

Experiments in Situ: Soil Repair Practices as Part of Place- Based Action for Change in El Salvador

Millner, Naomi (2023.0)

ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Agroecological networks have long valorized the experience of small-scale farmers and have cultivated processes of in situ experimentation to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of traditional techniques. In this chapter I suggest that this focus on experience and experimentation is vital within broader ecologies of 'mending' environmental damage, and to the ideas of ecological reparation put forward by this book. Specifically, I suggest that the loop of collective reflection on experience afforded by the examples I document in El Salvador allow for a supplementation of official histories with small stories; with purposefully censored collective memory; and with everyday expertise. The case presented in this chapter is engaged in experimental soil repair through composting practices and the creation of 'biofertilizers' – recipes that use local organic ingredients to boost soil health. I show how agroecological approaches to soil repair place campesino expertise at the heart of agricultural innovation and ecological reparation. Together, these fuller archives allow for a wider array of possible solutions to soil damage, while also enabling contestation to take place over stories told over land, ownership, lives, and communities. © 2023 Bristol University Press.