




THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ASSETS ON COMMUNITY WELL-BEING IN URBAN FARMING PROJECT



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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 21 September 2020

Revised: 13 October 2020

Accepted: 28 October 2020

Published: 23 November 2020

Keywords

Agriculture
Community farming
Social asset
Urban farming
Urban farmer
Well-being.

The role of social assets in community well-being in urban farming projects was reviewed in this article. Social assets are one of the key elements in reducing the incidence of poverty as it can affect the income level of an individual or household in a country. In urban farming, it has an important role from the perspective of the urban farmers and its relationship with other individuals or agencies seen as the motivational and adhesive forces for communitarian work that benefits the agriculture development in urban areas. However, previous studies that looked at social asset issues are still lacking in Malaysia, especially in urban farming context. Therefore, this study reviews how social asset benefits in urban farming and its roles in improve community well-being among urban farmers. The findings of the analysis of past studies have contributed roles include knowledge sharing, input and materials access, support community garden development, enhance motivations, technology transfer and adoptions, builds cooperation and encourage good agricultural practice. Since urban agriculture is profitable, more urban farmers should be encouraged to engage in this project. Thus, this study recommends that policies formulated in increasing the urban farmer's well-being must consider social assets. Future research is needed to study the community farming experience in Malaysia and to understand the factors social assets on their well-being. In this way, the information obtained will be important as a reference to the local community in Malaysia.

Contribution/ Originality: The paper's primary contribution is finding that social assets are the vital elements in reducing the incidence of poverty. In urban farming, it has seen as the motivational and adhesive forces for communitarian work that benefits the agriculture development in urban areas. Thus, this study recommends that policies formulated in increasing the urban farmer's well-being must consider social assets as the important factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

By 2020 it is estimated that the urbanization rate in Malaysia will be 77.0 percent and not more than 85.0 percent by 2040 and is expected to continue to increase by 2050 [1]. Malaysia's population is expected to increase from 31.7 million in 2018 to 32.4 million by 2020, while urban population is expected to increase by 87.8 percent, from 24.1 million in 2018 to 25.0 million by 2020. The rapid population growth is a result of economic and social development activities in urban areas, the well-being of the urban population is threatened and unsafe [2, 3] and

needs to compete for better quality of life [4, 5]. An important aspect that is often mentioned when discussing about urban residents is their economic status. A study from the Institute of Agricultural Policy Studies (IKDPM) found that RM0.11 out of every RM1 processed food product is the cost of imported raw materials. Meanwhile, imported raw materials contributed RM0.28 to every RM1 of non-processed food products such as vegetables and fruits. According to the IKDPM report, the B40 household group is the most at risks group for rising cost of living. Based on the 2009 and 2014 data, the B40 group is facing an increase in spending by 10.1 percent annually [6]. According to a report from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry [7] it expects food demand to increase by more than 70.0 percent by 2050 as a result of the rapid growth and population growth in the city.

This has brought about the need for growing of plants and raising animals within and around cities. This practice is also called urban farming (UF), the practice of cultivating food (fruits, grains, root crops, vegetables, and herbs), the animals (goats, chickens) and non-food products (ornamental plants, medicinal herbs) within and around urban centres. UF has been on the increase over the last decade to increase urban community well-being through fulfill food demand and supply urban areas [8]. The allocation for urban farming indicated the government support for urban farming in Malaysia. However, the well-being of urban farming has its own limitations. Schutte [9] stated that the success rate of this project is said to be still low and some expect that the project will not be very successful without the involvement of the local community, in fact many community gardens do not remain and face some threats to its development [10-12]. Nevertheless, farmers had to face various constraints, such as limited access to food markets, marketing their crops via middlemen, low diversity of crops and low level of savings [13]. Possible solutions to these issues include the better organization of the farmers, their official recognition and the establishment of a cooperative. Thus, through previous research articles is to understand how social asset is able to help in economic well-being among urban farmers.

2. THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL ASSET: DEFINITION AND DIMENSION

The term 'social asset' had just been applied since several decades. The idea, in any case, had gotten increasingly famous during the 1980s [14]. The term 'social asset' was first utilized in 1961 by Jane Jacobs, in spite of the fact that the idea has been perceived by journalists since the nineteenth century. More recently, suspecting around social asset has been extraordinarily impacted by James Coleman, an American sociologist writing during the 1980s and Robert Putnam likewise an American, and a political specialist writing during the 1990s; and to a lesser degree by Bourdieu and Hirschmann [15]. In general, it is alluded to Bourdieu, who thinks about social asset as a characteristic of a person in a social setting [15].

Table-1. Selected definitions of social asset.

Definitions of Social Asset
The part of human asset that enables individuals from an offered society to trust in each other and co-operate in the arrangement of new groups and associations [20].
Social asset refers to features of social association, for example, trust, norms, and network that can improve the efficiency of the general public by encouraging facilitated activities [21].
The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition [22].
Networks together with shared norms, values, and understanding that facilitate co-operation within and among groups [23].
The extent and nature of relationships people have with others, the relationships people have with their communities, and relationships between people and various services, institutions and systems. It is also a concept that can be used to understand the linkages between communities or institutions [24].
The institutions, relationships, and norms that shapes the quality and quantity of a society's social interaction [25].
Community cooperation, local relationship network, politic involvement and family support [26].
Source: Coleman [20]; Putnam [21]; Bourdieu [27]; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [23]; Stone [24]; World Bank [25]; Doris, et al. [26].

One can gain social asset through intentional activities and can change over it into different kinds of asset, as for example physical asset. Social asset can be described from numerous points of view, yet the significant reason continues as before that is, social asset is the system of connections and assets that engages network individuals to take care of issues together [16-19]. However, some definitions offered by noted researchers and universal improvement organizations are remembered for Table 1.

Kay [28] stated that social asset consists of resources within communities which are created through the presence of high levels of: i) trust, ii) reciprocity and mutuality, iii) shared norms of behavior, iv) shared commitment and belonging, v) both formal and informal social networks, and vi) effective information channels, which may be used productively by individuals and groups to facilitate actions to benefit individuals, groups and the community more generally. Woolcock [29] divides social capital into three main dimensions as in Figure 1.

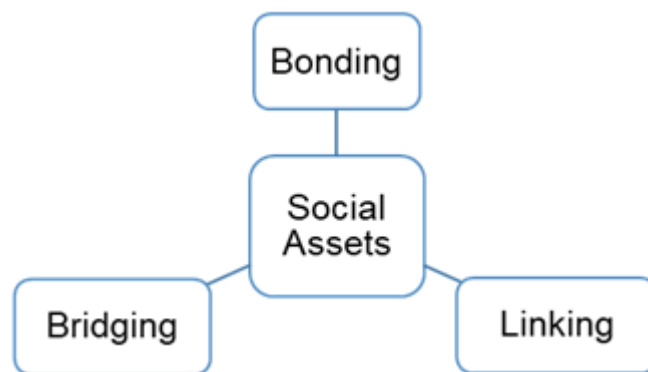


Figure-1. Dimension of social assets.

Source: Woolcock [30].

Recently, social asset theory distinguishes between “bonding”, “bridging” and “linking” forms of social asset [30-32]. Putnam [33] made a distinction between bonding social asset and bridging social asset. Bonding social asset refers to kinship and other intra-group networks or formal associations. Bonding social asset generally refers to horizontal, face-to-face relationships occurring in homogenous groups (like a family or neighborhood) where members share identities, histories and viewpoints [29]. Bridging social asset refers to those networks or formal associations linking individuals and groups beyond major social categories and cleavages. Bridging social asset, on the other hand, links members of more distant groups (either horizontally or vertically) through which external resources can be mobilized [29]. Woolcock [34]; Woolcock [29] introduced a third type of social asset, linking social asset, which unlike the two others has a vertical dimension.

Linking social asset refers to the links people have with higher levels of decision-making and resource allocation. In general, linking social asset refers to linkages ‘between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society’ [35]. Stone [24] mention that the “bonding”, “bridging” and “linking” social asset framework provides a useful way for thinking about the various different types of relationships that people have at any point in their life. It also highlights the fact that different families and communities will have different “mixes” of these types of relationships. That is, some people have strong family and friendship relationships (bonding social asset), whereas other people may be more involved in community groups (a form of bridging social asset) or know many people in various organizations and institutions (linking social asset). Stone [24] mention that the “bonding”, “bridging” and “linking” social asset framework gives a valuable method to considering the different various kinds of relationships that individuals have at any point in their life. It additionally features the way that various families and networks will have diverse “mixes” of these kinds of relationships. That is, a few people have strong family and friendship relationships (bonding social asset), whereas other people may be more involved in community groups (form of bridging social asset) or know numerous individuals in different organizations and institutions (linking social asset).

3. ECONOMIC WELL-BEING IN URBAN FARMING

Improving the wellbeing of citizens is the government's stated priority [36, 37]. Well-being is essentially an effort to overcome the problem and improve the quality of life of a human being in a safe, healthy and comfortable environment both physically and socially as well as psychologically [38]. Wellbeing is important to consider in the context of urban farming because while wellbeing may not be the intended end goal of urban farming, many of the outcomes of urban farming participation positively influence wellbeing [39]. Literature indicates that urban farming can have various positive impacts on household well-being especially in enhancing urban food security, nutrition and health. Farmers in urban farming activities are a promising option for sustaining their economic wellbeing, in terms of food intake and income generation.

Moreover, a spill-over effect occurs due to the ability of farmers to provide small job opportunities for people living in their neighbourhood [13]. It represents one of the possible self-employment strategies in cities which are not able to satisfy job demand [40]. Smit, et al. [41] add that urban farming can bring economic potential to areas which are not suitable for commercial purposes. It is also seen as a significant employer, especially in developing countries. For instance, Claridge [42] states that more than 200 million people are involved in market-oriented urban agriculture, thereby providing 15 – 20 percent of the global food supply. In Malaysia, urban farming can potentially play in enhancing food security for urban residents has been investigated by Rezai^a, et al. [43]. In economic terms, urban farming can contribute to food production activities, reduce household expenses, generate community income and create employment opportunities [44, 45]. The project offers a supply of fresh foods from vegetables and fruits grown and enjoyed by its employers and even the public [46]. In Malaysia, urban agriculture is seen as an approach to sustainable development that has the potential to provide food in or out of the city as urbanization has caused many problems to food, social, environmental and political systems worldwide [47].

4. ROLES OF SOCIAL ASSET ON ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE URBAN FARMERS

Social asset is observed as an important element and inclusive in human's natural characteristics. Human is created not to be solitary, and if does not interact with other humans, they would interact involuntarily with their surroundings based on observation. In context of urban farming activities, social asset can exist with new forms of social relationship between urban farmers, citizens, government bodies, NGO, input seller and others stakeholders. Social asset incorporates the social resources on which individuals depend while seeking after their vocations, including social networks, membership in groups, relationships of trust and reciprocity and access to more institutions of society [48]. In urban farming context, poor urban farmers are very often limited in their productivity because of inappropriate access to the inputs, credit, high transaction costs and other constraints of the market. Social assets should be capable of dealing with these problems of the poor farmers as they are officially recognized by the government. Through social assets having shared access to water resources and common land tenure among farmers [49] electricity supply, security, fences and pathways [41]. For example, all cooperatives should adopt the spirit of self-help, responsibility, democracy, equality, solidarity and justice and an awareness of collective action [50]. They strengthen the potentials of individuals within the collective and enable cooperative members to achieve well-being which would not be achievable for individuals: entering official markets and selling products at higher prices. Birchall [50] impugns the role of social assets in poverty reduction. He concludes that, after the establishment of a cooperative, the poorest people are discouraged from participating while middle income individuals are predominant among the members. There are several roles of social asset against well-being among urban farmers namely as below;

1. *Knowledge sharing*: Activities of knowledge sharing occurs in this community are directed to Mattessich [51] perspectives which discuss how social asset exist in community can help development structurally when this situation contributes in the process of knowledge and idea flow among community members. Interest and effort among urban citizens encourage them to find necessary knowledge and sources to

activate urban farming. Their sources to obtain information may come from interaction with government agencies such as MARDI and Agricultural Department through courses, exhibitions, forums and demonstrations. Other than, there are also certain individuals be it within community, neighbor friends or family members that interact to discuss requirements and knowledge sharing related to urban farming [52]. At the point when people cooperate with each other, an exchange of information happens. The diverting of information and information diffusions are some of the most broadly discussed aspects of social network, particularly at the individual level [53].

2. *Materials and inputs access:* First, for a household to engage in urban agriculture requires access to materials and inputs, including the pesticide, fertilizer, seeds, soil, manure, and water sources. These requirements maybe can be achieved individually, but for many people they will be easier with the help of others. For example, the Department of Agriculture will provide incentives to encourage urbanites to plant their own food crops. Incentives are in the form of seeds / planting materials, inputs, agricultural and small tools. So, a relationship household with Agriculture Department facilitates participation and implementation in urban agriculture [54].
3. *Support community garden development:* Neighborhood areas that wish to build community gardens will get opinions and views of locals and groups of society to ensure proposal of community garden development fulfills the needs of community and neighborhood. Urban household will also obtain neighbor, neighborhood association, community center, local social organization's thoughts through round table negotiation by involving local authorities and agencies to convey purpose and provide opportunities to participants to voice their opinions in identifying support towards community garden development in targeted areas [55].
4. *Enhance motivation/encouragement:* Social asset is also to provide motivation or encouragement among urban farmer community. For example, urban farmer who has successfully carried out farming activities will encourage other urban farmers who have yet to succeed. Other than that, these urban farmers are also able to give encouragements to other households who have yet to involve in urban farming to join and strive in said activities [56]. Inspirations and motivation among urban farmers are one of many factors that can ensure success in development among the urban farmers community.
5. *Technology transfer and adoption:* Social relationships and networks may affect the economic development of urban farmers by influencing farming practices and their propensity to adopt newer technologies via the supply of information through these networks. Urban farmers can then learn new techniques and acquire know-how from extension agents or who have used it, obtain informal training from others who have already adopted such practices, and even obtain official assistance to implement various practices. In urban agriculture, many innovations and technologies have been developed to facilitate farming activities and ensure that urban agriculture is always dynamic. For example is greenkit, self-watering container (SWC), fertikit, vertical system, fertigation, tube plot, urban kit and others [52]. Social relationships and networks may influence the economic development of urban farmers by affecting farming practices and their propensity to adopt newer technologies via supply of information through these networks. Urban farmers can then learn new techniques and get acquire know-how from extension agents or who have utilized it, acquire informal training from other individual who have just adopted such practices, and even get official assistance to actualize different practices. In urban agriculture, numerous innovations and technologies have been created to encourage farming activities and ensure that urban agriculture is always dynamic. For instance, the greenkit, self-watering container (SWC), fertikit, vertical framework, fertigation, tube plot, urban kit and others [52].
6. *Builds cooperation's:* Social asset can empower family units to become urban farmers, helping them access required supplies and enabling them to cooperate for expanded efficiency and security. Participating in

urban agriculture can likewise influence a family's social asset. This relationship could be positive, example if households work together as farmers and build stronger relationships, or it could conceivably be negative if a household farms alone, becomes more food secure, and neglects ties with neighbors who have become less important in the household's livelihood strategy [57]. The exchange of food between household's, especially between urban friends and neighbors related to improve family food security.

7. *Encourage good agricultural practice:* Urban agriculture emphasizes good agricultural practices as it serves to provide healthy and safe food to household. So, social asset among urban farmers, as built through community involvement, may also enhance social responsibility by promoting the use of ecofriendly agricultural practices and thereby contributing to environmentally sustainable development. There are channels through which community involvement may lead to good agriculture practices by promoting social obligation and by giving information, mindfulness, and training about good agriculture practices especially through agricultural extension service [58]. Through the previous channel, community involvement may influence individuals' inclinations and make them all the more socially responsible and, along these lines, more sensitive to the environment.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban farming can contribute to well-being of urban farmers. Nevertheless, farmers had to face various constraints, such as limited access to food markets, low level of knowledge about good agriculture practice, limitation of water and land, low diversity of crops and low level of savings. Possible solutions to these issues include awareness about benefits of social assets led urban farmers to act collectively in groups and organizations to improve their economic well-being. Social relationship that exists will support urban farming activities among urban farmer through various aspects such as knowledge, motivational and support enhancement, application of technology and sources to gain related inputs. Based on the discussions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Urban farmers need to develop various networks so it is able to generate knowledge flow that can improve comprehension of society members and idea exchange in regards to urban farming.
2. Government has to act as the implementation medium in shaping trust network alike. Indeed, government functions as the main backbone in uplifting individual social asset. Hence, strong social asset can contribute to economic improvement.
3. Good familial relationship and neighborhood spirit guarantee economic well-being among farmers in urban areas. United society can shape harmony in a community. Thus, tolerance and cooperation between community members must be improved through togetherness activities and programs to ensure that the goals of the urban farming are achieved.
4. Empirical studies must be carried out to determine the level of social asset among urban farmers because its play an important role in improving network formally or informally that include relationship within sectors, between sectors and with others community.

Funding: This research was supported by Research University Grant, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (Grant number: GUP 2016-023).

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Acknowledgement: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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