



‘It’s not really about the food ...’: food growing, food justice and sustainability

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Edible Urban Landscapes: Critical perspectives



Food growing and food security at individual/household level



- Food growing has multiple benefits including health, wellbeing and community cohesion
- But can it contribute to food justice?



- Increasing concern with HH food security and food poverty in food secure countries and cities
- Public and policy unease over foodbank use
- Concern that food banks do not reach all those experiencing food poverty



Which local/community food growers?

- Non-commercial food growers in Aberdeen
- On allotments and community gardens
- Rural and urban
- Scotland/UK
- 2017
- Semi-structured interviews with food growers about their motivations for growing (n=29)



Motivations & benefits of food growing

- Are closely related
- Multiple motivations
- Environment and health mentioned most often
- Social and economic reasons given less importance
- Family background important
- Access to fresh food & wider choice only mentioned by a few



Challenges and barriers



- Access to land, tools & water
- Rules and regulations
- Cultural norms that have developed around packaging and presentation of food
- Learning to manage pests and diseases



Engagement with others

- Mixed response
- Some growers were keen to engage with other community groups
- Many felt they lacked skills to do so
- Difficulty in getting groups to come to allotment - e.g. health and safety issues for schools and vulnerable adults
- Learning/training may be required



Enhancing HH food security?

- Yes – for those who are already growing
- Less evidence for link with addressing food poverty/accessing foodbanks
- Few policy mechanisms linking food growing with other social policy and welfare issues
- Community food hubs one way to include food growing in enhancing food security for those most at risk of dropping into food poverty



Conclusions

- Food growing is increasing
- There is increasing concern over food poverty and food safety/long food supply chains
- Food growing is not a suitable strategy for tackling food poverty due to high start up costs and time/space/knowledge needed
- Food growing could contribute to a local food system to tackle food insecurity, through e.g. providing local outlets to sell produce, but local food infrastructure needs developing

