

Sao Paulo, Brazil

Cities Without Hunger: a community garden project to end São Paulo's poverty cycle

Cidades Sem Fome, a São Paulo-based NGO, promotes urban agriculture in low income neighborhoods of the city. Using existing institutional frameworks, the NGO helps develop urban farming as a means to improve the living conditions of São Paulo's metropolitan inhabitants.

Urban NEXUS Case Story 2014 - 04

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The project in brief

A third of São Paulo's population lives in the East Side, a dense and segregated neighborhood with pervasive unemployment and violence. To empower local communities through alternative economic development and to increase social resilience, the NGO Cidades Sem Fome launched the Community Gardens Project. The urban agriculture project enhances self-sufficiency and sustainability through the improvement of food security, employment opportunities, nutritional awareness, green spaces, waste management and recycling. Greenhouses have been constructed using recycled materials in cooperation with the Hortas nas Escolas (Gardens in Schools), the educational initiative to raise awareness in the favelas. Cities Without Hunger launched its first community garden in 2004, as the result of a number of workshops and active resident participation, today it supports 21 gardens and 666 community beneficiaries.



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What makes it "Urban NEXUS"?

Cities Without Hunger benefits from an institutional Urban NEXUS, supported by a foundation of law and policy to support urban agriculture. The organization receives governmental support at the municipal, state and national levels, civil society and international organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Foundation. The program benefits from preexisting municipal programs and laws such as São Paulo's PROAURP-Urban Agriculture Program, which encourages urban agriculture through the mandatory mapping of idle land for agricultural use. Cities Without Hunger's urban farmers also receive assistance through the National Federal Program for Family Farming.

The Program is coordinated via the São Paulo Environment Secretariat, the Sub-Prefectures Coordination Secretariat, the Supply General Supervision and the Labor Secretariat. Together, these actions are supported by the State Environment Secretariat, the Federal Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, and the Federal Ministry of Environment.

The business plan promoted by the NGO includes the use of organic fertilizers made from composted waste to cultivate crops, 65% of which are allocated for the residents' consumption and the remaining 35% are sold at markets across the city or purchased by the government for school meals. Cooperation between the above-mentioned institutions to promote the reintegration of vacant land into the communities' strengthens food-security and resource efficiency, while fostering synergies between rural and urban farmers through peri-urban, multi-functional areas.

Date	2003-ongoing
NEXUS Sectors	Agriculture-Social-Food-Waste-Economy
NEXUS Innovations	Institutions, Communications + User Behavior, Law + Policy
Scale	City-wide (21 gardens, 666 community beneficiaries)
Budget	US \$511,770

Urban NEXUS Definition

The Urban NEXUS is an approach to the design of sustainable urban development solutions. The approach guides stakeholders to identify and pursue possible synergies between sectors, jurisdictions, and technical domains, so as to increase institutional performance, optimize resource management, and service quality.

It counters traditional sectoral thinking, trade-offs, and divided responsibilities that often result in poorly coordinated investments, increased costs, and underutilized infrastructures and facilities. The ultimate goal of the Urban NEXUS approach is to accelerate access to services, and to increase service quality and the quality of life within our planetary boundaries.

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Scope for improvement

Although the reconversion of vacant land for urban agriculture has multiple benefits, speculation hinders reconversion, as landowners expect greater revenues from potential real estate development, in comparison to using lots for urban agriculture. Moreover, national legal frameworks generally favor rural farmer families over urban ones, mainly through access to affordable credits, thereby missing the crucial importance of urban and peri-urban small scale agricultural productions.

Replication

The challenges faced by São Paulo are similar to many other cities around the world. Such forms of urban agriculture are currently being replicated in abandoned areas of many cities within and outside of Brazil. The project contributes to the creation of a more just, socio-economic urban fabric. However, this can only be achieved through efficient cooperation amongst various institutions and at multiple levels of the government, to facilitate the action of grass-root movements by providing the necessary legal and financial support.

Acknowledgements

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Further Reading

Cities without Hunger official website:
<http://cidadessemfome.org/en/>

Barbisan, T.S. and Giseke, U., 2011, Integrating urban and peri-urban agriculture into public policies to improve urban growth: São Paulo as a case study, Technische Universität Berlin: <http://cdn.cidadessemfome.org/files/2013/07/thiago-soares-barbisan-urban-management-master-thesis-tu-berlin-feb-07022011.pdf> (20 Aug 2014)

GIZ and ICLEI, 2014, Operationalizing the Urban NEXUS: towards resource efficient and integrated cities and metropolitan regions, GIZ Study: www.iclei.org/urbannexus



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