

Conference Report 29th and 30th October 2010

AESOP 2nd European Sustainable Food Planning Conference

University of Brighton Faculty of Arts

This conference was looking at integrating food systems within urban green infrastructure. Planning for sustainable food production and consumption is an increasingly important subject for planners, policy makers, designers, farmers, suppliers, activists, businesses and scientists.

Four themes were identified as entry-points into the discussion of 'sustainable food planning': Urban Agriculture (UA); Integrating Health, Environment and Society; Food in Urban Design and Planning; Urban Food Governance.

DAY ONE

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Prof. Tim Lang

"The re-emergence of food planning in relation to ecological public health: thoughts from the UK on the possibilities of a new European model"

Abstract

Over the last 40 years, evidence has built up about the food system's reliance on the natural world. That relationship has been generally exploitative. The food system literally mines the environment, and also snatches defeat out of the jaws of victory by overproducing and maldistributing food. In Europe, food is relatively heavily legislated, and consciousness about the issues has increased, as have appeals to behaviour change. Yet now we know that policy and practice have not responded either fast or deeply enough. Part of the reason for this failure to integrate policy with evidence has been that planning has become an enemy rather than friend. Planning is perceived as state interference, not a lever for the public good.

In this lecture I will argue that a new framework of thinking about food is needed, requiring simultaneous action on four levels of existence: the material world of physical things and natural infrastructure; the bio-physiological world of bodies, plants, animals; the cultural world of consciousness and life space; and the social world of human interaction. Faced by such complexity, is planning too blunt an instrument? What could shift all these in the necessary configuration for planetary and societal success?

Notes

The notion of planning is unfashionable and opposite to the 'consumers right to choose'; buying has replaced voting. The consequence of this has led to a food system which is unsustainable; there is no info on food labels regarding embedded water/energy costs. Planning needs to work towards sustainable food systems but often seen as 'top down' approach; reality is often democratic but messy. The shift to sustainable food systems, as with other significant cultural changes, needs to be rapid, coherent and cross-party.

The picture of our current food system is mixed, with both positive and negative effects. Positive includes better food, more choice and lower cost – almost a consumer nirvana. Negative effects are resource dependency, health costs and over/under/mal consumption.

Planning needs to champion 'ecological public health' and look at the conflicting factors to sustainability: rural-urban, rich-poor and work-culture. We need BIG thinking to solve these challenges not just local solutions. The transition needs to be managed through planning.

Policy is weak; EU competition policies accept retail power and small food networks don't address the corporate power. A possible new model is 'Bio-regionalism' but this is likely to come from the big corporations as they have long-term plans whereas public planning has stalled.

Suggested further reading:

EU Environmental Impacts of Products: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ipp/pdf/eipro_report.pdf
WWF/Defra 'One Planet Diet': http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/2050_food_consultation.pdf
and http://www.wwf.org.uk/wwf_articles.cfm?unewsid=3666

LECTURE 1: Giseke U et al

"Doing Transdisciplinarity – Designing Multifunctional Spatial Systems through Urban Agriculture – Casablanca. Urban challenges and the landscape as a constructive urban element."

Abstract

Global Change is a collective term that refers to all changes in the global environment that may alter the capacity of the earth to sustain life. One of the most powerful drivers of global change is urbanisation, including socio-economic transformations and the complex interactions of urban areas with their physical environment. With this in mind, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) established a research programme on "Future Megacities" in order to develop energy- and climate-efficient structures in urban growth centres in industrializing and less developed countries. The challenges faced by future megacities, to list but a few, include considerable – and partially uncontrollable – spatial growth, fragmented spaces, substantial population growth, the increasing divide between rich and poor, problems of providing adequate housing, of guaranteeing adequate environmental and living standards, and of maintaining a technical infrastructure (particularly for transportation), as well as the challenges posed by looming climate change. At the same time, in the current developmental processes of emerging megacities the foundations are being laid as to whether open space can be preserved within these urban regions in order to make a long-term contribution to the sustainability of cities and the quality of life in them. The discussion on potential open-space systems for urban growth centres seems almost a luxury. But that's misleading. The course of how urban standards of living will develop in the future is being set in today's dynamic process of urban development. This raises the question of what kind of open space systems are needed for future megacities.

Notes

Casablanca is an emerging mega-city from a population of 20,000 in 1907 to approximately 3.6m in 2004. The growth is largely chaotic and unplanned; developments lack public open space but they are looking at integrating Productive Green Infrastructure (PGI) which is based around urban agriculture and climate optimised. The growth of mega-cities is often polycentric allowing options for PGI feeding from suburbs and peri-urban to centre.

They have implemented four pilot projects:

1. Urban Agriculture (UA) and industry partnerships to establish water re-use management plans.
2. UA and informal settlements to integrate education and food.
3. UA and peri-urban tourism possibly attracting tourism to a scenic valley.

4. UA and healthy food production securing better income through teaching organic farming.

At the same time they are looking spatially at Casablanca to model PGI which is:

- Multifunctional PGI
 - Food – regional and seasonal: what contribution can this make to the city?
 - Beautiful with recreational spaces
 - Resource efficient
 - Provides ecosystem services and biodiversity
 - 'rurban' living space (RURBAN – new term to describe rural/urban fringes)

Need designed systems to evaluate their effectiveness and integrate new and old policies or planning systems. The project aims to raise awareness of the issues and develop a toolkit with both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'.

LECTURE 2: Howard Lee, Hadlow College

"How food secure can British cities become? A case study of Maidstone, Kent."

Abstract

The security of food supplies for citizens in Britain is rapidly climbing the political agenda. So far, discussion has been primarily focussed on a technological 'fix' for enhanced British agricultural production: 'sustainable intensification' in Britain is becoming a popular term. This paper argues that such an approach may help optimise yields in some areas but is not going to ensure food security overall. It is suggested that there needs to be a complete re-evaluation of our food production potential nationwide and especially in urban areas as part of an integrated sustainable development approach. For towns and cities this would comprise:

1. Surveying available land for food production potential within and around urban concentrations – parks, existing allotments, brown-field sites etc., with a full feasibility analysis of soil potential, including any history of contamination;
2. Modelling the potential of food types (dairy, meat, vegetables, fruit, cereals) for production in and around cities, so that transport spines can be utilised to facilitate rapid movement of more perishable produce into cities – thus revisiting and refining the zoning ideas for food production that urban geographers first proposed in the 1820s;
3. Integrating urban food with water, energy and architecture (buildings for widespread water harvesting and storage, green roofs as standard, solar photo-voltaic thermal, medi-turbines, anaerobic digestion etc.);
4. Ensuring that societal wastes are managed so that organic wastes are moved outwards from cities to replenish the nutrients in food being moved inwards;
5. Not losing sight of the need to enhance the quality of life of urban citizens – physically and mentally – by encouraging more 'green exercise,' facilitating better community identity, and re-assessing the entire aesthetics of the urban environment.

Thus urban centres need to be reviewed as agro-ecosystems in terms of stocks and flows of all commodities, with food as a key component.

Maidstone, the county town of Kent, is considered and some tentative ideas proposed as an example of the sort of mapping and feasibility assessments that might be considered. Thus, it is suggested that an agro-ecosystem approach to urban sustainable development in Britain is the most viable way ahead if we are to feed the 80% of our citizens who live in such areas.

Notes

The population of Maidstone is approximately 140,000 and based on the calorific intake of adults they mapped the available land around Maidstone to assess how much of a balanced diet could be achieved. Various other case studies have been undertaken; significantly in Manchester and Leeds.

Currently they are in the process of modelling the data. The area has been split into three zones; urban centre, peri-urban and rural hinterland. They are now looking at estimating the quantity of land available in each zone, and mapping the zones, which would extend along major transport routes.

They will be looking to deliver discreet projects in each zone to assess productivity. Raised beds and poly-tunnels will be important to achieve high-yields. Also likely to require a move towards mixed-use farming.

Suggested further reading:

Julie Brown, Growing Communities: <http://www.growingcommunities.org>

Geofutures, Food Footprints: <http://www.geofutures.com/tag/food-security>

LECTURE 3: Everett B

“Urban Seams: Food planning strategies for borders in New Orleans.”

Abstract

As the increasing mobility of people, information, and technology causes cities to rapidly expand, it simultaneously widens socioeconomic divides. These liminal borders manifest themselves as physical hiatuses in the urban environment where disparate races, ethnicities, and lifestyles collide. Borders are often depopulated zones of low use that encourage crime, blight, and negative social stigmas. Many are located on vacant sites, in unused public parks, and in median strips between neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the escalating flux of the city has pulled the attention of designers toward urban centres and mixed use developments, leaving borders in disrepair.

This paper explores the process by which food programming can transform neglected, urban borders into pluralistic public spaces in New Orleans, Louisiana. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have exacerbated racial and economic borders that have existed since the city's founding in 1718. In order to activate the contentious, physical borders that are created by these social divides, programs are needed that have social, economic, and cultural value to all surrounding neighbourhoods and their residents. Since food provides both a personal and shared multi sensorial experience, it can act as a socially mobile medium to bring together individuals, families, communities, and even whole cultures. The incorporation of food venues—markets, cafes, urban agriculture, and culinary job training centres—into border sites has the potential to transform them from urban deserts to socially and culturally diverse urban destinations. Food seams offer a setting that encourages interaction and connection among patrons, thereby diminishing hegemonic power relations, liminal antagonism, and negative social stigmas. By establishing food seams throughout New Orleans, a socially sustainable network of urban food systems emerges with the ability to foster healthy neighbourhoods, build socioeconomic value, and create a collective sense of pride among otherwise disparate communities.

Notes

In deprived neighbourhoods there is often limited access to food stores. This is combination with the disaster of hurricane Katrina has enabled greater strategic thinking to tackle many of the problems caused through socio-economic divisions. Opportunities are seen by using food and eating to breakdown the divisions between neighbourhoods, such as through box schemes and markets.

The findings show that the positions of markets affect their user diversity; good transport links allows many groups to interact in one place. Also important is mixing cultural events within the market setting; the use of art/music to draw in people.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Carolyn Steel

“Food, cities and sitopia: using food as a design tool to reshape how we live.”

Abstract

Food is mankind's most vital shared commodity, inextricably woven into our social and physical structures and relationships. What, how and with whom we eat helps shape our sense of community and identity, while the production, trade, consumption and disposal of food are all major influences on global climate and ecology, urban development, rural landscapes, transport infrastructures, politics, commerce and industry. Food connects multiple aspects of life on earth, making it a powerful tool with which to create an integrated design approach to human dwelling.

Sitopia (food-place) is my word for such an approach. We are entering a neo-geographical age, in which the careful use of resources will once again play a vital role in our capacity to survive and flourish. Through food, we can address the complex range of challenges ahead, from the design and strategic transformation of cities, buildings and systems, to a new conception of sustainable prosperity.

Notes

Urban food systems are a recent conversation as we have inherited an urban-centred view of the world. Rural landscapes have been considered as a ‘pastoral pastiche’ and wilderness has been iconised. In the UK if our food distribution networks were disrupted it is often cited that we would be ‘nine days from anarchy’.

Supermarkets hold significant land banks and power and are driving the new urbanism; creating supermarkets with mixed-use including affordable housing. The supply chains are carefully controlled with only six or seven companies managing global supplies. Resources from the natural environment are often not taken into account; research showed that if all embedded water and energy was taken into account a McDonalds burger would be \$200.

Suggested further reading

Carolyn Steel, *The Hungry City*

Roy Patel, *Stuffed and Starved* ??

Lecture 4: C Mees and E Stone

“Food, Homes and Gardens: Public Gardens for a Sustainable City”

Abstract

Densely built urban districts leave residents with little access to public open space in the vicinity of their housing units. Community gardens supplement traditional open spaces for recreational purposes and are often used to grow food. These gardens are critical as climate change and population growth increase the need for urban agriculture. Community gardens were first created in New York City during the 1970s. Residents of low-income districts appropriated available vacant public lots to create gardens in the vicinity of their apartments. These gardens were used as social gathering spaces, to grow food and beautify neighbourhoods. Common management of the space was essential to the maintenance of the garden as public space. Today 300 community gardens are situated on public land in New York City, overseen by the GreenThumb division of the Department of Parks and Recreation. These gardens are not legally protected in the same way as other parkland, but residents' successful volunteer management and political activism has protected them against appropriation for other land uses while preserving the multifunctional aspects of their urban land use typology.

In the current economic crisis various elements are employed in New York community gardens to maximize productivity, conserve water, deal with waste issues and provide neighbourhoods with recreational opportunities. Beehives, chicken coops, rainwater harvesting, and hybrid structures combining greenhouses and storage sheds are examples of community garden elements that have been recently legalized, financially supported by NGOs or regulated in new ways. To maintain public gardens successfully, however, it is important to guarantee that residents are allowed to design and use the gardens according to their individual preferences and neighbourhood needs. To support urban agriculture and improve local food systems for a sustainable city it is therefore necessary to legal recognize and define community gardens as publicly owned and communally managed by residents, and to encourage their development in high density residential centres.

Notes

There is a 30yr tradition of community gardening in New York which has often been ad-hoc and unplanned. The average size of garden is 50 x 100 yards and often in areas which are low-income with little public open spaces. The gardens are always designed bottom-up and there is no requirement to grow food, but 88.4% grow produce. Bees and chickens are also allowed, and regular events are held throughout the year on many.

Suggested further reading

<http://www.greenthumbnyc.org> – lots of good resources and information

LECTURE 5: L. Peemoeller

“Progress through Process: Preparing the Food Systems Report for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) GoTo2040 Plan.”

Abstract

How will we continue to produce food and feed our population in 2040 while planning for population growth, transportation, homes, and commerce in the Chicago Metropolitan region? This is the question that frames the CMAP 2040 Food Systems Report, which was developed over the course of 9 months through a participatory community planning process with over 130 food systems stakeholders from the urban and peri-urban areas that make up the Chicago Metropolitan Region. The report was the first report of its kind for the region. It required a collaboration of stakeholders who had not previously worked closely together to define existing conditions, a vision for 2040, a set of recommendations, and a list of indicators. This paper examines the process by which the report

was produced using the community planning strategy and the challenges and opportunities it presented.

Notes

The project was part of policy process for 'Food Systems Planning' whereby all systems within the city were related to food consumption; transport, waste, green spaces etc. The data required for such research was not easily available, although the project used national indicators to monitor its effectiveness over time.

Recommendations from the report about city-wide Food Systems Planning were; improve education, assess available infrastructure and collect data. The biggest impact of the project was to educate the policy-makers and give options for deliver.

Suggested further reading

http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/go-to-2040-strategy-papers#Land_Use

LECTURE 6: C. Bradbee

"Sustainable Agriculture and Urban Design: the Italian paradoxes"

Abstract

As urban or peri-urban agriculture gains in popularity it raises questions about the design of cities as well as the role of planners and designers in making a place for food production in the city. Much of the urban food production movement, especially in North America, starts with a surplus of urban land amidst poverty or is motivated by the urban rising class and their desire for non-industrial food. In northern Europe the newest tradition of vegetable gardens for the urban inhabitants began in the 19th century and is now in a second rebirth. Italians are very aware of the issues of 'Slow Food' and have a well-established local food culture, but function out of a different cultural mindset in cities where the urban centre is the most desirable place to live. This means that the re-integration and development of sustainable food production in Italian cities faces some unique issues.

This presentation will examine the planning, social and design problems specifically emerging in Italy in the effort for re-covering and re-establishing urban edible landscapes. It will focus on a north Italian city, Piacenza, which is located in the productive Po River Valley (65 km south of Milan) and has a long history of food production in what is now the historical centre. Food was raised intra moenia by nobles, urban dwellers, and particularly by the monasteries over several centuries. But Italian culture also grapples with a strong philosophical and aesthetic division between the city and the countryside. It is understood that nature belongs in the landscape of the countryside rather than in the city and there is little tolerance for the mess of vegetation or unwanted wildlife. This long held cultural understanding presents an obstacle to the systematic re-integration of food production into Italian cities.

In 2005 the Laboratorio Urbanistica Partecipata of Piacenza promoted a petition that the city assume a strategic plan for food production around and within the city integrated with an urban green system. Local citizens have continued to push for a more systematic approach to urban food production. Some small local farmers have accepted the challenge of selling their products through the local food chain. One result of the petition was a recent city government survey of existing food production gardens within the city. A variety of gardens were found within the city that includes community gardens, opportunistic gardens on marginal lands, private gardens, school gardens, and those still functioning within monastery held lands. With the completed the survey the city now

stands at a decision point. How can it plan for urban food production? How can it promote alternative uses in peri-urban land other than industrialized agriculture or remunerative building uses? Is land available within the built urban fabric? Is it safe to grow food on it? How will it all be organized? Where will the infrastructure to support it come from? And above all, will people accept 'nature', even in the form of food production within their city?

Notes

Cultural differences are interesting; Italians do not have public open space as in other cities and do not like wildlife or mess. However, they do have lots of markets and food; fresh, diverse and good although often mass-produced. UA does not seem to be a need. Partnerships are being formed in peri-urban areas; farms are used by adult education and social services to provide education and skills training.

FILM: 'The Urbal Fix' by Tom Bliss

www.urbal.tv to watch online - A horizontal trans-disciplinary research, teaching, groundwork and social change engine for urban sustainability.

Abstract

The Urbal Fix is a film that puts cities into the driving seat of an adaptive strategy against imminent resource depletion, economic chaos and climate crisis.

'Rurban' describes the bleeding of unsustainable urban consumerism into formerly healthy rural resources. Its polar opposite, 'Urbal', describes the only logical cure: The injection of countryside, by means of green productivity, deep into the heart of our cities.

Presented by landscape architect and film maker Tom Bliss, the film features contributions by Hilary Benn MP, Professor Katrin Bohn (CPULs), Professor Lord Tony Giddens (Former Director LSE), Andy Goldring (Permaculture Association), Nick Green (Incredible Edible Todmorden), Sir Peter Hall (Town and Country Planning Association), Professor Tim Lang (City University, Food Policy), Daniel O'Neill (Centre for the Advancement of Steady State Economics), Jonathan Porritt (Environmentalism), Professor Robert Tregay (Landscape Architect) and many other activists, politicians, academics, designers, entrepreneurs, and growers.

Urbalism is the distillation of a select range of theories: Ebenezer Howard's pre motor-car Social City provides a 'once and future' ergonomic, political and economic framework. Steady State Theory provides a contextual objective. CPULs provide a spatial structure plus psychological and ecological priorities. Bio-mimicry systems (permaculture, community woodlands, SUDs) offer low impact / high yield outputs with biodiversity, ecological services and biosequestration benefits. Natural England and the NHS provide additional ergonomics and justification via health and well-being co-benefits. Incredible Edible Todmorden and other temporary, guerrilla and planned schemes in West Yorkshire provide proof and inspiration. And engagement, co-design and local empowerment imperatives demand a new multi/trans-disciplinary approach for designers and other 'experts' - as championed by The Urbal Institute.

DAY TWO

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Prof June Komisar and Dr Joe Nasar

"The integration of food and agriculture into urban planning and design practice: A North American perspective"

Abstract

A host of urban problems that traditionally have not been central to the work of planners and designers are transforming the understanding of typical urban 'systems' or areas of concern, requiring innovative responses. But how do planning and design take on emerging fields of practice? Challenges to the current food and agriculture systems represent one such area of intervention to which planners have started to respond recently. In parallel, designers (from architects to industrial designers) are increasingly interested in urban food and agriculture issues. Food and agriculture are thus fast gaining recognition as legitimate areas of planning and design through research, university teaching, design competitions, and professional recognition – but their integration into the everyday practice of planners and designers does not result automatically from such recognition. This talk seeks to reflect on the emergence of a new field of practice in the built-environment professions, using food and agriculture systems in North America as a case study.

Notes

Planning as a profession can be slow to respond to new challenges, such as climate change; the integration from theory to practice often slow. Food systems were traditionally linked to planning but this was lost and is now re-emerging. The last ten years has seen an increase in research and practice is picking up; moving from interest to practice, marginal to integral.

Entry points for planners into integrating food systems can be through:

- Capturing broader interests in food systems; peripheral professions.
- Non-planners needing planner to be engaged.
- Specific events which require intervention eg. chicken law debates in US.
- Food systems studies which are commissioned.
- Collaborative working for example, Waterloo in West Toronto planning and health departments working together.
- Job in food systems planning are filled by planners.
- Jobs include food systems planning.
- Food systems planning becoming a normal part of the workload.

Adaptive technologies and green building technologies are also driving agenda.

Suggested further reading:

<http://foodurbanism.blogspot.com>

LECTURE 7: S. White and H Natelson "Planning and sustainable food and farming"

Abstract

The planning system shapes our urban and rural areas by guiding and regulating the use of land, and through the making of place and space. In the UK the planning system operates at different scales, from the national, to the local, to the neighbourhood. Planning establishes visions for the development of localities, setting policies to enable the implementation of these visions. These policies guide place-based development decisions, from the location of new housing and infrastructure, to the conversion of a single shop into an office. The planning system has recently undergone reform, changing it from a traditionally land-based system, to one that seeks to address the many factors that shape spaces and make places.

The planning system is inherently intertwined with our food system. It influences the availability of land for commercial and non-commercial agriculture, it shapes the retail environment, and it outlines options for the management of food waste.

Given this role, planning has a responsibility to support and promote a more sustainable food system. Whilst this paper does not explore in detail what is meant by a sustainable food system (this is explored in detail elsewhere, including Lang 1999), it believes this system to be one that is ethical, equitable and environmentally-sound in meeting the needs of producers, retailers and consumers, and Sustain's Sustainable Food Guidelines are taken as a basic framework for the definition of a sustainable food system for the purposes of this paper.

Notes

Sustain is a UK charity which aims to change the food system by:

- Increasing access to good food, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods.
- Getting food systems into planning policies; the London Plan refers to a food strategy.
- Carry out research around food and health/well-being, environment and sustainable economic development.

Health and Well-being: Main issues are access to food shops, diverse food retail environment and commercial food growing. The retail sector needs to maintain independent food stores and classify suburban retail centres as such so they can invest in facilities to improve this access. They suggest using local designations for community gardens.

Environment research is currently about local food production and distribution and food waste. They also support the protection of high quality agricultural land, promote flexible decisions regarding green belt land, the creation of 'food hubs' and supporting LA's reach composting targets.

Ecological support is based around farm diversification, small and independent food retailers, for example supporting farm shops but ensuring x% is locally sourced and produced. National guidance often supports this but needs tenacity to drive the agenda. Barriers are often about the weight of policies, some of which seem to conflict, and who is driving the agenda.

LECTURE 8: A Vijoen and K Bohn

"The Continuous Productive Urban Landscape (CPUL) toolkit: How to plan productive urban landscape for European cities"

Abstract

As cities across the world seek policy guidance, good practice examples and further theoretical evidence on the impact of urban agriculture, it is worth noting how rapidly this subject has moved from a "fringe interest" into the centre of public attention. While a long established literature documents and advocates urban agriculture in developing countries, the rapid shift of interest in urban agriculture that has taken place in North America, Europe and Australasia, is remarkable. In Europe, the environmental and socio-cultural benefits of introducing productive landscapes into cities have now been widely accepted.

Consequently, the paper will discuss something more strategic and infrastructural: the question of how a significant amount of urban agriculture can be re/integrated into cities. Re-integration is important here, as cities have included productive spaces before, and the economic and agricultural logic for locating fruit and vegetable growing close to the city centre was clearly argued as long ago

as the early 19th century. Our task today is to rethink and redesign better spaces for today's (and tomorrow's) urban food systems.

The architectural profession as well as activists and artists have led much of this development, as evidenced by a number of significant international exhibitions, live projects and coverage within influential design journals. As interest in these topics within Europe spreads and moves into allied disciplines, such as planning and landscape architecture, this paper explores ways in which designers can continue to play a significant role in conceiving, advocating and justifying the integration of sustainable food systems into the urban fabric.

After 10 years of design and research work on the topic, the authors will present their evolving CPUL City design concept in the context of two European cities: Berlin and London. Continuous Productive Urban Landscape (CPUL) is an architectural and urban design concept which the authors developed around the year 2000. It proposes a coherent strategy for the introduction of interlinked productive landscapes into cities thereby creating a new sustainable urban infrastructure and supporting a re-definition of open urban space usages. Urban agriculture is one of the major spatial and occupational components of this productive urban landscape.

Concepts like CPUL City provide cross-disciplinary design strategies capable of giving spatial and organisational coherence to the infrastructural and qualitative aspects of urban agriculture.

The paper will focus on the historic lessons, current practices and future strategies of two exemplary European cities, London and Berlin, with respect to CPULs. This first summary of specific data will form the basis of a more generic guidance on how to plan productive landscapes for European cities – the CPUL City Toolkit.

The paper will conclude with a reflexion on the challenges for and potential of enabling Continuous Productive Urban Landscape to be taken forward and move “out of the gallery” to become an integral part of everyday urban infrastructure.

Notes

The concept is to achieve ecological intensification as densification. This will create spaces that are both personal and seasonal, and looking at all types of public open spaces. There are often different needs from the public towards open spaces, but opportunities to create new ‘desires-in-use’. The CPUL can also achieve productive lifestyles for individuals.

LECTURE 9: C. Verzone

“The food urbanism initiative”

Abstract

The domains of agriculture and urbanity have traditionally been seen as mutually exclusive despite their extreme interdependence. In recent years, a burgeoning grass-roots movement has emerged with the aim of re-integrating agriculture into the life of the city. The time has come for innovative spatial solutions to the problems surrounding food and urbanism. The Food Urbanism Initiative (FUI) aims to examine the overall impact of food on urban design and to study the potential of new architectural and landscape strategies for the integration of food production, processing, distribution and consumption in the contemporary city. The FUI paper outlines the fundamental intentions of this movement as well as examining strategies meant to facilitate urban development that integrate both city life and food production cycles into a more harmonious coexistence that is socially, economically, and environmentally responsible. Using Switzerland as a point of departure,

FUI explores the nation's recent history and describes the project's research methodology while also citing corresponding examples at multiple scales.

The discipline of landscape architecture is well poised to deal with the challenges and opportunities for integrating food production into the life of the contemporary city. Its tools can be used to generate urban form and reconfigure existing urban spaces (vacant lots, parks, gardens, and public squares) to productive agricultural ends by drawing from its deep roots in both the realms of agriculture and urban design, its recent interest in reclaiming derelict sites for productive social ends, and its ability to manage multi-faceted processes over time. Food Urbanism proposals, programs and prototypical pilot projects are sprouting up across the globe and are beginning to provide valuable insight. FUI hopes to advance these efforts by thoughtfully examining the movement to develop solutions reinforcing the liaison between theory and practice, between architecture and agriculture, between city and farm.

Suggested further reading

Book: Ecological Urbanism 2009

www.slowfood.com

http://www.iconeye.com/articles/20071009/index.php?view=article&catid=429%3Aicon-072--june-2009&layout=default&id=4040%3Aurban-farming&option=com_content – ICON magazine June 2009 article

LECTURE 10: P.A. de Graaf

“Room for urban agriculture in Rotterdam - Defining the spatial opportunities for urban agriculture within the industrialised city”

Abstract

The research presented in this paper provides a top-down perspective of the Rotterdam urban landscape and its opportunities for urban agriculture. This perspective aims to be instrumental in bottom-up entrepreneurial driven realisation of urban agriculture projects in cities in industrialised countries in general and Rotterdam in particular, firstly by uncovering and mapping opportunities for urban agriculture and secondly by showing their potential through design case studies. The paper will focus on the mapping of opportunities and its underlying rationale.

First, promising types of urban agriculture are defined based on international best practice and expert judgement of the local context. Secondly, a set of criteria is formulated that defines opportunities based on the demands and on the benefits for the city these types have spatially, environmentally and socially. The third step encompasses a mapping of these opportunities through interpretation of the existing urban fabric: its built and green milieus and the social diversity of their inhabitants, its zoning and its underlying waste (water) and energy infrastructure. This step will result in a map for each type that highlights areas or fields of opportunity, with an overall map integrating the maps for each type in an opportunity map for urban agriculture in Rotterdam.

It is argued that the definition of spatial opportunities and a corresponding typology for urban agriculture should be investigated in relation to the role it can play in making the city more sustainable both in a social and an environmental sense and the potential of urban agriculture to function as a system that is more than the sum of its parts, making the city more resilient to changes caused by climate change or other environmental problems, such as depletion of finite resources, loss of biodiversity etcetera.

Notes

This project is mapping UA opportunities; either ecological areas such as allotments or urban forests, or technical areas, such as hydroponic or aquaculture solutions. Some obviously will require much greater infrastructure. The principles should guide the visioning.

LECTURE 11: M. Tomkins

“Food is concrete: augmenting architecture through community food-gardening on inner London housing estates”

Abstract

The French poet and artist Jean Cocteau (1893 (1928)???) once stated that all art is anonymous, in that authors are rarely present when people view their art. This is also true of the built environment, which is largely silent of architects’ voices, filled instead by the hubbub of the daily intervention of residents. This paper explores one intervention - community food-gardening - as it is presently emerging within six inner London housing estates. In a series of interviews, the estate residents explicitly expressed frustration at the “blank”, “bleak”, “disused”, “neglected”, “barren”, “grey” and “derelict” landscapes surrounding their homes, voicing instead a desire to re-use them “productively” through food-gardening.

However, this paper argues that while food is enunciated as the primary concept, it is a set of primary practices, such as the construction of the self-built, food-producing landscape, the creation of shared social narratives and the interaction with natural resources that dominate. Thus the gardeners should not be confined by the urban food discourse, exemplified within civic agriculture (Lyson, 2004), which seeks to link consumers to food production by its (re)localisation. Rather, what needs to be explored is the re-linking of residents to architecture, landscape, and the planning of cities. As one resident put it, gardeners are “amateur architects”, augmenting the pre-planned architecture with a bricolage of seasonal, quotidian, and playful performances.

This challenges formal architectural space and place through soil, the growing of food, and its social harvesting. Using multi-site participant observation, semi-structured interviews and photography, the research throws new light into this overshadowed everyday food-gardening activity that often falls within the penumbra of the productive, economic and environmental “feeding cities” UA discourse. It confirms that self-grown food, within the built environment, is a primeval and emotional scream muffled by our current relentless food supply systems. Similarly, postwar Town and Country Planning Acts have muted the multiple narratives of play, knowledge, and self-building that are finally escaping, fuelled via this tiny, self-made harvest.

Notes

He looked at farming/food production projects in urban areas; starting with the premise that growing or assisting with such projects would change consumption habits. However, during the research this became apparent that projects weren’t producing the yields or crops necessary for this, and therefore the reasons for such projects were elsewhere.

Therefore, he researched the benefits gained by residents through their involvement. Particular reasons were the speed that projects could be created, and therefore impact the environment. Also, how projects have released creativity from those involved; play for adults.

LECTURE 12: R. Wiltshire

“Growing alone, growing together, growing apart?”

Abstract

The organisation of an unpaid supply of labour in an essential but under-researched aspect of contemporary forms of urban agriculture, and a key restraint on its expansion. In the UK there are two dominant modes of practice, collective and individual, the former exemplified by volunteering activity on growing projects, the latter by traditional allotment gardens. This paper explores the assumptions about human motivation, individual rights and effective social organisation that underpin these two modes, and scopes the consequences for accountability, sustainability and social inclusion in a diverse local population. The relationship between collective and individual practitioners can be antagonistic, and it is argued that greater transparency in the assumptions that underpin the social organisation of urban agriculture will support a more nuanced and effective set of policy choices.

Notes

A major problem is increasing the amount of voluntary labour needed to run such projects, and therefore promote UA. The research compares individual and collective growing.

Issue	Individual	Collective	Notes
Example	Allotment	Community garden	
Right to access land	Statutory	Contractual/temporary	
Right to participate	Tenancy	Membership/voluntary	
Beneficiaries	Individual	All participants	
Primary motivations	Self	Common good	
Social participation	Discretionary	Required	
Collective action	Latent	Essential	
Primary barrier to participation	Land supply	Fit to group	Possibly based on age, race, gender etc.
Funding	Rents/taxation	Grants, service agreements, sales	
Professional involvement	Weak	Strong	More likely for joint projects to contact professionals
Production/distribution decisions	Autonomous	Negotiated	
Accountability	Individual	All participants	
Outcome of shirking	Harm to self	Harm to group	
Compensation on dispossession	Statutory	Discretionary	If LA's dispossess group they must rehome (at least on allotment site)

Frictions happen between available space and proselytization; convergence happens when deficits of land drive action, move beyond the allotment law to secure resources.

Suggested further reading

A Place to Grow: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/9027597>

Growing in the Community: available to purchase <http://www.lga.gov.uk>

LECTURE 13: Dr. C. Tornaghi

“Public space, urban agriculture and the grassroots creation of new Commons: lessons and challenges for policy makers”

Abstract

In recent years, the emergence of a new environmental culture is posing new challenges to public space management. Urban social movements in the Global North are claiming public spaces that reflect stronger concerns for sustainability, climate change and environmental quality. From Landshare to Urban Harvest, from Guerrilla Gardeners to the diverse practices of collective urban agriculture, a wide range of initiatives is experimenting and enacting –with different degrees of legality - new ways of sharing spaces while producing food and experiencing conviviality in public spaces.

In some cities these initiatives start and evolve within marginal/liminal spaces (illegal allotments, guerrilla gardening etc.) while other groups and organisations are seeking a more systematic dialogue with -and support from- local institutions (Landshare, Transition Towns, Urban Harvest, Abundance, Permaculture associations, etc.). Nonetheless, it seems that the ability of local and regional institutions to respond to these new demands are somehow limited and constrained by planning traditions that have not been permeable to emerging urban cultures and their needs, failing to create flexible or more adaptable public spaces. As a result, short term satisfaction to these needs is found in the possibilities left open by “loose spaces” (Franck and Stevens, 2006) or ad-hoc negotiations between grassroots groups and local councils (such as for the concession of public land), but none of these go beyond the status of emergency or residual practices.

Drawing on preliminary academic-activist research into several of these practices in UK and Italy, and adopting a relational perspective to the construction of public spaces (Lefebvre 1974, Jessop 2001), this paper aim to present and discuss the challenges that these practices and cultures pose to the political and planning agenda for urban public space management in regimes of energy and space scarcity and climate change.

Notes

This research looked at grassroots activism and relationships between groups and LA’s; can dialogue, and therefore project outcomes, be improved.

Suggested further reading

Book: Insurgent Public Space, Hou 2010

LECTURE 14: D. Solomon

“URBANIAHOEVE: Where Social Design Expands Urban Agriculture”

Abstract

Urban agriculture defined in simple terms is the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities. Described as laden with benefits for the cities & regions as well as its practitioners & entrepreneurs, urban agriculture’s (UA) current definition delineates (peri-) urban food production in locations as disparate as Dakar, Havana, and Detroit. But as UA’s field of operation increases, adjustment and nuance of the definition becomes an imperative. How can agro-parks developed by multinational agriculture concerns be included under the same term as grass-roots/landscape architecture

initiated by the cultural sector? Must urban agriculture continue be defined using the same forms of output as conventional agriculture?

Since September 2009 URBANIAHOEVE Social Design Lab for Urban Agriculture has been conducting action research towards developing a signature, suitable, and sustainable form of urban agriculture (UA) that could be widely adopted in Northern European cities. The physical and conceptual starting points for these UA typologies presuppose the use and integration of existing forms of green and social infrastructure, as well as offering a clear benefit to the immediate surroundings. This paper charts URBANIAHOEVE's specific areas of research and the resulting typologies that range from planting design, to food facilities and (playground) equipment, to collaboration protocols and the strategic re-appropriation of public space.

Notes

These art-led projects aim to raise awareness about urban food production by various interventions in the built environment, and through workshops run with local communities.

Suggested further reading

Website: <http://www.urbaniahoeve.nl>

Further information and presentations will be available to download from this website when ready:
<http://artsresearch.brighton.ac.uk/research/projects/continuous-productive-urban-landscape/aesop-2nd-european-sustainable-food-planning-conference>