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**A commodification of urban greening projects: Urban gardening in Gothenburg as a cooperative practice or a risky and individualized career-opportunity?**

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**Abstract**

The Agenda for Sustainable Development aims for inclusion, safety, resilience, and sustainability in urban residential areas. The Gothenburg city council has tried to implement these goals over the past decade, with focus on urban gardening and city farming. Urban gardening has been described as a potential space for improved urban social wellbeing and socially inclusive green growth, thus a possibility to combine social and commercial aspects of sustainability practices. During the past decade, the municipal shifted focus from associational urban gardening to urban agriculture and its emphasis of individual farming on municipal land (a project named *Stadsbruk Göteborg*). When global food chains and deliveries were radically restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic, officials aimed at increasing the city's degree of food-security through local food-chains. Since 2020, the city of Gothenburg thus started to encourage inhabitants to become city farmers by leasing a piece of municipal land.

The aim of this article is to discuss potential consequences and implications of the municipal change in focus, from collective, voluntary gardening activities to encouraging small-scale commercial farming. The current focus on city farming is described by officials as a possibility to combine social and commercial aspects of sustainability practices. This focus was described as a new possibility for inhabitants to support themselves financially as gardening activities in the city can provide a source of income. As a result, entrepreneurial gardeners have grown in numbers. Especially migrant groups with a farming experience from their country of birth saw new opportunities in the city's slogan 'from gardening box to hectare' and aimed for a career in farming. Under the municipalities' new scheme 'from gardening box to hectare', gardeners were encouraged to take part in entrepreneurial training activities (e.g., how to think like an entrepreneur) whilst taking part in the municipal gardening classes. However, due to the perceived competition between gardeners, entrepreneurial gardening became a very lonely and individualized activity, compared to gardening within the formalized associational activities previously promoted by the municipality.

In this study, I focus on the unexpected results in this commodification of urban greening projects. Furthermore, I analyze how socio-economic resources and social capital limits - or strengthen – the entrepreneurial gardening practices and the life quality of participants. It is argued that this gardening practice becomes a work first rather than life first practice, in particular for migrant groups.

**Key-words**

urban gardening, local food supply, entrepreneurial farming, commodification, sustainability strategies