

Re-Designing Community Foodscapes to Enhance Social Inclusion in Sustainable Urban Environments

Authors : Carles Martinez-Almoyna Gual, Jiwon Choi

Abstract : Urban communities face risks of disintegration and segregation as a consequence of globalised migration processes towards urban environments. Linking social and cultural components with environmental and economic dimensions becomes the goal of all the disciplines that aim to shape more sustainable urban environments. Solutions require interdisciplinary approaches and the use of a complex array of tools. One of these tools is the implementation of urban farming, which provides a wide range of advantages for creating more inclusive spaces and integrated communities. Since food is strongly related to the values and identities of any cultural group, it can be used as a medium to promote social inclusion in the context of urban multicultural societies. By bringing people together into specific urban sites, food production can be integrated into multifunctional spaces while addressing social, economic and ecological goals. The goal of this research is to assess different approaches to urban agriculture by analysing three existing community gardens located in Newtown, a suburb of Wellington, New Zealand. As a context for developing research, Newtown offers different approaches to urban farming and is really valuable for observing current trends of socialization in diverse and multicultural societies. All three spaces are located on public land owned by Wellington City Council and confined to a small, complex and progressively denser urban area. The developed analysis was focused on social, cultural and physical dimensions, combining community engagement with different techniques of spatial assessment. At the same time, a detailed investigation of each community garden was conducted with comparative analysis methodologies. This multidirectional setting of the analysis was established for extracting from the case studies both specific and typological knowledge. Each site was analysed and categorised under three broad themes: people, space and food. The analysis revealed that all three case studies had really different spatial settings, different approaches to food production and varying profiles of supportive communities. The main differences identified were demographics, values, objectives, internal organization, appropriation, and perception of the space. The community gardens were approached as case studies for developing design research. Following participatory design processes with the different communities, the knowledge gained from the analysis was used for proposing changes in the physical environment. The end goal of the design research was to improve the capacity of the spaces to facilitate social inclusiveness. In order to generate tangible changes, a range of small, strategic and feasible spatial interventions was explored. The smallness of the proposed interventions facilitates implementation by reducing time frames, technical resources, funding needs, and legal processes, working within the community's own realm. These small interventions are expected to be implemented over time as part of an ongoing collaboration between the different communities, the university, and the local council. The applied research methodology showcases the capacity of universities to develop civic engagement by working with real communities that have concrete needs and face overall threats of disintegration and segregation.

Keywords : community gardening, landscape architecture, participatory design, placemaking, social inclusion

Conference Title : ICUA 2019 : International Conference on Urban Agriculture

Conference Location : Toronto, Canada

Conference Dates : June 17-18, 2019