

## **Justice Studies 310 – Food, Hunger and Social Justice**

### **Problem-Based Learning Case #3**

**Submitted by students:**

**Brittany Bec, Jessica Bot, John K. Lwaboshi**

Submitted to

Dr. Gloria DeSantis, PhD, Dept. of Justice Studies, University of Regina

and Anna Dipple, RPIRG Executive Director and

Leonel Elias, RPIRG Green Patch Co-ordinator

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**PBL Case - “We’ve been wondering about gardening around the world (e.g., backyard, front yard, roof top, community gardening, etc.). We have a sense that it is on the increase because more people are becoming aware of big problems with the industrial food system, however, we don’t know for sure about this trend and we don’t know what influences people to get into gardening around the world” (This assignment was co-created by Gloria, Anna and Leonel during the summer of 2016.)**

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## **Introduction**

Food sovereignty is an international movement based on individuals and communities around the world coming together to gain control over their food systems. There are many unique motivations for edible gardening in Canada and around the world. In Tanzania food sovereignty is seen as a human right because it not about gaining profits as much as it is about improving farmers' marketing sector. Awareness of the negative effects of the industrial food system is growing, and giving people the knowledge and motivation to fight for their food sovereignty. The Green Patch is an example of food sovereignty that enables the University of Regina community to gain control over its own food sovereignty.

## **Motivations for Edible Gardening**

### **Canada**

A study done in Mississauga, Ontario based on interviews done in 2011 showed that there are many different motivations for people to garden edible plants (Conway, 2016). These interviews were conducted in multiple neighbourhoods and include people of different economic statuses (Conway, 2016). The most frequently stated motivation was to grow food that individuals could use in their own cooking (Conway, 2016). They enjoyed the convenience of fresh food and growing ingredients that may be difficult to find in a grocery store (Conway, 2016). The next motivation was enjoyment, people used gardening food as a hobby (Conway, 2016). Another influence was that people found it better in taste, freshness, and allowed them to have greater knowledge about how it was grown than store bought produce (Conway, 2016). Parents used gardening as a way to teach their children where food comes from (Conway, 2016). They find that their children are more likely to eat food if they pick it themselves (Conway, 2016). Saving money was the last reason people stated for gardening (Conway, 2016). People

would acknowledge the fact that they could possibly be saving money; however, it was never a major concern (Conway, 2016).

Along with motivations to garden many people did not garden because of the multiple barriers they associated with gardening (Conway, 2016). The greatest barrier was time; this includes time spent planning, planting, weeding and upkeep, as well as harvest of the food (Conway, 2016). Other barriers include animals and pests, lack of knowledge, shade, lack of space, and weather conditions (Conway, 2016).

## **Worldwide**

Throughout the world there are many different reasons and motivations for pursuing gardening in one's backyard or partaking in community gardening. Whether the reason is for food sovereignty and the want for independent growth, or for financial reasons and the want to control what goes into the food that people grow.

According to a recent study, urban gardening has become more popular in different countries globally. The increase in popularity is believed to be attributed to a few factors such as lifestyle changes, social and ecologist movements, critique to globalization, and learning about the impact urban gardens can make on climate change (Ruggeri, 2016). One example of community gardening is in a town in Minnesota where one school is using community gardens as a source of food for the cafeteria to use in meals. It is planted and run by the school and provides an alternative source of food while saving the school a bit of money in the long run (Lund, 2016). In the United States urban gardening alone has an estimated number of 43 million households participating in it. This number is a substantial increase since 2008 when the number was around 36 million households (Ruggeri, 2016).

Outside of the United States, other countries are partaking in the trend of urban gardening as well; however, not for the same reasons. Food insecurity plagues many people living in poorer countries because the cost of food can be too much. Urban gardening is helping the poor to cope with this while also providing them a source of income. A city in the Philippines, for example, is taking initiative to help the poor grow their own food. The mayor of Manila has asked the wealthy individuals living in the city to allow residents to plant gardens on empty patches of the land they may own (Asia News Monitor, 2015). This program not only provides a means for people to grow their own food, it also provides them with the seeds and training on how to garden so that they are more likely to be successful (Asia News Monitor, 2015). This program is allowing poorer people to attain more food for free but it could also be a good way to generate more income for the people who do it.

In a recent study done in Milan, Italy, on the topic of urban gardening, the main motivations for pursuing the program by people was “the desire for healthier food and personal wellness” (Ruggeri, 2016). Gardening and Agriculture in Milan has always been a big part of the city's history. More recently the city is adopting the urban gardening movement by allowing non-profit organizations to create new urban gardens in order to enhance abandoned green areas (Ruggeri, 2016). In 2015, Milan created the “Milan Urban Food Policy” in which 100 cities around the world signed into agreement with (Ruggeri, 2016). This policy’s motivation is to create a sustainable food culture and supply chain through six different areas: governance, sustainable diets, social and economic justice, food production, food distribution, and food waste (Ruggeri, 2016). While people in Milan and other cities are growing food as a political and leisure based activity, the study also found that those living in Eastern European countries pursue urban gardening not for leisure or health but as a coping strategy for the poorer people of the

countries reacting to economic difficulties (Ruggeri, 2016). Meaning, when economic crisis hits these countries a common reaction from the lower class is to pursue gardening because it is almost always cheaper to grow food than buy from the store. This is showcased in a case study of Tanzania agriculture.

### **Tanzania Agriculture**

Tanzania food sovereignty is fundamentally seen as a human right as opposed to a commodity. Tanzania's agriculture is poor due to the fact that they do not have large machines that can produce food efficiently, effectively, and rapidly. However, most foods in Tanzania are organic and are often produced by private sector farmers. Private sector farmers hire volunteers to help them produce the crops. At the end of the year, the private sector farmer would donate some crops to those who had volunteered their work, as their reward.

### **Neoliberalism**

The idea behind private sector farmers in Tanzania is not to eliminate the government or the multinationals. The main concept is for farmers to have control over their own food system. This idealism also gives people more access to food security and the ability to grow their own food at home, such as through gardening. Tanzania private sector farmers focus on the concept of food sovereignty due to the fact that it gives Tanzanians the ability to be in control over their own food system without have to depend to the industrial food system.

### **The Challenges of Globalization**

Tanzania's agriculture is poor because Tanzanians lack the large machines that can produce food effectively and rapidly. For example, the article "The First Mile Project in Tanzania" (2008) by Clive Lightfoot, Helen Gillman, Ueli Scheuermeier and Vincon Nyimbo, demonstrate, that "farmers in Tanzania face challenges when trying to develop access to markets

and thus improve their livelihoods, they lack access to relevant information and knowledge and to communication technologies such as mobile phones, the internet, and e-mail” (14). Although Tanzania is an underdeveloped country, they still keep social peace by acknowledging the fact that food is a right and not a commodity.

Moreover, both public and private sector farmers tend to protect their natural land resources by putting restriction signs up to keep people away from stealing the products. They also protect their natural resources by watering the plants, and fertilizing their gardens effectively.

### **Farmers’ Market and Corporatization**

Tanzania’s farmers’ markets are not just once or twice a week, it is an on-going process. James Barham (2008) states in the article “Collective action initiatives to improve marketing performance” take place and that the “Tanzania farmers’ market primary objective is not competing between private sector farmers but they tend to focus by improving their market situation like producing new products that is beneficial to Tanzania” (p.1). In Tanzania, corporatization of the food system is no longer driven by profits gained through greater economic efficiency because most private sector farmers in Tanzania try to grow their own food in order to maintain control of their own food systems.

## **Industrial Food System Awareness**

### **Canada**

It is evident that people are becoming more aware of the industrial food system because of the increase in interest in food policies. The National Food Policy for Canada proposed by Food Secure Canada is an example of these policies. Food Secure Canada is an organization that

is made up of food activists from all across the country (Kneen, 2011). Its members include organizations such as Food Banks Canada, Dieticians of Canada, National Farmers Union, and many more (Kneen, 2011). The three all-encompassing commitments in which it was founded on are zero hunger, a sustainable food system, and healthy and safe food (Kneen, 2011). People all across Canada are calling for a National Food Policy which is a clear sign that people want food sovereignty.

### **Worldwide**

Canadians are not the only ones in search of change due to problems with the industrial food system. La Via Campesina is an international organization that promotes the rights of small-scale farmers ("La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement", n.d.). It strongly opposes transnational organizations and corporate driven companies that threaten people and the environment ("La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement", n.d.). It promotes food sovereignty and has a major goal of stopping neoliberal ideas of globalization, privatization, and corporate ownership ("La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement", n.d.). Its members are countries all over the world, including Canada, Mexico, Thailand, India, Haiti, Italy, in addition to multiple others ("La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement", n.d.). This is proof that people all over the world are becoming more and more aware of the problems with the industrial food system and that they want change ("La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement", n.d.).

### **The Green Patch**

Food sovereignty is the control over food sources (Wiebe & Wipf, 2011). The Green Patch exemplifies food sovereignty values by educating people on food security and healthy eating habits (DeSantis, Dipple, Elias, 2016). It also teaches people how to grow their own food

(DeSantis, et al, 2016). These are just a few of the values of the seven pillars of food sovereignty (DeSantis, et al, 2016). Even if volunteers help only a small amount, they are still contributing to and showing interest in the larger movement towards food sovereignty.

A few recommendations for The Green Patch to consider for enhancing their food sovereignty include spreading more awareness about The Green Patch. Not enough people are aware of The Green Patch. They could spread awareness through small, five minute presentations that they could present to different faculties at the beginning of class.

The Green Patch buys its seeds from a Saskatchewan company this means the seeds are local and this is a value of food sovereignty. However, The Green Patch also holds workshops on seed saving. If they saved their own seeds this would even further their own food sovereignty because then they would not have to rely on other places for their seeds.

Create more educational programs on how to garden is another recommendation. I feel like one of the major things preventing people from gardening is lack of knowledge on how to create and maintain it successfully in the climate we live in. With more education programs available, people may show more interest in growing their own food, especially if they have people willing to help them do it.

## **Conclusion**

Food sovereignty enables farmers, foodies, and everyone around the world to gain control over their own food system. Food sovereignty within nations allows them to control food production modes, cultures, accessibility, cost, and other factors contributing to food growth and distribution (Wiebe & Wipf, 2011). The Green Patch exemplifies food sovereignty values by educating people about growing their own food. They are teaching people how to grow food to

feed themselves which allows them to start a conversation on the importance of control over food sources. These conversations are important tools for building the path to food sovereignty for individuals, communities, and nations around the world.

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