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Geoforum

Volume 39, Issue 3, May 2008, Pages 1228-1240

It takes a garden: Cultivating citizen-subjects in organized garden projects

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.06.012>

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Abstract

Since the 1980s organized garden projects have proliferated in institutional settings associated with the "roll-out" neoliberal state and the sad consequences of neoliberalism more generally: jails, schools, hospitals and other clinical settings for "at-risk" populations. This article advances the concept "organized garden project" over the richly connotative, but inchoate term "community garden," and links the long episodic history of garden projects with changing discourses about the supposedly transformative power of gardening practice for individual and social transformation. The article highlights two organized garden projects within the San Francisco Bay area, a chief locus in the movement to using organized garden projects to produce new individual and collective subjectivities. The case studies assess, from the typically unambiguous standpoint of the garden organizers, the nature of the subjectivity that gardening practice is supposed to produce, the need for such alternative subjectivity

and the "difference" such alternatives are believed to make for the individual and in the wider social, political and economic milieu.



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