Does urban gardening could help poor people to be more resilient?

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Abstract

In developed countries, a part of the population is becoming poorer: an increasing number of households cannot reimburse their debts, more and more people are excluded from unemployment allocations, etc. Solutions offered by decision makers inside the current economic system do not succeed to improve the problem. The economic production keeps growing but the unemployment rate continually increase and the gap between richer and poorer either. The aim of this presentation is to display a study proposal which intended to test the potential of solutions located outside the current economy. The aim of the study is to find a solution that could turn precarious people into more resilient people. For the purpose of this study, the first solution to be tested is the urban gardening (in a next study, local exchange systems, parallel currencies, and other solutions could be tested).

A first test will aim to assess the social impact of urban gardening. The method will consist in semi-directive interviews of individuals involved in urban gardening. Discours analysis of decision makers speeches will also be used. Both methods should help us to identify the factors that condition the participation of individuals to urban gardening, the advantages they found in such activity and the barriers that that could have prevent them to get involve before. All this information might help to design policy measures to promote greater participation to urban gardening.

A second test will consist in a questionnaires with closed-end questions in order to verify if urban gardening does really improve resilience of individuals involved (we will try to cover the 8 follwing aspects of resilience: absorption capacity, ability to recover, ability of adapting behavior, capability to innovate, capability of self-organization, learning process, acceptance and management of risk uncertainty and capability to anticipate). People will be interviewed before and after getting involved in urban gardening in order to see if they are more resilient after gardening than before. This will be carried out on a larger sample of people than for the semi-directive interviews.

A third test will consist in assessing the environmental and macroeconomic impact of urban gardening. An input-output model will be used for that purpose. The variables entered in the model will be the following: (i) increase in purchasing power caused by urban gardening (people can increase their consumption given that they produce a part of their food and do not have to buy it anymore), (ii) investments and consumptions in tools and other equipment required for gardening, (iii) decrease in supermarket and other food purchasing. The output variable given by the model will be changes in global consumption, in GDP, in total employment, on polluting emissions (pesticides, food transport, etc.). If people consume vegetable

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from their garden, transport of vegetable sold in supermarket should decrease and polluting emissions also. Pesticides used in agriculture should also decrease. This can be test by the model.

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