URBAN EUROPE

AGORA Thematic Dialogue

Unfolding Dilemmas of Regenerative Green Neighbourhoods

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online

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Content

Anders Bergmark, Färgfabriken, Stockholm, Sweden

Färgfabriken has, since its founding in 1995, served as a platform for contemporary cultural expressions, with an emphasis on art, architecture and urban planning. In many of our projects and exhibitions, both in Sweden and abroad, we have developed methods with the purpose of exploring and trying to understand the complexities of our constantly changing world. Färgfabriken is driven by a desire to reflect upon the heterogeneous and multicultural world we live in. We want to test the limits of what an art space is, and could become.

Starting August 28 2021 we will open a project named Symbiosis. The project will consist of a large exhibition, workshops, seminars and debates. "Symbiotic thinking" can be used to tackle many broad challenges. Challenges which in turn are directly and indirectly linked to one another. Individually, man's various systems, such as cities, trade, production and transportation, can be enthralling and well-functioning, but together they often compete both amongst each other and with the planet's own fragile systems.

Man has the potential to not only parasitize on the unique planet the earth is. We need to develop self-healing and adaptable systems, societies and cultures, based on compassion and knowledge rather than on ever-accelerating consumption and exhaustion of limited resources.

Can an art space somehow contribute, inspire hope and create new ways for orientation in this confused time? Can art and other forms of cultural expression be integrated with research? We believe so. Färgfabriken has created a forum where meetings, clashes and cross-fertilizations occur.

In order to formulate ideas and visions for a good and hopeful future, we must begin to think, research and collaborate across borders - visible and invisible. We therefore want to discuss and test all kinds of possible and impossible symbiotic contexts in a non-prestigious and creative way. Our ambition is that it gives the audience an opportunity to think and reflect on different dimensions of our complex existence. We believe Regenerative Green Neighbourhoods is an important challenge very much linked to the Symbiosis project.

Andrea Pierce, University of Delaware, Newark, USA

In the US context, the primary dilemmas for implementing these neighborhood strategies have to do with funding and leadership. Urban neighborhoods have very limited resources available from governments, and the private sector typically only contributes where they would see a direct return on investment, such as if they have buildings or headquarters in the location. Most all regenerative work I know is from students, volunteers, and non-profit organizations, which may have a lot of enthusiasm but are also under extraordinary financial and personnel resource strain. Sustaining support needed to change neighborhoods over time is quite challenging, as people come and go and funding stops and starts from different sources, if at all. In a practical sense, I see this strategy playing out in resource-rich environments and not in resource-poor environments. The connection to environmental justice is strong. I would advise serious attention be paid to selecting pilot sites that are resource-poor, and adequately supporting their development through the funding mechanism.

Blanca Pedrola Vidal, Valencia, Spain

Cities are complex systems and when looking for solutions for future sustainable cities, there are multiple factors to take into account. Cities are for ALL people and designed by people. But too many times not all people are equally represented. At the same time, the planet is facing a major threat and it is vital to think of the environment. How can we build cities that promote social justice and do not harm the environment? Nature based solutions are a good way to create sustainable cities. They are sustainable in the sense of water management, thermal stress, improving biodiversity, etc. And at the same time they provide opportunities to build social cohesion. Nevertheless, only by introducing NBS we cannot achieve sustainability and social resiliency. People is the key-driver for real sustainable transition. We have to find the best tools to engage a diverse range people and promote inclusion and equality.

Designing a city, a landscape or a building has to be done thinking on the changes they will undergo in time and the impact on the environment, in a wide sense of the word: people and nature. As a professional, my interest is in applied research to translate concepts from research to practice and vice versa.

Bob Webb, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

Our main interest (see for example reference below) is the need to take a more holistic systems approach to future sustainable urban development, which more fully captures both trade-offs (which can identify some intrinsic dilemmas) but more commonly significant synergies and co-benefits. A first dilemma is that this requires much broader up-front framing of issues than traditional institutional siloes allow. Nature base solutions including regenerative green/blue infrastructure and investment is a huge potential generator of multiple co-benefits, but a second dilemma is that normally there is low acceptance or understanding of how to value these in an overall cost-benefit sense. So plenty of dilemmas but plenty of opportunities too.

Webb, Robert, Xuemei Bai, Mark Stafford Smith, Robert Costanza, David Griggs, Magnus Moglia, Michael Neuman, Peter Newman, Peter Newton, Barbara Norman, Chris Ryan, Heinz Schandl, Will Steffen, Nigel Tapper, Giles Thomson. 2018. *Sustainable urban systems: Co-design and framing for transformation*. Ambio 47(1):57–77.Openaccess at DOI:10.1007/s13280-017-0934-6

Carla-Leanne Washbourne, University College London, London, UK

I am an interdisciplinary researcher, practitioner and educator working at the interface of the physical and social sciences and public policy. Key areas of activity include: environmental science and policy, urban knowledge systems and science advice, but my previous work also includes earth sciences, engineering geology and science communication for policy. Overall, my work seeks to understand and improve decision-making and planning in urban settings, focussing on urban environment and sustainability issues.

I am currently involved in a number of projects, within and beyond the academic research setting, which relate to regenerative green neighbourhoods. Some of the most relevant to this dialogue are:

A Green Space City Lab for London – Facilitating a platform for engaged discussion between key stakeholders in urban green space across London, in collaboration with London National Park City Foundation.

Knowledge use in green infrastructure decision-making - Long-term project to understand and improve the way in which different kinds of knowledge are used in decision-making around urban green infrastructure projects in cities in South Africa and the UK, in collaboration with the Gauteng City-Region Observatory, Johannesburg where I am a Research Associate.

One of the ideas that I am most excited about developing in the near future considers the possibilities for using creative fiction (books, film and art) to push the boundaries of urban planning, influencing creative and transformational ideas for how urban for green space can look and what urban green space can be. Regenerative thinking could be such a positively disruptive force against the assumption that degradation and extraction is the only way that we can go in our relationship with the natural world!

VISONS OF REGENERATIVE GREEN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Community-led spaces in cities provide so much beauty and inspiration and a focus for creative and generative activities above and beyond the literal act of greening.

Photo: Leah Lovett, UCL

I have been repurposing all kinds of things over the last few years to try and grow food plants in my small urban garden while trying to put things back into the pretty exhausted soil. Trying to encourage a regenerative approach even at the smallest scale!

Photos: Carla Washbourne

David Ludlow, UWE, Bristol, UK

Central to the resolution of the dilemmas of "regenerative neighbourhoods" is the delivery of policy co-benefits through urban planning that transform difficult choices into "win-win" solutions. Policy strategies including blue green infrastructure and nature-based solutions are key parts of the strategy mix available to secure neighbourhood regeneration in the context of carbon neutral cities and climate change mitigation. Indeed, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of resilience and adaptability for the sustainable cities, and has also given rise to the notion, and anticipation, of an emerging "new normal", reflecting changes in attitudes and behaviours as the pandemic has propelled cities and citizens through a decade of digital transformation overnight. As a consequence, cities and planning practitioners across Europe are now facing a common challenge: planning for a deeply uncertain future and influencing the transformative capacity of cities to deliver on carbon neutrality whilst transitioning towards the post-pandemic "new-normal". The climate emergency and Covid-19 have thrown into sharp relief the limitations of urban governance, demonstrating the urgency for new solutions, given the need identified in the European Green Deal to define decarbonisation pathways by 2050, creating cities of "net-zero neighbourhoods".

Regenerative neighbourhoods and their associated dilemmas must now be considered within the framework of an emerging vision of the net-zero neighbourhood, building on the transformations of the "new normal" with associated new ways of living and working more locally promoting major environmental benefits with reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air-quality. The net-zero neighbourhood plan envisions liveable neighbourhoods of mixed urban land-use providing housing, employment, education, shopping, and cultural facilities within easy walking and cycling distance. Here, neighbourhood living and working gives benefits of homeworking for families with business benefits of lower cost 'hybrid working". Mobility is key with less need for cross city travel whilst providing opportunities for more active travel supporting city priorities for climate, economy and health.

City planners are actively working to understand how we can plan for the net-zero neighbourhood as hubs of living and working, as well as how to target behavioural change strategies to respond to the new socio-economic and spatial reality of cities. For example, the new EU's sustainable smart mobility strategy (2019) provides a pan-European recognition that "mobility patterns and consumer behaviour are changing" reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, largely facilitated by digital solutions, and that "people are willing to switch to more sustainable modes of transport". The twin green and digital transitions will redraw connectivity, re-energise the economy, and revitalise neighbourhoods, and "regenerative neighbourhoods", and the resolution of their associated dilemmas, must form an essential ingredient in the definition and delivery of net-zero neighbourhoods of the "new normal" living.

Dorri Boekhorst, FACCE-JPI, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

In 2020 the Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI), and JPI Urban Europe organized an Exploratory Workshop on Urban Agriculture with the aim to analyse if and what urban agriculture can contribute to food and nutrition security, specifically under environmental, health, social and economic aspects and if it should be treated as an emerging topic in the work of both JPIs.

The objectives of the workshop were i) to explore and understand the current landscape of urban/peri-urban agriculture and the underlying context driving the urban agriculture discussions, ii) to explore and identify the potential impacts, risks and benefits of urban agriculture and the policy context around it, and iii) to identify and prioritise key areas in urban agriculture which FACCE-JPI and JPI Urban Europe should focus on.

The following three major recommendations resulted from the workshop:

Recommendation 1: Support research, in collaboration with other partners in the bio-economy space, into bio-refinery processes, recycling, waste management and related areas in an urban context to provide evidence for up-to-date policies on food production and food safety.

Recommendation 2: Utilise suitable upcoming Horizon Europe partnerships and their instruments such as Living Labs to address transnational issues around urban agriculture on a local but connected level.

Recommendation 3: Treat urban agriculture as part of the food system and address all resulting issues (planning, sustainability, policy etc.) under this aspect.

FACCE-JPI will continue to explore this topic, in the short term with two expert meetings in the upcoming months. These meetings aim to produce two white papers. One for the FACCE-JPI Governing Board, with recommendations on how to include this topic in the FACCE-JPI Strategic Research Agenda, and to assess possible options for collaboration and / or determine overlaps with the Urban Europe Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda. A second white paper will aim to informing and bringing attention to this topic to the Horizon Europe Partnerships that are currently under preparation, or will soon be starting, with the emphasis on the SSFS, Agro-ecology and DUT Partnerships.

Felipe Barroco Fontes Cunha, Energy and Development Agency (Agenzia per l'Energia e lo Sviluppo – AESS), Bologna, Italy

I am working on a community energy project in Bolgona (gecocommunity.it) and I believe that initiatives of this kind can put neighborhoods on a more sustainable and greener pathway, as it promotes social cohesion, local economy and environmental awareness.

RESCOOP.EU (https://www.rescoop.eu/news-and-events/news/rescoop-eu-doughnut) has developed an incredible image based on the doughnut economic concept, illustrating an initiative that try to respond to environmental, economic, political, geopolitical and social challenges, based on common goods.

Federica Risi, European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) EGTC, The Hague, Netherlands

Illustration from: ICLEI Europe (2020). Making Urban Nature Bloom.

A traditionally neglected scale of planning, the neighbourhood is increasingly being recognised as the geography where most human needs and aspirations are shaped and realised. More than that, the neighbourhood is a defining parameter of socioeconomic inequalities and the place where global environmental challenges are most felt.[1]It provides a window to understand our relationship with nature, but also a meaningful scale of action where the healing starts.

As the COVID-19 crisis made clear, recovery gives us the chance to do more than simply going back to the "old normal". It gives us the chance to do *better*, to advance bold actions and drive a systemic shift, starting from our homes. As a magnifying glass on several urbanisation problems (e.g. urban sprawl, car-centric spaces, lack of green areas, etc.), the pandemic also made us ever more aware of how much we need nature "close to us" to live healthy, happy lives.

Regenerative green neighbourhoods are nature- and people-inclusive places which reshape urban daily life by reshaping human interaction with nature, from exploitative to reciprocal. They become an instrument of urban planning to downsize sustainable transitions, allowing us to rethink infrastructures, functions and land-use. They provide laboratories for producing innovative approaches integrating nature and ecosystem

[1] See: German Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2020). *The New Leipzig Charter - The transformative power of cities for the common good.*

services into all areas of urban life, from mobility to energy, housing, food, education, work, culture, recreation, and so on. As such, regenerative green neighbourhoods operationalise the planetary health approach at the local, micro-scale, encompassing the *green*, the *just*, and *productive* dimensions of the sustainable transition[2]. Ultimately, they provide an opportunity to root strategic sustainability agendas (the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal, etc.) at the level closest to citizens, and thus more meaningful for their mobilisation.

Yet, we should be wary of falling into the *local trap*.[3]As a scale of spatial intervention, the neighbourhood is necessarily interconnected with urban processes determined at the city, regional, and certainly national scale. Driving urban transformations, in other words, takes more than a village.

Some reflections, zooming into circular economies and NBS …

As uncovered by the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Circular Economy, current legislative frameworks at the EU and national levels represents the main barriers to recognise – and

Illustration from: ICLEI Europe (2020). Making Urban Nature Bloom.

recycle or reuse – waste as a resource, thus hindering the full realisation of urban circular economies. [4]

Similarly, the lack of harmonised definitions of nature-based solutions (NBS) and the fragmentation of knowledge sources pose key obstacles to their incorporation into policy, and therefore, into planning.[5]The resulting lack of measuring frameworks and data means the manifold benefits of NBS at the urban scale remain invisible, limiting their uptake and potential to simultaneously restore ecosystems, protect biodiversity, adapt to climate change, and enhance people's wellbeing.[6]

[2] See the three dimensions of the European city identified by The New Leipzig Charter.
[3] See: Purcell and Brown (2005). Against the Local Trap: Scale and the Study of Environment and Development. *Progress in Development Studies*, 5(4):279-297.
[4] See: EUKN Secretariat (2020). *Unravelling the 'Green' Actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU*. https://www.eukn.eu/fileadmin/Files/Policy_Labs/2020_November_3/2020_ReportSI_FINAL.pdf.
[5] One of the key preliminary findings of the H2020 project CONEXUS: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/867564.
[6] Ibid.

Francesca Birks, Woods Bagot, New York, USA

Streets Ahead

During Covid many communities were forced to work from home and this meant that many individuals reconnected with their local neighborhoods. This period of hyper local revealed some of the challenges and benefits within our own streets. In the city of New York twenty seven percent of the city's open space is found in its 6,000 miles of streets and 12,000 miles of sidewalks. However, a large percentage of streets is for vehicular traffic and sidewalks are filled with street furniture, trees, scaffolding, construction barricades, and other pedestrian detours. Since Covid, restaurants and shops have expanded into adjacent sidewalks, further reducing the area for people to circulate. What might it mean to reclaim more of our streets for the public rather than for cars and commercial activity? How might the regeneration of these spaces contribute to the wellbeing of more communities?

As the pandemic reframes how we interact with our urban environments, the design feasibility of various strategies to pedestrianize our streets has widely been debated. In the past year Woods Bagot commissioned a Streets Ahead report to took a look at how our streets might be re-designed for people rather than cars. Using Sydney as a case in point we explored how some of the streets within the vast urban network could be transformed into market gardens, parks, playgrounds and inviting spaces for children to play thereby increasing the liveability of our cities.

How might we use the opportunity of Covid to rethink how we live within our cities, how we interact with our natural environment, and in the future how might we regenerate and green our streets thereby reclaiming the streets for the public good.

I am also enclosing this poem by Adrienne Rich which is included as the introduction to the wonderful book All We Can Save:

My heart is moved by all I cannot save
so much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,
with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.

Francesca.Birks@woodsbagot.com

François Mancebo, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne IRCS, Reims, France

May urban agriculture be the cornerstone that helps reconfigure more sustainable cities? And if so, what type of urban agriculture, and under which conditions? Such are the two issues I would like to address during this thematic dialogue.

Why not counteracting urban sprawl and fostering what could be called "rural sprawl", by introducing nature and rural characteristics such as farming within the city, in its interstitial areas and wastelands? In this perspective, urban agriculture would turn into a common good, reshaping the whole urban fabric

Urban agriculture lends particularly well to long-lasting urban policies, especially those turning environmental "bads" —such as brownfields and wastelands— into environmental “goods” and urban amenities. It would make sense to establish productive lands as a key component of urban design when possible. A network of agricultural plots, which would penetrate the smallest nooks and crannies of the urban fabric, should be a wonderful tool to link the different components of the city, while providing other ecosystem services such as walking and leisure activities. Besides, such a network would greatly improve urban resilience, by linking formerly scattered vegetated places within a consistent system. Squares, parks, gardens — community gardens and kitchen gardens, as well as public gardens—.

But such urban transformation cannot possibly arise from the sole will and skill of architects, planners, surveyors, and politicians. It has to be nurtured and molded by its inhabitants to bring it to life. It requires involving every citizen in the decision-making, and not only by "consulting" them, which is not obvious as shown by SmartUrbanGreen, a JPI Urban Europe project The more top-down repairing planning procedures the less results, if not linked with grassroots collaborative process and with negotiation between local communities and local authorities.

Indeed, urban agriculture may be one of cities' main seedbeds of creative innovation, provided that it involves participatory decision-making. It is all about the right to decide and the power to create, renewing and deepening what Henri Lefebvre called *The Right to the City*. Such a process needs time, quite differently from the frenetic timeline and knee-jerk reactions to any opposition that elected officials and planners, guided by their own short-term interests impose on urban policies (the next election, compliance with construction deadlines etc.). In this perspective, urban agriculture embodies the proper use of slowness (*Le bon usage de la lenteur*) in urban planning and design as depicted by Pierre Sansot.

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https://www.smartugreen.eu/

https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2015/09/27/the-nurtured-golem-a-nantes-neighborhood-transforms-environmental-bad-into-good/

Illia Tymoshok, Gdańsk University of Technology, Gdańsk, Poland

City as continually developing system nowadays contains signs of the industrial period that reveal itself through undeveloped districts, public transport connection, etc. In the new era of City Planning, we try to revitalize and implement those undeveloped parts as working gears into the new mechanic system of the city. Today residents of big cities need to feel the breath of nature among the concrete building jungle. That is why modern city planners try to improve the system of green public spaces.

One of these subjects of revitalization is the loop in the Oliwa quarter in the City of Gdansk, Poland. This very place is important due to its localization. The loop in the Oliwa quarter, which was built in 1948, is the second oldest loop in Gdansk. It is located on the crossroad of the main city road Aleja Grunwaldzka Street and the street that leads to the Osowa quarter through the forest.

Currently, the loop in the Oliwa quarter is a closed green space covered with few trees, bushes, and grass and surrounded by tram rails. The main problem of this place is that some people endanger themselves by illegally crossing this green place to shorten the way to another bus or tram stop. That is why we considered transforming this piece of land into a developed green public space, where residents and tourists can spend time while waiting for the tram or bus. In addition, residents would be able to spend spare time with family and friends because of the unrecognizable destination of this place, which is the meeting hub of the Oliwa quarter.

The new look of the revitalization site is the steel olive tree in the middle of the green public space which is the symbol of the Oliwa quarter.

The steel construction will be covered with led lamps and make it glow at night in every season highlighting its symbol of immortality. The tree will be surrounded by a hedge maze with implemented shrub sculptures in the shape of animals as a link to the nearby-located zoo, which anyone would be able to discover after finding the right way in the maze. Around the hedge maze will be a sidewalk made of natural materials that will absorb water into the soil. Siting place in our green public space will be located all around the sidewalk as small benches on rails you can put together or separate at your will. For the safety of public space, there must be a fence located nearby the tram rails. In order to pay the pedestrians attention to the fence, it will be covered with optical illusion murals on different sides of pickets, so people will be able to see different pictures and tourist information from different perspectives. At the entrance to the public space, there will be another steel tree in the shape of an arc with a led screen, which will show the current departure and arrival information of trams and buses. All present trees and bushes will remain in their current places due to their age and natural value.

Joanna Bach-Glowinska, Gdańsk University of Technology, Kielno, Poland

The implementation of the FWE Nexus Square prototype, which is possible thanks to the funding of the international SUGI JPI CRUNCH project, aims to show the flows of water, energy, and food closed in one loop. The Non-Invasive Measurement System was supposed to demonstrate the ongoing processes in the intuitive form of the easily accessible and open data on the Gdansk city platform. The FEW NEXUS Square prototype was originally planned at the OBC office campus. The targeted group was mainly the office workers and nearby residents then, including also the FEW NEXUS Square functionality. When office workers switched to remote work because of COVID-19, the research became pointless at this location, especially considering the people flow measurement in this public space. Despite the ongoing sanitary restrictions, public transport hubs, such as the one in Gdańsk Oliwa, are highly frequented places. Thus, the concept of adapting FWE NEXUS Square as a temporary Green Waiting Room in the area located in the middle of the loop with separate tracks was created. It is planned to close the possibility of taking shortcuts through the track thanks to the use of appropriate protection around. The only safe crossing of the tracks will be the entrance to the Green Waiting Room which greatly facilitates also the implementation of a pedestrian flow measurement system in the area of the entire loop.

“Although the main assumption of this project is scientific and research goals as the FEW Nexus Square […] it also has a wide practical application and utility functions that will serve the residents. The Green Waiting Room will make the waiting time for passengers for a tram or bus much more attractive. It will also allow them safe access to a vast green area covered with a few trees. As part of the project, it is planned to perform a single-entrance loop opening. […] Residents can also count on elements of small architecture, such as benches or litter bins.” says the Gdansk City Partner.

However the location in the heart of Oliwa, at the gates of the Oliwa Park was “provoked” by a pandemic situation, the second testbed in Gdansk happens to be the expected and highly welcome the green transformation in Oliwa.

Joaquín de Santos, Community Land Trust Brussels, Brussels, Belgium

The built environment accounts for 36% of carbon emissions in the EU. Yet despite all this building, across Europe we face a severe lack of affordable housing and growing homelessness. To address the dual crises of climate change and social inequality we must increase the capacity for communities to self-organise and adapt to life within planetary boundaries. We must provide the conditions for longer term decision-making. This requires new tools, methods and ownership models which mobilise residents to shape their own neighbourhoods, for current and future generations.

The Community Land Trust (CLT) is an organizational model which does just that. CLTs are non-proft, democratic, community-led

organisations. By avoiding market speculation, they develop and manage homes, which are affordable for perpetuity, as well as other community assets, which contributes to thriving neighbourhoods. And most important of all, they act as long-term stewards of these assets, ensuring they remain permanently accessible for generations to come.

Through the EU project Sustainable Housing for Inclusive and Cohesive Cities, several frontrunner cities in Europe have identifed the CLT model as a potential solution to combat both socio-economic exclusion and environmental challenges. Simultaneously, many of those same EU cities are committing to a circular economy by adopting Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economy model. But implementation of the Doughnut principles in the built environment proves slow because they are fundamentally at odds with the short-term speculation which drives city-making today.

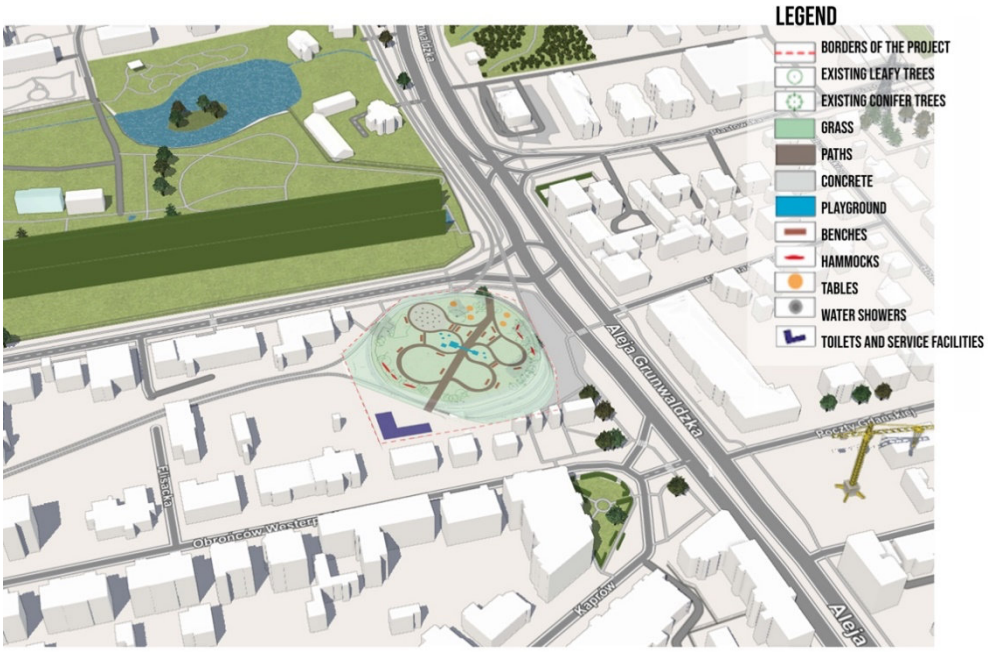
We believe that the Community Land Trust can be the vehicle to deliver Doughnut neighbourhoods: circular, affordable and inclusive, for current and future generations. These are principles enshrined in the legal framework of a CLT, meaning that unlike speculative building models, incentives align. Our ambition is to use CLTs as a systemic investment vehicle to catalyse a shift towards an inclusive circular economy in building and neighbourhood development practices more broadly.

Julia Lisewska, Urbanism on Faculty of Architecture, Gdańsk University of Technology, Gdańsk, Poland

I am a student of MSc in Urbanism at the Gdańsk University of Technology and a representative of a student reaserch group working on a project of a green waiting room designed inside a tram loop in Oliwa district in Gdańsk, Poland.

All over the world we see effects of the COVID-19 pandemics. It has changed views on various topics including urban planning. It adjusted the way people feel and behave in public spaces.

We, as the future spatial planners, have made an attempt to create a place that would face the problem of people feeling insecure in public space. Tram loop in Gdańsk Oliwa is a great example, where the pandemic and post-pandemic solutions can be implemented. Currently, it is an abandoned greenery inside the tram rails, close to which a lot of people gather. The loop is located in the old part of the district – full of historic villas, monuments and a well-known park nearby. For the purposes of the study, we created a document consisting of 3 parts. Firstly, there were prepared analysis about the neighbourhood area to find the biggest potentials of the place. The analysis took into account needs of different age groups and the challenges they meet according to the pandemia. We also focused on records in the planning documents, the impact of the neighbourhood and connections with the place. In the second part there were designed proposals on how to develop the tram loop. Finally, there were examined the consequences of the project for the whole neighbourhood. Thanks to our joint work, we were able to create a document, which is the attempt to ensure a normality for residents in these hard times.



Kostas Karamarkos, KKC, Kozani, Greece

A Vision for Sharing Green neighborhoods and useful Urban Gardens:

Implementing successful actions that result in improved citizens' quality of life, actions that are also supported by local authorities, is both a target and a great challenge for modern cities and societies.

During the last decade intra – and peri – urban agriculture expanded rapidly. It went beyond the initiative of self-organized citizens or associations. Urban and peri-urban gardens are becoming a promising trend in some cities & towns all over Europe.

Benefits of Urban Gardening

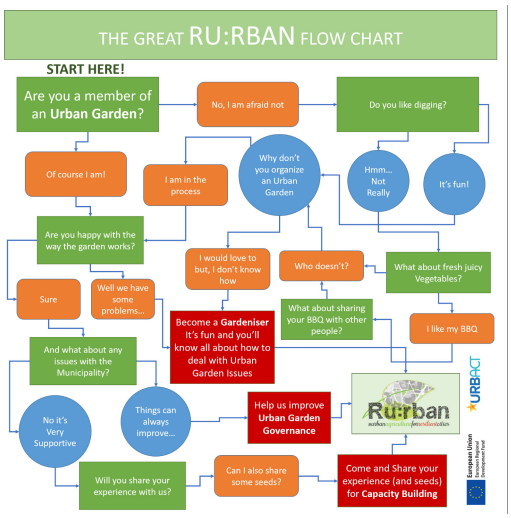
Urban gardening and agriculture plays an important role in enhancing urban food security (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13593-014-0273-y).

Urban agriculture contributes to local economic development, poverty alleviation and social inclusion of the urban poor, as well as to the greening of the city. The importance of urban agriculture is increasingly being recognized by international organisations like UN-Habitat (http://wcr.unhabitat.org/) & FAO (World Food and Agriculture Organization http://www.fao.org/home/en/).

Today associations managing urban gardens already often at the forefront of innovation: they put in place new techniques such as permaculture, use new technologies, create green parks for leisure and therapeutic purposes, stimulate citizens participation to all environmental activities through the abolition architectural barriers – in particular of those with motor disabilities and the visually impaired – they improve social inclusion and integration, disseminate the culture of sustainability and resilience by raising awareness among citizens, families, groups, associations and institutions on the need to safeguard and regenerate the territory through self-management processes of common goods and self-organization.

How do we get there?

Cities should exchange on methodologies to improve the impact of their urban gardening practices focusing on the policy topic management. They should involve a wide range of stakeholders that have a strong relation with the existing gardens in each interesting city, but also people responsible for the management of city gardens on behalf of the cities.



Laszlo Pinter, Central European University / International Institute for Sustainable Development, Vienna, Austria

NBS make sense to people because of their perceived impact on a wide range of urban sustainability challenges. Green space works as habitat for birds. NBS are great for bees and other pollinators. They make heat waves more tolerable for all. NBS also add value to buildings and produce food for the neighbourhood.

Yet for all the good things associated with them, NBS are often an afterthought in planning, and as a result, we tend to underinvest in them. This is because the values of NBS are diverse, spread out over time and space, and they are not the private experience of a few. Many of the impacts of NBS are public goods and they are not always easy to put our finger on. This makes the business case for NBS harder to argue.

But what if we made the engagement of people in envisioning urban space with nature easy in the early stages of planning? Wouldn't that help them realize the potential and value of NBS? That's a great step forward, but it's not enough. People also need to see and recognize potential impacts – their range, scale and of course location. NBS may be nice for NBS sake, but it is their impact that people can relate to that makes NBS really 'sell'.

We created an intuitive web-based tool that makes engagement in the envisioning of urban space with NBS *and* the impacts of NBS easy. People are invited to be creative and enrich a particular site in a particular city they are interested in with NBS, in a way that maximizes impact, while keeping within biophysical constraints, municipal regulations and budget. Its use is demonstrated in the context of a future project site in Vienna, but it is customizable to any location. Welcome to the Urban Nature Explorer (UNE), a legacy of the H2020-funded Naturvation project.

Leslie Mabon, Open University, Oban/Milton Keynes, Scotland, UK

One of the consequences of the events of the last year or so is an explosion of social media posts, think pieces, and even initial research into how urban planning – and urban greening – can shape the post-COVID city. Whilst these are welcome and fruitful discussions, they must not deflect from some of the bigger and tougher questions in among all the hype.

I don't want this to come across as a 'boo boy' text against urban greening. COVID and climate change are very real phenomena with the potential to harm people. If green spaces in all their various shapes, sizes and forms can reduce some of these risks through heat mitigation, flood risk reduction, health benefits, food provision and all the rest, then I am all for it.

The problem, however, is that decisions over how green spaces are developed and distributed are not value-neutral. Nor are they separate from the bigger context of whose identities are recognised and prioritised within policy and governance. Many of the social, economic and political processes that put some urban dwellers at greater harm from COVID than others are the same processes that lead to unequal distribution of climate risk and indeed urban greening. Researchpublishedinthe USA last year shows that practices of redlining(defined on Wikipedia as "the systematic denial of various services by federal government agencies, local governments as well as the private sector either directly or through the selective raising of prices", but commonly associated with racial discrimination) 60-70 years ago still have effects *today* on distribution of street trees and localised heat distribution. It is therefore not a big jump to realise that implicit biases in our planning and governance systems today may well lock disadvantaged neighbourhoods – and the people living there – into exposure to more dangerous levels of climate change and lower access to risk-reducing interventions.

Public park closed due to COVID-19, Scotland

Indeed, health and wellbeing is another area where greenspace ends up doing a lot of heavy lifting. There is plenty of scientific evidence that greenspaces support mental health, and indeed a groundswell of research into how people have engaged with greenspace under conditions of COVID. But you know what also causes stress and poor health outcomes? Unemployment, austerity, inequality, and – critically – structural racism. Community–ledurban greening initiatives are similarly a fantastic means of developing and maintaining what social scientists like to call social capital – basically, the ties, connections and sense of belonging that help people to keep going in the face of shocks and stresses. What can't be allowed to happen, though, is for the responsibility of being resilient to fall on individuals and communities, or to allow 'building resilience' to become a means of rolling back public services by stealth. Greenspace is a welcome addition to, but not a substitute for, state support for public health, public housing, infrastructure, and social welfare.

Lastly, we should also pay heed to whose identities are recognised and whose are silenced or marginalised when we talk about urban greenspace. The Black Lives Matter movement has drawn attention to the #BlackInNatureand #BlackBirdersWeek hashtags, and has sparked debate over the often white and middle-class character of conservation. It is also worth reflecting on the often exclusive and privileged spaces through which international knowledge and policies about urban greening travel, and whether knowledge and belief systems developed in one part of the world can readily be applied to urban green environments elsewhere.How do more technical approaches to urban green landscapes grounded in concepts such as ecosystem services and landscape ecology sit with traditional, local and indigenous knowledge? Which knowledge systems carry more power, and to what effect?

To be clear, I'm not saying don't plant trees, don't have community gardens, or don't go to the park if it makes you feel better. But urban greening does not in itself make a just, resilient city. To address the factors that led to uneven exposure to COVID, and will continue to lead to uneven exposure to climate risk, urban greening needs to be just one part of a much bigger suite of structural reforms such as rent controls and redistributive taxation. In this regard, greenspace researchers would do well to form alliances not only with ecology, public health and engineering, but also with their academic colleagues in areas such as education, social welfare and public policy.

(adapted from earlier version written by me and posted on urbangreenadaptationdiary.wordpress.com and @urbangreendiary).

Maria Beatrice Andreucci, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

Positioning Regenerative Green Neighbourhoods as a 'Force for Good'

Relevant economic and demographic trends have characterised European cities in the last decades. Significant phenomena include accelerated migration, economic instability, growing digital divide and energy poverty, infrastructural obsolescence, and widespread community resilience erosion, on the one hand; and improved smart technologies and innovation systems, protracted foreign direct investment, and associated corporate and economic re-organisation, on the other (European Investment Bank, 2018).

At an urban level, shifts from rural to urban, core city to suburbs, and single cities to neighbouring networks of locations have been accompanied, at different moments, by substantial and visible long-term regeneration programmes, with a true *renaissance* occurring, even in many formerly abandoned and de-industrialised areas of Europe's cities (EIB, 2018).

In 2020, the concept of community and environmental resilience changed, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In front of unknown health issues – combined with increased socio-economic challenges in a climate change scenario – cities must urgently explore how to best combine environmental goals with economic recovery and social justice, modifying on-going plans and initiatives, while re-arranging priorities (Andreucci & Marvuglia, 2021).

"Regenerative" (Lyle, 1994) green neighbourhoods concern the implementation of multi-scalar and multi-functional strategies with the aim to mitigate climate change effects by encouraging circular metabolism, by integrating locally available resources, by improving energy efficiency, flexibility, and production, by endorsing inclusivity, proximity, and modal shift, as well as by supporting actions to restore vital ecosystems and mainstreaming green blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions (NBS), in order to reduce risk factors for individual and collective health and promote built environment quality, from both a social and environmental perspective, in a life cycle approach.

Within this framework, emerging issues and related questions with respect to positioning regenerative green neighbourhoods as 'a force for good' necessarily arise: How did societal challenges and related transition priorities within the built environment change in the post-COVID scenario? Should the attention paid to NBS change as well? How much do innovative research, funding, and business model frameworks to boost regenerative urban design through NBS already take into account those changes? How can addressing the challenges of climate neutrality through NBS at a district scale help with respect to the achievement of multi-scale transition's goals?

The aim is to contribute to an understanding of what type of NBS development process, determinants, and enabling systems can bring forward urban transition in Europe, under a 'doughnut economy' (Raworth, 2012) approach.

Some reflections on NBS scaling-up opportunities are provided as concluding remarks, within the frameworks of the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) and UN SDGs, as well as other policy initiatives with the overarching aim of making

European cities resilient, inclusive, and climate neutral by 2050.

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Polly Moseley, Scouse Flowerhouse, PollyPort CIC & Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

My vision of a regenerative green neighbourhood: drop the "green" and embed layers of colour, which change with the seasons, and restore quality of public realm.

Adrian Henri's vision of Esmedune including artworks from Barcelona, St Petersburg was an inspiration to me. It seems dreamlike now and my vision is for much more of a grounded biodiverse approach which includes craftsmanship of local artists, valuing of their work, repopulation of empty shops, and animation of brownfield sites, and new beautiful makeshift infrastructure which matches the transient beauty of the wildflowers and yet sends signals out that DIY isn't something you have to go to a superstore to buy kit for!

I have learned from Landlife and the National Wildflower Centre, how brownfield spaces are undervalued for biodiversity, as is concrete, ceramic waste and estuary grit – local materials which contribute to the circular economy. Writing expensive topsoil out of contracts is vital, as is not falling for market-driven "solutions" such as expensive wildflower matting. Our vision for Scouse Flowerhouse involves building sustainable community wildflower seedbanks and for bridging urban and rural divides so that farmers work urban land and wildflower crop fields on edge lands thrive.

After decades of demolition and depopulation in Liverpool, the 1990's saw art deco lidos and performance spaces being stripped out of our city parks along with biodiversity. So we need a collective, restorative approach with social innovation and vibrant debate, where differences of opinion are embraced, rather than feared or shied away from.

There is still a leaning towards green lawns, which are not homes for nature, and plastic grass is on the rise. I don't like the term "solutions" because there are no "fixes", the process of change needs to evolve and adapt.

Sometimes it is important to create very visible manifestations of colour, which will trigger resistance but importantly act as catalysts to signal a direction for future aesthetics and cultural behaviours, for example, very visible and accessible Wildflower Gateway sites. How these relate to the ways in which people use the space on a daily basis, such as dog-walkers or runners is key. Local democracy is central as is doorstep nature.

Partnerships with social justice organisations, schools and community leaders are central to future maintenance. The City needs to better articulate maintenance ethos in contracts for people, new developments, and infrastructure, in line with working better at a local level in partnership, respecting skills and addressing skills gaps to provide and support green jobs – or ecological jobs which support volunteer, learning and therapeutic activity in nature with a confident set of ecological principles and skills. Less theorising, more collective action.

Replace the ANGST – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards - with Flower POWERS - Playful Open Welcoming Ecological Regenerative Spaces!

www.scouseflowerhouse.com

Images: Esmedune mural by Adrian Henri, in the John Snow room of University of Liverpool; Princes Park and Everton Park, Liverpool,Spring 2021 photos by Sonia Bassey, Mandela 8 and Torus Housing; Everton Park and Riveroaks meadows, Liverpool summer 2020.

Ruba Saleh, ICHEC Brussels Management School, Brussels, Belgium

YEAH project, mental mapping, the neighbourhood I dream of, 2019

Sheetal Patil, Azim Premji University, Bangalore, India

Food–Compost–Food – nutrients cycling with urban agriculture for sustainable neighbourhoods

While cities are portrayed as engines of economic growth, sustainability of such growth has been a topic of debate since past many decades. Problems related to environmental degradation, inadequate urban infrastructure, and lack of basic services, such as water supply, sanitation, waste management, loom large in many cities. Growing environmental footprints of cities at an unprecedented rate hampers the sustenance of economic growth and exacerbate the problems of urban poverty. Thus, the challenge of maintaining economic growth while creating sustainable and liveable cities needs solutions based on nature.

Urban agriculture (UA), with its multifunctional nature promises a way to achieve sustainability goals even at neighbourhood scale. When combined with organic solid waste management, UA facilitates management of city's organic waste in a meaningful manner as well as helps conserve resources and avoids waste dumps in the peripheries of large cities. The sustainability outcomes of integrated nature-based solutions such as those of composting and urban agriculture encompass its all the three pillars – economic, environmental and social. While composting is considered to be one of the most efficient way of nutrient cycling, UA can be imagined as vehicle for enabling food and nutritional security, improving material and subjective wellbeing, meeting climate adaptation and mitigation challenges, diversifying livelihoods to improve incomes, enabling community cohesion and inculcating environmental awareness. Urban agriculture along with composting has a greater potential in meeting food demands partially, if not fully, and also reduce the pressure on municipalities or city corporations for managing solid organic waste.

The project UPAGrI – Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture as Green Infrastructure* through one of its case studies intends to understand the relationship between urban and peri-urban agriculture and solid waste management and how they reinforce each other contributing to positive outcomes for urban sustainability and well-being in two rapidly growing Indian cities. Over the past eight months we conducted in-depth interviews with urban farmers and organisations that promote UA. Preliminary insights from the interviews revealed that composting and farming / gardening goes hand in hand. In fact, few respondents mentioned that they started with composting their own kitchen waste at their homes itself and when the compost was ready then they were motivated to grow their own food using own compost. Forming groups using social media channels and exchanging knowledge and resources was recognised as one of the key factors in keeping people motivated and inspired. Many of the respondents were not only happy to harvest food from their own waste material, but also felt proud for not polluting the environment by contributing to mounting waste dumps in the city's outskirts. Interviews also revealed that the cycle of food-waste-and again food was considered to be socio-ecosystem service by embedding society for facilitating and appropriating provisioning, supporting and regulating services from the UA ecosystems.

One of the main challenges faced by practitioners for either starting or continuing

composting and urban farming was lack of recognition and support from urban planning and other government authorities. Apart from this lack awareness of safe and effective ways of composting was felt necessary. We are in the process of designing a detailed case study to establish evidences and inform policy-makers about the benefits of composting and urban farming at various scales.

*The project is a collaborative research in India and Tanzania and funded by the British Academy and runs from 2019-2022. More at:https://upagri.wixsite.com/up-agri

So Young Han & Jane da Mosto, We are here Venice, Venice, Italy

We are working on creating deep community engagement in a very unusual situation in Venice, associated with a green space that isn't yet — but potentially could become — the fulcrum of a regenerative garden, in terms of human and multi species wellbeing.

The methodology derives from Debra Solomon's work in The Netherlands - "Radical Observation". The project is associated with the International Architecture Biennale. The location is strategic as regards the revitalisation of Venice and, in particular, the adjacent semi abandoned area of the city.

Progress to date is limited and is associated with responsiveness as regards the institutions as well as the willingness to engage of both the institutions as well as citizens.

Taoyuan Wei, CICERO Center for International Climate Research, Oslo, Norway

One of the key barriers for regenerative green neighbourhoods is lack of economic incentives for actions that both promote urban liveability and minimize cities' negative global footprints. For example, households need additional efforts to reduce food waste, e.g., spending more time on planning food purchasing, classifying food waste, and storing food in a better way. Such efforts imply losses of opportunity benefits from, e.g., leisure, homework and paid working. In addition, food producers would hope households to buy more food rather than buy less to reduce food waste. Hence, it is important to design proper tools to provide sufficient economic incentives for actors to implement the 'right' actions.

However, the economic incentive issue is typically overlooked in many cases where an action is proved to be good for sustainable urban development. Without proper economic incentives, any proposed actions would face difficulties to finance itself and continue over time. Related to food waste reduction by households, a plastic bottle recycling system works in some countries like Norway by a re-funding system, i.e., by return a bottle to a certain point, one can get their money back paid when buying the goods contained in the bottle. Could such a system be used for other 'right' actions?

It is important to emphasize that one action may indirectly influence various actors. A 'right' action from an engineer's perspective could not be right anymore if we consider the reactions of various actors. For example, electric cars may make consumers drive more distance and use more energy since the car is labelled as green and a 'right' choice. This called for a systematic approach to analysis of social reactions to a 'right' action. Although here I emphasize the economic aspect, it might be necessary to consider other aspects as well. In any case, if our society relies on a market-based economy, then a 'right' action for regenerative green neighbourhoods needs a well-designed system to provide proper economic incentives for relevant actors.

Veneta Zlatinova-Pavlova, University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia, Bulgaria

The concept of green buildings has evolved from energy efficient construction and use of reusable/recyclable materials through the principles of green neighbourhoods with "green" used here in the more literal meaning, to the more holistic approach of implementing nature-based solutions, ecosystem services and of course "greening" the urban landscape. The expected positive outcomes of the concept also range from improving microclimate and quality of living (with regard to health among all other considerations) to tackling climate change. Understandably, the pathway to something characterized by such a broad descriptions and developed at so many scales and driven by so many diverse visions could not be easily and clearly defined.

One of the widely investigated topics among these is the nature-based solutions (NBS). Currently a number of Horizon 2020 projects and other EU funded R&D programmes are implementing diverse approaches to NBS and investigating the concept from different perspectives. The range of NBS types is rather wide – from small scale ones (for example using natural and local materials like lumber for urban furniture or permeable paving) to large scale "infrastructures" (like constructed urban wetlands or urban greenbelts). The objects and functions they aim to improve are also different – buildings, urban furniture, technical infrastructure, landscaping elements, green infrastructure etc. However, their main goal seems to be not to change the way we live or our quality of living, but rather sustain it while changing the technology and performance of the urban services and common goods.

The vision of the regenerative green neighbourhoods (RGN) is also diverse and while sharing the same principles of sustainability, ecology, efficiency etc. the projects that have been already implemented differ in terms of scale, approach and main goal of the intervention.

The ideal of RGN is laid on the above mentioned pillars – buildings, infrastructure, landscape, while the image it evokes in one's mind is of homes/buildings of medium to small scale, located in lower density neighbourhoods (lower to what we are used to now), a profusion of greenery. It is not strange then that the existing implementations reflect or try to imitate this image rather than embody the core essence of the concept.

This dilemma between the imitation and implementation is existing not only in the projects related to NBS but also in those presented as belonging to the fields of circular and doughnut economy. Moreover, the implementation of the concept is often developed mostly in the rhetoric of the project rather than in its physical presence. Other evolving dilemmas concern the implementation of the concept through the use of contemporary technological solutions. It presents the problems of efficiency as these solutions are often resource demanding and of consistency as sometimes the technology being implemented is the goal, not the improved characteristics of the problem. And finally - the

legislative, institutional and administrative frameworks that are failing in keeping pace with the contemporary ideas for the development of the physical urban space and the need for order for the concept to become mainstream in short-term perspectives.

Xabier Hualde, Fomento San Sebastián, San Sebastián, Spain

Regenerative Green neighbourhoods is an important present and future topic for the city of San Sebastian. Cities are where most of the population live and where major changes can be activated at an EU scale to meet the goals set by the Commission. Those concepts are slowly being integrated by the local public authorities in their respective plans but, besides it, a big socialization effort must be made, so the citizenships, our companies, etc. integrate it on a daily basis.

Notes:

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