

## PATHWAYS FROM PRACTICE TO POLICY FOR PRODUCTIVE URBAN LANDSCAPES

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*Keywords: productive urban landscapes, policy, urban agriculture, urban planning, sustainable design*

*Abstract: This paper aims to disseminate and outline primary research emerging from an international network supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The paper is experimental in that its aim is to direct readers to the networks more extensive website found at: <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/utppp>*

*The network is exploring how policy at various levels has impacted on the implementation of six European urban agriculture projects, led in main by architects, artists or researcher activists. From the perspective and experience of these practitioners, the network aims to identify future pathways towards policy that will support the implementation of urban agriculture (UA) within the context of a productive urban landscape infrastructure.*

*The network has run a workshop in Amsterdam (Netherlands) and in Brighton (UK) plus a seminar in Sheffield (UK) to explore these questions amongst the network's core group of nine partners as well as invited guests.*

*An overarching question is if policy can be developed that becomes embedded as a norm, thus moving beyond the current reliance on interpretations by informed individuals of broad policies focused on sustainability, health, urban regeneration or community engagement? These questions will be contextualised in relation to urban agriculture policy innovations occurring in selected European cities.*

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### 1. Introduction

This paper follows on from the paper presented at last year's 6<sup>th</sup> AESOP Sustainable Food Planning Conference held in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. The paper presented in Leeuwarden (available at: <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/utppp/draft-papers-and-publications>) provided an overview of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council supported International Research network, titled, "Urban Transformations: Pathways from Practice to Policy for Productive Urban Landscapes".

The format of this paper is experimental in that it aims to direct readers to the Network's website (<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/utppp>), where a more complete overview of primary research is being made available, including a series of live presentations made by network members, practitioners and those involved with policy development and implementation. It presents an overview of findings from two research led workshops and a seminar, exploring how policy at various levels has impacted on the implementation of six European urban agriculture projects, led in main by architects, artists or researcher activists. Drawing on and expanding the perspective and experience of these practitioners, the network aims to identify future research to facilitate policy that will support the evident emergence of a spectrum of urban agriculture (UA) practices. Furthermore it wishes to evaluate the possibilities for giving these practices policy and spatial coherence and within the context of a sustainable productive urban landscape infrastructure.

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The network has run a workshop in Amsterdam (Netherlands) and in Brighton (UK) plus a seminar in Sheffield (UK) to explore these questions amongst the network's core group of nine partners as well as twenty eight invited guests.

## **2. Practitioner workshop held in Amsterdam**

### **2.1 Workshop Outline**

Held during November 2014 and hosted by the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, this workshop was designed as a forum for core participants to frame their understanding of the relationships between practice and policy. The first part of the workshop enabled participants to diagrammatise their experience and understanding of where policy aided, hindered or was lacking in relation to their practice and research. With input from ten invited practitioners and post graduate research students from Amsterdam participants reflected on and compared their varied experiences.









































### **2.2 Workshop findings**

An overriding conclusion from this workshop was that, at least within Europe, there is a lack of policy specifically targeting the implementation of productive urban landscapes, and that they are not commonly defined as a strategic goal within institutional or organizational policy. The network did not identify specific barriers put in place to prevent their implementation. It became evident that there is a complex array of policies at work that influence the realization of any one project. These policies may be those of a major organization, such as a municipal planning department or local policies with the organization that controls the land or budget related to a particular project. In addition to the various policies at play, it was found that projects are very often reliant on the interpretation of policy by gate keeper officials within city/municipal authorities or institutions. Urban regeneration, community building and empowerment, land use policy, public health or sustainable development strategies are often the overarching policy goals that make the case for implementing urban agriculture and more extensive productive landscape projects.












In pursuing the network's goal of utilizing arts and design methods to obtain insights into practice and policy relationships the network has begun to map different types of urban agriculture project and the types of policy associated with it. Tables 2 and 3, when read alongside each other, provide an overview of policy and practice. Readers are referred to the network website for a more detailed overview of each project.

A primary question is if productive urban landscape policy can be developed to become embedded as a norm, thus moving beyond the current reliance of interpretations of broad policies by informed individuals focused on sustainability, health, urban regeneration or community engagement? Readers are referred to the paper being presented at this conference by Rich et. al., titled "*The 'Healing City' – Social and Therapeutic Horticulture as a New Dimension of Urban Agriculture?*" for an example of how evidence is being gathered and evaluated in ways that could provide an evidence base for future policy specifically related to productive urban landscapes from a health perspective.

**Table 1. Urban agriculture projects and the types of policy associated with them.**

	Project	Initiation Up & (or) Down	Beneficiaries/ Users	Influential Policy?	PL Policy
	Brighton & Hove Planning Advisory Note UK				
	Berneaux Productive Park Geneva Switzerland				
	Edible Campus Brighton UK				
	Rurban Paris France				
	Spiel/Feld Marzahn Berlin Germany				
	Urbania Hoeve Foodscape Wilderman Amsterdam				
	Urban Food Justice Leeds UK				
	HadLOW Carbon Community UK				

**Table 2. Urban agriculture projects and the types of policy associated with them.**

Lead	Motivation	KEY:
 	Wellbeing / Sustainable urban design / Support local food growing / Brighton & Hove Local Plan.	 Top-down & Bottom-up (bold = dominant process)
 	Planning for future urban expansion / Integration of open space / Compensation for loss of agricultural land.	 City / City Authority
<b>R</b>	Ecological education / practice based design / outreach.	 Institution / Organisation
<b>R</b>	Testing bottom up strategies for urban resilience / Civic agriculture as one part of a closed loop system / Local entrepreneurship.	 Community
<b>R</b>	Local regeneration / Draft urban agriculture plan / Community building / Ecological education / Sustainable urban design.	 Policy in place
<b>A</b>	Social design processes / Urban agriculture / Edible landscapes / Resilience / Community gardens.	 Policy not in place
<b>R</b>	Food Justice / Create a social platform to inform policy and action / Food sovereignty / Communication between different partners.	<b>R</b> Research Led
	Resident's action / Hadlow (Kent UK) designated a "Low Carbon Community" / Learning community / Practical action.	<b>A</b> Arts Led

### **3. Policy professionals workshop held in Brighton.**

#### **3.1 Workshop outline**

This workshop was held in Brighton during March 2015 and was hosted by the University of Brighton's School of Arts Design and Media, it focused on policy developed at the city planning level. It brought together network members who had led projects, policy implementers, project commissioners who had to interpret policy and academics with policy knowledge related to food or productive urban landscapes. A representative from Brighton and Hove City council's sustainability team and from the UK's leading NGO advancing more sustainable, equitable and resilient food systems, SUSTAIN (<http://www.sustainweb.org/about/>) also attended.

#### **3.2 Workshop findings**

This was a revealing and rich event for the network with some unexpected outcomes. We had speculated that those involved with policy at the level of city planning or food policy at a strategic level would be able to help define policy pathways that design led practitioners could pursue. During workshop it became clear that, at least within the UK context (but apparently across Europe), civil servants did not have the capacity to contribute to this detailed discussion because the "productive urban landscape" agenda was not a targeted policy objective.

The workshop highlighted the exemplary work undertaken by SUSTAIN, in exploring England's National Planning Policy Framework in relation to the development of food growing as part of a healthy city strategy, but this did not identify a pathway by which practitioners could engage directly in policy development.

The foregoing tended to confirm the network's speculation that for productive urban landscapes, "practice is outstripping policy, but policy is being developed".

What is clear is that policy in relation to urban agriculture and productive landscapes is being developed as an ambition within open urban space planning, although with the exception of Paris, specific targets and pro-active outreach programs remain to be developed.

A number of urban planning policy related trends are becoming evident such as:

- Explicitly naming productive landscapes as a desired typology within open urban space planning for example in Almere, Berlin, Birmingham, and Detroit. Implicitly there are many examples such as in Sheffield, Lisbon and Leeds.
- Digital platforms for urban agriculture, mapping the location of fruit and vegetable growing sites within cities, generally using online interactive maps. These initiatives may be led by individuals within social enterprises (e.g. in Birmingham) or supported by city authorities (e.g. Amsterdam).
- The increasingly significant role of Food Policy Councils, although their remit is much wider than productive urban landscapes.
- The emergence of "constellations of agents" within cities.

Major policy relevant actions in cities related to the network's activities may be summarised as follows:

## **Berlin**

In 2012 Berlin's Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment have adopted a "*Green Vision for Open Space Planning*" with an urban landscape strategy named: "*NATURAL. URBAN. PRODUCTIVE*".

The concepts underpinning this strategy were prepared by two Landscape Architectural Practices supported by "think tanks", and a draft was prepared for public commentary prior to adoption. The strategic objectives remain goals rather than legally binding commitments.

The Green vision is underpinned by the notion of "urban cultured landscapes", a concept well attuned to Berlin's established inter-cultural and community gardens movements.

## **Amsterdam**

The City provides a digital platform for urban agriculture utilizing interactive mapping websites, and general information about community food growing activities.

The city has an established and active constellation of partners, including organizations such as the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions, the Cities Foundation, URBANIAHOEVE, Farming the City, etc.

"Living Labs" have been used by the city administration as "no cost" temporary demonstration project, with diverse aims: bio-based circular economy / improved biodiversity / improved business environment / related to the cities sustainability policy. One of these has tested the production of flax within an industrial estate.

## **Milwaukee**

Presents another constellation of agents – Will Allen – Growing Power / the legacy of the late Prof. Jerry Kaufman / IBM Smart Cities Award 2011 / Mayor Tom Barratt / Centre For Resilient Cities / Fondy Food Market / Growing Food and Justice for all.

The city's policy under Mayor Barratt tends towards an enabling and permissive planning policy approach for productive landscapes, removing barriers but not directly managing projects. It works on a win – win principle.

## **Detroit**

Detroit's problems arising from the loss of the automobile industry and population are well known. An extensive constellation of agents are active in the city including: The greening of Detroit / Detroit Black Community Food Security Network / Earth Works Farm / Wayne State University – SEED Wayne / Corporate interests / Hants Farms / SHAR Foundation / Eastern Market.

Ambitious Co Design processes, multidisciplinary and multiagency, sponsored by the Detroit Economic Growth Association, resulted in the 2013 publication of the "Detroit Future City Plan", explicitly stating that Productive Landscapes should be utilized as the basis for a sustainable city, and

advocating a new land use type, *innovative productive* characterised as being networked / agricultural and recreational. The plan includes precisely demarcated areas for *innovative productive* landscapes within a coherent and comprehensive spatial plan.

The Future City Plan is run by a team being set up as a not for profit organisation – and its remit is facilitation rather than implementation.

## **Paris**

Jacque Oliver Bled, representing the Sustainable Development Strategy Division of the Agency for Urban Ecology, located within the Town Hall of Paris's department responsible for the management of green spaces and environment, presented the city's uniquely comprehensive plan for implementing urban agriculture.

This urban agriculture plan is the result of Mayor Anne Hidalgo's initiative to canvass public opinion regarding certain policy priorities. The policy being followed in relation to urban agriculture recognises three sectors of activity, economic, environmental and social and the value of the space in which these activities overlap, it furthermore it recognises how urban agriculture can contribute to urban planning and design.

As far as we are aware the Paris urban agriculture initiative is the most comprehensive currently undertaken within Europe and North America, it is characterised by a comprehensive policy plan connecting local government agencies and representatives from, the business community, schools, property owners and associations. The entire network of actors is focused on the realization of deliverable projects appropriate to specific spaces.

A programme of outreach activities including knowledge sharing and research into levels of productivity and urban pollution underpin an ambitious target to increase the current area of cultivation on roofs and walls from 0.56 ha (1.6 acres) to 33 ha (82 acres) by 2020.

## **4. Policy pathway partners**

Through a process of dissemination partners for advancing the network's research agenda are being found, and an open invitation exists to increase the networks effectiveness in finding innovative pathways to policy. Fruitful dialogues are currently underway with the EU COST action on Allotment Gardens, within which the long history of allotments and community gardens in Europe is being discussed as part of an expanding spectrum of urban food growing practices that cover a range of scales and aims, together constituting, productive urban landscapes. Collaborations across this spectrum of practices have the potential to be mutually beneficial, while furthermore making the case that productive urban landscapes should be understood as an essential element of a sustainable urban infrastructure. This enquiry is undertaken in a spirit that acknowledges that in this highly dynamic situation there is much scope for optimism, but it is also the case that innovative urban agriculture projects and productive urban landscape initiatives are far from the norm. Emerging projects have much to learn from the allotment garden movement, with respect to building their own capacity and claiming their right to urban space. But working together urban agriculture and the allotment movement have the capacity to produce cities that are more resilient sustainable, equitable and enjoyable.

Another strand of investigation led by one of our network members who is also active in the EU COST action urban agriculture is exploring opportunities for collaborative work in advancing our related agendas.

Alongside the dialogues referred to above, the network is exploring research opportunities working in Letchworth, the "original" garden city, sited north of London in North Hertfordshire. This strand of research will consider opportunities for action based research and possible prototyping of spatial interventions within Letchworth, working towards innovations within Howard's and subsequent interpretations of the Garden City concept. Central to this future work will be the co-designing of research agendas with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and the newly founded International Garden Cities Institute.

In developing future work several key grass roots / civic organisations have indicated their willingness to help shape and critique future research undertaken by the network, with the aim of maximising its potential relevance and impact.

## **5. Policy users and developers seminar held in Sheffield**

### **5.1 Seminar outline**

This seminar, held during July 2015 and hosted by the University of Sheffield's School of Architecture, brought together core participants from the network and the policy pathway partners identified in paragraph 4. The aim was to shape follow on activities to be undertaken by the network.

### **5.2 Seminar findings**

A facilitated seminar explored the following two questions with a focus on helping to understand guest's expertise and identify what research could usefully assist practitioners advance the case for urban agriculture.

- 1) Policy and urban agriculture: What are the policy areas most relevant to advancing UA within the UK? What would be needed to implement a "Paris like" policy, or do we need something else? How can policies like Brighton's planning advisory note promoting urban agriculture be ensured to deliver more than token gestures? What are the shortcuts to policy?
- 2) How does urban agriculture contribute to a resilient and sustainable urban food system? What is its productive role? Where are the outlets for produce? Where is the space? What are the urban / rural connections? Can it become part of a waste collection system (urban composting)?

At the time of writing the conclusions from the seminar have yet to be fully evaluated, but they will be developed within the formulation of two planned academic papers and the shaping of future research.

Headline questions raised by the seminar include:

Framing research into productive urban landscapes in the contexts of urbanization pressures.

Building the evidence base for productive urban landscapes beneficial impacts and the challenges that they introduce to cities.



Better understanding urban metabolisms and how productive landscapes contribute to the creation of closed loop metabolisms.

Which are the receptive existing "policy drivers" relevant to productive urban landscapes?

## **6. Conclusions**

A rich body of practice exists and policy is emerging in support of productive urban landscapes, but in general this remains aspirational rather than being embedded with binding targets and commitments.

From the perspective of design led researchers and practitioners, building robust theoretical models as well as design strategies evaluated and tested against policy relevant criteria remain significant methods for opening up politicians and decision makers to the need for robust policy.

In working towards these goals the following questions are important:

In advancing the spectrum of practices that together constitute productive urban landscapes, will allotment holders, community gardeners and their associations benefit from joining forces with other urban food growers, including commercially driven urban food growers?

Do we need a European wide working group for small scale agriculture?

Who will collect the data to make the case for urban agriculture and productive urban landscapes?  
Who can? Can we?

Who needs to listen (elected representatives?) and how do we get them to listen?

## **7. References**

This paper draws on primary findings of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council supported Urban Transformations Network: Pathways from practice to policy, an international network of practitioners and academics exploring how policy impacts on the development of productive urban landscapes and how policy may be developed to support this development.

For further information readers are directed to: <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/utppp>