



HOW TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT GARDENERS' MOTIVATIONS INTO URBAN GARDEN PLANNING?

Challenge

In many European countries there is increasing demand for urban gardens; local authorities and urban garden associations have seen waiting lists expand and in some cases people wait several years before they can get a plot for gardening. Considering this demand, in many cities, local authorities seek to incorporate urban gardens into development plans. This process is supported by urban planners, architects and landscape architects.

When considering development plans it is important to consider that gardeners come to the garden with a wide set of expectations and motivations.

Furthermore, considering conflicts of use for limited space in cities the inclusion of urban gardens in city planning can only be legitimated if these motivations are taken into account in the process of planning and designing the gardens. This will also ensure that gardens provide the range of functions they potentially have for urban dwellers.

Finally, some urban gardens already in place may have potentials that are not being fully exploited. An understanding of motivations will help improve the functioning of the garden and its appropriateness in relation to gardeners' expectations.

The challenge we want to address in this factsheet is to integrate the expectations and motivations of gardeners into the planning and design process of urban gardens.



Image 2 - Pla Buits garden, Barcelona. Photo: Carolina Villar



Image 3 - Traditional layout of a family garden. Photo: Jeanne Pourias

Advice Note to Planning and Design Practitioners

Motivations change over time and are shaped by personal interests and needs, social status, cultural background and external factors including global societal changes such as economic crises or environmental disasters.

The main motivations expressed by gardeners are as follows:

Food production and sovereignty

Gardeners seek self-produced, good quality and affordable food.

"I've never seen cabbage like the one we grow in our garden in any store! Well, only sometimes, but it's really unusual" (Gardener from Paris).

Psychological and physical health

The garden is seen as place to rest and as a way to stay fit.

"I think it gives a lot of life quality. When one comes home from work, tired and stressed one can just lie down on the grass and experience a completely different world" (Gardener from Oslo).

Contributing to environmental, political and economic urban life

Plots are seen as a source of collective empowerment helping to bringing life to vacant plots.

"A place where we can develop initiatives, not just contemplative spaces such as urban parks" (Gardener from Barcelona).

Weaving socio-cultural relations

Gardens are believed to strengthen community ties and enhance social cohesion within the neighborhood.

"It's not only the idea of growing; it's also the contact with people..." (Gardener from Paris).

Learning, educating and transmitting knowledge

Gardens are depicted as an arena for learning, producing and sharing knowledge among people of different socio-demographic and socio-economic profiles.

"I use to come here with my grandchildren to show them where beans come from" (Gardener from Barcelona).

Recreation, hobby and self-realization

Gardeners enjoy being outside, engaging with nature, and spending their leisure time in a meaningful way.

"Here I feel alive, in this place you can feel that it is worth living" (Gardener from Nitra).

Learn More

Useful links

<http://www.urbanallotments.eu/>

References

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Image 4 - Productional type of AG. Photo: Maria Bíhuňová and Barbora Čakovská



Image 5 - Etterstad allotment garden in Oslo. Photo: Helena Nordh

Message to Designers

Before the design process begins...

- Keep in mind that the design and spatial structure of the plots influence their use. For example, we often think about plots as a square or rectangle, but setting them in triangular form might allow space, at the "tip" of all triangles, to set up a collective garden shed or a meeting point for gardeners.
- Gardens should offer opportunity for the expression of the various motivations of gardeners.
- Understanding the motivations of gardeners is the best way to ensure that the garden is appropriate for gardeners and fits the needs of the neighborhood.
- Gardens should provide flexibility that can withstand and adapt to the inevitable changes occurring in the individual motivations of gardeners, in the group of gardeners or more broadly in the expectations linked to the development of society.

Advice to designers

- Actively involve gardeners in the design and implementation process.
- Get to know the future gardeners: ask them about their motivations and expectations.
- If you don't know the future

users of the garden, speak with gardeners of other urban gardens.

- Take advantage of the different types of gardens that exist and look for inspiration in other experiences, possibly abroad: allotment, collective, social, community, school gardens.
- Mix different types of plots on one space. Having different sizes of plots will allow different gardeners to become involved in the garden; those that have more skills and time to maintain a big plot and those for which a small plot is sufficient. Collective plots might be a good option for beginners willing to test themselves during their first years of gardening, while other gardeners might prefer individual plots.
- Save space for uses other than gardening: places for barbecues, picnics or other activities enhance collective life in the garden.
- Keep it simple, not too sophisticated; gardeners will make the garden their own eventually.
- Make the garden as inclusive as possible and consider potential obstacles that would exclude certain person from spending time in the garden: for example raised beds and accessible toilets provide accessibility for people with disabilities.

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Case study

The Jardin des Bordes is an urban garden located in the regional park "La Plaine des Bordes", close to Chennevières-sur-Marne, in the Parisian region. It has been created in 2004 and associates both collective and individual plots of various sizes. One of the collective plot serves as a place of training for newcomers. Tool sheds are shared between gardeners, and the garden also include collective places where gardeners can meet and organize events: a collective cabin and a shady lawn with table and chairs.



Image 6 & 7 - Jardins des Bordes - Plan and photo. Photo: AC Daniel

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