

Planning for Food Systems in Lugo, Spain

By Alfonso Morales, Andres Manuel García, Wim Timmermans, Rafael Crecente, and Ad Woudstra

Recently, a group of scholars and students from universities in the Netherlands, Spain, and the United States were convened in the city of Lugo, Spain to explore how local governments can use scenario planning to address the future challenges of their local and regional food system. The effort was part of the larger F:ACTS! Initiative (Forms for: Adapting to Climate Change through Territorial Strategies!), a partnership of fourteen authorities and agencies from eight countries across Europe that seeks to enhance resilience through the exchange of ideas and practices, case studies, expert coaching, and internships. (Please visit www.factsproject.eu for more information) The effort consisted of a week of lectures, field experiences, scenario development, and public presentations aimed at influencing the City of Lugo to create a local food system that protects green space in the city, fosters food production activities in urban and nearby rural areas, and fosters self-sufficiency and the commercialization of local products. What follows is a report on the week's activities and lessons.

THE TEAM AND THEIR TALENTS

Rafael Crecente, Director of the Master in Sustainable Land Planning program at the University of Santiago de Compostela, and professor Wim Timmermans of Van Hall Larenstein University built on previous collaborations to address food systems planning in Lugo. They recruited Alfonso Morales, an expert in urban agriculture and community food systems from the University of Wisconsin, Madison; Ruth Fleuren and Jos Uljin, experts in landscape architecture from Van Hall Larenstein University; and Ad Woudstra, an expert in public participation and scenario planning, also from Van Hall Larenstein University. A total of twenty-six students attended the study trip.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

Day 1

The week began with introductory lectures by Andrés Manuel García, researcher at the Land Laboratory of the University of Santiago de Compostela, on the administrative organization of Spain, the food and food systems activities

of Lugo. Morales delivered six lectures on community/regional food systems. Ad Woudstra provided lectures on rapid rural appraisal, scenario planning, and the creation of "mindscapes," a process to produce a graphical representation of how users understand the particular qualities of an area. Following the lectures, the students were briefed in interview and observational techniques.

Day 2

On Tuesday morning, the group visited Lugo's public market and attended two more lectures by Morales. In the evening, the students learned how to use mindscapes as part of Rapid Rural Appraisal and scenario planning processes. Woudstra explained how this multi-method approach can be used to develop knowledge and insights associated with the problems and possibilities of a region. The approach's advantages are that it (1) addresses clients' needs, (2) can be executed by multi-disciplinary teams that constantly exchange information, (3) produces results quickly and inexpensively, and (4) delivers reliable data. Providing the community visual and graphical representations of findings makes communication less dependent on written language, enhancing community participation and the comparative exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. Fleuren and Uljin demonstrated Woudstra's point with a graphic that showed the students' concepts and experiences, or their local "mindscapes."

Day 3

On Wednesday, the group toured the O Rato nature preserve and vegetable gardens. Here, students interviewed representatives of the Federation of Neighborhood Associations, an organization that represents about 120 associations, and the O Bandullo environmental organization, which is a member organization of the Galician Association of Urban Gardeners. Students also interviewed the neighborhood association's extension agents, who are employed to support gardeners, and an elected official of the Provincial Council, who is in charge of environmental concerns and renewable energies. The group also visited the O Carmen quarter to view a part of the central city where urban agriculture might be possible.

Next was a trip to the municipal building, followed by interviews with Alberto Rodriguez, an architect and urban planner who is a representative of the Association of Ecological Development of Galicia, a contributor to the food systems efforts. Finally, the group travelled a short distance from the city to visit the Vida de Aldea, a comprehensive dairy/farm/social service operation with rental gardens available to families.

On Wednesday night, Woudstra led the students through the process of conceptualizing key scenario drivers and formulating the scenario drivers. The process involved a debate and discussion that is typical of the scenario planning process and was central to both pedagogical and project goals. From it emerged graphically rich narratives driven by two key predictions: whether the economic crises will deepen or diminish and whether the awareness for local food will grow or not. Four scenarios were constructed:

Day 4

On Thursday, students worked on the scenarios in four multi-disciplinary groups. Some group members created a schematic analysis of Lugo and its surroundings (topography, water, built environment, green spaces), while other students worked on the scenario narratives, paying attention to social and spatial developments. The stories were presented with text and graphics and critiqued by teachers and group members.

Day 5

On Friday morning, students presented their preliminary scenario plans to the assembled faculty. A spirited exchange ensued, scenarios were clarified, and in the afternoon students improved upon the scenario plan for Lugo and created more detailed scenario-driven plans for the O Carmen Quarter in preparation for the public presentation.

Day 6

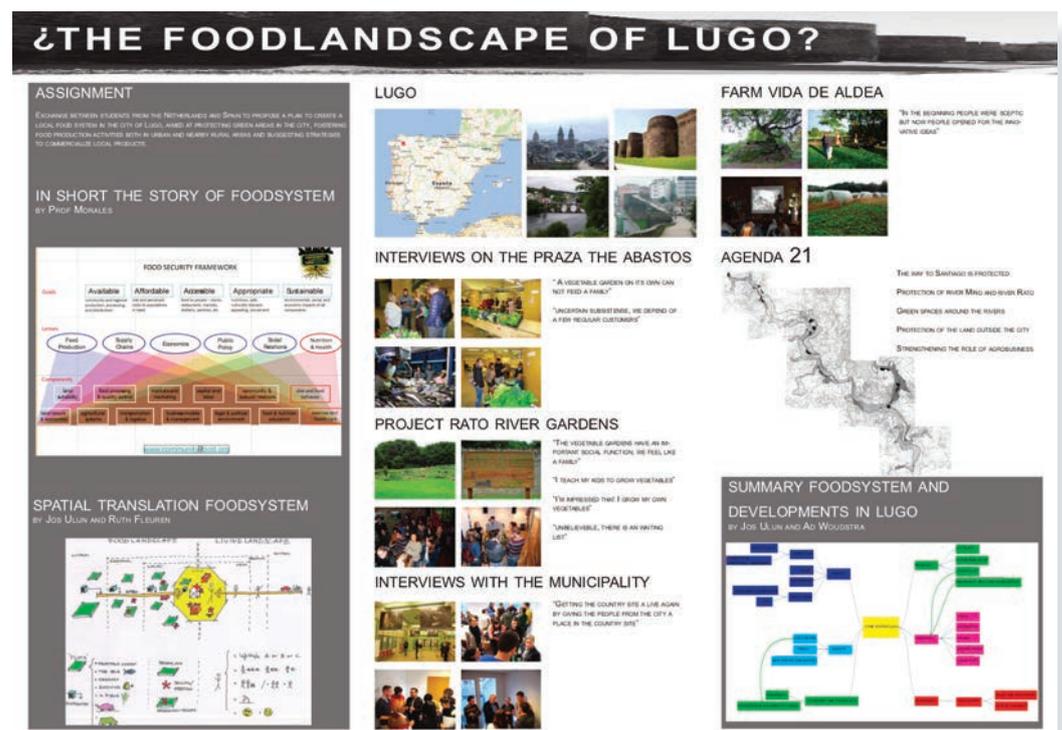
On Saturday morning, each group publicly presented its scenario, printed on A1-sized posters, complete with details of the O Carmen area and another area in which the effects of the scenario could be best demonstrated. Following the presentation, those gathered discussed the scenarios and the Spanish students and scholars organized themselves for follow-up presentations in the region.

SCENARIOS

	Deepening economic crisis	Diminishing economic crisis
Diminishing awareness for local food	Disaster, Disaster	Large Scale Lugo
Growing awareness for local food	Crisis Asks for Creativity	Green Paradise

One example of the posters developed by students who participated in this exercise.

To see the posters, go to: <http://laborate.usc.es/en/news/2012-10-31/conclusions-international-seminar-local-food-systems.html>





CONCLUSION

The global food system has expanded to the point that most food consumed in the industrialized world travels about 1,500 miles from producer to consumer. In Lugo, Spain, a city of about 100,000 residents, the changes behind this development occurred in the mid-twentieth century, much later than in other industrialized countries.

However, typical trends accompanied the broad development, migration from rural to urban, and the intensification of the remaining farms for competition in a globalized food market. The remaining farmers suffer from increased input prices and decreased profit from their products. Today, most employment is in the public sector, services, or the food processing industry. The lifestyles associated with industrial employment and industrialized agriculture have changed consumer habits in Lugo, as they have around the world; the sale of locally produced food has decreased, and more households cook from prepackaged or convenience food offered by large supermarkets at low price.

Nevertheless, the city maintains some of the traditional agriculture that once supported a robust local food system. Further, the region celebrates cultural food practices and some foods from the region enjoy a following. Still, while master plans restrict urban agriculture,

many residents of Lugo still maintain vegetable gardens within the city. Additionally, the city population retains strong familial connections to rural areas with easy access to local products from friends and relatives.

In spite of declining traditional agriculture, initiatives to revitalize the local food system are reemerging, encouraged by existing traditional practices and by new organizations embracing sustainable food systems. The importance of these social and economic drivers and the uncertainty of the future make Lugo a perfect location for using scenario planning to explore the future of the region's food system.

Scenario planning is an important opportunity for planners seeking to capacitate communities to address the food system and other challenges to society. This jointly organized effort shows the possibility for the international transfer of food system knowledge and further the application of scenario planning to food systems problems. Students learned public participation and various skills, and offered a non-threatening and new vision to civil society and government who might otherwise be leery of "expert" advice or consultants with a particular political view or position in local conflicts.

Though Spain, the Netherlands, and the U.S. bear different political subdivisions and land use practices, they share recognizably similar food supply chains, food production practices, and planning methods. In all three countries we find urban gardens, neighborhood associations, and environmental organizations populating the public/private landscape with broadly similar concerns for production, distribution and marketing, and other local/regional food activities.

Likewise, scenario planning is common on both continents. These broad commonalities, further honed by a series of lectures on the food system, facilitated the scenario planning process and made the results understandable in Lugo and its surrounding region. Our contemporary global food system demands globally applied planning techniques and this example capacitates others in meeting this emerging professional responsibility.

Top: Thirty Dutch and Spanish students spent a week learning about the Food System in Lugo. The students pictured are visiting a local fruit and vegetable stand.