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## Food Sovereignty in South Africa: Policy Implications and the Right to the City in Urban Agriculture

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### Abstract

In South Africa, the official interest in agriculture in urban centres and suburbs is quite recent, although it has been practised for a long time. Urban agriculture is associated with many benefits including increasing food security of households, diversifying diets, livelihood support, and provision of informal sources of income. These are just some of the reasons why academics, governments, and aid organisations have touted urban agriculture as the panacea for urban food insecurity in the Global South. However, an adequate incorporation into policies including the interests and needs of communities remains challenging.

This research project identifies critical perspectives on urban agriculture, emphasising the agency of food gardeners in South Africa and how they individually perceive the benefits. This reflection is guided by the theoretical approach of the right to the city and the concept of food sovereignty. The combination of this theory and concept offers important aspects for the improvement of urban agriculture from a socio-political and ecological perspective and promotes the much needed dialogue between policy-makers and communities. In this context, this research questions how an optimal environment for community gardening in terms of governmental support and integration on a local level should be designed. The project focuses on the role of community initiatives, the way they contribute to policy-making and inclusive development in the city.

As the empirical case of this study, the innovative community initiative “Kos en Fynbos” which emerged in George, South Africa, is analysed. The voluntary movement started with the concern to improve nutrition in the community through the implementation of permaculture practices and no-till gardening. So far, communities from different parts of the city have joined these activities and vital competitions strengthen the interest in participation. Nevertheless, support of the local government is imperative to sustain these efforts. Increasing governmental responsibility in the urban realm and disinvestments in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are part of the challenges.

**Keywords:** Community initiatives, food sovereignty, right to the city, South Africa, urban agriculture