

ROLES OF URBAN AGRICULTURE FOR FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION OF IMMIGRANTS: CASE STUDY OF BLACK CREEK COMMUNITY FARM IN TORONTO, CANADA

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ABSTRACT

Globally, urban agriculture has been increasingly recognized as a sustainable planning tool at local-scale, and a growing body of literature suggests urban agriculture's social benefits on urban migrants, such as immigrants and refugees adjusting to new cultural environment. To build a more inclusive society for highly ethno-cultural cities, the potential of urban agriculture must be further studied to be incorporated strategically into a city planning scheme. Due to an increasingly rapid and massive migration, many contemporary cities face numerous challenges in immigrant integration in a host society, which has resulted to widespread agitation towards newcomers and more closing gate policies. In response to a conventional "charity" model of hosting immigrants, the paper proposed an alternative hosting model which acknowledged existing immigrants' potential to be "coordinators" that would have a capacity to accommodate newcomers. How does urban agriculture function as an incubator to foster "coordinators" among migrants? What are key roles urban agriculture plays to incorporate immigrants and native residents to develop an inclusive society? This paper aims to identify contributions and limitations of urban agriculture as a means for fostering social inclusion of immigrants, by taking a community farm in a multi-ethnic neighborhood in Toronto as a case study.

Focusing on project structures and participants' experiences, a set of stakeholder interviews and 16 in-depth interviews with community farm participants were conducted. First, the analysis of the project structures, ranging from its governance structure, spatial

conditions and programs offered, indicated that the case study was designed and modified over time to be more open to the multi-ethnic community by improving accessibility and transparency of the project. Secondly, the findings from the life-history interviews with the research participants highlighted diversity in participants' ethnic backgrounds, generations, and professional backgrounds. Immigrant participants' motivations for activities at the community farm were highly influenced by the participants' past migration experiences associated with social exclusion such as economic, cultural and social hardships. Particularly, the program development opportunities encouraged some immigrant participants to propose new ideas for the community, and the planning, preparation, and implementation process functioned as training opportunity to demonstrate leadership and take part in a larger, more "fulfilling" role in the community farm. Most importantly, the process was allowed by the participants' flexible attitudes for introducing new groups to the project, which was revealed through the perceptions towards the community farm.

The results suggested the two constraints of the community farm which must be further investigated. First, while many immigrant participants were fostered, the community farm still had difficulty introducing new immigrant groups, such as Vietnamese and Iraqi immigrants, who were the two largest immigrant groups in the community. Secondly, the community farm faced a challenge for pursuing a financial sustainability while serving the community members in need, which was commonly found among the existing urban agriculture projects, particularly in racialized and low-income neighborhood. The findings indicated that despite its constrained scale of operation, the community farm the community farm was generally used as a community platform to attract immigrants from a diverse ethnic background and foster *participants*, *supporters* and *coordinators* who nourished leadership and the sense of ownership. Finally, based on the findings the paper addressed a model which encompassed three aspects "openness" of urban agriculture which have assisted each step of

involvement of participants: *accessibility, transparency, and acceptance*. The paper concludes by suggesting a further study on the existing urban agriculture projects in Toronto as individual nodes that fabricate the entire urban agriculture system developed with immigrant with the scope of social inclusion in a transforming host society.

Key words: Urban agriculture, Social inclusion, Immigration, In-depth interviews

Key words: Satoyama, NPO, Dominant species, Semi-natural forest

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