



A Local Panel Discussion on: The Future of Urban Agriculture in the Alberta Capital Region

Dustin Bajer, Jennifer Cockrall- King and Candace Vanin

February 12th 2013, Art Gallery of Alberta, Ledcore Theater

MY NOTES

Each of the panelists had a short presentation, asked each other questions and allowed the audience to ask questions.

PRESENTATIONS

Food and Edmonton

Jennifer Cockrall-King

PART I: Historical Context

Edmonton has extremely fertile land; settler immigrants would come to the west and settle here based on agricultural yields such as Donald Ross' Vegetable Garden (Picture Below)





Edmonton Horticulture Society is 100 years old (<http://www.edmontonhort.com/>)
In 1940s there was over 4000 vacant lots used for food (Victory Gardens)

PART II: Urban Agriculture and Inspirations from Other Cities

Vancouver

Property taxes are decreased if it is used for agriculture

Kelowna

Small plot intensive farming (<http://www.greencityacres.com/>)

Milwaukee

Two Acres of Greenhouses located in the middle of a food desert with an integrated system.

Montreal

Lufa Farms prototype rooftop garden (<https://lufa.com/en>)

Chicago

First Vertical Farm (<http://www.plantchicago.com/>)

Paris

Urban bee keeping



London

Capital Growth initiative to have 2012 new food growing spaces within the city by 2012 (<http://www.capitalgrowth.org/>)

Inuvik, Northwest Territories

An underused ice rink was converted into a community garden (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/2009/be-eb/nwt-tno-eng.php>)

PART III: Edmonton

Edmonton has:

- Local economic focus
- Restaurants
- Farmers Markets
- “Green, Eggs and Ham” which is a local agricultural company that is not affected by the boom and bust cycles
- “fresh” Edmonton’s Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy

Understanding Edmonton’s Comparative Advantage: Integrating Agriculture and Food Sector into Urban and Regional Areas

Candace Vanin

Agrology

- The Science of agriculture and associated natural resources

Sustainable Development

- “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” – Bruntland Report
- “7 Generations Principle” – First Nations

Land Use

- Classification of human activities impacting a landscape
- Distinct from Land cover and Land Management maps

Extent of Agriculture in Canada

- 10% of the total land mass in Canada is farmable. 80% of that is in the Western provinces.

Soil Zones

Canada land Inventory (CLI)

- Land suitability Rating System (LSRS) which improves on the CLI because it includes climate

Climate

- Alberta is Semi-arid



- Potential evaporation is greater than precipitation because of the Rain Shadow effect of the Rocky Mountains
- Agro-Climate (Scale of 1 to 7)
- Aridity and Heat
- Frost Free Period
- Edmonton has 143 frost free days
- Calgary has 117 frost free days

Water

- Surface water supplies versus groundwater supplies

Demographics

- Cities are growing
- Okotoks is the fastest growing urban region

Food System

- Full and holistic integration of food production to include aspects like water and waste
- Food and Beverage industry is the largest in Alberta

The Future of Urban Agriculture

Dustin Bajer

Ecosystems as a Network

Resiliency of a network

Cities are social networks

History of Agriculture

Fertile Crescent spurred Agriculture which allowed for a surplus of food allowing an elite to manage the food and therefore urban areas were born.

Cities and Agriculture are products of each other.

Cities

50% of the global population lives in cities because for the better opportunities they offer based on the social proximity of distance.

Geoffrey West and The Scaling of Cities

- Physicist
- Kiebers Law
 - Larger mammals use less energy per kg
 - This can be applied to cities and their reduced ecological footprint and energy consumption.

Agriculture

People are leaving rural areas

Leads to larger plots and more input for those farms to be productive



Currently we have a Divided System

Urban Agriculture can mend it through integrating these cities and agriculture can solve each other's problems. Examples:

- Using the built environment to complement agriculture
 - Run off water can be used for irrigation through street design
 - Heat Island creates city micro climates, therefore we can use this to grow different foods
- Put organic waste to use
- Access to Labour and access to farm (now urban) farms

Some problems cannot be solved like pollution or bio-diversity, but urban agriculture can get people to think about it.

PANELIST QUESTIONSJennifer

Is their good agricultural land in the city?

Candace

Yes the North East Farmlands has extremely fertile land within the city limits

Dustin

What can urban agriculture bring to the city other than food production?

Jennifer

Cultural diversity, Toronto has an ethnically diverse food system because of the immigrants. It takes 10 years for a new Canadian to feel like they have the same entitlements as a natural born Canadian, this means they feel like they are on fringes of society but with community gardens they can produce food from their own ethnic background in a community.

Candace

Agro-tourism, which is the fastest growing tourism and it can focus in on the regional or local heritage, which is crucial in the globalising world.



AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

On the topic of the North East Farmland.

Jennifer

With engaged citizenship we could potentially save it, because backtracking is harder to do in the future.

If you had a vision of food in the city, such as a garden on every corner, do you believe it could happen?

Candace

Why not root cellars? This could solve the local food problem with the storage of food and create a connection with food again.

Dustin

Food education opportunities because education is crucial for bringing up the youth with a connection to the food they eat.

Jennifer

If people want something to happen, it will happen

How can we solve the challenges for increased water usage and the cost of transportation of fertiliser and food?

Dustin

We need a holistic and integrated design approach.

Are there any resources for food production?

Jennifer

Community gardens because it encourages communal learning. Seedy Sundays as well is a seed swap and encourages local food resiliency because of local genetic diversity.

To Dustin, does the Edmonton Public School Board take an interest in expanding food education?

Dustin

Partnerships with other schools have been started and the students have visions of setting up the same sort of initiative in other schools.



How do you spread the word of food production?

Dustin

It is like a crack in the pavement that slowly gets bigger through frost heaving and then a seed gets in and grows. It is a step by step process.

Candace

It's about education of knowing where food comes from, not from a bag but from the ground. Unfortunately a crisis is the only thing that will make people change because we are creatures of habit.

Can urban agriculture help with obesity?

Dustin

Yes because if you teach children that if you cannot compost it you should not be eating it then that would help with the problem.

