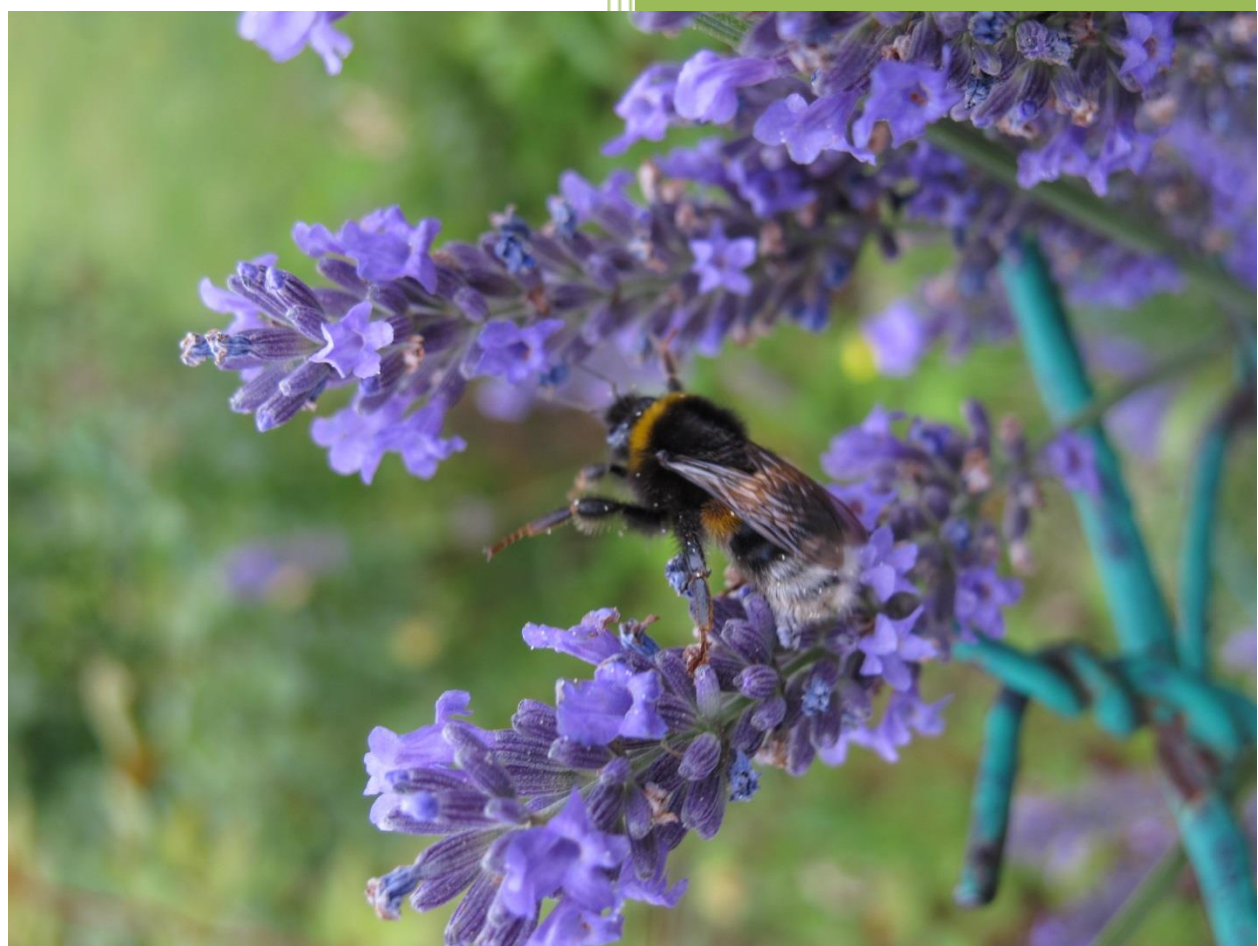


COST ACTION TU1201
Urban Allotment Gardens in European
Cities
Future, Challenges and Lessons Learned

2013

Short Term Scientific Mission Report



Ilona Feklistova

Poland, Warsaw

19.08-02.09.2013

Introduction

The main goal of present paper is to report on the short term scientific mission within COST action TU1201 taken place in Warsaw from 19 July to 2 August 2013.

The report is prepared by Master student in Landscape architecture Ilona Feklistova from Estonian University of Life Sciences. The STSM corresponds to COST action working group 2 and results will be used in poster design for COST action meeting in Poznan in September as well as in scientific paper and Master thesis that will be defended in June 2014.

The STSM mission was possible through COST action financial support TU120 and cooperation of Warsaw University of Life Sciences.

Given report gives short description of urban allotment (farther UA) areas where the field survey took place, contains specification of methods used during the research, gives overview on the results and provides with examples of questionnaire and illustrative material.

Methodology

This paper reports on results from field survey conducted in several UA areas in Warsaw city:

Sadi Zoliborskie, Piaski and Lotnik. The general part of information was collected through questionnaire with open-end questions where random selection of respondents helped ensure adequate representation from all three UA areas. Also visual data represented by sketches, photos, plans has been prepared. In formulation of the questions I aimed to cover **listed below** issues :

- identify the dominative groups within UA users;
- UA role in creating social capital;
- To reveal personal value of UA;

The data was collected in cooperation with Polish Master student Hanna Szumilas from Warsaw University of Life Sciences. As result we had got responses from 50 respondents (20 - Sadi Zoliborskie, 15 – Piaski, 15 - Lotnik) that is transformed 100 percent.

Context

The history of UA – in polish *Rodzinny Ogród Działkowy* ('family garden allotments') is more than one hundred years old in Poland. Their initial goal was to meet the basic needs of rural labor moved into urban settings as well as to secure availability of food resources, especially during and after the second II World War and to develop agriculture in Soviet period (). Today more researches show UA are being valued as a positive place for social interaction and recreation thus gardens' value to food security usually remains secondary (). Present research aimed to investigate social issues of UA in Warsaw. During the conducted questionnaire listed below questions were considered:

- What are the main driving forces for keeping UA?
- What is the role of UA in integration of different social and cultural groups?
- How does the owner/user perceive UA?
- What is the role of UA as a place for recreation?
- What are the preconditions for social interaction?
- And if social interaction affects the composition of the lot?

Study sites

‘Sadi Zoliborskie’ family garden allotments

One of Warsaw’s oldest urban gardens, the Sadi Zoliborskie, lies at North part of Warsaw city next to the ‘Kępa Potocka’ Park. The UA was founded in 1932 as a point of meals for the homeless and unemployed in the military range.

Today the garden provides with private lots 455 members, where each person maintains plot of 150 m², as a whole makes 68500 m². Gardeners pay for their plots, maintain them, and have exclusive ownership over the plants produced there.

Plot ownership entitles members to a variety of paid facilities like garden tools, water, manure, mulch, electricity, WC and security. In return shareholders must pay the rental fee, contribute a few hours of volunteer work over the season, and abide by the garden rules.

The garden provides a space for socialization and nurtures personal development.

Also the UA interacting with schools and welfare homes for the educational purpose.

‘Piaski i Lotnik’ family garden allotments

The ‘Piaski i Lotnik’ UA are placed on northwest part of Warsaw suburban area close to the airport. These UA were found in 1960th and divided within the militaries. In facilities and obligation they are similar to ‘Piaski i Lotnik’ gardens. Additionally they have common area where playground, facilities for grill and social events can be found.

Results

Gardening appeals to people across demographic, cultural, age-related lines, hence UA can increase the interactions between people who would not normally meet and socialize. There was no opportunity to evaluate the role of AG in multicultural integration because the respondents were 100 percent Polish. On the other hand questionnaire has indicated certain value in interaction within different generations. Questionnaire showed that about 32% of respondents maintain the UA with their family (generally presented by several generations) thereby gardeners use the space to pass on farming techniques or recipes to younger members. Hereby, it is worth mentioning that 38% of UA users were engaged in gardening practice from their childhood as result they are able to pass traditional practice of garden maintenance. There were only two people within the age of 25-30 years, and one of them mentioned that it is of great importance that UA provide opportunity to interact with people much more older than him. Also within respondents 16% of retired people who are maintaining the UA alone or with husband/wife mentioned that they are visited regularly by their grandchildren in order to play or eat fresh fruits in the garden.

By providing communal space UA encourage interaction and sustain a community's values. 82 % claimed that they are in good relationship with their neighbors and actively communicates, even though that they had not mentioned it as part of daily activity (only 18 % did). About 30% of respondents admitted that organization of their garden is associated with their neighbors; nearby lots serves as motivation to keep own garden on the same level or to compete or borrow some ideas from each other.

It is generally acknowledged that common activities like garden parties and workdays serve as socializing opportunities (). The questionnaire showed that people are not so actively engaged in social activities. Almost half of respondents claimed that they attend once a year meeting and 10 percent take part in celebration of harvest. There are also social works where about 38% percent are engaged. Hence, the interaction within the neighbors is more localized or linked by common interests (for example beautification of an UA).

The spatial organization of UA can play a certain role to make people feel comfortable during the meeting and to stimulate interactions. As a rule cars are not allowed into the area (except for people with disabilities) that makes common paths with wayside are not more than three meters and create comfortable human scale place; thus it allows to interact people passing the neighbors UA with their owners. There are also created common recreational areas where UA users have opportunity to make picnic/grill and organize celebrations, meetings.

It is widely acknowledge that UA areas are public health promotion enterprises that can simultaneously promote good nutrition and physical activity. The time people spent in the UA varies from 2-3 days a week to six hours every day and 88% percent of respondents noticed that maintenance of the garden is the main occupation of daily round in their gardens. Also 14% acknowledged that sport or active games take place in their lot. Hereby, only 4 percent mentioned UA as important resource of food, to be more precise the respondents stressed the ecological value of products and not the degree of financial support.

The percent of retired people within UA users is dominating (70%), thereby the UA are essential for those who generally are not in favorable position; due to financial and health difficulties they are isolated from fulfilled life. 40% of respondents find a meaning for their life spending time in UA; the area makes them to socialize, provides opportunity for active recreation in the fresh air and becomes a way of self-fulfillment.

Gardening is admitted as a highly creative process where even random organization of gardens requires to gain certain practical knowledge. 28 percent of respondents see gardening as creative process, also it increase the interaction within neighbors, creates competition and motivates. 32 percent has acknowledged that lots should have practical organization to simplify the maintenance.

The garden also provides a relief from the surrounding city as a space where the community can feel comfortable. 44 percent has admitted the high recreational value of UA areas, 52 percent recognized that they fill calmness being in UA area. The UA area as the place for engagement people with nature is of particular importance within urban area. 16 percent had recognized daily interaction with nature like observing birds, taking care of cats and breeding pigeons, smelling the flowers, looking into the sky.

Conclusion

My research was focused on motivations and intents, the perception of the garden by users it serves, the use of gardens as social spaces and its organisation, and the effect of gardening. Hereby I had shortly presented the first results of my investigation. At this point to sum up, the gardeners view their gardens more as recreational, social and cultural places than as agricultural production. The more detailed investigation will take place during writing of my Master thesis.

Additional material

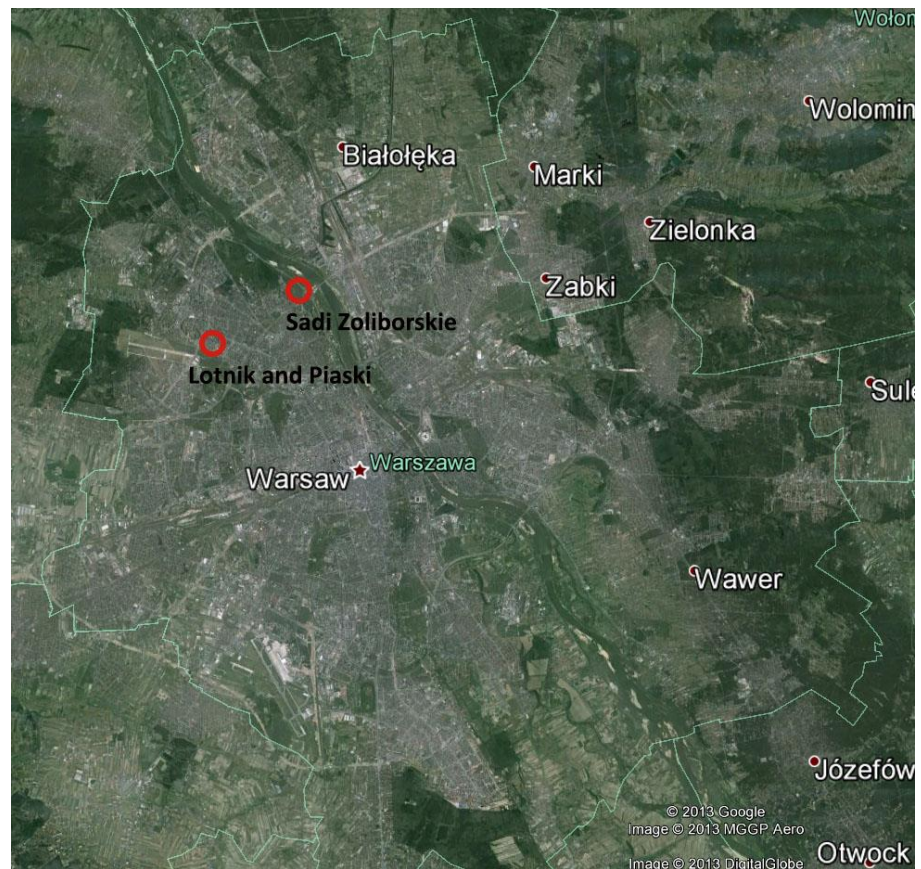
- 1) Questionnaire and example of answers
 1. Personal information (social, cultural identity)
 2. If their childhood was related to garden, farm, agriculture...
 3. If the person maintains the plot alone or with family/friends...
 4. What is the primary goal for keeping the garden (preferences in plants <> function)
 5. What is the person doing in allotment garden
 6. Does he communicate with neighbors and if this connection spreads, exists also outside the AG?
What are the relationship with the neighbors (nurture, trust, commitment, sharing, helping)
 7. How much time person spent there, how frequently (if he/she wants to spent there more/less time)
 8. Aesthetical preferences; planted randomly or organised because of preferences, colors forms are chosen?
 9. What are the facilities on the place?
 10. What is the meaning of that place for the person? (engagement with nature, cultural tradition, skills, education, community development, leisure, health, food, business, area protection) If the people planting for selling or private use?
 11. How does the person feel being in the garden?
 12. If there are special occasions when plots' owners meet (celebration or meeting, how often)
 13. Is there are any activities concerning all amintainance of the area that are done cooperatively?
 14. Does the person follows organization of garden similarly to neighbors (if yes, is it required or he does it unaware) or the garden is the way to express him/herself?
 15. Is there something that they would like to change about their plot

Description

16. Description of the allotment, preferences in plants
17. Description of people behavior on the place (digging, cutting shrubs, smelling flowers, communication with neighbors, picnic, playing, sport, etc)

2 SADI ZOLIBORSKIE
1. Polish, Female, Retired
2. Not connected
3. On her own, her husband accompanies her but is not so interested in maintenance of the place
4. Recreation through beautification
5. Maintenance the flowers, bushes, trees; picnic with family and friends
6. She is in good relationship with neighbors: meets with them, exchange flowers, drink coffee together
7. In summer time - everyday about 6 hours; also depends from weather
8. Choosing colors, organising composition, being artistic
9. Water, electricity, ecological-WC
10. Contact with the nature; acquire new knowledge about gardening; keep in contact with people (for personal use)
11. Feels happy because of self-fulfillment through artistic organization of garden (>self-expression nr10)
12. celebration of 'day of harvest'; competition for the nicest garden (she does not attend herself)
13. pays for maintenance of the roads
14. she thinks that garden should be kept in similar way, but with aesthetical attitude where flowers should take place on the foreground, vegetables left to the back side of the garden
15. She hates the noise from the street; too many mosquitos; would be great to have more birds in garden
16. The entrance is framed with garden arbor and covered with climbing rose, the paths is covered with decorative stone and leads to the wooden hut that is decorated with climbing plant. The foreground is filled with high perennials (<i>Hosta, Hemerocallis, Iris, Paeony, Phlox, Bergenia</i>), roses, low decorative bushes (<i>Hydrangea, Thuja, Berberis, Potentilla fruticosa</i>). Thus the plants screen the small private area that is covered with grass and equipped with outdoor furniture. The owner creates balanced compositions combining different colors and texture of leaves, flowers and follows the overall appearance of the plants. Some fruit trees are planted in the far corner of the garden (<i>Prunus</i>).
17. She was irrigating the plants and cleaning from deflorate flowers; her husband was sitting on the bench

2) Placement of the UA areas in Warsaw



3) Form and organization of lots



Piaski i Lotnik UA areas



Sadi Zoliborskie UA

4) Illustrative material

Place for social interaction



Sadi Zoliborskie UA – common path



Piaski i Lotnik UA areas - common playground

Place for hobby



Sadi Zoliborskie UA – tennis court



Piaski i Lotnik UA areas – ‘pigeon hous’

Place for self-fulfillment



Sadi Zoliborskie UA – practical approach in garden organisation



Sadi Zoliborskie UA – artistic approach in garden organisation

Place for interaction within
different generations

