

Real Food Wythenshawe Project

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The main goal of the paper is to report on the short term scientific mission within COST action TU 1201 taken place at Salford University in Manchester from 28 June to 10 July 2014. The report is prepared by Researcher at the Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Engineering, Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra, Slovakia. The STSM corresponds to COST action working group no. 2 and results will be published as poster presentation in COST meeting in Cyprus, published as research paper and presented at conferences.

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Abstract

Urban Allotment Gardening (UAG) is an important source of fresh and seasonal fruit and vegetable reduces the risk of developing heart or cancer disease, creating community and economic benefits. This is one of the main goals of the Real Food Wythenshawe project that has started in 2013 in Manchester, to present how urban agriculture could help people change their eating habits and form their relationship to home-grown food. The Real Food Wythenshawe programme will be delivered through a range of schemes that will be led by the Real Food Wythenshawe partners, as well as through activity at several community hubs across the area. A key aspect of the paper was to investigate how many allotment garden colonies are located in the area and if they are used by people, to examine how many people grow their own food, and the potential benefits of the Real Food Wythenshawe project. Presented results in the first short report represents project early outcomes, planned actions and field surveys conducted in areas of Wythenshawe, Great Manchester from discussions with the people that are responsible for this project. Outputs from the questionnaire that has been distributed since July 2014 via emails and Facebook will be presented in the Final report. This project is different from the other food projects in UK, because of its top down orientation and initial budget that has been approved for 1million pounds; an amount which exceeds any other project to the author's knowledge. The outcomes of the programme will be delivered through a range of projects that according to their character try to reach all age groups and educate them about food production. Besides the expected benefits other positive outcomes of the food project may appear with a local community such as good publicity for the area and meeting other people.

Introduction

Urban Agriculture

The concept of Urban Agriculture (UA) seems, on first encounter, to be just convenient shorthand for describing food production activities taking place within and on the periphery of cities and towns (Ellis & Sumberg, 1998). In literature we can find many definitions of UA focus on different terms for example, Mougeot (1994a, 1994b., p.1) defines UA as encompassing “the production of food and non-food plant and tree crops and animal husbandry (livestock, fowl, fish, and so forth), both within (intra-) and fringing (peri-) built-up urban areas.” A definition by Smit et al. (1996, p. 1) characterises UA as “an industry that produces, processes and markets food and fuel.....on land and water dispersed throughout the urban and peri-urban area.....” Further, Tinker (1994, p. x) puts forward the view that UA “refers not merely to the growing of food crops and fruit trees but that it also encompasses the raising of animals, poultry, fish, bees, rabbits, snakes, guinea pigs, or other stock considered edible locally.”, and for Ellis and Sumberg (1998) and Viljoen (2005) the idea of UA has become associated with ideas of food self-sufficiency in cities at both household and city-wide levels, of poverty reduction addressed solely within urban boundaries, and of futuristic waste recycling systems that can maximize city food output in an ecologically friendly and sustainable way. According to Armar-Kremesu (2000) UA has increasingly gained recognition as a viable intervention strategy for the urban poor to earn extra income. It also allows the poor to reduce their reliance on cash income for food by growing their own food on plots inside or outside the city, thus increasing their access to much needed food.

Urban gardening (UG), activity connected with UA, is often depicted as cure for social fragmentation, and an effective way of acting with and for a specific public, linked with social, environmental and economic benefits (Smit, 1996, Stocker & Barnett, 1998, Mbiba, 2001). Growing food in urban environments also creates documented social and health benefits, such as greater food security, nutritional diversity, community cohesion and psychological well-being (Martin & Marsden, 1999; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000) From an economic perspective UG offers support for local economies by providing vocational training and producing fresh fruit and vegetables that might be particularly hard to come by in pockets of inner city (Howe & Wheeler, 1999) For instance, according to Boulianne (2001), urban gardens facilitate teamwork in a shared open space, which is supposed to facilitate integration within a community.

Food

One of the most important aspects of UG is food production. Food is more complicated issue for individuals, household and communities than credit or clothing also in UK and there has been much social and political debate about growing food in recent years (Shaw, 1999).

Food choice and management is a daily habit, yet also part of self and family identity, deeply embedded in cultural, social and religious beliefs and practice. Food is private, in that it is stored and consumed in the domestic domain, but it is also communal (shopping, eating) and therefore is a public good, because few in the UK grow or rear their own food. Good food is important in its own right as a contributor to health and well-being, especially in crowded urban areas (Morgan, 2009) but it is also an indicator of wider social inclusion (Howard, et al., 2001) Access to food, that is the shops or markets people can reach, what they can buy and how much, is governed by decisions in which few ordinary citizens play any part. According to Caraher and Dowler (2007) initiatives to change factors within the complex business of obtaining, preparing and consuming food will inevitably be varied in nature and outcomes. Those on low incomes eat less well, often pay more for their food, often face worse access (Morgan, 2009) - with a poorer quality/range - and suffer more diet related ill-health (Howard, et al., 2001). To get access to a healthy diet can necessitate the expense (financial and temporal) of travel by car or public transport. Thus the price of transport is an additional or externalised cost (Caraher & Dowler, 2007). People who live on state benefits or the minimum wage often lack sufficient money to buy enough or appropriate food for a healthy diet, especially if they have to meet other essential expenditures of rent or fuel costs, or are indebted. According studies of Dowler et al. (2001) to if they have to rely on small corner stores, they may have to pay anything from 6 - 13% more for a nutritionally adequate diet than they would if they shopped in one of the main retail outlets. They cannot afford to experiment in food purchase or meal preparation; and, in common with the majority of the population (particularly those who are younger), may lack confidence to cook and prepare unfamiliar foods.

There is also some evidence that healthier foods cost more. In a comparison of a 'regular' basket of foods with a 'healthier' basket – in the latter replacing skimmed milk for full fat, wholemeal bread for white, low fat for full fat products, etc.- the more healthy basket of goods costs considerably more than the less healthy (Caraher & Dowler, 2007).

Food projects

Food issues have been climbing the public agenda in recent years and local authorities and health authorities charged with reducing inequalities, exclusion and poverty, have seized on community based food initiatives as a means of solving what are perceived to

be the particular food problems of those who are poor, lack skills and decent affordable shops nearby (Caraher & Dowler, 2007). Literature on the subject highlights the value of urban food-growing projects as a powerful vehicle for tackling intimately linked social, economic, educational and environmental concerns (Hopkins, 2000). 'Food projects' thus figure in proposals and funding applications for local regeneration and public health (Caraher & Dowler, 2007) and are seen as new public agenda for addressing inequality: regenerating local communities, improving health, and redressing the consequences of increasing poverty and deprivation (McGlone et al., 1999).

Local food projects are hard to characterise consistently (Caraher & Dowler, 2007) and there is no formal definition, but they broadly encompass a range of initiatives which operate in a given community, or which have arisen from a local group within a community (Anderson et al., 1996). The term is used by a range of professionals and sectors to indicate initiatives which have in common: food (its production, preparation or consumption), local involvement (management, delivery, paid/unpaid workers) and state support (funding, space, professional input, transport, equipment (Caraher & Dowler, 2007). The label is usually attached to projects which work with, or are generated by, low income communities (McGlone et al., 1999) and does not usually include farmers markets or delivery systems such as meals-on-wheels (Caraher & Dowler, 2007). McGlone et al. (1999) characterises the food project as "partnership between public, voluntary and private sectors to work together with those who live on low incomes and in deprivation to enable them to achieve a better quality of life". Food projects range from practical sessions on cooking, food co-ops or transport schemes, community cafés, gardening clubs to breakfast clubs in schools. They have a variety of management and organisational structures, and can encompass local activities run by volunteers to those where a statutory worker has been given time to engage with the local community in developing food work. The funding or other support can come from local authorities or health authorities, lottery monies or other charitable sources (Caraher & Dowler, 2007). According to Caraher and Dowler (2007) National Lottery charitable donations represents new opportunities of donation.

For Caraher and Dowler (2007) local food projects are too often used as something of a 'quick fix': addressing exclusion, poor food access or skills, or hungry and disaffected school children and they are seen by the professionals as a way of attaining targets such as reductions in heart disease or cancer rates, or contributing to sustainable food supplies (under Local Agenda 21), without the need to engage in protracted debate or conflict with regeneration or business/planning developments, some of which potentially contribute to the problems of food poverty. The challenge for planners and funders is to harness the energy, vision and skill development within local food projects, and to develop the capacity to build on and listen to the experience of local people engaged in them. In practice, local community

members engage with food projects in various ways, not necessarily primarily to improve their health.

Allotment gardens in UK

Allotment gardens represent one of the forms of producing food and of often associated with other agricultural projects (Milbourne, 2010). Allotments gardens are deeply embedded within British national landscape, and are firmly rooted in British cultural heritage (Crouch & Ward, 1997, Crouch, 2003a). Currently, there exists 245,000 allotments throughout Britain, and a renaissance in interest places a further 100,000 people on waiting lists (Malone, 2009). In addition, a national survey undertaken by a property agency revealed that almost half of all residents would rent a plot if land became available locally (Findaproperty.com, 2008). Such figures are remarkable considering the imminent death of the allotment movement has been prophesised for many years (Crouch & Ward, 1997).

Recent changes in the role of allotment gardening have seen it shift from being a post-war form of social welfare provision to a type of leisure activity (Wiltshire et al. , 2000). Wiltshire et al. (2000) argue that the increasing popularity of allotment gardening can be seen as a growing reaction to the privatisation of public life and the need for spaces that support social contact and active participation.

One of the projects that adopts basic concept of allotment gardening is a pop-up allotment project- Edible Eastside, located in the heart of Birmingham. The food grows in wooden containers – raised bed and each holder have its own one. As Larkham and Hardman (2014) notes, unlike the traditional allotment, Edible Eastside uses locally-sourced raised beds; enabling users to grow on a disused, almost certainly polluted, site close to the city centre.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in Wythenshawe area, Great Manchester, the part of the city that has been described as deprived, with health problems and no access to fresh food. A key aspect of the paper was to investigate how many allotment garden colonies are located in the area and if they are used by people, to examine how many people grow their own food, and the potential benefits of the Real Food Wythenshawe project.

‘Interviews can provide rich sources of data’ on people’s values (Kitchen & Tate, 2000, p. 213), fostering ‘a deeper picture’ relative to questionnaires (Silverman, 1993, p. 15). An interview with Rachel Harding, one of the project coordinator of Real Food Wythenshawe, was conducted in July 2014 via email and also by personal meeting, to explore

the view on the Real Food Wythenshawe project and to present activities that are connected with it. The obtained information will be analysed and discussed according to literature and past successful or not successful food projects in UK.

The food self production ability in the area was analysed based on the questionnaires (see appendix 1), formed by WCHG with cooperation of research team from University of Salford that I was part for two weeks of my STSM, and have been distributed via emails and Facebook. Although Parfitt (1997: 76) heralds questionnaires an 'indispensable tool' for human geographers seeking to gather primary data on a population's characteristics, behaviours and attitudes, this was the easiest option how to reach people in the area. There is 100 expected respondents and so far the responds rate is just 38%, because the distribution of the questionnaires started by the WCHG in the middle of July 2014.

Case study area

Wythenshawe area in Manchester

Wythenshawe (pop. 86,000) is a district in the south of the city of Manchester, England. Historically in Cheshire. In 1931 Wythenshawe was transferred to the City of Manchester, which had begun building a massive housing estate there in the 1920s to resolve the overpopulation and deprivation in its inner-city slums. With an area of approximately 11 square miles (28 km²), Wythenshawe has been referred to as one of the largest council housing estates in Europe, although private ownership has grown. The district comprises nine areas: Baguley, Benchill, Peel Hall, Newall Green, Woodhouse Park, Moss Nook, Northern Moor, Northenden, and Sharston (www.manchester.gov.uk).

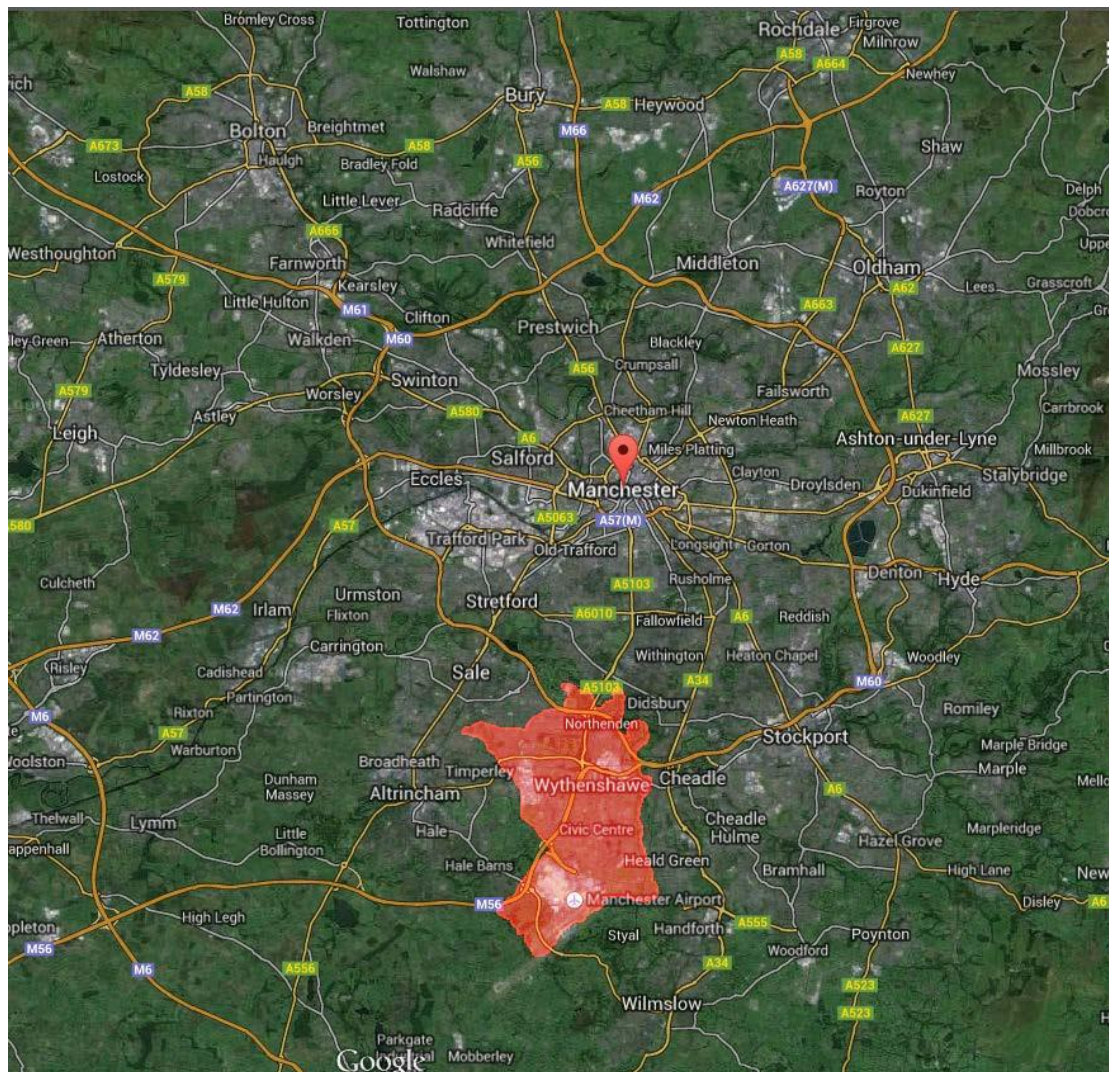


Fig 1. Wythenshawe and its location within the Great Manchester (Google maps, 2014)

The results of postal surveys and interviews research of 2600 people living in Wythenshawe conducted by Huxley et al. (2004), aimed to information about health status, quality of life, personal circumstances and consulting behaviour, showed higher proportion of residents in poorer socio-economic circumstances with a longstanding illness. Supermarkets shy away of these areas of high crime and low disposable income, living them barren retail deserts (Howe & Wheeler, 1999). This was one of the reasons to start think about this part of Manchester a potential area for regeneration. The signs of deprivation are also seen on the deprivation map from 2012, where the most deprived areas are shaded dark red; the least deprived areas dark blue.

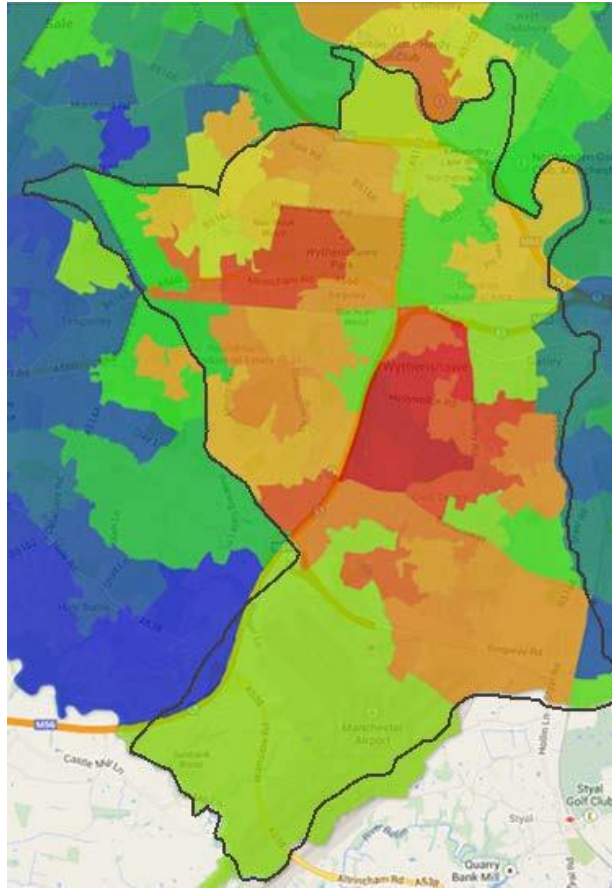


Fig 2. Section of deprivation map of Great Manchester from 2012- black line presents the boundaries of Wythenshawe area (Mapping deprivation in Manchester, 2012)

Real Food Wythenshawe

Real Food Wythenshawe is a 5 year £1million Big Lottery funded community food campaign that was launched in September 2012, with match funding from key partners from public, private and voluntary sector organizations that are based in Manchester (www.communitieslivingsustainably.org.uk). The main aim of this project is to inspire the people of Wythenshawe about the food they eat, with a slogan of ‘Grow it. Cook it. Eat it!’ From plant to plate, the campaign, which is led by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, encourages and supports residents to take control over what they and their families eat by promoting ways that people can grow their own produce, learn to cook healthy, economical meals using local, seasonal produce. It demonstrates that healthy eating and ‘real food’ is possible for everyone, regardless of age, budget, ability or time (www.wchg.org.uk)

The Real Food Wythenshawe programme is focused on delivering (www.realfoodwythenshawe.com):

- A network of community growing and cooking initiatives, engaging with those most in need of access to healthy food and exercise, and develop new initiatives where there is an

unmet need.

- Increasing the scale, variety and connectivity of local food production – maximising the use of local green spaces at all scales and moving towards continuous urban food production.
- A programme that helps more people in Wythenshawe to enjoy reasonably priced, sustainably produced and locally grown food through development of food businesses, social enterprises and markets which meet community needs.
- An increased understanding across the community of the benefits of a more sustainable diet, both to the climate and to individuals' health.
- Projects that look to generate employment and training initiatives, with real jobs, apprenticeships and internships.
- A programme that engages a new generation with food, developing their awareness of the connections between the food they eat, their health, and climate change through building and running innovative sustainable indoor growing systems.

Results

Allotment gardens in Manchester

There are more than 40 allotment sites in Manchester and 7 of them are located in Wythenshawe area. The allotments are owned by the Manchester city council and to rent one must sign for it on waiting list. The rent of the plots depend on its size (from 17p to 19p per) and class. There are 3 classes (A-B) depending on the site. The area of the allotments is fenced and to enter the key is needed. The waiting list and the time that you have to wait for you allotment is one of reasons that people are not much interested to growing their own food there.

it, but the ultimate idea is for the students to take over ownership, along with volunteers.



Fig 4. Biosphere at Manchester Collage (Real Food Wythenshawe project, 2014)

Wythenshawe Park

Wythenshawe is one of the greenest areas of the city with 12 parks and large areas of woodland. One of the largest parks is Wythenshawe Park with an area of 109 hectares of open parkland. It is a place for year-round leisure and educational activities for all ages including a variety of activities and events. The park is easy to access by car or public transport and there's plenty of parking on site. In the park are existing gardens, plots and old unused green houses that offer places for residents to grow food. In the park are located Wythenshawe Community Farm, Horticulture centre and the Walled Garden- Orchard and plots and they will serve as a presentation place for producing your own food.

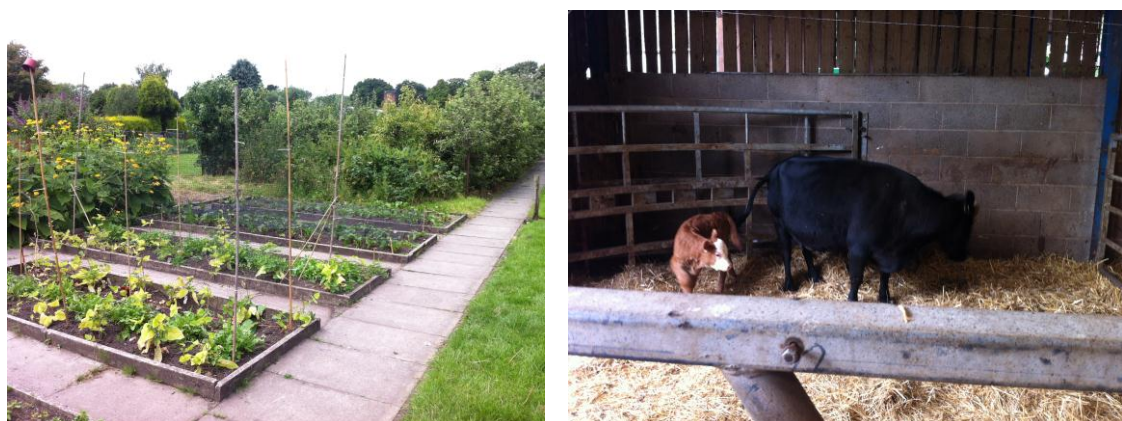


Fig 5. Location of the Horticulture Centre, The Farm and Walled Garden within the park and photos of Horticulture centre and the Farm.



Fig 6. Photos of the plots in Walled Garden.

Promote edible planting

One of the main goals of the project is to encourage people produce their own fruit and vegetables in their own gardens. To motivate people the organizers distribute free seeds and plants and by Facebook and questionnaires collect information if people have planted them and take care of them or not. *“There have been 2000 plants and 750 packets of seed distributed form May to September to present how easy is to produce own medicine, a box of medical plants has been placed in front of the local pharmacy.”* (Rachel, 2014).



Fig 7. Planters with medical herbs in front of the pharmacy (Real Food Wythenshawe project, 2014).

Workshops

Along all this activities the programme will also help the people of Wythenshawe to develop the skills and the passion to cook healthier, cheaper and more sustainable food – food from scratch. By organizing workshops in local community centres they want to motivate people use more local fresh food in the kitchen and demonstrate how easy and cheaper is to live healthy. As a communication tool with the community is used Facebook, to connect people into one group and inform them about the events, ongoing workshops and activities. People can also share the pictures of their own gardens and planters. People also communicate with the organizers via emails and every year is conducted questionnaire survey to reveal the changing eating habits of the Wythenshawe inhabitants.



Fig 8. Cooking workshop ((Real Food Wythenshawe project).

Edible transport

As the project and the edible food growing presentation in the area of Wythenshawe is flexible, there is also an idea to design an edible bust stops and bicycle racks in Wythenshawe to present urban food production in the city. The proposal is to create an edible transport interchange in the heart of Wythenshawe. It is submitted as a partnership between Real Foods: Wythenshawe and Groundwork Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside & Trafford (MSSTT) with the support of MCC South Manchester Regeneration teams, Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG), and Transport for Greater Manchester

(TfGM). According to Rachel (2014) *“The core aim is to inspire local people to connect with their natural environment through sustainable food and diverse landscapes and help create a flagship land management model which has the potential for further roll-out across the City, particularly at other Bus/Tram Stops/Stations.”*

Research and evaluation of the Real Food Wythenshawe project

The purpose of the evaluation is to evaluate the impact project has the local community, to understand what techniques and processes work and what don't, and to demonstrate value for money. The measure of success of the project is based on number of people reached and engaged in planned activities. Two types of evaluations will be used by WCHG with cooperation of research team from University of Salford according to the evaluation. For the outcome evaluation baseline questionnaire (see appendix 1) will be used and for the process evaluation, that will seek to understand the context in which Real Food has worked and how this influences outcomes, in-depth interviews are suggested as a method to collect data.

Discussion

The current policy climate in the UK is to reduce inequalities in health and social exclusion, using a judicious mix of public and private sector partnerships. One of these partnerships is also Real Food Wythenshawe that connects partners such as: Willow Park Housing Trust, Parkway Green Housing Trust, The Wythenshawe Forum Trust, St Modwen, The Manchester College, Manchester City Council, University Hospital South Manchester Foundation Trust (Wythenshawe Hospital), Creative Concern, EMERGE, FareShare North West, BITE (a partnership initiative of Manchester Mind/ Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust), URBED and the University of Salford. These partners represent combination of public, private and voluntary sector organisations that are based in Manchester and offer skills and experience in urban regeneration, project management, sustainable design, resource use, health and disability issues and sustainable food (www.realfoodwythenshawe.com).

Although the project coordinators are still in the process of evaluating the best technique to collect the project outcome, one of the methods they have already started is questionnaire survey, to collect information about the people, their eating habits, health and food growing abilities (see Appendix1). The project success will be measure according to collected information on based on number of people reached and engaged in planned activities and changing their nutrition. In practice, such evaluations as have been done (for

instance Dobson et al., 2000) have shown that local food projects can have some impact where they are based on sound principles of community involvement and needs assessment, have clear aims and objectives and have been allowed time to establish themselves. The overall community improvement according to Marr, (1999) may be limited because food projects may attract the more committed within a community, those with an existing commitment to better health through good food. Dobson et al. (2000) in their evaluation of a community food project with a number of different activities conclude that 'by the end of each initiative, people had made small sustainable changes to their own and their families;' diet. Perhaps most importantly interest in, and enjoyment of, food had increased.'

McGlone et al. (1999) notices that measurement of outcomes must also reflect the fact that food projects are not static. They go through cycles when they are more or less successful, by whatever measures. For example, at one time a food project may have lots of users and activities, as well as considerable professional support and funding. If success was measured at this point, the project might appear in a very positive light. However, a year later, interest may have diminished because of a withdrawal of funding, or because the people involved have changed. These difficulties might take some months to resolve and the project may require help (such as professional intervention or an injection of cash) to overcome a period of relative inactivity.

This project has started as the professionals' initiative that at the end would like to be leading by the community and volunteers. According to McGlone et al. (1999) the majority of food projects in UK started as professional involvement in generating the original idea, either informally as a background supporter, or formally as a professional whose remit was to initiate and facilitate such projects. Based on the research from 2004 conducted in Wythenshawe area (Huxley et al., 2004) presented that one of the negative aspects of living in the area included low levels of co-operation ("no-one wants to join in projects that start here"). This fact could be a problem to lead the food projects a keep them alive after the professionals and financial support will be gone. On the other hand the results from the research has showed that the quality of leadership, solidarity, neighbourliness and a sense of belonging/community is one of the positive features of living in Wythenshawe. Dynamic local workers and long term professional support, especially after funding is one of the important element in project success, because as Caraher and Dowler (2007) pointed in their paper, projects which are exclusively owned, meeting only professional agendas, and parachuted into a community with short-term, start-up funding, are likely to flounder.

Project sustainability

Funding is one of the main factors that affect sustainability of the project and a key to projects being able to thrive is becoming self-financing. There is a question who will finance all the activities such as cooking or gardening workshops and who will take care about the Biosphere at the Manchester Collage? For these questions have been no answers yet.

To use no man's land - Land contamination may prevent the future development of urban agriculture on certain sites, or limit their ability to produce goods of a required standard for consumption (Howe, 2002)

Nutritional outcomes and their sustainability may not be successful as the project leaders might think. According to McGlone et al. (1999) users of the cook & eat sessions said they were trying the new foods and they had gained in confidence. However, trying the recipes at home depended on their having time available, and whether partners or children were willing to make changes to their diets. The projects succeeded in putting food on their agenda just for a short period.

Conclusion

Local food projects should not be seen as a solution to enables those on the lowest incomes to obtain and eat sufficient, but also a way to create community. They are important parts social exclusion, anti-poverty and health strategies to overcome social, providing training, alleviating general health problems and improving the local area. They have been seen as a potential solution to empower local people work in partnership and to improve their eating habits and social life. In the top down oriented food project with the state support it is always a question how the project will be accepted by the community and what will be the sustainability of the project after the completion of financing.

The Real Food Wythenshawe project doesn't support the establishment of new allotment gardens and via workshops and community gardening projects is encouraging people living in Wythenshawe to grow their own fruit and vegetables and to develop the cooking skills. The outcomes of the programme will be delivered through a range of projects that according to their character try to reach all age groups and educate them about food production. Besides the expected benefits other positive outcomes of the food project may appear with a local community such as good publicity for the area and meeting other people.

The project will also look to bring into use the large number of "no man's lands" that exist between properties in Wythenshawe, utilising the land for growing food. More than 50 pieces of Wythenshawe Community Housing Group land have been mapped for potential growing. There have been chosen most areas based on analysis carried out before the project and the analysis of the space, but. The character of the places has not been presented yet. The cooperation with the Manchester council enables to organizers implement new ideas more

effectively and the council support could help to the project resist after the end of support. The project within the Real Food Wythenshawe program could be seen as a way of attracting funding to achieve the wider aims.

The idea of edible bus stops is quite well known in UK. The projects coordinators see two main benefits of it. One is Economical- the proposals will cost less than a commercial planting scheme, as volunteers and the local community could be educated and trained in planting parts of the site. The second benefit of edible transport is environmental, when the proposals will offer a much more bio-diverse greenspace than ornamental planting alone. A mixed softworks design incorporating edible planting will provide an important stepping stone for wildlife as well as providing a more functional, and valuable landscape for the local community.

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Other web sources

www.manchester.gov.uk

www.googlemaps.com

www.realfoodwythenshawe.com

<http://www.findaproperty.com>

Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

(Please see attached files)