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COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe: UA in Barcelona Metropolitan Region Short Term Scientific Mission Report

Barcelona, Spain 25/02-15/03/2013



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Introduction

This report has been elaborated within the Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) from the 25th of February to the 14th of March 2013) preceding the 2nd Working Group Meeting of the COST-Action Urban Agriculture Europe (UAE) to be held from the 12th to the 15th of March, 2013 at the Escola Superior d'Agricultura de Castelldefels at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Castelldefels (Barcelona, Spain).

The aim of the action is to develop a common European approach basing on existing research projects on urban agriculture issues and reference regions in partner countries.

The action is composed of four working groups which focus on different topics:

- WG 1: Urban Agriculture definitions and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- WG 2: Urban Agriculture and governance
- WG 3: Entrepreneurial models of Urban Agriculture
- WG 4: Spatial visions for Urban Agriculture

The subject of the STSM in Barcelona Metropolitan Region was to work on typologies of Urban Agriculture in the reference region in order to test a common methodology linking all the four working groups of the action. The aim is to present our results at the working group meeting and propose them as a tool for cooperation and networking between the four working groups.

The Metropolitan Region of Barcelona has 5.029.181 inhabitants (2011) which means 70% of regional population. It is the 2nd most populated region in Spain. Within the metropolitan region 45% of all inhabitants are concentrated in the city of Barcelona and its surroundings. The metropolitan system spreads along the central Catalan coastal strip in two parallel bands with a big contrast between plains (urban and agricultural areas), forested mountains, main urban area along the shoreline and the polycentric suburban areas along the Mediterranean corridor. The population is very dense and is centred around Barcelona (15.931,44 In/per km²). There is a slow exchange of population from the central city to new centres and suburban areas. Around 18% of surface is farmland and a 46% is represented by Mediterranean forests, thickets and meadows (Maldonado, 2012).

The agricultural production is diverse: the suburban and coastal areas are characterised by an extensive horticulture (Maresme, Baix Llobregat), the mountain areas by arboriculture (Ordal Mountains), the flat area by cultivation of cereals (Vallès) and viticulture (Penedès) (Callau and Paul, 2007). Family firms with medium-sized farms cultivate significant portion of agricultural land. In the wine industry there are great companies. Some of the medium and small farms are dedicated to pig, cattle and poultry breeding. The food industry is strongly established in the territory (Maldonado, 2012).

There are several initiatives within the city of Barcelona and its surroundings aimed more at social and recreational than production aspects of urban agriculture. There is a big refuse on the part of professional farmers' associations and unions but an increasing interest in administration due to emerging social and leisure realities.

According to the problems pointed out in the reference region description two main questions arise:

- 1- Which is the role of agriculture in land use planning?
- 2- How could be the multifunctionality of urban agriculture or peri-urban agriculture in the studied area emphasised?

This report has been elaborated and written by Giulia Giacchè and Attila Tóth as a result of common work and cooperation during the STSM. Our research projects have been adapted in order to point out the main issues in urban agriculture (definition / description / analysis of different types of urban agriculture). Our aim was to find a common interdisciplinary way of working and to propose tools to deal with key issues of urban agriculture in the reference region.

The analytical framework and methodology are presented in paragraph 2. The results of survey and analysis are illustrated in paragraph 3, discussed in paragraph 4 and in the last paragraph some final remarks have been concluded.

Giacchè Giulia - Tóth Attila

1. Methodology

The methodology refers to observation made during the 1st WG meeting of the COST-Action UAE in Aachen (2012) and to exchanges between researchers occurred after the meeting until now concerning typologies of UA. Basing on these observations and exchanges the idea of UA continuum arises, see figure 1.

The methodology bases on the work in progress in all 4 working groups.

According to the definition of UA (elaborated by WG1) different components (as spatial, functional, market, origin, actor, stakeholders, motivation) can characterise UA in a given context. The relative importance may also vary with geographical location, however all components are relevant in all contexts. In order to grasp the diverse reality of urban agriculture in Europe WG2 suggests to think about UA along a "continuum".

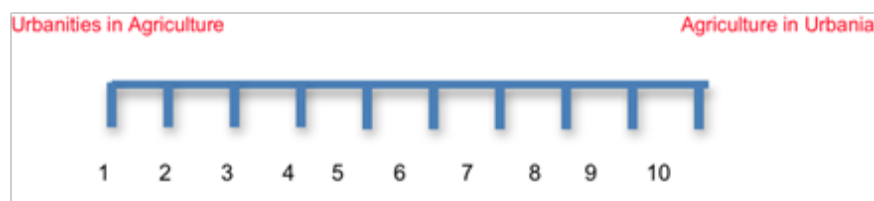


Figure 1: UA continuum (COST Action UAE WG2, 2012)

The "continuum" concept has been interpreted by several researchers participating at WG2 on the one hand regarding the links between urban and rural, on the other hand regarding actors and the professionalism degree in farming.

Therefore the gradient has been considered with respect to:

- on the one hand: greater or lesser interaction (farmers / agriculture «» consumers / city);
- on the other hand: level of professionalism (citizens cultivating their garden as a hobby » as a part-time job » entrepreneurs producing for the global market).

The two poles of the continuum are:

- at the point 1: urban actors interested in gardening
- at the point 10: farmers producing and selling their products on the global market.

The "continuum" between all forms of UA expresses the diverse links between „actors“ and the expression of different professionalism degree in farming (professional, hobby, part-time, recreational, educational, etc.).

According to Ejderyan and Salomon Cavin (2012) we base on two axes characterising the centrality of UA in relation to the city centre. This approach helps us to figure out the spatial dimension of UA and mainly its location aspect (in- or outside the city), see figure 2.

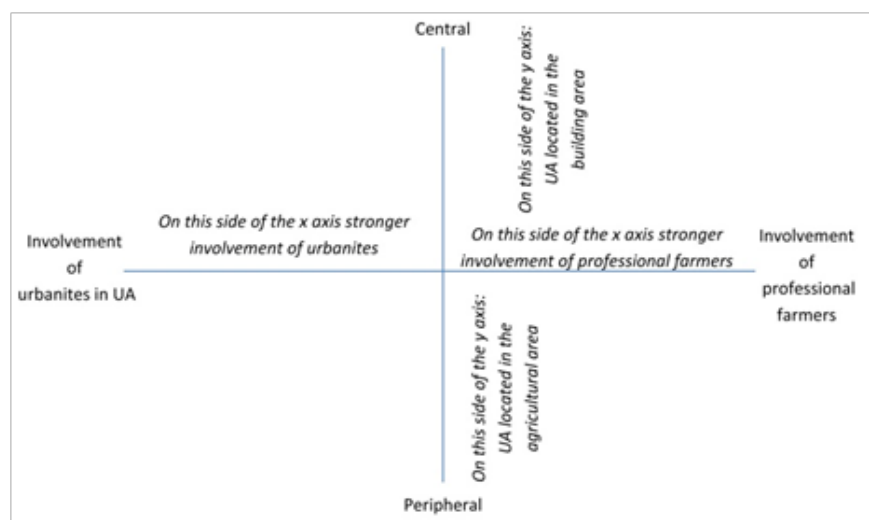


Figure 2: UA characterised by the type of actors and the location in the urban fabric (Ejderyan and Salomon Cavin, 2012)

To interpret the continuum in a comparable way we decided to provide an analysis framework which indicates:

- **Ten types of agriculture:** for analysed types of agriculture we provide a description of features, quantitative and qualitative elements based on available information about the analysed case studies,

- **Characteristics of governance and ongoing public policies supporting each type of UA.** In case there are no public policies directly supporting UA (at municipal, regional or national level), we decided to analyse public policies (education, food, health-care etc.) indirectly supporting or effecting the analysed types of UA, see figure 3.

Types d'UA	Agriculture preserved as cultural heritage	Family gardening	Community gardening	Vertical gardening/roof top	Agro-quartier	Agro-park	Proximity agriculture			Agriculture oriented to local market	Agriculture in transition	Agriculture oriented to global market
							community supported agriculture	residential agriculture	social farming	public procurement		
Case study												
Text/laws												
Localisation												
Institutional level												
Space of action (ex. bassin consumption)												
Area/sectors of public policies												
Tools or devices												
Public Actors												
Private Actors												
Issues												

Figure 3: Analysis framework for diverse types of UA++

Eleven case studies have been selected in order to describe the types of agriculture and to discover public policies supporting them. In order to gain a complex knowledge of diverse components of UA we analysed our case studies by field trips and interviews. Therefore in all case studies, according to methodology proposed by WG3 a questionnaire has been provided in order to point out the difference between the diverse types of UA according to various components, see Annexe B. The outcomes of our survey are presented in the result chapter and selected case studies are described and presented by "UA identity cards".

Basing on methodology proposed by the WG4: Spatial visions for UA on COST WIKI we define spatial characteristics, visual values and perceptual qualities.

The focus of our spatial and perceptual analyses is inspired by four main categories proposed by WG4:

1. **spatial situations** (how UA is occurring in landscape and urban structures and how is it impacted by 3-dimensional elements like buildings, vegetation etc.)
2. **uses / users and observers** (actual and if applicable, potential uses of the space)
3. **atmosphere** (explored by observation and perception of the space, captured by sketches, drawings, cross sections and photos)
4. **terms** (to describe the overall characteristics, atmosphere and perception of selected case studies, included in the UA identity cards)

We provide spatial analysis on topographical and orthophoto maps and sketches in order to locate UA sites within urban or landscape structures. In spatial characteristics we analyse the relation between different land use types in smaller urban context (e.g. built-up area / open space) and in wider territorial context (e.g. agriculturally used open land / urban area). We focus on definition of spatial qualities related to real and perceived ownership relations (private / semi-public / public).

We define visual and functional linkages between UA sites and its surroundings represented either by dense urban fabric, scattered suburban structures or by open land. We describe perception of diverse spatial qualities (inner / outer space » private / semi-public / public space). The identity cards include comparison of our visual perception of UA sites from field trips with statements of interviewed users and stakeholders concerning their perception and of the space they use.

Our perception of selected UA sites bases on observation, experiencing the essence, multifunctionality and multilevel values. Within our interviews several questions have been formed with the aim to find out what is the role of UA for the actors (users of the space, stakeholders, observers), how do they perceive the space and the surroundings, if they perceive the cultivated area either as private or as semi-public space. The aim of this questions and our personal observation was to discover and to define the role, values and benefits of UA for the society.

The UA identity cards describe and depict the analysed case areas and typologies. The aim of this complex overview of UA typologies in the reference region is on the one hand to emphasise the diversity of UA, the contrasts between different land use types and the whole range of what UA is. On the other hand to point out identity, uniqueness and values of UA case areas and typologies.

We interviewed the representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Food and Environment of the Generalitat de Catalunya in order to discover the legislative background and the position of agriculture and urban agriculture in public policy and planning practice (regional and local land use, spatial and landscape planning tools). We met also few representatives of Unió de Paegeos, the most important syndicate of farmers, in order to understand the position of professional farmers concerning land use planning and urban agriculture.

The aim of our STSM methodology is to link the main tasks of all four working groups of the COST-Action Urban Agriculture Europe and suggest a common methodology for further collaboration of all four working groups, see figure 4.

The schedule of the STSM during the first ten days consisted of 11 case studies (7 sites: 3 community gardens, 1 squat farming, 1 professional agriculture, 2 agricultural parks, including interviews with users and stakeholders; 4 subjects: meetings and interviews with consumers: 2 associations, 1 private school and with a researcher working on vertical farming) in order to understand better the diverse forms of UA in Barcelona Metropolitan Region. Two further appointments were fixed in order to understand different points of view on agricultural sector development: the public sector represented by the Generalitat of Catalunya and the private sector represented by Unió de Pagesos, the main agricultural syndicate.

The appointments were arranged by Luis Maldonado and Xavier Recencases who introduced us and our work. Three other interviews were fixed independently. During all events we were accompanied by students of ESAB who worked as mediators, especially in terms of organising travels and interpretation if interviewees preferred to speak Catalan.

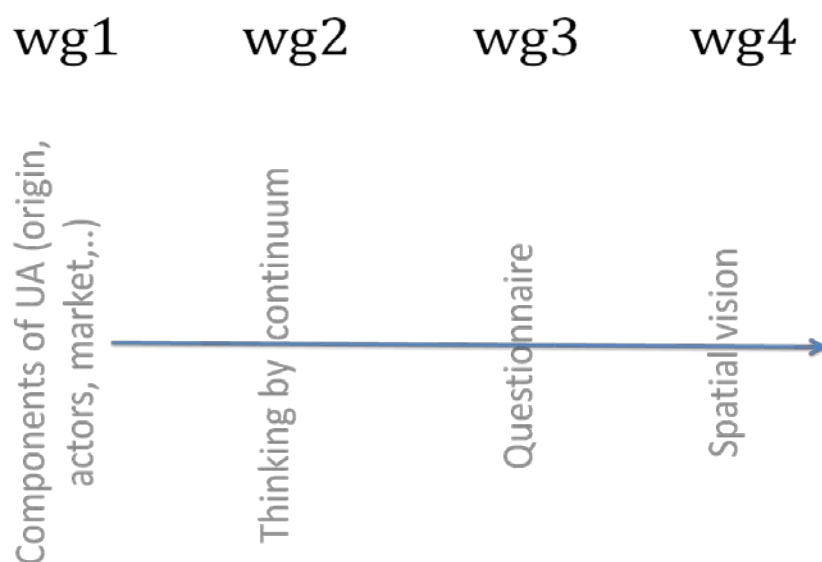


Figure 4: STSM methodology linking the main tasks of all four working groups of the COST Action UAE

2. Results

According to the proposition of WG2 as first step in developing a profile of UAE policies and governance contexts we need to identify the key policy actors and stakeholders in each participating city/region/country, across the state, civil society and the market. Therefore the results are articulated focusing on: public policies (state), market and civil society.

According to the methodology proposed by WG4 sketches and maps are needed to provide a more efficient description of spatial situation, perception and atmosphere of UA spaces. Therefore we elaborated four UA identity cards which describe diverse typologies of UA by maps, sketches, cross sections, photos and terms, see Annexe A (Urban Agriculture Identity Cards).

Public policies

In Catalunya there are different levels of territorial organisation: Generalitat de Catalunya (region or autonomous community), Diputació (provincial level), Comarca (inter-municipal level) and municipality.

Spatial planning

In 1979, with the autonomous statute of Catalunya, the competences for spatial planning are assigned to the Generalitat de Catalunya. In 1983 the Generalitat promulgated the first law of territorial policy (N° 23/1983). The law provides establishment of Pla Territorial General de Catalunya (PTGC), which is articulated through a series of plans focusing on specific territorial ambit Plans Territorials Parcials (PTP) or sectors Plans Territorials Sectorials (PTS).

The PGTC (1995), according to the Law 23/1983, is the instrument that defines objectives of general interest; the territorial model of development and the guidelines for drawing up territorial plans. This plan defines also areas of agricultural or forestry land use, with a special interest to maintain or expand their extension, status and fertility.

The aim of Pla territorial metropolità de Barcelona (PTMB) (2010) is to promote a sustainable development of the country; to “respect” the area of special interest for agriculture and forestry land use; to promote an efficient use of energetic and hydraulic resources; to protect natural areas of special interest; to foster the environmental impact of actions affecting the land.

The plan defines three systems: open spaces (see figure 5), settlements and infrastructure. The Open Space System includes all the areas classified as “non urban” (SNU) which are considered as a key component of planning. Three types of spaces according to their characteristics and the proposed level of protection are included in the SNU: espais de protecció especial pel seu interès natural i agrari (space of special protection according to its interest for natural and agricultural values); espais de protecció especial de la vinya (space of special protection for vineyards); espais de protecció preventiva (space of preventive protection). Even if the first two categories have a higher level of protection in all three cases the conversion of land use is allowed if it's foreseen within the spatial strategy plan at metropolitan scale. Therefore, with the approval of PTMB 74,8% of Barcelona Metropolitan Area appear to be included in the category of open space and 70,4% of these belong to categories of greater protection of non-urbanised land (Blanc, 2012).

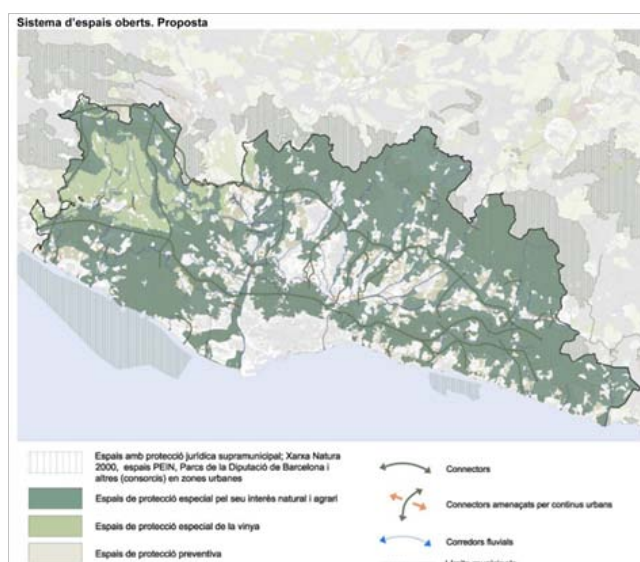


Figure 5: Open space system (Pla territorial metropolità de Barcelona, 2010)

There are also two other levels of territorial organisation and two other tools of planning. The Plans Directors Urbanistics (PDU) serving as instruments to ensure the implementation of planning guidelines and to coordinate the municipal urban planning which is conducted by a Pla d'Ordenació Urbanística Municipal (POUM).

Agricultural planning and projects

In Spain the agricultural planning is supported by two plans of rural development: one national and one regional managing the European Union CAP funds. The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Food and Environment of Generalitat of Catalunya manages the regional one. In the regional plan there are no specific measures for urban and peri-urban agriculture at the moment but the farmers working in peri-urban areas can gain funding.

The most supported sector by the region is the agro-food industry as it has a greater economic impact.

At the same time the region develops some initiatives to enhance short supply chains. It participated in the Rururbal project (2009-2011) which aimed at proposing confirmed guidelines for developing territorial governance strategies. This approach consists in promoting local, qualitative agro-food production and consumption. The mentioned consumption values non-urbanised peri-urban areas and creates a favourable social environment to protect them. The Spanish case study was the “comarca del Valles Oriental”. They applied a bottom-up approach to define the strategic actions envisaged by actors to develop a food governance model and to get closer farmers and consumers.

At the moment considering the economic crisis the most important initiative made to support the short supply chain is a label defined by de Decree of Generalitat Catalunya 24/2013. The label should certificate the commercialisation system: if the product is sold directly (producer-consumer) or a short circuit (in case there is an intermediary).

In 2013 the subsidies provided to support agricultural parks have been cut (in case of Parc de Gallecs) or reduced (in case of Parc Baix de Llobregat).

At municipality level two main projects have been carried out: municipality gardens and school gardens.

In the first case it is the Department of Environment at Municipality of Barcelona that carries out the programme of Barcelona Urban Gardens' network. This programme is aimed to involve people over the age of 65 in activities improving the environment by applying organic farming methods in gardening. The programme began in Can Mestres gardens in 1997, although it is not the first vegetable garden in Barcelona. The first one, called Hort de l'Avi, was created in the Gràcia district in 1986 due to requests from a local group of neighbours. Seniors participating in the Urban Gardens programme benefit also socially since they are allowed to cultivate a piece land during their free time to improve their everyday lifestyle and personal physical condition and to make new friends (Aragay Esmerats, 2010). Also the city benefits from the programme in a more environmental way, by creation of new green spaces where gardens play the main role. At the moment there are 12 gardens within the city centre, see figure 6. The municipality provides a plot, water and tools for gardening for five years to retired people living close to the gardens. They have to absolve an initial trial period of six months and after the transfer, the beneficiaries should follow a farming model without use of chemicals. Users of the garden are not allowed to sell products obtained by cultivation.

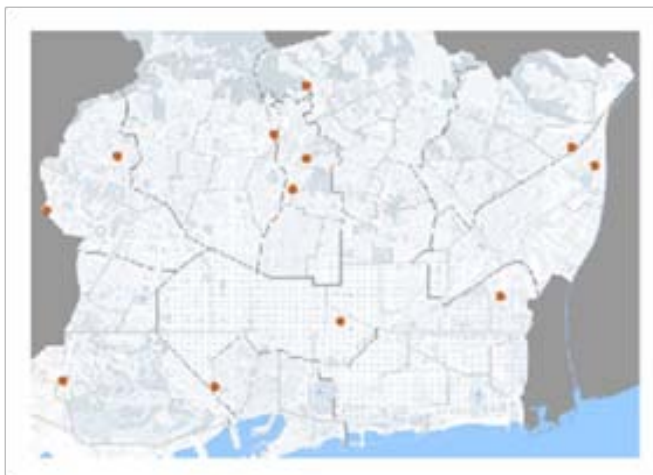


Figure 6: Municipality Community Gardens (Department of Environment of the Municipality of Barcelona, 2013)

Since 2001 the City Council, within the Agenda21, encourages schools to make their own Agenda 21 project to improve education, participation and civic involvement. In Barcelona there are almost 200 schools participating in the Agenda21 school project and they have an own garden. There are different typologies like a piece of cultivated ground, tables of crops, greenhouses, etc.). Schools participating in the project create a rich network, see figure 7. This type of garden is supported by the municipality, by the Department of Environment or by „Education of Barcelona Municipality“. The approach is characterised also as an educational activity as it is addressed to young people.



Figure 7: School Gardens of Barcelona (Agenda21 BCN, 2013)

Governance Model

Public bodies are involved in different types of UA and in different ways.

Concerning municipality and school gardens the Barcelona Municipality provides space and/or tools and/or funding to carry out these projects. The main objectives consist mainly in social and educational functions, see the UA identity cards.

Public bodies (Generalitat, Diputació and the surrounding municipalities) are involved also in management of the two analysed agricultural parks (Parc Agrari Baix Llobregat and Parc de Gallecs). Although, the partnership composition differs (only public in case of Parc de Gallecs and public-private in case of Baix Llobregat). There is also a difference in the provided supports, see the identity card of Agricultural Parks.

Actors' evaluation

According to public point of view it is not important to distinguish peri-urban areas from the other ones as the only difference consists in urban pressure and the balance between agricultural and urban spaces is regulated by the market (of product and land). Therefore the farmers can decide if they continue in cultivation or sell their land.

According to the opinion of interviewed persons working in agricultural parks and members of the Unió de Pagesos agricultural used land doesn't have an adequate protection and currently the best tool to protect it is the economic crisis. In fact, the quality of agricultural land is not taken into consideration in the decision-making concerning extension of industrial or urban areas and the planning is still conducted „from an urban point of view.“

Actors' Proposals

The proposals suggested by actors to ensure a greater spatial are:

- a special law for the agricultural areas (as the Pla d'Espais d'Interès Natural o PEIN (1992) provides for natural areas);
- a law to expropriate the land from owners who do not cultivate it in order to enhance a land mobility;
- creation of a network of "Agri_2020" (similar to Natura2000);
- recognition of the specificity of peri-urban areas and implementation of the Charter of Peri-urban Agriculture (2010);
- a tool to quantify the value of agricultural land to understand better its importance and to provide its protection as economically active spaces.



Aerial view to Baix Llobregat



Farming in Parc de Gallecs



Old farmhouse in Parc de Gallecs as architectural landmark underlining local identity, cultural and historical heritage

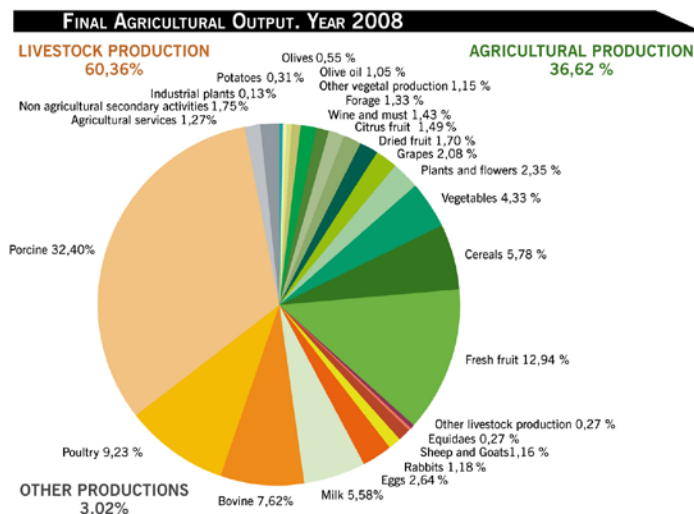


Mercat La Boqueria fresh market right in the centre of Barcelona city

Figure 8: Final agricultural output in Catalunya region in 2008 (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009)

Market

In Catalunya the most important production is livestock, especially pork production, see figure 8.



We interviewed a sample of six farmers who are members of Unio de Pagesos and most of them work in the Baix Llobregat park. Five out of six produce fruit and vegetable and only one wine. All of them have inherited their enterprises. The size of enterprises varies from 4 to 10 ha. Only one of them considered the international market, while the others are oriented to the local and/or regional market. Three out of six farmers sale their products through direct sales in percentages ranging from 10 through 50 up to 100% . Five out of six sale their products at Mercabarna market. Mercabarna is a company administrating the Food Unit produced by Barcelona's wholesale markets and by a large number of companies involved in production, sale, distribution, import and export of fresh and frozen products. Mercabarna products reach the whole area of Spain and many countries around the world. Its most immediate sphere of influence encompasses the whole territory of Catalunya, the north of Valencian Community, eastern Aragon, the Balearic Islands, Andorra, the south of France and the north of Italy, see figure 9.



„BUBUB“ fruit and vegetable store in Barcelona selling products mainly from Baix del Llobregat Agrarian Park

Figure 9: Mercabarna sphere of influence (Mercabarna, 2013).



The Generalitat of Catalunya provides some facilities to sale the products of farmers of Baix Llobregat Park on the market by reserving a special area.

We interviewed also a winemaker from Penedés area in order to understand his entrepreneurial model, see the identity card of Vineyard Landscape. In 2007 he started to make wine and established his own winery. He tries to sell his wine on local and global market as well by using various sales channels (e.g. internet, retailers, direct sale).

Actors' evaluation

The main problems related to agricultural sector identified by actors are:

- farmers' aging / no generational turnover within the family
- bureaucracy that almost paralyzes economic activity
- weak competitiveness with large companies determining the price of wine
- disadvantage caused by the market which is open to products produced under less stringent rules and conditions

Actors' Proposals

- to involve young farmers into existing farms who would be on the one hand supervised in the first years by experienced senior farmers and on the other hand they would bring innovative approaches;
- to create an unique office to carry out all the paperwork related to the agricultural sector (health, production, marketing)
- to make the recruitment procedures in agriculture more flexible

Civil society

In recent years, there are two ongoing phenomena:

- 1st more attention to alimentation (especially after food scandals, e.g. mad cow in 2000) - preferring local and organic products;
- 2nd more attention to urban agriculture as a tool for sustainable development supporting greater food security and responding to climate change.

There are four initiatives, which have been analysed during the STSM: Consumers Associations, Procurement of food for the school, Community Gardens and Squat Farming. The first two case studies represent two different forms of short supply chain. In the second two cases consumers coincide with producers. While the production in community gardens is limited and has several purposes (recreational-demonstrative), the case of squat farming tends to self-sufficiency.

The two interviewed consumers associations are: Germinal Farrò and Cooperativa de Consum 30 Panxes. The first of them is the 1st consumers association in Barcelona founded in 1993 by 15 citizens. The basic idea was to find products: agro-ecological, ethical and proximity in order of importance. From 1993 to 2013 they created 4 more groups composed of 20-50 people. They preferred to create small groups rather than enlarge the first one in order to maintain the cooperative organisation of the association. In fact, all members should commit on the one hand to buy the products and on the other hand to participate in the association. To participate means to be a member in one of the seven committees (purchases, infrastructure, administration, internal network, external network, education, informatics) and in assemblies (around 8 per year). All members have to order products using the web page of the association and choose demanded products and quantities basing on the offer of producers within the network (by Friday) and then go to pick up their basket (on Wednesday).

The management costs (telephone, electricity, gas, rent the room, etc.) are covered by a monthly members contribution of 5 euro plus a surcharge of 20% on the cost of the products.

They do not receive any kind of support and funding from governmental agencies.

The Consum 30 Panxes Association works more or less in the same way. The main difference is that the delivery point baskets are leased by Trevol cooperative, which is engaged in distribution of organic products to cooperatives, schools and consumers associations. The rent of the room is EUR 100 per month. It is up to each members EUR 4.20 / month, usually paid at the beginning of the year.

Another form of short supply chain is provided by St Paul's School in Barcelona. In 2008, the direction and advice of the parents committee decided to change the menu by changing the head chef. The new chef has been asked to provide a new menu introducing organic and local food. He accepted the job and started to look for products and tried to combine quality/price/distance whereas it had to be still organic, see figure 10. We interviewed the cooker who said that when he started it was more difficult to find local organic products, while in the last few years it has become easier as there is an increase in the number of farmers and a decrease in price caused by market competition.



St Joannes winery and vineyard in the traditional wine-growing region of Penedès



Store with local products in Parc de Gallecs



Hort Sant Pau del Camp urban garden

Figure 10: Radius of products' origin (elaborated by Eduardo M. Caldero basing on the information gained by interview)



The school doesn't receive any support from public bodies but the prices can be supported by the family. The cost per day is EUR 3 compared to EUR 1,5 in case of public schools.



Small-scale farming in Hort del Xino



View to production plots in Hortet del Forat community garden

Community gardens can be defined by a large variety of situations, see the identity card Urban Gardens Barcelona: there are gardens occupied by some people to protest against the presence of empty space and lack of meeting points (e.g. Hort del Xino); associations authorised by the municipality interested in providing activities for residents (e.g. Hortet del Forat); citizens who "donate" agricultural land to elder people to cultivate (e.g. Can Masdeu). Most of the community gardens are self-managed and self-financed by the group of people who take care of the space and decide what to do and how to do.

Community gardens get usually no subsidies but their stakeholders have a clear goal of openness to civil society and organisation social interaction and learning events. There are involved mainly young people from different backgrounds and origins.

Different is the case of Can Masdeu a "rurban squatting", see the identity card of Squat Farming. During the last decade the phenomena of squatting increases dramatically as a reaction on an increase of housing costs in Barcelona caused by real-estate speculation. Barcelona's urban sprawl is limited from east by the sea and from west by the hills of Collserola, where rural spaces have traditionally flourished within natural landscapes. In these areas the social centres of Kan Pasqual (since late 1996) and Can Masdeu (since late 2001) combine cosmopolitan features, i.e. their members are Catalan and foreigners from cities and villages with agro-ecological experiences. According to the article of Cattaneo and Gavalda (2010), these "rurban squatters" focus on learning, recovering the land and local farming practices. They incorporate modern solar and wind technologies with new perspectives like permaculture. Both the Kan Pasqual and the Can Masdeu groups are in a learning process for self-management of time, food, water and energy. Each individual creates tools for collective incorporation – in short and medium term – increasingly independent lifestyles. The two communities are more or less autonomous from the material, monetary and, especially, political point of view. At the same time they serve as social centres and have several stores (wood, metal, glass), workshops (bakery, bicycle, carpentry, welding) and access to land resources (orchards, water, wood, earth, stones) they try to recreate a closed circle.

The main financing forms are represented by the bar open on Sundays, in case of Can Masdeu, and the sale of bread in case of Kan Pasqual. There are also monthly fees paid by members of the house (EUR 45 per month in case of Can Masdeu). The land owner in case of Can Masdeu is the Sant Pau Hospital. They don't have any agreement with the owner.

Actors' evaluation

The main problems identified by actors are:

- difficulty of access to land / empty spaces
- onerous certification systems
- some farmers seem to be reluctant to changes in marketing systems and remain connected to cooperatives or shops

Actors' Proposals

- to allow the exploitation of abandoned spaces and buildings by citizens
- to create an association which could lease the land and re-lease it at increasing prices proportionally to the production capacity (ongoing project called Terra Franca)
- to create a system of self-certification between consumers and producers (ongoing project by Germinal Cooperative)

A researcher of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) has been interviewed to better understand the ongoing research on vertical farming. They consider that vertical farming could help to reduce the ecological footprint of cities. In fact the current food and agriculture model, the fragmentation of the city and the countryside mean energy use, CO₂ emissions from transport, and large-scale marketing requirements. Rooftops are connected to a building in terms of energy, water, and CO₂ flows so could be a model to reduce waste of resources and transportation of products (Cerón-Palma et al, 2012). At the moment their research site is under-construction. The building was designed by H arquitectes studio in the Autònoma Campus. The university has launched a competition for realisation of a building and researchers could participate with their experiments and theories. At the moment they have some data, which have to be tested in order to investigate different aspects, also those economic ones.



Ecological and environmental friendly approaches in Can Masdeu towards sustainable way of life



Social life and farming on the terraced gardens of Can Masdeu

3. Discussion

The discussion bases on the one hand on results of the STSM research into UA in Barcelona Metropolitan Region and on the other hand on methodology developed by processing of the STSM results.

In the results there are presented different forms of UA in Barcelona Metropolitan Region, see figure 11. Within the selected case studies there are no analysed examples of professional agriculture located in the urban structure. The consumers association and the St. Paul's school can be located directly at the intersection farmers / urban; urban / rural. Are they the most balanced forms of UA?

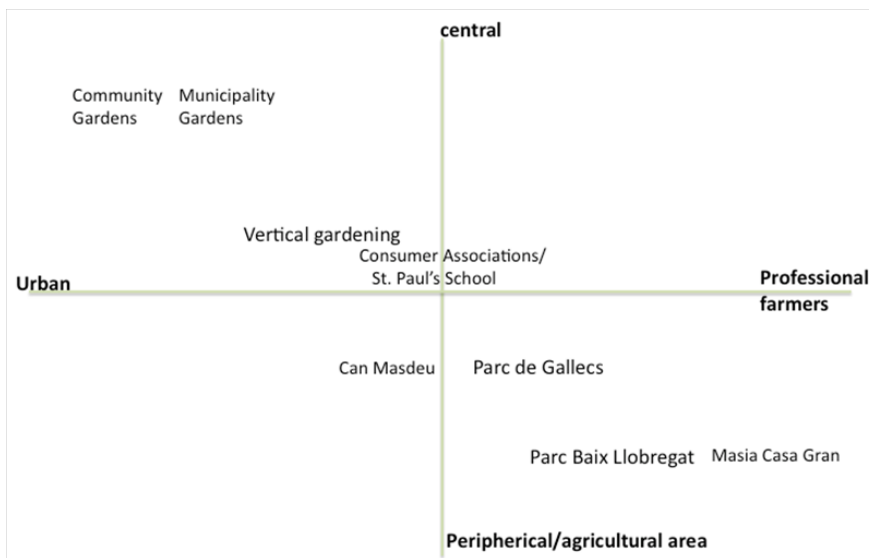


Figure 11: Localisation of the case studies

The results show that the Barcelona Metropolitan Region faces similar problems and has similar potentials like other European peri-urban areas.

Concerning the agricultural sector there are some problems linked to farm structure (e.g. small, non competitive), to changed socio-economic conditions (e.g. conduction is no longer familiar), to the product market (e.g. weak bargaining power on the market, a gap between farmers' purchase price and final price for the consumers) and to the land market (difficult to access the land, especially with non-urban aims; difficulties with protection and defining the land value). Although, the proximity to the city allows access to different markets (e.g. short supply chain, direct sale, consumers association, food procurement of school, public institutions, etc.). There is an interest of non-farmers in agriculture and an ongoing diversification of agricultural activities can be defined.

The civil society seems to respond to its needs (e.g. creation of consumers association in order to avoid retailers, to provide the possibility to choose products and producers, to enhance land mobility, to create a self-certification system based on relation consumers/producers, etc.). The civil society is also a promoter of other initiatives (e.g. urban gardens) as an expression of the need to reclaim the space, knowledge and opportunities for sharing.

Another point to emphasise is the network behind these initiatives, which are linked to other local subjects (e.g. network of urban gardens in Barcelona), to European associations (e.g. the French association Terres de liens is the reference for Terra Franca) or even to global networks (e.g. the park Baix Llobregat is recognised as a good model of agricultural land management and there are visitors even from China).

Concerning methodology we combined two different points of view (landscape architect, agronomist), we used diverse analysis tools (e.g. sketches, questionnaires) and followed the aims of different WG of the COST-Action UAE (e.g. by defining different components of UA, by identifying the model of governance, by identifying entrepreneurial models and by defining the needs of users and stakeholders, etc.). The cooperation of researchers with a different professional background can be evaluated as fruitful and contributive.

The complexity of UA can be paradoxically defined by a simple methodological tool in form of an UA continuum line, see figure 12. Our joint effort and the aim to cooperate in research and to develop a common methodology led to more complex results. This way of cooperation allowed us to test several tools proposed by different WG (e.g. components of UA, continuum, questionnaire, diagrams, sketches, maps, terms) and to develop new tools (e.g. identity cards).

Basing on the tested methodology we can suggest some new tools for analysing UA. We consider the different components of UA identified and described in our work to be an important tool to understand diverse “types” of UA. The continuum is a good way to define and present UA considering the fact that excluding urban gardens all the other case studies are defined by at least two of the ten forms of UA, e.g. the agricultural parks as the figure 12 shows are located along the continuum at 6 points: 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10.



Figure 12: Position of Agricultural Parks along the continuum

Therefore, thinking “in continuum” could be useful to avoid generalisation and simplification and to present the complexity and multifunctionality. This approach allows us to compare different case studies all over Europe, since comparison of results is crucial, especially in a COST-Action as it provides exchange between researchers with different cultural and professional background.

On the one hand direct interviewing by questionnaires is certainly the best way how to obtain authentic information from actors. On the other hand observation and perception of the space allow us to extract efficient characteristics of the space, its qualities, identity and atmosphere, which can be processed e.g. by sketches.

Final Remarks

Considering the short duration of the mission we focused on providing:

1st suggestions for the CAP reform basing on the actors' evaluations/propositions

2nd tools to be implemented in methodologies of the four working groups of Cost-Action UAE in order to improve their networking.

What are public bodies doing concerning UA?

Maybe not enough concerning ongoing accelerated processes (e.g. population growth, climate change, soil consumption, etc.), the demand for healthy food and a more respectful local development model towards people and nature with a lower impact on the environment. Perhaps administrators should understand how to capitalise social potentials of urban areas.

At European level the European Commission should implement different ongoing national or regional experiences to:

- enhance land mobility (e.g. Banca della Terra of Toscana Region or Banco de Terras de Galicia / promote laws to provide the possibility to expropriate abandoned agricultural land);
- create a platform to present ongoing projects and research results with an aim to raise public awareness and to improve existing and implement new public policies;
- draw inspiration from diverse tools of natural protection in order to apply similar tools onto agricultural land (e.g. "Agri2020"; „Farmland Directive“; law of agricultural land protection; etc.).

Concerning the tested methodology we suggest to create more opportunities to exchange between WG1 and WG2 to align components of UA with forms of UA, as well as between WG2 and WG3 to better focus on professional aspects of agriculture. As all mentioned working groups deal with issues which have a spatial impact we suggest their networking with WG4 to form and elaborate complex spatial visions for UA.

Moreover these possibilities to exchange could be contributive to defining tools for comparison of different situations and case studies.

We propose the developed identity cards as a tool to provide a complex information about UA case studies and to compare different reference regions and spatial situations.

Further improvement of some aspects (e.g. public policies, governance models, entrepreneurial models) by elaborating of diagrams would allow to present and compare different situations.

We believe that our cooperation during the STSM was successful and could serve as a basis for future collaboration between us. We plan to publish the results of our work in a peer reviewed journal (e.g. Landscape and Urban Planning) and to present them on upcoming conferences (e.g. Student Scientific Conference at SUA Nitra and Young Scientist Forum at Centre for Development and Research, BOKU Vienna). The future collaboration with the host institution and our supervisor Luis Maldonado is foreseen on the one hand within the WG4, on the other hand in interdisciplinary issues linking more working groups.

The duration of upcoming short term scientific missions could be lengthened to e.g. one month in order to provide more time to analyse the case studies, and to facilitate more discussions and exchange with the host to establish more concrete possibilities of future collaboration.

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Annexe A

Urban Agriculture Identity Cards

A.1 Urban Gardens Barcelona

A.2 Squat Farming

A.3 Agricultural Parks

A.4 Vineyard Landscape



IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

3 COMMUNITY GARDENING

POSITION ALONG THE UA CONTINUUM



GREEN

PROTEST AGAINST PRESENCE OF EMPTY SPACES

HORT DEL XINO

El Raval district



C/Reina Amàlia, 11 b

Start Date: 2008

Origin: occupied house » demolition » occupied empty space

Aims: claiming social space, occupying an empty space, improving the neighbourhood, creating a natural space within the built-up area, acquiring horticultural experience

Surface: 600m²

Products/services: cultivation of vegetables (1st to learn, 2nd to produce), organisation of workshops (to learn about vertical gardening, synergic gardening etc.), open to the civil society

Users: 15/20 permanent, some temporary, relatively young (20-40 y), from closer or broader surroundings (e.g. Santis)

Management: land owner = private management of the space = occupied (once a week, on Sunday), every year propose a project but then have to move forward, self financing of materials
Governmental Support: fined for / municipality could provide water
Network: community gardens, clubs and associations (e.g. Canya viva, Permacultura Barcelona)

Perception by users:

UA: tool to complain, to learn

Space: public open place where you want, a space for creativity

HORT SANT PAU DEL CAMP

El Raval district



c/de Sant Pau, 89-97

Start Date: 2006

Origin: aim of the municipality to redevelop an area used by drug addicts

Aim: municipality project addressed to retired people living in the district

Surface: 700 m² (2 parts = 225 m² garden = 9 plots/25-30 m²; recreational space with a picnic table)

Products/services: cultivation of seasonal vegetables which don't cover the self-sufficiency of users

Users: retired persons allowed to use the plot for 5 years, decision making by sortition

Management: land owner = municipality, management of the space = municipal engineer - control of needs (once a week)

Governmental Support: The municipality provides space, water and instruments for cultivation

Network: Urban Gardens of Barcelona, Department of the Environment

Perception by users:

UA: a way to do something during free time activity

Space: a piece of private land "transformed"

L'HORTET DEL FORAT

La Ribera district



Plaça del Pou de la Figuera

Start Date: 2008

Origin: 2005 - start of a participatory project, 2006 - ended by decision of the municipality to implement the project of "Jardins del Pou de la Figuera" » creation of hortet del forat

Aim: to create a meeting point, to provide popular activities for residents, horticultural education - planned activities for children/workshops for everyone

Surface: 100m²

Products/services: cultivation of flowers, seasonal vegetable (mainly used for preparing social dinners), organisation of workshops and activities

Users: 6 /10 permanent, some occasional, participating in social activities, age variable, mostly (25-40 y)

Management: land owner = municipality, management of the space = participants/assembly (once a month)

Governmental Support: The municipality provides space, EUR 3000/year and in the 1st year EUR 8000 to cover the costs of the project

EDUCATION

REACTION TO LACK OF MEETING POINTS

SPACES

ORGANIC FARMING METHODS

SOCIAL INTERACTION

COST-Action Urban Agriculture Europe

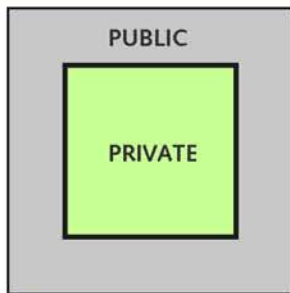
URBAN GARDENS BARCELONA

UA IDENTITY CARD

GIACCHÈ, Giulia - TÓTH, Attila. 2013

private citizen,
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or public disorder
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you can do what
and interaction

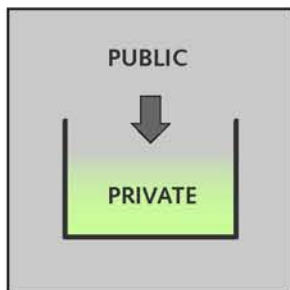


Our perception:

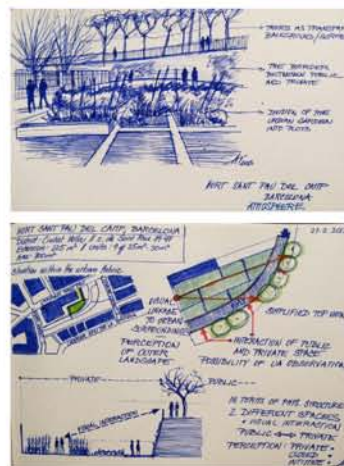


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of Barcelona city

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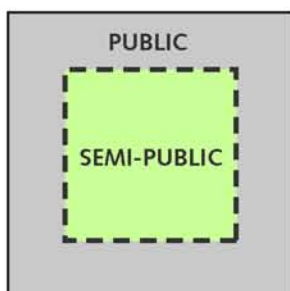
Our perception:



occasionally
age: quite

municipality,

month)
municipality
for maintenance
rebuild



Our perception:





POSITION ALONG
THE UA CONTINUUM

3 COMMUNITY GARDENING



7 P

CAN MASDEU, BARCELONA



community gardening

architectural dominant



cultivating the land

Can Masdeu



society

terraced gardens



**Start Date:** 2001

Origin: 8 persons started to occupy the empty building (abandoned since 40 years) to organise a meeting on climate change (2002). They perceived the potential of Can Masdeu to become a place of another way of life and consumption

Aims: to restore former land use in the valley (horticulture and forestry); to occupy empty buildings and spaces; to live in a different way, a more sustainable one

Surface:

Products/services: vegetable covering 80% of users' needs; 4 ongoing projects: community garden (since 2002, 100 persons, 33 plots), social centre, community life, agro-ecological education; workshops (permaculture, bike repairs, etc.); open to civil society for free in collaboration with other associations; guided tour, presenting experiences (each sunday)

Users: 20 persons living in Can Masdeu (30-45 y), from all around of the world, most of them from Spain

Management: owner of the land and buildings = Sant Pau Hospital; management = assembly / occupants (once in two weeks); there are 4 commissions - one for each project; funds for materials and projects = self-financing (dinners, parties, bar - open every Sunday), each occupant has to pay EUR 45/month

Governmental Support: No. they would be interested in different forms of subvention and support but not from the municipality.

Network: other collectives and associations (eg. *Permacultura Barcelona*, *Radio Bronka-Contrabanda*, other squatted houses: eg. *Can Be*, *Kan Pasqual* - exchange of knowledge, experience and products; residents participating in the community garden project

Perception by users:

UA: source of food

Space: reconnection with nature, space to find own lifestyle, reuse of resources, reduction of waste, landscape as source of materials (eg. wood), living in a community linked to nature; perceived as private /semi-public space

3.3.2013

REDUCTION OF WASTE

RECONNECTION WITH NATURE

SUSTAINABILITY

COMMUNITY

LIFESTYLE

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

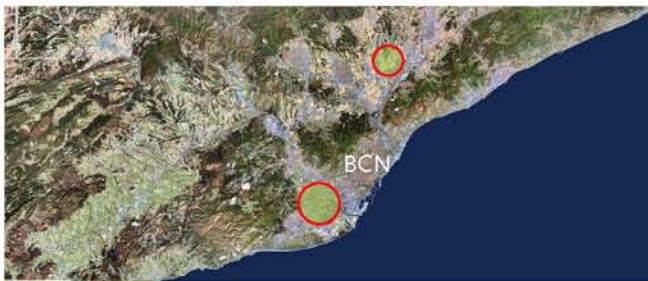
REUSE OF RESOURCES

**CAN MASDEU, BARCELONA**

- INTENSIVE CULTIVATION, TERRACED GARDENS
- EMBEDDED IN THE SURROUNDING WOODLAND
- FORMER HOSPITAL BUILDING AS ARCH. LANDMARK
- VIEW TO THE CITY (MENTAL LINKAGE)
- "HIDDEN" SPACE ("WORLD")

Our Perception





PARC AGRARI DEL BAIX LLOBREGAT



source: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya

Start Date: 1998 (Consorci Parc Agrari del Baix Llobregat)

Origin: 1994 - Baix Llobregat Regional Council » proposal of an agricultural park; 1995 - second phase of the strategic plan: objectives; 1996 - LIFE project on peri-urban spaces of Barcelona MA - co-founded by EU

Aims: to protect and preserve agricultural land; to guarantee stability and viability of agricultural activities

Surface: 3.332 ha

Products/services: farmers: vegetable (63%), fruit; livestock: sheep, chicken, development of direct sale; consortium: visit tours, environmental education, technical support for farmers

Users: 1.200 persons (75% land owners and their relatives)

Management: consortium (Barcelona Provincial Council + Baix Llobregat Regional Council + Farmers' Union - 14 municipalities around the park); management tools: strategic plan, management plan, development plan

Governmental Support: EUR 900.000/year (2012) - member institutes of the consortium; needs: promote integration of young people to avoid uncultivated land, to promote land mobility, to keep technical support

Network: production, education, recreation: mainly local, also global (the park is recognised as a model of agricultural land management)



source: Diputació Barcelona

URBAN / PERI-URBAN

AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION

ANIMALS

FOOD DIRECT SALE

LOCAL MARKET



source of the photo: Diputació Barcelona

HISTORICAL LEGACY

CULTURAL HERITAGE

RECREATION

EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENT

Our perception:

PARC AGRARI DEL BAIX LLOBREGAT
3000 ha
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
EXTENSIVE FARMLAND CLOSE
TO BARCELONA CITY

7.3.2012



MOUNTAINS AS SKYLINE
VIEWS TO THE CITY

PRODUCTION FIELDS (e.g. ARTICHOKE) WITH POLYTUNNELS

Perception by users:

(farmers, agronomists)

UA: a tool for conservation of agricultural land and improvement of urban environment; activity related to the city; agricultural production with social, educational and environmental benefits; complementary to peri-urban agriculture (PUA); a clear difference between PUA and UA, PUA = food production = farmland + farmers, UA = city, leisure, social, etc.

Space: proximity to city inhabitants; historical legacy and local identity; agricultural and environmental peri-urban area; food production, leisure; "green lung"; very strong personal linkage to the land; perceived mostly as private space

L'ESPAI RURAL GALLECS



Start Date: 2006 (*Consorci de Gallecs*)

Origin: 1970 - Franco expropriated 1471 ha to promote the growth of the city; 1980 - the land passes to *Generalitat* » urban areas sprawled until 2005 - decision to preserve non-urbanised areas as public open space.

Aims: to protect and preserve a public open space

Surface: 733 ha (75% agricultural land, 10% woodland, interstitial spaces)

Products/services: vegetable, cereals (focus: local products, agro-ecological production system); processed products (beer, flour); Two products recognised as "Slow Food Garrison"; farmers: visit tours; environmental education; direct sale - supported by the consortium

Users: 150 persons living in the park; around 20 farmers; social cooperative

Management: Consortium (*Generalitat*: 51%; 6 municipalities around the park); land owners = municipalities; land cultivators: farmers (an agreement needed to regulate the situation); farmers: *Associació Agroecològica Gallecs* (cooperation farmers / consortium); consortium: land use plan (strategic spatial vision), management plan (balance agriculture / forestry / recreation)

Governmental Support: EUR 530.000/year (2012) - members of the consortium according to portion (cut of support for 2013 by Department of Agriculture needs: to preserve the best agricultural land, to protect agriculture in urban context

Network: recreation, production, distribution: local; specific issues: global (Slow Food, Fedenatur, Natura2000, European Green Infrastructure, ...)



HERITAGE
NATURE
SOCIETY
EDUCATION

source of photos:
Consorci de Gallecs

FAUNA & FLORA

AGRICULTURE
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Our perception:



DIRECT SALE
LOCAL MARKET

ENVIRONMENT

Perception by users:

UA: a way to make urban society more sustainable; change in mentality = agriculture + city; not behind, not at the border, not peri-urban » integrated, within the urban area!

Space: unique historical landscape structures, "agricultural jewel" within residential area; local identity; cultural heritage; value in productivity; nature near urban area

L'ESPAI RURAL GALLECS, BARCELONA
733,52 ha
INTEGRATION OF AGRICULTURE INTO URBANISED AREA
AGRICULTURE + NATURE + SOCIETY
AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE AS PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

5.3.2013





1 AGRICULTURE PRESERVED AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

8

POSITION ALONG
THE UA CONTINUUM

1

MASIA CASA GRAN, ST JOANNES WINERY & VINEYARD



historical legacy

vine cultivation



landscape structures

wine-making



landmarks

transition



source of photos: <http://www.stjoannes.com/>



ST JOANNES

CULTURAL HERITAGE

TOURISM

VINE CULTIVATION

WINE-MAKING

TRADITION

KNOWLEDGE

HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES

CONTINUITY

HISTORICAL LEGACY



Start Date: 2007 (establishment of the winery)

Origin: The current land owner has inherited the house and the fields from his parents (family tradition in vine cultivation)

Aims: to produce a high-quality wine, to convey the history of the vineyard, the traditional knowledge of vine cultivating and wine-making

Surface: 200.000m² (10 ha vineyards, 3 ha woodland, 7 ha expropriated)

Products/services: vine (combination of over 50 years old with recently planted vines); varieties: "Macabeu", "Xarel.lo" (traditional grapes of Penedès Region), Cabernet Sauvignon, "Ull de Llebre"; 50% of grape production sold at the cooperative and the other 50% used to make own wine in Casa Gran; organizing of guided tours; cooperation with Penedès eno-tourism network

Users: land owner, enological consultant, 3 permanent employees

Management: the land owner has been expropriated an area of around 7 ha by the municipality, with an aim to build a women's prison. At the moment the project seems to be under revision and it's possible that the land owner will have to give back the money to the municipality

Governmental Support: need for less bureaucracy (less requests; one single body to be addressed), market control (focused on importers with less external rules, major cooperatives, enterprises regulating prices)

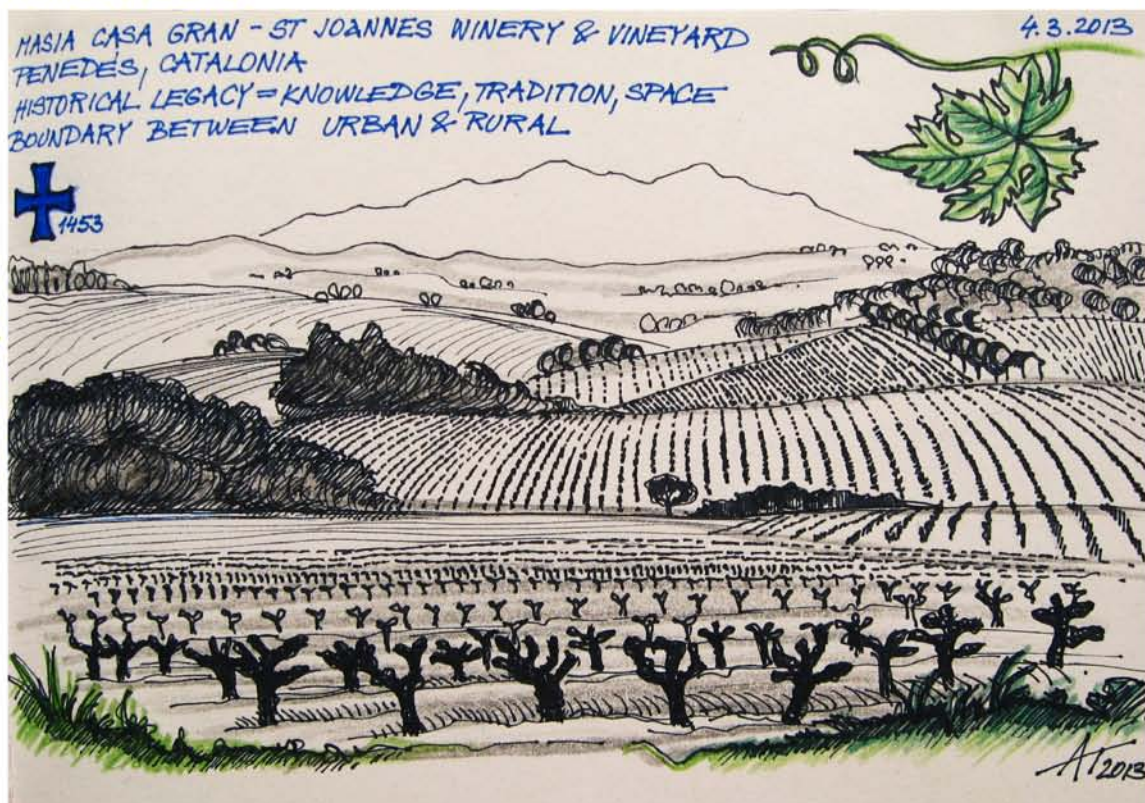
Network: market: global network, tourism: local network

Perception by users:

UA: continuity, historical legacy = knowledge, tradition, space

Space: boundary between urban & rural / city & countryside, historical landscape structures, Casa Gran as a local landmark

Our Perception



Annexe B

Questionnaires

B.1 Questionnaire for users (professional farmers, other types of UA)

B.2 Questionnaire for public body

B.1

Questionnaire _ Professional Farmers/Other Types of UA

1-Origin component

1. (cases n.1-2-3-4-5-6-7)How the project was originated? Why? When? Which is the partnership that founded the project?
2. (cases n 8-9-10)Can tell us the history of the enterprise and since you have taken over?

2- Spatial component

1. Where are the agricultural land/plots located (indicate the municipality or district and specify the location in urban/periurban or rural area)?
2. What is the size of the farm/area?
3. Which is the basin of consumption/production?
4. Do you get anything you need for producing in your town, in your region, in the metropolitan area, Catalonia, Spain?
5. Which is the average surface of plots?
6. What is there in the surrounding? What are the spatial objects that have meaning to agricultural activity (e.g. terraces, store sales, short chain)?
7. What types of spatial entities are mobilized by agricultural actors (e.g. blocks of parcels, portion of the watershed, natura 2000 zone,)?
8. How do you perceive urban agriculture?
9. What does the space where you do farming mean for you? do you like being there?
10. Who is the owner of the land that you are cultivating?
11. Do you perceive the agricultural land as strictly private or semi-public?

3- A functional component

1. What is the role of agriculture for you?
2. What is the role that has or could have within the territory?
3. Which products do you cultivate?
4. Do you keep any animals within the enterprise?
5. Which kind of services do you provide and how?
6. Do you have any linkage to the city? YES/NO WHICH:
7. Are there any conflicts with the city or citizens/neighbours?
8. Which function provides the space for you?
9. And which for the observers if there are any?

4- A market-orientation component

1. Have you diversified and / or differentiated your business according to the demands of consumers or the market?
2. Do you consider local, regional, or international demand of products for sale products?
3. How do you sale the products (global market, supermarket, short supply chain)? (Indicate also the % for each categories and for each products that you produce)
4. Where do you sale the products (international, national, regional, local market)?

5 – an Actor component

1. Has the enterprise/persons involved in this project a defined legal status? 2. How many persons work in the enterprise/are involved in the project? (Indicate number, sex, age, origin, formation, profession, time invested in farming and in which activity)
3. Why did you choose to be a farmer (passion, work, inheritance)?

6 – a Stakeholder or actor component

1. Who are the consumers? (Indicate number, origin, formation, profession, sex...)
2. Where they live?
3. What are they looking for? (organic food, local food)
4. Which are the actors that they are related to? How is the network of linkage?

7- a Political component

1. Are there any forms of financing that you ask for?
2. What are the policies that support this form of agriculture?
3. Are there any instruments or tools to support or to provide this form of agriculture?
4. What would you need to maintain your activity?
5. What level of territorial organisation (UE, State, Region, Diputacio, Municipality) should take an interest in this form of agriculture?
6. In your opinion, which policies have to be provide in social care, environmental care etc.? Which tools should be used for it?
7. Which CAP tools could support your activity?

8- Future

1. In your opinion what is the future of agriculture within and around the city?
2. Which type of agriculture will survive? How?
3. How you can see yourself/ this project in 10 years, in 20 years?

B.2

Questionnaire _ Public Body

1. Can you briefly introduce the tasks and competences of your service concerning agriculture?
2. Which tools do you have to provide to support agriculture? (Regional laws? agricultural plan or programme?)
3. Which are the main purposes to develop the agricultural sector in Catalunya?
4. What are the strength and weaknesses of the agricultural sector in Catalunya?
5. In your opinion, which level of government can best affect the agricultural sector?
6. Do you involve farmers and citizens in the planning / policy and decision making process? (Is there enough communication / participation / discussion?)
7. How could be farmers' needs better integrated into the planning process?
8. Do you think that collaboration with some other institutes could improve agricultural planning/policy by sharing tools and instruments? (if so, which institutes?)
9. Does the agricultural policy face any conflicts with environmental policies? If so, do you see any solution?
10. Does the agricultural policy face any conflicts with spatial planning? If so, do you see any solution?
11. Is there any legislative protection of agriculturally used land? Do you feel the need to protect agriculturally used open land?
12. Do you own any agricultural land?
13. How do you manage it?
14. How do you understand the term/phenomenon of urban agriculture?
15. Do you have specific tools or policy addressed to peri-urban or urban agriculture?
16. Which level of territorial organisation (UE, State, Region, Deputacion, Municipality) should take an interest in this form of agriculture?
17. Which Common Agricultural Policy tools could support this form of agriculture?
18. Do you develop or plan to develop any projects to integrate cities and agriculture?
19. What is your opinion about short supply chains? Do you support them?
20. Do you support choosing of local product for public procurement?
21. What is your opinion about agrarian parks? Do you think they are a good model of agricultural space governance?

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COST-Action UAE: WG2 - UA and governance



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Giulia and Attila at work
(photo: Eduard M. Caldero)



COST- the acronym for European COoperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research- is the oldest and widest European intergovernmental network for cooperation in research. Established by the Ministerial Conference in November 1971, COST is presently used by the scientific communities of 35 European countries to cooperate in common research projects supported by national funds.

The funds provided by COST - less than 1% of the total value of the projects - support the COST cooperation networks (COST Actions) through which, with EUR 30 million per year, more than 30.000 European scientists are involved in research having a total value which exceeds EUR 2 billion per year. This is the financial worth of the European added value which COST achieves.

A "bottom up approach" (the initiative of launching a COST Action comes from the European scientists themselves), "à la carte participation" (only countries interested in the Action participate), "equality of access" (participation is open also to the scientific communities of countries not belonging to the European Union) and "flexible structure" (easy implementation and light management of the research initiatives) are the main characteristics of COST.

As precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research COST has a very important role for the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA) anticipating and complementing the activities of the Framework Programmes, constituting a "bridge" towards the scientific communities of emerging countries, increasing the mobility of researchers across Europe and fostering the establishment of "Networks of Excellence" in many key scientific domains such as: Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences; Food and Agriculture; Forests, their Products and Services; Materials, Physical and Nanosciences; Chemistry and Molecular Sciences and Technologies; Earth System Science and Environmental Management; Information and Communication Technologies; Transport and Urban Development; Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health. It covers basic and more applied research and also addresses issues of pre-normative nature or of societal importance.