lack of systematic information on killings in many countries, and no specialized monitoring at the international level. These figures are therefore likely to be a gross underestimate of the number and extent of killings. The investigation also reveals that the countries with the highest reports of killings are Brazil, Peru, Colombia and the Philippines. The survey did not find high levels of killings in Africa. The interpretation is that this could be due to lower levels of rights awareness and reporting activity in rural areas of the continent. To read the whole article, <http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/180/viewpoint.html#3>

To read, listen, watch and share

- Eric Holt-Giménez, Yi Wang and Annie Shattuck, *The Urban and Northern Face of Global Land Grabs*, 2011, <http://www.usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/research-publications>
- Food Chain Workers Alliance, *The hands that feed us*, 2012, <http://foodchainworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hands-That-Feed-Us-Report.pdf>
- Material, papers and reports on UPA in the webpage of the RUAF foundation, www.ruaf.org
- More information on CSAs in the website of the international network Urgenci, www.urgenci.net and <http://blog.urgenci.net>
- To know more about the *International Alliance of Inhabitants* and the building of an *Urban way*, <http://www.habitants.org>
- FAO, *Growing greener cities in Africa*, 2012, <http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greencities/>
- Documentary on the green transformation of Detroit, *Urban Roots*, 2012 <http://treemedia.com/treemedia.com/Wel-come.html>

For reports and more references www.nyeleni.org

One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk. Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877

