
The organisation of urban agriculture in Cape Town, South Africa: A social capital perspective

Tinashe Paul Kanosvamhira

Abstract

This article explores urban agriculture in Cape Town and its organisational forms. Based on a literature review of peerreviewed articles and grey literature, it examines the state of linkages among urban farmers and various supporting organisations of urban agriculture. Moreover, it examines the coordination of activities among key supporting organisations. By analysing the roles of state and non-state actors and linkages, the article discusses implications for the development of urban agriculture. This article suggests that a lack of effective coordination of initiatives among supporting actors presents a significant pitfall in the development of urban agriculture. Furthermore, the failure of farmers to self-organise is identified as equally detrimental. Therefore, it calls for improved synergies between state and non-state actors involved to ensure that the gains of urban agriculture are enhanced.

1. Introduction

Cape Town has a long history of supporting urban agriculture within its borders (Rogerson, 2010), in fact, it is the only South African city with an urban agriculture policy (Olivier & Heinecken, 2017). Olivier & Heinecken (2017) argue that Cape Town has the most diversified urban agriculture sector, with support from both non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government. Visser (2006) holds that increasing unemployment levels and failure of the economic sector to absorb the unemployed encouraged the city to employ urban agriculture as an intervention strategy to generate jobs and counter poverty. According to Battersby et al. (2014), there are at least 100 NGOs supporting the practice across the city. Notwithstanding, the economic benefits of urban agriculture in Cape Town remain modest (Haysom et al., 2017). One of the factors responsible for this has been identified as the limited coordination amongst supporting actors (Haysom & Battersby, 2016), but from a broader perspective equally important is the organisation of urban farmers (Voleníková & Opršal, 2016). Collective organisation among urban farmers has been recognised as a necessary strategy to ensure access to resources from supporting organisations (Schmidt et al, 2015). Moreover, Voleníková & Opršal (2016) suggest that urban farmer organisation facilitates the lobbying for desired developmental change. In other words, a more unified voice from the urban farmers aids in lobbying for policy development. Consequently, the success of urban agriculture does not lie only in the ubiquity of support but equally

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