




## ENDING POVERTY: STRENGTHENING URBAN CONTAINER GARDENING

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### ABSTRACT

*The COVID-19 pandemic augmented with the threats brought by climate change resulted in a ballooning number of poor across the globe. Hence, making it challenging to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations. This paper aims to identify long-term solutions to address the posing threats brought by the crisis that will lead to the eradication of poverty. Urban Container Gardening is one of the most efficient and attainable ways of solving hunger and reducing waste. It will also be a good source of income since agricultural harvests are largely consumed daily as people are becoming more health conscious. However, this paper concludes that the current urban container gardening system is not sustainable due to the lack of support from the government. This paper also examines the role of the government in facilitating a free market for all, where people are allowed to offer and sell their harvests. Finally, this study presumes the importance of mandatory savings and insurance for the vendors to transform their lives from poverty to financial security.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, Urban Container Gardening, Free Market, Financial Security

### ABSTRAK

*Pandemi COVID-19 ditambah dengan ancaman yang dibawa oleh perubahan iklim mengakibatkan membengkaknya jumlah orang miskin di seluruh dunia. Oleh karena itu, menjadikannya tantangan untuk mencapai Agenda 2030 untuk tujuan pembangunan berkelanjutan yang ditetapkan oleh Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi solusi jangka panjang untuk mengatasi ancaman yang dibawa oleh krisis yang akan mengarah pada pengentasan kemiskinan. Urban Container Gardening adalah salah satu cara yang paling efisien dan dapat dicapai untuk mengatasi kelaparan dan mengurangi limbah. Cara ini juga akan menjadi sumber pendapatan yang baik karena hasil panen pertanian sebagian besar dikonsumsi setiap hari karena orang menjadi lebih sadar akan kesehatan. Namun, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Urban Container Gardening saat ini tidak berkelanjutan karena kurangnya dukungan dari pemerintah. Penelitian ini juga mengkaji peran pemerintah dalam memfasilitasi pasar bebas untuk semua, di mana masyarakat diperbolehkan men-*

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*awarkan dan menjual hasil panennya. Terakhir, penelitian ini mengan-  
daikan pentingnya tabungan dan asuransi wajib bagi para pedagang  
untuk mengubah hidup mereka dari kemiskinan menjadi keamanan  
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## Introduction

People living below the poverty line are frequently hungry, have low and unsustainable income, have limited access to education and even healthcare facilities. Thus, the battle against poverty has been one of the most pressing global objectives for decades. For example ASEAN, poverty alleviation become the priority programs in their countries (Firmansyah & Kusreni, 2018). According to the United Nations, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty globally has decreased from 36 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2015. Unfortunately, the unprecedented global pandemic has challenged and threatened the decades of progress in the fight against poverty.

In 2014, two-thirds of the 59.5 million refugees and internally displaced people worldwide settled in urban areas. There was a rapid increase in the number of people living in urban areas (UNFPA, 2015). With the fast rise of metro cities, it is necessary to respond to the problems of long-term urban development (Zhang & Li, 2018). Food security, health and well-being, sustainable economic growth, and environmental quality are among the responses necessary (UN Habitat, 2016). Viljoen & Bohn (2005) and Wascher & Jeurissen (2015) highlights that by increasing resource efficiency, shortening food supply chains, and closing nutrient cycles, we may minimize our ecological footprint. Madhusanka et al. (2020) stated that urban container gardening has emerged mostly in agricultural nations due to a lack of space and climatic unpredictability. With proper knowledge and resources, urban gardens are a smart and efficient solution to hunger and lack of income.

However, a sustainable source of food and income may be worthless without financial literacy. Financial literacy programs aim to enable people to assess complex financial goods and services to make well-informed financial decisions. But the level of financial literacy remains unacceptably low, particularly among the poor in emerging nations due to the ineffective strategies, as stated by OECD (2017). Moreover, the World Bank and other major organizations agreed that all people should have access to basic financial services such as savings and insurance, as it gives them more economic and social power towards improving their lives (UNDP, 2006).

## Literature Review

This part lays the groundwork for the theoretical framework of this scientific study, describing the ideas' historical and contextual context. In addition, the comprehensiveness of the chosen theories is addressed in terms of the theoretical framework's contributions to this study. Furthermore, this section discusses the relevant concepts, such as past viewpoints and problem-solving approaches to the chosen topic.

## Theory of Practice

The use of theory of practice as a theoretical framework and analytical lens in this paper is based on the nature of the research issue, which focuses on the motives of urban

gardeners and foragers' actions, as stated by Warde in 2015. Why do they engage in practicing when they can go to the shop and buy food? What do they obtain from working that motivates them to keep practicing? or "Why do people do what they do?"

The theory of practice acknowledges the individual as a physical and mental agent (Schatzki, 1996; Reckwitz, 2002), and that practitioners are the ones who carry out the practice (Warde, 2005). Practitioners' constructivist thinking, which includes both maintaining and inventing practices, is divided into two categories in practice theory: reproductive and inventive practices (Halkier, 2008; Warde, 2005). As stated by Nicolini (2009), reproducing particular cultural or attitudinal positions among practitioners; such aspects of the practices might be regarded as conditioning for the individual urban gardener or forager in order to fit in. While innovative practices ensure that practices evolve in accordance with current societal changes, they also contribute to the understanding of the researched practices' connections to larger institutions like the food system.

On this background, the theory of practice as an analytical lens and theoretical framework is thought to add to and qualify the knowledge of the practices of urban gardeners and foragers, and hence their motives, at both the zoomed in and zoomed out levels. By analyzing the relationship between sayings and doings, it will be possible to focus on how they are connected, as well as the performance of the practices. And the zooming out movement on the practices, which indicates their interconnectedness with other societal contexts, can qualify a discussion on how the insights in the researched practitioners' motivations are suggestive of future food system qualities.

### ***Theory of Everyday Life***

According to Jacobsen (2005), the idea of everyday life is applied in this study since it explores the everyday life practices of urban gardening and foraging. This theory contributes to this paper's chosen topic interest in how the actions of the investigated urban gardeners and foragers on a microlevel can relate to broader challenges in our food system and societal context that constitute a macro-level. Everyday life can be seen as a collection of what the theory of practice refers to as reproductive practices, such as the knowledge, experiences, and meaning structures generated through routine actions.

Similar to practice theory, this comprises a general focus on doings, particularly reproductive doings. Weeding, watering, and producing compost could be considered as examples of a reproductive everyday life act in the context of urban gardening. However, it is crucial to note that in daily life theory, the focus is not only on the practice of weeding in and of itself, but also on the implicit common-sense structures of the urban gardener, why he weeds his urban garden, and other culturally and socially conditioned habits.

The theory of everyday life allows for the analysis of urban gardeners and foragers as both individuals and social beings in this way. The research study's understanding of urban gardeners' and foragers' motivations and theorising on how these motivations and food practices can be suggestive of future qualities in the larger structures of the contemporary food system are linked by the application of the theory of everyday life under the socio psychological approach (Brandhøj, 2015).

### ***Relevant Concepts***

As cited by Duchemin et al. (2008), urban agriculture is practiced by 800 million people around the world. Market production employs 200 million people, with 150 million of

them working full-time. Approximately 15% of the world's food is produced by these folks. Although urban agriculture is largely practiced in developing nations, it is also practiced in developed countries, particularly in metropolitan cities such as New York, Chicago, Berlin, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. There are an estimated 80,000 people active in Berlin, and there are about 1,000 community gardens on public property in New York. The Boston Natural Areas Network manages more than 150 community gardens in Boston, bringing together over 10,000 people ([Boston Natural Areas Network, 2008](#)).

Urban agriculture brings both agricultural and urban development concerns. It has been proved to have an essential role in developing countries when it comes to reducing poverty and promoting social and economic development ([Mougeot, 2006](#)). Urban agriculture (UA) improves the economic situations as well as the health of poor and vulnerable families, particularly women and children, despite the fact that it is still viewed as a transient or peripheral activity that does not lead to long-term urban development. It has a direct and indirect impact on the citizens' quality of life in numerous ways. Agriculture in urban areas is widely regarded as a resource that contributes to food security for families and communities, as well as the improvement of living circumstances in impoverished areas in both developing and developed countries.

As the world's population grows and arable land is depleted, urban container gardening has become increasingly important in a variety of ways to improve food security. It is economically significant and provides jobs since it can grow a city's economic base by providing chances for the production, packaging, and sale of food, vegetable, herb, and fruit products. Another benefit is that it ensures people's health and benefits the environment, as well as being socially important and raising environmental consciousness ([Borgen, 2020](#)).

## **Research Methods**

This section contains the methods used in the study to effectively articulate the significance of sustainable urban container gardening as a way of addressing poverty.

### ***Research Design***

This is a qualitative study employing descriptive research design. Qualitative research seeks to have an in-depth understanding of current situations within the community ([University of Texas Arlington, 2021](#)). It aids in determining the status of urban container gardening and its growing significance in ending poverty in all parts of the globe. Moreover, the descriptive research design was utilized to describe the current condition and study it as it is ([Siedlecki, 2020](#)). This was used to obtain information regarding the status of urban container gardening and describe what exists in the community to understand the implications brought by this method of alleviating the lives of the underprivileged.

### ***Data Collection and Interpretation***

The study obtained compiled data from various sources and limited interviews were conducted among the ten recipients of seeds from the government in various places like Quezon City, Rizal, Bohol, Tagum, Samal Island, and Davao City. The interpretation was supported by secondary data from previous studies conducted in different regions around the world. From the analysis, the conclusion and recommendations were developed as a basis for policy-making and future research.

## Results and Discussion

The urban container gardening system itself is attainable and sustainable. However, there is a weak implementation of it in many countries, particularly in third world countries. Many countries in Asia face the issue of importation which affects the local farmers, devaluing or decreasing price of agricultural harvests earned by the farmers, lack of technological support and irrigation systems, devastating calamities, and many other issues and challenges which are focused more by the government.

Food policies have been considered as a national and global concern ([Mansfield & Mendes, 2013](#)). In fact, various cities in first world countries have begun to formulate strategies to address food-related concerns. According to Urban Transition Alliance, a Municipal Food Strategy considers all aspects of food management, including primary production, distribution, processing, marketing, and recovery, and is critical for identifying intervention sites that might lead to local inclusive job possibilities. [Morgan \(2009\)](#) also added that every food strategy is distinct, with various beginning points, objectives, and institutional leaders, but they always stress public health, social justice, or sustainability in some way. One example of the cities who pioneered the establishment of municipal food strategy in its respective country was London in 2006, in which they call it “Healthy and Sustainable Food for London: The Mayor’s Food Strategy.”

The governments in some Asian countries have actions in promoting urban agriculture or urban container gardening. For instance, in the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture established the Plant Plant Plant Program. One of their activities was the training on vegetable seed production and plant propagation was held in partnership with Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) for select coordinators of A TI-supported urban agriculture community gardens in Metro Manila ([Department of Agriculture, 2021](#)). These are actually clear evidence of their support towards urban development. However, ten out of ten recipients of the seeds in various government and nongovernment organizations’ programs said that the seeds were distributed without any manual on how to plant it and make it sustainable, there were no training and seminars conducted related to skill-based planting, there were no fertilizers provided as well, and there was no monitoring on the seeds they planted. The worst thing that had happened in the past is that the government provided substandard quality of seedlings to various peasants’ groups ([GMA News, 2009](#)). This issue was also observed in Rwanda wherein the government often delays seed distribution and that corn farmers experienced losses due to substandard quality of seeds which did not germinate ([The New Times, 2019](#)).

Conversely, urban container gardening has been a transformative method into sustainable food production and future viability of agricultural production and food value. In fact, in Germany, urban agriculture provides a positive impact and a much greater potential to societal transition to a bioeconomy which also contributes to the move towards technologically driven bioeconomy with the support of political and scientific institutions ([Winkler et al., 2019](#)). Additionally, Central and South American countries successfully initiated their micro-gardens programs, backed by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, their respective governments and municipal authorities, which includes training and demonstration center, proper identification of local inputs such as choosing the right container, seeds, and fertilizers, most importantly, the creation of help desks for families engaging in urban container gardening ([Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015](#)).

The sustainability of urban container gardening in areas with full implementation and support by the government and even those self-supporting families has provided food security. Urban agriculture has provided social, economic, food, and ecological sustainability within the urban community for it offers a more consistent food supply and helps people to become physically stronger even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Khan et al., 2020). In the Philippines, local governments are encouraged to adopt urgent measures to address emergent issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most pressing concern is ensuring food for local residents in the face of a severely harmed local economy and enterprises. Urban gardening is seen as one of the answers in several UCLG ASPAC member cities in the Philippines (UCLG ASPAC, 2020). However, based on the result of the interview, 70 percent are not confident that the current urban container gardening practices they have will be sustainable in producing harvests for daily consumption. Meanwhile, 30 percent of them believe that it will be sustainable since they are confident in their skills to successfully grow the plants despite the limited government support.

Urban gardening has been a center of studies of different social groups in shaping the urban economy, hence, its income generating capacity is sought. Urban agriculture is promoted in Slovenia because it can offer additional income for the families wherein surpluses from the production were sold having a gross margin of 135.17 EUR/year (Glavan et al., 2016). Additionally, low-income families have moved to urban container gardening to use its income from surplus produce to improve the disposition of their families since on average, monthly income from the sale of goods from urban agriculture ranges from US\$15 to US\$30 (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015).

Agriculture employs over half of the workforce in developing countries. It offers a source of income for the farmers and even urban gardeners. Most farmers in developing countries have low crop yields and limited access to markets where they may buy agricultural inputs and sell their products (UN and International Labour Organization, 2013). As such, the government is responsible for providing access to markets wherein people could sell their produce with government interventions and regulations in pricing and other systems. In the interview of the ten respondents, all of them are in favor of a free market space. In terms of insurance, 80 percent of them do not have any insurance policy and pension. While the 20 percent only relies on their monthly pension. When asked if they are in favor of the mandatory savings and insurance to be deducted from their daily income in the market, they all agreed given that the current urban container gardening will be strengthened and developed.

## Conclusion

Urban container gardening has a positive impact on the lives of the underprivileged for providing them food security through self-production and additional income for the surplus. However, the government offers only sporadic support. As a result, it is unsustainable for some regions because they do not know how to start urban container gardening, not enough training, and demonstration, have limited access to resources like seeds and fertilizer, and there is no active monitoring. Despite this, as urban agriculture provides for both consumption and livelihood, it is effective and accessible since it only requires a small area or space with lesser resources to grow promoting waste reduction.

Urban container gardening is a cheap innovation with a number of potential and strengthening this would lead to more possibilities of having a more sustainable food supply, eradicating poverty, providing livelihood, and financial security. The role of the government in facilitating a free market space for growers turning vendors is crucial in alleviating the lives



of the poor. Moreover, free market space entails systems and interventions from the government to assure a fair and just source of living.

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