

# Urban Agriculture as a Tool for Facilitated Urban Greening of Sites in Transition: A Case Study

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## **Abstract**

The article explores the possibilities of urban agriculture as a tool for facilitated socially inclusive urban greening and governance of sites in transition. “Beyond the Construction Site” (BCS) is the research focus of this article. Urban agriculture proves a tool for including people in site planning and management since it requires presence of users on site. The case study reveals two novelties in the facilitation process in relation to the urban agriculture greening of sites in transition: a) multiple level operation engaging users, municipality and general public, and b) gradual inclusion of users in site governance. The article presents an example of how general participation in spatial planning between municipalities, spatial planners, and citizens could be developed and institutionalised in the future.

**Keywords:** self-governance, urban green spaces, urban agriculture, allotment gardens, temporary land use

## **Introduction**

Urban agriculture (UA) – the growing of crops in the city – has recently emerged as an important part of developing the urban green infrastructure (UGI). UA takes many forms, from vertical farming and rooftop gardens to community farms and community gardens (Wiskerke & Viljoen, 2012; Adams & Hardman, 2013; Lin et al., 2015). Nowadays scientific research and public body are paying increasing attention to the issue. In Europe and the USA, most governments are trying to develop a UA policy that will encompass all practices related to the growing of food in cities (Ernwein, 2014).

Vacant land in urban environments is more and more becoming a field for developing temporary land uses in the context of community gardens, allotments and others forms of UA. Vacant sites where the intended use has not yet developed and where temporary land uses such as UA take place can be referred to as sites in transition. Bishop and Williams (2012) explain that the temporary use of space developed at sites in transition can sometimes last a very short period (a year or two) or for a longer period (for example 100 years); it is not necessarily planned or legal, but still differs from permanent land use, which is usually the subject of urban planning, is legal and of longer duration than temporary land use arrangements. In this article we adopt a definition from Németh and Langhorst (2014: 144), who describe land in transition as vacant land where temporary use for UA is a legal solution

and “*explicitly and intentionally* time-limited in nature.” UA initiatives temporarily occupying vacant city land are extremely interesting; their study reveals many interesting problems that such communities encounter and practical and policy solutions they find for organising temporary land use through communication with the municipality, other citizens, and among themselves as individuals involved in the initiative.

Studies of such initiatives at sites in transition are important as they can provide a relevant contribution to understanding the importance of recognition and support of urban agriculture through land use planning policy. Urban planning is considered a technical and political process guiding development. The planning decision process involves many actors, influencing decisions on whether to maintain areas of agricultural land close to or within cities. In the planning process, urban planners determine the present and future roles of agriculture in cities, designing zoning plans accordingly (Aubry et al., 2012). Stakeholders involved in the development of the urban environment include academic and research institutions, private firms, governments, public and local authorities, the public at large, and non-governmental organisations (Mougeot, 2000; Dubbeling & Merzthal, 2006; Smith et al., 2001). However, there is a problem with the integration of UA and planning. While many cities are more involved with food system activities, initiatives are often piecemeal and isolated (Thibert, 2012; Lovell, 2010). There is a gap in participation in the spatial planning of the UGI between municipalities and citizens (Cerar, 2014). There are also major discrepancies between how users use the UGI and the intentions of UGI planners (Bratina Jurkovič, 2014). It is therefore necessary to explore the processes behind how citizens use, plan, create and govern the UGI and relations between city councils and planners in these processes to at least partially close the gap.

Thibert (2012) has listed various reasons for this lack of integration. In the USA, many planners believe that they should not intervene in the area of food policy because it is not their field of expertise. UA policies are not covered by a specific subfield of planning because they relate to many disciplines. Land use planning focuses on the best use of land excluding agriculture as a valuable land use. Local governments and planners can facilitate UA by adopting various planning policy tools. De Zeeuw et. al (2000) state that local authorities can integrate UA into zoning by law, combine UA with other land use functions (nature conservation, recreation), encourage the use of vacant public or private sites in transition (temporary use of space) for UA, or incorporate food production spaces within new social housing projects. Overall we can stress the importance of planning authorities and local government in integrating UA within existing planning frameworks (Thibert, 2012). One integration method is socially inclusive UGI planning that follows the basic public participation rules after Reed (2008). Fig. 1 explains the principles of socially inclusive UGI planning (Figure 1).

Reed (2008) argues that the participation process emphasises empowerment, equity, and trust learning: participants need to have the power to influence decisions and the technical capability to engage effectively in decision making. For decisions requiring knowledge beyond their own, stakeholders need to be educated and confident to enable them to participate on an equal footing in decision making. Special consideration of power inequalities (age, gender, and background) is necessary to better choose the tools for participation within groups. The learning process needs to be two-way and iterative, including learning among stakeholders themselves and among stakeholders, policy makers, and the experts included in decision making.

Furthermore, the process considers stakeholder participation at the very beginning of the planning process, providing better decisions because they recognise the needs and priorities of stakeholders. It represents all relevant stakeholders in society. It identifies them, differentiates between them, studies their relationships, and prioritises their involvement to better include

them in the decision-making process. It defines the objectives of UGI planning and goals upfront, at the beginning of the process, which can relate to stakeholder analysis. Most advanced cases build on the “shared adversity principle” rather than solely on consensus among stakeholders. Such deliberation revolves around communication and argumentation rather than negotiation. Socially inclusive UGI planning therefore needs to select the methods for stakeholders and their type of engagement after planning objectives have been defined and stakeholders analysed.

Probably the most crucial and underemphasised aspect of the process is that its success increases if led by an experienced facilitator who is perceived to be impartial, open to multiple perspectives, and approachable, and who maintains positive groups dynamics, incorporates local knowledge and combines it with scientific knowledge to empower people, (scientifically) understand the surroundings more accurately, and provide knowledge from experience on the ground (practical knowledge), which is often hidden to scientists. Such UGI planning is not institutionalised as mainstream planning for the UGI in European cities. This type of planning is still mostly undertaken outside city councils in isolated, experimental initiatives.

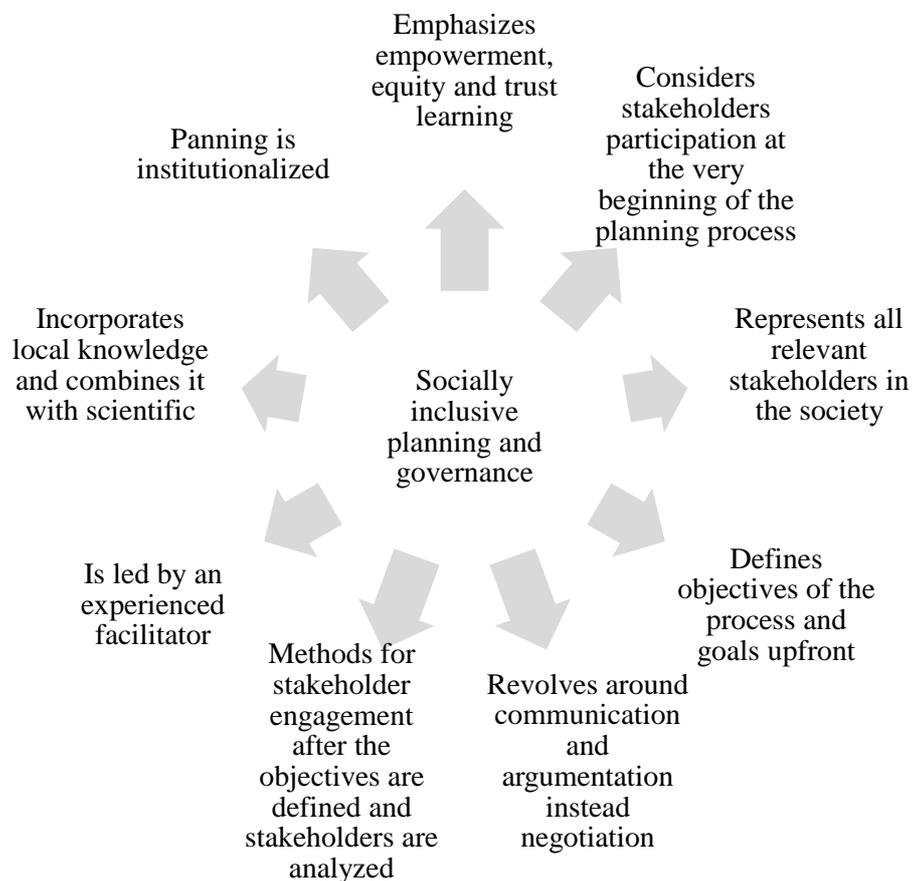


Figure 1: Socially inclusive urban green infrastructure planning (source: Adopted after Reed, 2008).

The main aim of our study is to explore the possibilities of UA as a tool for facilitated socially inclusive urban greening and the governance of sites in transition in accordance with the principles of socially inclusive UGI planning.

Greening by growing crops in the city can take many forms – from greening through grassland to greening through horticultural production. Produce consequently differs and is differently valued. For example, fresh vegetables can be used for direct consumption and can

therefore contribute to higher food self-sufficiency, lower costs, or even profit making, which makes them more interesting than urban greening through grassland. Horticultural production is interactive – more manual work being needed in production – and points the way to the socially inclusive governance of the UGI. The greening of sites in transition through UA therefore offers different outcomes for local government if practiced in a socially inclusive manner.

### Research area

The Beyond the Construction Site (BCS) project is the research focus of this article. BCS is a civil initiative led by KUD Obrat, which has run as a temporary community garden of 0.2 ha in a dormant construction pit in the centre of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, since 2010 (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: Beyond the Construction Site (BCS) was established in 2010 as a temporary community garden of 0.2 ha in a dormant construction pit in the centre of Ljubljana (source: Internet 1).

Fig. 3 shows the location of BCS in Ljubljana. In 2014 the project had around 100 regular users. We chose this case as our focus because the initiative is located in the densely populated city centre, where possibilities for classical agricultural activities outdoors are very limited and where there are no municipal allotments for the public to rent. The initiative also developed a site in transition. It uses a dormant construction pit situated within a heavily populated neighbourhood. Because the initiative has planned and now governs BCS with the help of facilitators, it is an interesting case for researching the capacity of transition sites to develop and demonstrate culturally new public participation practices in the governance of urban green areas.

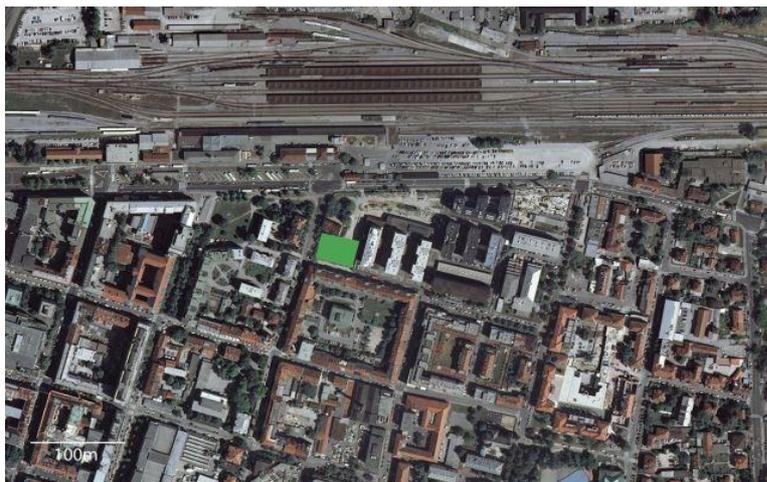


Figure 3: Location of BCS in Ljubljana (source: Internet 2)

## Research methods

### *Overview of regulations for urban agriculture and temporary use in the Municipality of Ljubljana*

Firstly we reviewed the regulations of the Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL) in the field of UA. We then reviewed the regulations relating to the temporary use of space in the MOL. This included a review of legislation on the temporary use of space at the national and municipal levels, and a review of existing material on the subject.

### *Interview*

The research takes a case study approach, using interviews to explore the planning and governance approach of the UA initiative at BCS. In depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview guide. Five interviewees were selected according to their roles in respect to the case study - a MOL employee, a BSC facilitator, an expert in urban planning, a user in-situ, and a user and social ecology expert. The place and time of the interviews were chosen by the interviewee and included two office and three on-site interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were recorded with a voice recorder. The transcription and analysis of data followed by means of a case study table. The table was used as input for the case study narrative. The narrative provided a basis for discussing the results in the light of the theoretical background and hypothesis. The analysis of the case narrative was used to identify whether the crucial principles of socially inclusive urban green infrastructure planning, as explained by Reed (2008), were used in developing BCS.

## Analysis and results

### *Regulations for urban agriculture and temporary use in the Municipality of Ljubljana*

UA policy is defined at the municipal level by various pieces of legislation: the Decree on the management and lease of MOL land for gardening purposes [Sln. *Odlok o urejanju in oddaji zemljišč Mestne občine Ljubljana za potrebe vrtičkarstva*], the Rules on the management and lease of MOL land for gardening purposes [Sln. *Pravilnik o urejanju in oddaji zemljišč Mestne občine Ljubljana za potrebe vrtičkarstva*] and the Ordinance amending the Ordinance on the management and lease of MOL land for gardening purposes [Sln. *Odlok o spremembah Odloka o urejanju in oddaji zemljišč Mestne občine Ljubljana za potrebe vrtičkarstva*]. This legislation defines the conditions and criteria for managing and leasing land for gardening purposes, and the nature of the lease. Land is leased out by the MOL for garden plots if the MOL has defined the land as: (a) permanently dedicated to gardening, (b) temporarily

permitted for gardening, or (c) agricultural land. It is relevant to stress that only organic production is allowed on garden plots owned by the MOL.

### ***Temporary use of space in the Municipality of Ljubljana***

The scope of temporary use is not directly defined by any law or regulation. Real estate owned by the state or municipalities is governed by the Physical Assets of the State and Local Government Act [Sln. *Zakon o stvarnem premoženju države in samoupravnih lokalnih skupnosti*] and its subordinate Decree on physical assets of the state and local government [Sln. *Uredba o stvarnem premoženju države in samoupravnih lokalnih skupnosti*].

The temporary use of space can be defined as a kind of an interim use when the specified intended use of an area expires and the new use is not yet established. This can take a very short time or several decades. Temporary use is an important factor in the revitalization of derelict spaces (buildings, open spaces, etc.) because it revives the abandoned, unused space, and prevents its degeneration. Both the private and public sectors contribute to producing abandoned sites in transition, which fail to take account of socio-cultural needs and disconnect society from the built environment (Shrestha, 2014).

The advantages of such land-use planning are in facilitating responsiveness to the rapidly changing needs of the urban space and society; it is therefore not surprising that the temporary use of land is not directly defined by any law or regulation of the Republic of Slovenia (Internet 3).

Article 30 of the Physical Assets of the State and Local Government Act [Sln. *Zakon o stvarnem premoženju države in samoupravnih lokalnih skupnosti*] states that immovable property that is temporarily not in use can be freely used under direct contract. It can be used by a) public bodies performing public functions; b) non-governmental organizations acting in the public interest; c) social enterprises or non-profit legal persons; d) international organizations, members of the Republic of Slovenia who have a head office, department, or agency in the territory of Slovenia. In most cases, temporary uses of space are self-organized, community-oriented initiatives in the field of sport, culture, gardening, etc. (Začasna raba prostora, 2015).

In the MOL, 90% of such spaces are used by cultural organizations and sports clubs. Free use of space in the MOL is possible only for social organizations acting in the public interest and non-profit organizations (Vrbica, 2015). Among the best known examples of temporary use in the MOL are Beyond Construction Site, Urban Roof, TEMP, Tabor Park. At the European level, the temporary use of space exploration was launched by the project Urban Catalysts: Strategies for temporary uses – potential for development of urban residual areas and European metropolises (2001-2003). Current examples of good practice in Europe are: Lakatlan, Budapest; Meanwhitespace, London; Coopolis, Berlin; and Stipo, Rotterdam (Patti, 2015).

### **The case study Beyond Construction Site**

#### ***Approach, actors and processes***

The most important goal of the initiative is to explore the capacity of transition sites to develop and demonstrate culturally new practices of public participation in governing urban green areas. In 2010 the city council enabled free use of the dormant construction site in the city centre by the non-government association KUD Obrat by way of a contract agreement. Access to temporarily abandoned land in the city centre initiated exploration of how to engage citizens in establishing new functions in the degraded area within the neighbourhood. The

establishment of facilitated self-governance of BCS required: a) initiation and facilitation, b) identifying needs, c) setup, d) working with users, e) coordination of use, f) planning for the future development of the programme in-situ with users, g) support of the city council, and h) media attention.

At the beginning, a few cultural events were organised by the initiators at the site. Immediate neighbours were not particularly interested. Then initiators issued a public appeal inviting the public to co-create the site. Public appeals published on the official BCS website (Fig. 4) and in the daily newspaper “Delo” brought success. Citizens gradually became interested in the project. An important message of the website appeal (Fig 4) was that gardening was possible on the site. The invitation shows neighbourhood buildings, a fenced off dormant building site in the neighbourhood, and a completely new element – a tomato plant in a flower pot – indicating the possibility of urban gardening in the dormant construction pit. The otherwise fenced off site now has gates, open gates, suggesting that the area can be opened up, entered, and used. There is a caption to the sketch “DIY garden” [Sln. *Naredi si svoj vrt*], directly inviting citizens to participate (Fig. 4).

Urban gardening has a strong continuous culture in Ljubljana and Slovenia in general; therefore referring to this special culture in Fig. 4 was an important cultural “hook” to involve participants in creating BCS. A subsequent facilitated socially inclusive process helped neighbours and other interested parties to develop BCS into a temporary community garden in the centre of Ljubljana. Different methods were used to explore the needs of immediate residents such as interviews, field research, group meetings, and focus groups. The analysis showed that residents wanted a green area.

In the process of co-establishing the intended use at the site and of the site it was crucial for the initiative to identify the focal issue and agreed on an action plan. People were included in establishing the site, which enabled them to develop a sense of ownership. At first the coordination of site use was led by a facilitator. Within this process, the facilitator assured that people’s actions, responsibilities and roles were accounted for so that users gradually became more willing to take on coordination roles. A facilitated process therefore helped users to develop facilitated self-governance of the site as the coordination role was gradually transferred from facilitator to users.

A community began to emerge from a group of unconnected individuals. High level participation in decision making was used as a step towards forming this community. For this the BCS site plan was well thought through and was intentionally planned to produce gardens allocated to individual users and facilities for shared use (common garden, tools, and buildings, terrace, shared shed, fireplace), which created a community atmosphere. Every year, a new element has been added to the site. For example a beehive and a new tree house are two recent acquisitions. These elements are developed in cooperation between users and facilitators.

### ***Relevance of UA in creation of UGI on sites in transition***

In the view of respondents, the garden allotment approach to socially inclusive UGI planning helped achieve several important outcomes of the BCS project. Motives for participating and opinions on outcomes vary (Fig. 5).

The strongest economic implications of the BCS in relation to UA is avoiding costs, as people spend less on vegetables when they grow their own; gardening therefore increased food self-sufficiency. UA in the case of BCS does not contribute substantially to the income of urban farmers because the raised beds are small and suffice only for self-provision. The UA initiative pursues no profit-oriented business model. Nevertheless respondents stress an important indirect socio-economic aspect of UA at BCS. The children growing up at BCS will in future be capable of growing food and hence of avoiding costs or even of earning money

(new job opportunity); the facilitated self-governance approach taken at BCS therefore increases their knowledge in this regard.



Figure 4: Graphics used in the website public appeal for creating Beyond the Construction Site (adapted from source: Internet 4).

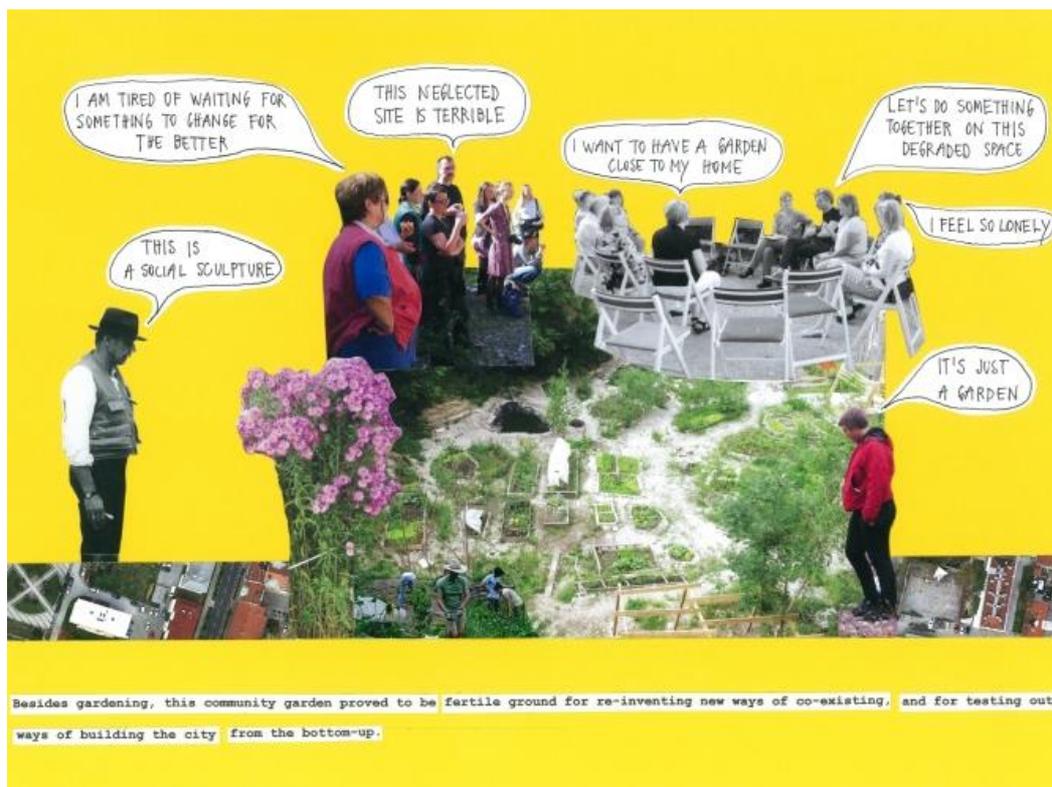


Figure 5: At BCS, the facilitated socially inclusive creation of urban green infrastructure and its governance includes urban agriculture (source: Internet 5).

Although the initial biodiversity of the site was recorded by a botanist, later changes in biodiversity were not recorded in any way. Respondents have contradictory opinions. Some say biodiversity decreased while others are of the opinion that overall biodiversity increased with BCS. Invasive and allergenic plant species were removed and new cultural plant and

animal species, and soil rich with microorganisms, were introduced. The area of greenery at BCS increased, so that the overall surface of urban green areas in the city increased, thus increasing urban green areas at the European level.

The green space used for UA is not physically linked in with the wider green infrastructure; BCS has therefore not contributed to greater green area connectivity in the city. As explained by respondents, BCS is an element in a mosaic of green areas, part of a fragmented green system. Respondents agree that the initiative has not contributed to the integration of urban green with other physical and transport infrastructure in the city. However the UA at BCS has contributed to greater connectivity of the site with the street it faces onto. The area used to be fenced off from the street, from the public. Today the fence can to some extent be seen through, inviting the public to interact with BCS.

Urban gardening and the self-provision of food through gardening has a long history across the country. The UA context of BCS therefore facilitated networking with similar self-governance initiatives throughout the country. This in turn has stimulated nationwide collaboration and enhanced citizens' political clout.

Other uses are feasible on the site, such as a park, lawn, and playground. However the strong national cultural affinity with gardening influenced development of the site so significantly that it can be considered a culture-specific factor. It was all the more influential because of the location of site and because people in the city centre have least access to urban gardens. There are other factors influencing the development of BCS into a self-managed UA initiative. Self-efficiency, community involvement and participative governance of the city were (and still are) high on the political and planning agenda in cities across Europe. As one of the interviewees noted, projects such as ECO Box in Paris, Prinzessinengarten in Berlin, and Hamburg Park fiction served as examples for facilitators to help users in developing the BCS site.

BCS is open to everybody. Cultural and educational events organised on the site are open to all, whereas the number of gardeners is limited to the number of gardens available, although a garden can be used by more than one user if so agreed. A new user of an individual garden can therefore join the initiative and start gardening only when a garden becomes available. Those interested are put on a waiting list. Users are free to leave the project whenever they wish. Indeed, for many gardeners BCS is just a temporary activity. There are different reasons for leaving a garden. Some find new, bigger gardens or ones closer to home. Others lose interest or find new priorities in life.

BCS has affected peoples' knowledge and behaviour in many ways. Active participation in running BCS has empowered them. UA at BCS has enabled higher social inclusion, helped to develop co-responsibility for the living environment, intensified social interaction, and has provided live-case training for facilitators interested in practicing participatory concepts in governing urban sites in transition. Different gardening styles encourage tolerance towards different life styles. One interviewee explained that differing biocultural values among gardeners encourage recognition that it is all right to do things differently.

BCS offers considerable learning potential for UA. Self-organisation through a facilitated process demonstrates that citizens are capable of managing an area when given the opportunity. It also shows that community practices do not occur spontaneously, proving the importance of the role of facilitators capable of creating a nurturing atmosphere in which creativity develops. It is an experiment in connecting people; the community context is therefore important for the success of BCS.

BCS has increased participation in the planning process, thus transforming existing patterns in planning culture. Artistic intervention has been used as an alternative to planning that fails when investment is not the key driver of development. Citizens were not merely informed or

consulted, but became policy makers. Continuous, high quality consultation between facilitators and the MOL has increased the council's affinity for similar projects.

BCS has attracted significant media attention. Several respondents agreed that the city council can be expected to devote more attention to the specific outcomes of BCS this year in connection with European Green Capital 2016 events. For now the city council acknowledges the project, has supported it by prolonging free land use by way of a contract agreement with the initiators, and has provided for smaller grants for materials. The MOL is not directly involved in BCS development. Most important is that the city acknowledges BCS as an example of different, better, innovative governance practices. The deputy mayor feels that the city council should both continue to enable such initiatives and explicitly define temporary use as a category of land use to give some general guidance for the development of temporary use.

### ***Relationship with the municipality and funding***

The city council has enabled free land use under a contract agreement with the initiators, the KUD Obrat association. It supports the project materially (e.g. ensures a water supply for the site). Apart from this, there have been smaller donations and grants from the non-government organisation Zavod Bunker, the city council, the European Fund for Regional Development, the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, and a private seed establishment, Semenarna Ljubljana that help finance specific events at the site. For the most part, the garden is financially independent.

### ***Lessons and transferability***

The most innovative aspect of BCS is the explicit role of facilitators. The role of initiators was to bring the idea to the public, while facilitators explored citizens' needs and engaged them in the governance process. The facilitators' role was to (a) gradually include neighbours and other interested parties in running BCS; (b) communicate experience in running BCS with the city council; and (d) propose amendments to city council planning rules on temporary land use.

Participation in decision making and self-management systems are a tradition in post-socialist European cities; however, this is not the case in urban green area governance. With help of facilitators, users manage the new UGI at BCS themselves. Today BCS engages people from many generations (children, young families, seniors). Users are immediate neighbours and people from other parts of the city, mainly middle-class and well educated.

Another important aspect of BCS is the temporary use of space in cities. As a topic, the temporary use of urban space has been growing in importance in Europe over the past 15 years, and BCS is an example of this movement. The process of establishing temporary, alternative use of urban space does not take a prescribed form. Each instance corresponds to a specific time in history, a particular society and planning culture. Each case requires a specific setup, a specific situation and context, something that is not to be found elsewhere. Each case is thus a novelty.

Our findings confirm that combining interviews with an overview of legislation is a reasonable approach for exploring the processes of urban greening exemplified by BCS. Interviews were conducted with a user, a facilitator/initiator, an expert and a MOL employee. The four levels ensure multi-level viewpoints and responses at both the government and non-government level. Because interrelatedness between the site and social inclusion was perceived on several levels (users, facilitators, experts, city council), research justified the decision to examine BCS within the context of the social inclusion theme. Our expertise in social ecology allowed us to view BCS from both a personal and professional point of view.

One respondent was among the members of the public and gardeners whose professions were unrelated to city planning.

**Discussion: The city's urban planning policy challenges and opportunities**

Why has the initiative been successful and how does it reflect the needs and opportunities of urban green infrastructure governance? The initiative under study is a response to citizens' needs and also a spatial opportunity for channelling these needs. In many respects it reflects a desired direction in the development of green infrastructure when compared with the city's urban green planning guidelines (Száráz & Nastran, 2015; Internet 5):

- revitalization of brownfields,
- transferral of responsibility for green areas
- increasing the number of gardens in the city centre and self-efficiency.

The owner of the BCS site is the MOL, which has been a mitigating circumstance and at the same time a great opportunity for the MOL to respond more speedily with the support of the initiative to the needs of citizens, and to transfer responsibility for managing green spaces to them.

Among the city's urban planning priorities are the rehabilitation of brownfields and the development of green areas and open public spaces (Internet 6). The city preserves and complements the green system, focusing attention on the revitalization of brownfields, a more sustainable transport system, and multi-functionality, thereby improving and maintaining social as well as ecological ecosystem services (Nastran & Regina, 2015). Temporary use of suitable degraded spaces within cities can enrich degraded areas on several levels with minimal financial input. This should not exclude monitoring the health safety of UA products, particularly in view of soil and air particle pollution, an issue especially relevant at abandoned construction sites and brownfield areas. Responsibility for soil rehabilitation and UA health safety monitoring should be better defined – an issue already comprehensively discussed by Jamnik et al. (2009) – as well as how to help similar initiatives to recognise and address potential problems.

One of the greatest future challenges for the city's sustainable ecosystem development will be more active cooperation between the authorities and the public and later a partial transfer of responsibility for green areas to the public. Citizens who perceive green areas as a part of their living space and gain a sense of ownership take better care of these areas and bring life to them with various activities (Nastran & Regina, 2015).

Although the role of gardens in the BCS initiative is not essential, it is certainly not negligible. It reflects the need for gardening in the very centre of the city, where such opportunities are lacking. Increasing food production and local self-sufficiency is one of the strategic goals of the city's Environment Protection Programme (Jazbinšek Sršen, 2014). The city tries to provide at least one gardening area in each urban neighbourhood. Due to dense urbanisation, the city centre has no such area. For this reason, too, the production component of the BCS initiative addresses this need.

Is it possible for the BCS initiative to become a model for similar community-based interventions in urban green areas? The transfer of responsibility for green spaces is a goal but no-one really knows how to attain it. There is also a lack of more stable organisational structures for users in the mid-term perspective. A more established form of organisation might be unnecessary, due to the transient nature of land use. Nevertheless, the complete lack of formal structures for users needs to be addressed in the future. BCS provides and promotes the temporary use of degraded urban spaces under self-governance, but it is not easy to encourage similar initiatives, not least because of the uncertain future of land uses developed at sites in transition. There is no formal, systematic provision of transient spaces for similar initiatives because each case is specific and because of the rigid spatial regulations of the

municipality. Consideration could be given to an interactive list of urban spaces for temporary use with faster formal procedures and incentives for private owners to lease degraded areas in the city for temporary use at minimal or no cost.

### Conclusion

This article discusses a case study on the creation and functioning of a community led green project at site of transition. The case study underlines the relevance of UA in greening degraded sites and shows the need and opportunity to improve mainstream UGI planning by introducing a socially inclusive approach and facilitated governance. The BCS initiative has been studied through the prism of the socially inclusive UGI planning principle based on the general principles of effective public participation.

BCS initiators, facilitators and users have satisfied most aspects of socially inclusive UGI planning. The initiative empowered citizens for UGI management by emphasising equity and trust learning. Consideration of neighbours' and other citizens' needs at the very outset of the project was found to be crucial, as well as a willingness to include stakeholders from various parts of the society regardless of age and education.

The facilitators helped users define the main objectives and the goals of their participation upfront and throughout BCS development. Crucial was the capability of the facilitators to encourage people to communicate and advance different ideas for degraded BCS site co-transformation that introduced a sense of community. The case study emphasises that bottom-up initiatives need firm facilitation processes. They can be successful even if facilitators are less experienced as long as they are capable of combining their scientific knowledge with local skills. In such cases, the personal and professional backgrounds of participants play an even more important role for the successful development and implementation of group or individual greening projects.

UA was shown to be a powerful tool for including citizens in site planning and management since it requires the presence of users on site. In managing their plots, users are encouraged to interact at the site, especially when they share facilities and amenities such as tools and sheds apart from their individual gardens.

The case study revealed two novelties in the facilitated UA greening of sites in transition: a) multiple level operation engaging users, local government and the general public and b) the gradual inclusion of users in site governance. This provides an example of how general participation by local government, spatial planners and citizens in spatial planning could be developed and institutionalised in the future.

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