



AN INTERNATIONAL
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
INITIATIVE ABOUT FOOD
& FOOD SYSTEMS

/ Mexico /

Mexico City

Transborder Connections, Québec to Mexico and Back Again

Photos: ©Johane Germain

One day after Terra Madre Day, the buono, pulito, giusto just kept on flowing in Mexico City. As I stumbled out of my bright pink taxi and into l'Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez at 11:45 pm on Friday night, I was a little bleary-eyed after a week's worth of rush and activities. The [Eco-Gastronomy Project](#) round-table on Food, Ethics, and Entrepreneurship had taken place the evening before at Camelia Bistronomía. Today, I had met up for a final interview with [Lactography's](#) Georgina Yescas, then sat down with several local academics for a conversation about the state of Food Studies in Mexico. Dinner at [Los Danzantes](#) in Coyoacán followed, after which I jumped into the seatbelt-less taxi that had just deposited me in front of the Aeroméxico terminal. Having just left a set of new Mexican friends (with the remaining traces of our meal of ceviche, [huitlacoche](#) ravioli, and fresh tortillas with guacamole and [chapulines](#)), who should I see at the airport check-in counter but two long-time Slow Food friends, Johane Germain and Carole Moisan.

Johane and Carole, leaders of the [Vallée de la Batiscan convivium in Québec](#), were on their way back from the Oaxaca region in the south of Mexico. They had just spent three weeks there, meeting and consulting with a number of local community leaders working on food and sustainability. Johane is president of SF Vallée de la Batiscan and had been invited to Mexico by her friend, Gerardo Salas González, who had previously visited Québec to learn about [hemp production and its use in eco-construction projects](#). (The community in the Batiscan valley has been focusing on sustainable agricultural products in recent years, in part to fend off problematic hydro-electricity proposals that might threaten the area's ecological balance. Hemp has been a key product for them, because of its hardiness in the region and polyvalent applications, such as oil, seed, and fibre. Other products include edamame [fresh soy beans], spelt, and wild berries.)

Despite the late hour and the oh-so-quiet departure lounge, Johane, Carole, and I quickly dove into recounting stories from our respective Mexican experiences—the new colleagues, great food, and inspiring initiatives that had characterized our stay. Here, in Johane's own words (translated by me), is a brief snapshot of one of the exceptional projects she and Carole were able to witness.

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The stonework canal ↑

↑ Nataniel and Jemina explain the different soil types and the other ingredients in making adobe constructions.

↓ Just behind Carole, two volunteer parents, including Gerardo ↓

↓ Nataniel and Jemina explain the different soil types and the other ingredients in making adobe constructions. ↓

↓ The hen house, made of adobe bricks sitting on a stone foundation ↓

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This project was about creating rich value within a rural context, based on techniques of permaculture and eco-construction. It took the form of a workshop offered to twenty young people, averaging about 14 years of age. During our visit, they were building a hen house. The location is at the extreme southern end of the San Andreas fault, which connects all the way to Alaska. Nataniel and [Jemina](#) are owners of a one-hectare parcel of land near Masunte, which they have started to cultivate with fruits, vegetables, and medicinal plants, all within a forest setting. A major effort, building canals in stonework, had been undertaken as well, in order to capture and store the precious fresh water available on this hilly terrain.

Nataniel and Jemina accepted an offer to partner with the my friend Gerardo’s students. Many of them volunteer their time on this great project that is all about biodiversity and the production of food that is good, clean, and fair. I met Gérardo two years ago already, when he came to Québec for a visit and to talk Slow Food and ecoconstruction using local hemp. [The headquarters of Slow Food Vallée de la Batiscan is itself a building entirely constructed from hemp-fibre bricks—a great insulator that is also low-allergen and highly sustainable.] An engineer by profession, Gerardo conceived and created this alternative school in Zipolite and San Augustinillo. We were very happy to find ourselves there, and to see, in concrete terms, the results of our many discussions.

To stay up to date with Slow Food Vallée de la Batiscan and their many internships, partnerships, and eco-development projects, [follow them on Facebook](#).

D. Szanto & J. Germain
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Montreal and Batiscan, Québec



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