

Eating the Planet: The Structures of Foods

Student-Lead Session Plan

Case Study 1:

The Growing Urban Agriculture Community in Shrinking City Detroit

In the United States, the city of Detroit is rapidly shrinking; since the de-investment and presence of the automobile industry thousands of jobs were lost, and millions of citizens with it, leaving Detroit to seek new employment and opportunity (Paddeu, 2017). From this massive economic decline, recent grassroots efforts emerged to bring urban agriculture to the forefront of Detroit, with a mission to reignite economic growth and feed the population, creating a cohesive united community. Farmers markets, local restaurant businesses and neighborhood farms have grown to not only provide new income to its citizens, but a healthier and sustainable diet (Davison, 2017).

Moving Forward

While the urban farming model has proven incredibly useful in revitalizing a city de-industrialized, many factors contributed to the success of this new food structure. A city filled with vacant lots, a motivated grassroots movement and desperate local government fueled the success of urban farming. Outside of this specific collection of factors, questions arise to the practicality of replicating this model to other urban cities across cultures. The success of the Detroit model lacks the presence of an existing food industry, with focus on food structures being comprised of community-based collaboration.

In this context we ask:

- Is urban agriculture possible to implement on the same scale in large, highly populated cities?
- In Detroit, the grassroots movement was supported by a network of non-profit organizations and NGOs. Without the non-profit presence, is urban agriculture practical to recreate in other cities?
- Is urban agriculture a competitive economic industry in cities with pre-established food chains? (i.e. “middle man” grocery chains)
- Detroit was specific to a shrinking city context, which was important to the development of the strong grassroots movement that would ultimately develop its urban agriculture economy. Can grassroots movements like this one be replicated in other large scale cities?
- Political regulation is a secondary component in the development of urban agriculture in this case study. Is it possible to create an urban agriculture economy regulated by government on the state, regional or national level?

Case Study 2:

Urban Agriculture as a Response to the Food Supply Crisis in Kampala, Uganda

Kampala is the capital city of Uganda that is growing and has to deal with food supply crisis. It began with the decline of the formal economy, and low agricultural productivity in rural zone lead to the growing of urban population (Sabiiti & Katongole, 2014). The latter increased the demand for food and it had to be imported. Because of the rising of oil price, it impacted the price of food, leading to inflation. To solve this situation, urban agriculture was seen as an alternative economy. It can serve for many different purposes; to be self-sufficient, as a second job, or even for the high income class to start their own business (Sabiiti & Katongole, 2014). Urban farming became common after its formal political recognition in 2005 (Sabiiti & Katongole, 2014). Since then, we can see for instance education programmes to train women and teenagers. Creativity became a virtue to find solutions to save resources and limit waste (Adler, 2018).

Moving Forward

Unlike Detroit, who was struggling with rapid de-populization, Kampala experienced rapid growth; with urban agriculture resulting from government policy rather than grassroots organizing (Sabiiti, 2014). The high government regulation policy focuses on transitioning urban agriculture from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture, in an attempt to meet the needs of a growing population.

In this context we ask:

- How can urban agriculture be beneficial for both low and high income class?
- Is urban agriculture effective when regulated by government bodies?
- The Kampala government intends to transition urban agriculture to become commercialized forms of income, does this defeat the purpose of urban agriculture?
- In which ways is urban agriculture responding to economic deficiency?
- Since there are different types of urban farmers, how can they be represented in the political decision-making progress?

Sources to Read/Watch:

Case Study 1

- Paddeu, F. (2017) "Legalising urban agriculture in Detroit: a contested way of planning for decline" *The Town Planning Review; Liverpool* Vol. 88, Iss. 1. 109-129.
DOI:10.3828/tpr.2017.9
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314246904_Legalising_urban_agriculture_in_Detroit_A_contested_way_of_planning_for_decline

- Davison, D. (2017) "How Urban Agriculture is Transforming Detroit". *TED Talk*.
https://www.ted.com/talks/devita_davison_how_urban_agriculture_is_transforming_detroit/#t-658883

Case Study 2

- Sabiiti, E. B. and Katongole, C. B. (2014) "Urban Agriculture: A Response to the Food Supply Crisis in Kampala City, Uganda." *The Security of Water, Food, Energy, and Liveability of Cities*. Springer, Dordrecht, 2014. Pp. 234-242.
https://cdn.fsbx.com/v/t59.2708-21/41813469_1366792183454923_4731087410631278592_n.pdf/Urban-Agriculture-Uganda.pdf?_nc_cat=0&oh=66e64ca976df43b9e8b33c3c871d3c71&oe=5BA59076&dl=1
- Adler, Nils (2018). "Rooftop Farming: Why Vertical Gardening Is Blooming in Kampala." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media. Available online:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/19/kampala-uganda-rooftop-farming-vertical-gardening-urbanisation> (consulted the 20/09/2018)

Outline of Student-Lead Session:

- 5 minutes: Brief Overview of the Topic, and division of the room in two, to discuss each case study separately.
 - Group 1 will discuss case study 1, group 2 will discuss case study 2.
- 30 minutes: Groups 1 and 2 will be divided into three groups, each facilitated by a member of our group. The discussion topic will rotate every ten minutes as followed:
 - (1) Social Implications
 - (2) Economic Implications
 - (3) Environmental Implications
 - Questions for each of the topics have been prepared to stimulate conversation and critically evaluate each implication in relation to the case studies.
- Last 10 minutes: Come together as a class and compare both case studies, establishing the pros and cons of each case, allowing room for discussion and debates for each case study.
 - We will draw out charts on the whiteboard to track ideas and critiques as they are brought up in class.