

Självständigt arbete vid LTJ-fakulteten, SLU
Master's Project in Landscape Achitecture
Faculty of Landscape Planning, Horticulture and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Landscape Architecture

Volunteer Motivation in Vancouver's Green Streets Program

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Alnarp 2011

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Ex 0545

Advanced E, 30hp

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Motivation till brukarmedverkan i Vancouver Green Streets Program

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Abstract

Volunteers create and maintain over 350 flower gardens in traffic circles and corner bulges in the streets of Vancouver. Vancouver's Green Streets Program is run by the City of Vancouver and started initially because citizens were asking for it.

In-depth interviews were conducted with twelve gardeners in their gardens. They were asked about their motivations for initially joining and staying with the program. The research on the benefits of community gardening is extensive and shows proof of improved mental health and social bonding. Motivation is more sparsely examined. No earlier studies have focused solely on motivation.

The reasons that the gardeners gave for maintaining their street garden were arranged into eight categories: *garden interest, well-being, learning, creating, values, improving environment, encounters and sharing*. The most common motivation for joining the Green Streets Program was an inwardly-focussed personal joy of gardening. The motivations for remaining in the program tended to be the more externally-focussed desire to share their gardens with others and people passing by.

A final part includes implementations based on the interviews and earlier literature. Urban gardening programs are often referred to be a way to cope with climate change. Even if that might be an outcome is that not a main reason for people to participate in this case. Among other things is the accessibility to home and to offer an opportunity to participate factors to consider in planning.

Sammandrag

I Vancouver skapar och sköter volontärer 350 blomsterträdgårdar i stadens rondeller och gathörn. Vancouver's Green Streets Program drivs av Vancouver stad och startades efter önskemål från stadens invånare.

Djupintervjuer hölls med tolv volontärer i deras trädgårdar. Forskningsfrågan undersöker de medverkandes motivation till att inledningsvis gå med och senare fortsätta i programmet. Det finns omfattande forskning som visar på fördelarna med brukarmedverkan som hälsa och sociala möten. Volontärernas drivkrafter till att delta är mindre undersökt. Inga tidigare studier fokuserar enbart på motivationen.

Resultatet delas in i åtta teman eller orsaker till att delta, *odlarintresse, välmående, lärande, skapande, värderingar, förbättra närmiljön, möten och ge*. Där den vanligaste orsaken till att inledningsvis gå med är den egna intresset i att ha en plats att odla och leva ut sitt odlarintresse. Bland orsakerna till att fortsätta i programmet anges det osjälviska motivet att ge, glädja andra samt att träffa förbipasserande.

Avslutningsvis presenteras förslag till tillämpningar av resultaten baserat på intervjuerna och tidigare litteratur. Den aktuella diskursen om brukarmedverkan tar ofta upp urban odling som en väg att möta den globala uppvärmningen. Det kan mycket väl vara en konsekvens, men det är inte en orsak till att folk engagerar sig i det här fallet. Viktiga faktorer att ta med i planering av platser där människor deltar är istället avståndet till det egna hemmet och att erbjuda möjligheter till att medverka.



"I think it brings joy to people to know that there is still natural beauty that sort of happens, that sort of happens magically in the streets"

(Gardener 29 years old in the intersection Arbutus Street and 2nd Avenue, Vancouver September 30, 2010)

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	8
Introduction.....	9
Vancouver's Green Streets Program	10
Presentation of the Study Site.....	11
Thesis Statement.....	13
Urban Gardening	13
Historical Background	14
Theoretical Background.....	14
Methods.....	18
Method Choice.....	18
Literature Search	19
Interviews	19
Sample.....	19
Analysis, Results&Discussion.....	23
Analysis of the Interviews	23
Results: Eight Reasons to Street Garden & Literature Comparisons	25
Conclusion.....	39
Implementation.....	39
Method Discussion & Further Research	40
Endnotes.....	42
References.....	42

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Lund, 2011-09-01

Ingrid Kristensson

Introduction

It is early 1996 in Vancouver, Canada and someone doing his or her spring-cleaning empties a birdfeeder onto a newly constructed corner bulge. Dozens of sunflowers sprout from the seeds and light up the street. People start calling the city to ask if they can plant in the bulges close to their homes as well. In response, the city starts a pilot project and the Vancouver's Green Streets Program is born. The program becomes popular and more and more bulges around the city are taken care of by the locals (City of Vancouver 2009). The small-scale pilot project has soon grown so large that the city hires a full-time coordinator to organize the volunteers. By October 2010 does the program include 350 street gardens that are tended by volunteers all over the city¹.

My interest in the Green Streets Program originated from my own gardening experiences. Summer 2010, my first summer living on the ground floor of an apartment, enabled me to have my first little garden on the raised patio outside the door. It was exciting to see things grow, sensuous to smell the herbs after the rain and interesting to plan for expansion into the communal bushes on the other side of the common grass.

I had the opportunity to spend autumn 2010 in Vancouver and found the Green Streets Program on the City of Vancouver's homepage. It caught my attention immediately. The street as a place for community gardening was new to me, the focus on flower gardening appealing. The popularity and success of the program led

to the decision to write about the Vancouver Green Streets Program.

My first physical encounter with the Green Streets Program ends in slight disappointment. I am riding my bike down the hills of Vancouver for the first time, and the brown strips of lawn running along the streets show that it has been a long, dry summer. I pass traffic circles with "this garden is taken care of by a volunteer", that don't look much like gardens at all.

Then on my travels around the city, it suddenly happens I turn a corner and almost lose my breath over the cascades of violet hydrangeas hanging out into the streets, or laugh over crazy pieces of homemade art in a traffic circle or get moved by dill, bees and gnomes fighting for my attention along rows of parked cars.

Three months later, after meeting some of all the gardeners, the street gardens I pass are no longer just pieces of land with a few plants. I know that a traffic circle can be so important to its gardeners that they will plan their vacation to be in town during the drought period every year. That a gardener might be mad that somebody pulled out his or her petunias for the fifth time this summer or happy about a gift of peonies from an old woman. That people will pull over their cars, slow down on their bikes, or cross the street while walking their dog to say "thank you" to a gardener and that maybe in an apartment somewhere, someone is going through seed catalogues to plan for the coming season. The gardeners plan for bees to come, colours to combine and childhood garden memories to blossom. They may already have their seedlings waiting on a balcony to be planted in a little piece of land.

Vancouver's Green Streets Program

Distribution of the Plots

The City of Vancouver combines the Green Streets Program with its ongoing traffic-calming projects in neighbourhoods and along bike routes. All bulges and traffic circles in the Green Streets Program have a budget for doing an initial planting. Volunteers with gardens in other spaces in streets are welcome to join the program and take part in the Green Streets Program's events, but will not receive any funding for their initial planting. In total, there are 500 gardens in the project. Not all of these gardens are taken care of by volunteers. Plots without a volunteer are taken care of by the city landscaping crew. When a gardener ends a contract, the landscaping crew is responsible for the maintenance until somebody else adopts the garden¹.

The current Green Streets coordinator Erin MacDonald has a degree in Landscape architecture. As coordinator she maintains contact with the gardeners, organizes parties

and creates newsletters all while continuously developing the program. Erin works in close cooperation with the superintendent of the parks board. They keep each other informed about what is happening in the office and out in the streets¹.

Signed Contracts

Citizens joining the program sign a contract with the municipality saying that they are officially responsible for their plot. Volunteers agree to keep their gardens tidy, weeded and in good condition. Since most of the gardens are located in traffic circles and bulges, the vegetation must be kept under a restricted height to maintain sightlines and must be kept clear of roadways, walkways and fire hydrants. The city recommends using drought-resistant plants for water wise gardening and does not allow edible plants. A part from these restrictions the gardeners are free to develop the gardens in whatever way they want (City of Vancouver 2009-05-11).

Gardener Support

When a gardener signs the Green Streets contract he or she will receive a "this garden is being cared for by a local resident involved in the Green Streets Program" sign for his or her plot. The City also delivers free compost to the gardeners at a number of locations throughout the city twice a year. The gardeners can get free bulbs when the city digs them up in the fall and they can buy annuals from the city at a reduced price on certain occasions. The gardeners are part of a mailing list and receive a newsletter twice a year with information on upcoming events in the Green Streets Program and other garden happenings in the city¹.



Picture 1. Green Streets info sign. The municipality installs signs in the gardens saying that the garden is cared for by a volunteer.

Green Streets Events

Each September, the Green Streets Program holds an appreciation party for all of the gardeners at the Van Dūsen Botanical garden in Vancouver. The gardeners get free entrance, light snacks, pictures from the gardens throughout the season and a speech from an invited guest lecturer. The event also include prizes from local sponsors for outstanding gardening in categories such as the most colourful garden and most water wise garden of the year.

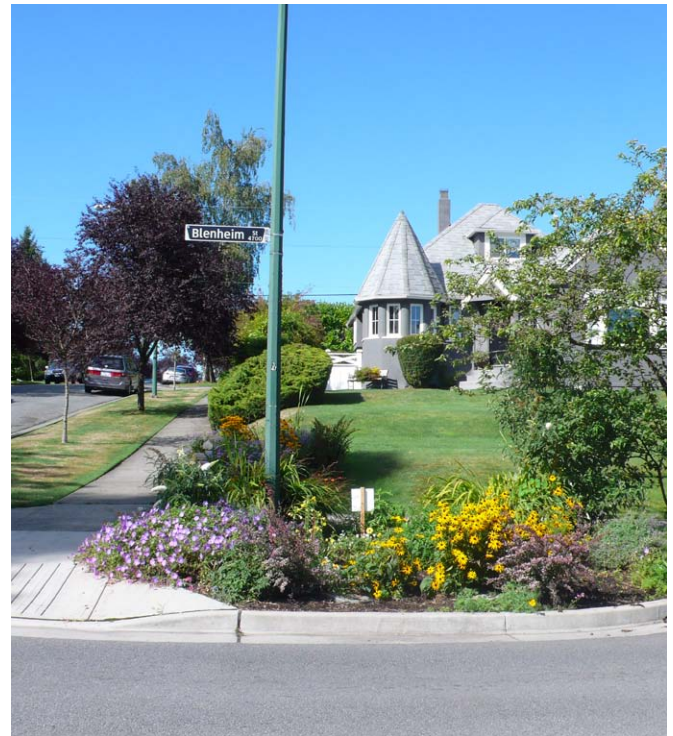
Green Streets gardeners can share plants at plant swaps. This spring, the swap included the BC Master Gardeners, another volunteer organization, which came to give garden advice¹.

The Green Streets website is full of suggestions and information including a list of plants recommended for water wise gardening. The municipality created the list of the plants that thrive in the harsh conditions of street gardening from its experiences working on gardens around the city.¹.

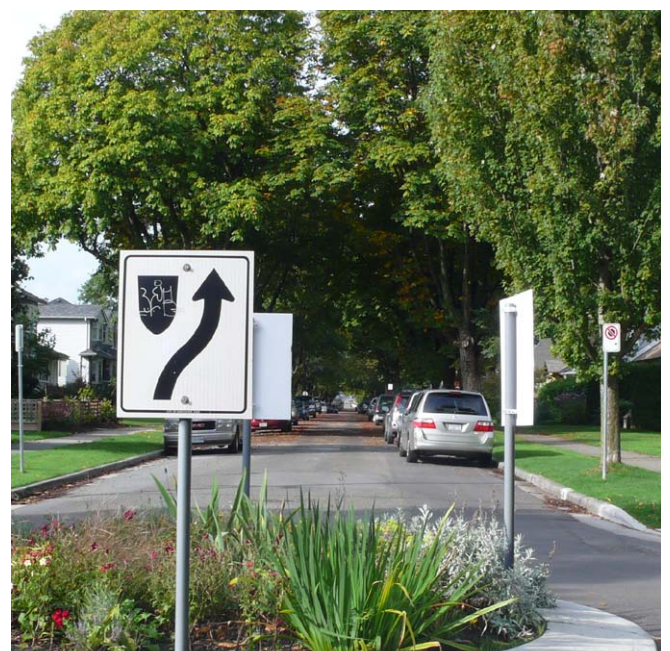
Presentation of the Study Site

The City of Vancouver, which runs the Green Streets Program, is a municipality consisting of the central western part of MetroVancouver. There are 2,1 million people living in the Metro Vancouver area, 578,000 of which live in the City of Vancouver (City of Vancouver 2010-10-10). Vancouver's population density is similar to the population density of Stockholm municipality (Statistiska centralbyrån 2011) and around twice as dense as that of the City of Los Angeles (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The Ville de Paris has four times as many people per area as Vancouver (INSEE 2007). The

inhabitants of Vancouver are multi-ethnic. The two largest ethnic groups in Greater Vancouver are comprised of people from the British Isles (54 %) and China (19 %). The British have



Picture 2. The study site, Vancouver. Vancouver consists mostly of low buildings. A strip of lawn between the sidewalk and road is standard on residential streets.



Picture 3. Trees grace a large number of the residential streets in the city.



Picture 4. The study site, Vancouver. View over downtown, a defined denser part of the city with mixed use apartments and businesses.

historically been in majority since the region's first non-aboriginal settlements in the mid-19th century. Most of the Chinese population came in a wave of immigration from Hong Kong in the 1980's, but there have been ethnically Chinese residents of Vancouver on a small scale since they helped to build the railway during the late-19th century (Government of Canada 2010-07-29).

Vancouver is situated on the south-west coast of Canada. The climate is oceanic with annual

average temperature similar to that of London. The winters are rainy and the summers are dry (Government of Canada 2010-09-28). The City of Vancouver is working toward several climate-change goals. They plan to be the greenest city in the world by the year 2020².

Vancouver is built with straight streets on a squared grid pattern and contains mostly low-rise buildings. There are few backyards and public open spaces other than the streets and large parks mostly situated along the shoreline.

Almost all of the streets have a strip of grass between the sidewalk and the road. Many of these strips are planted with trees of different ages and species. Downtown Vancouver is a small area of high-rise buildings with mixed commercial and residential use.

Thesis Statement

The aim in this study is to examine the motivation to volunteer in urban gardening programs. It is a case study of the Vancouver's Green Streets Program including an overview of motivation found among volunteers in similar settings. The thesis asks:

What are the motivations among the volunteers in the Vancouver's Green Streets Program to initially join and stay in the program?

The work is a Master's Thesis in Landscape Architecture from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. It is therefore observing a Canadian setting with a pair of Swedish eyes. There are urban gardening programs all over the world, but the literature used in this study is mostly European and North American. This can cause misinterpretation but also enables a discussion of the cultural differences experienced.

Urban Gardening

Urban gardening is a popular trend. In England 100.000 were waiting for a community garden in 2009 (Hope & Ellis 2009). Theories like CPULs, Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes, try to find solutions on how to incorporate gardening in cities and to reduce our carbon footprints not only through local

gardeners, but through professional farmers as well (Viljoen et. al. 2009). Grassroots movements like Guerrilla Gardening, a blog started in 2004, encourage people to break up the asphalt in cities over the world and plant for beautification and the political statement that public space belongs to the public (Guerrilla Gardening 2011).

The literature on the benefits of urban gardening is abundant and includes the perspectives of the world, the society and the individual. Urban agriculture is considered to be a way to save the environment. Gardens are a part of the green structure in cities that cleans the air, evens out the temperatures and infiltrates stormwater (Dwyer et. al. 1992).

There are several studies looking at the health benefits of gardening, both for the society in terms of lowered costs, and the individual, through improved mental and physical health. Gardening has been found to reduce the cortisol levels in the body. It has also been found to ease dementia and depression (Van den Berg 2011, Wakefield et. al. 2007). Just having one's own garden can enhance one's perceived health (Stigsdotter 2005).

Urban gardening programs are important as meeting places. They have been found to strengthen communities and leading to further neighbourhood organizations (Armstrong 2000). They are also important open spaces to have alongside traditional parks (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004).

While many studies prove the benefits of urban garden programs few studies examine why people become involved. The fact that many of the community gardens in North America are situated on vacant lots means that their existences are threatened. This is probably the

reason why much of the research is focused on an argument for their continued existence. This study aims to add to the literature on the motivation to understand the factors that are important when planning interactive places where people want to participate.

Historical Background

Urban gardening has a long history. Paul Castell writes in a retrospective on collective gardening that pre-industrialized cities contained vegetable gardens in home gardens and small gardens outside the city-wall. The gardens were places for producing food, but also places for social activities and children play (Castell 2010). Modern urban garden movements are often attributed to the industrial revolution. People were living in unhealthy conditions in confined quarters. The allotment movement started in Germany in the 18th century. People were offered land by the municipality as an opportunity to breathe fresh air and exercise while easing the food costs for poor families (Drost 1995). The American movement, started for similar reasons during the late 19th century, was also initiated by the authorities. The modern American community garden movement is often referred to as a new movement coming from grassroots initiatives. In the 1970's people, first in New York, began to plant on vacant lots as a reaction to rising food prices (Lawson 2005).

Urban gardening today is often referred to as a way to produce local food and lower the carbon foot print (Viljoen et. al. 2009), but some sources claim that the gardening movement in western countries primarily create places for recreation and socialization (Saldar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004).

Theoretical Background

Why do people garden in public? The literature review found no other study that solely focused on the motivation to volunteer in urban garden activities although there are studies that focus solely on volunteer motivation in general. This essay examines two different studies, one American and one Finnish that show similar results. They base their results on studies of volunteers from diverse positions such as janitors, social workers and evangelicals. The studies found that motivation for volunteering included external benefits such as the possibility of career advancement and personal rewards, such as the possibility to contribute to the community, feeling needed and feeling better about one's self. Following values like humanitarianism or religious beliefs is also an important reason for volunteerism. Some motivations were self-focused reasons, such as using skills that otherwise are unused and learning from hands-on experiences. A third motivation for volunteering is networking and socializing with others. Other motives include exploring one's strengths, changing one's life and enjoying the lack of structure and commitment in opposite to ordinary work (Clary & Snyder 1999, Yeung 2004). Generalized volunteer motivation seems to be similar in the United States and Finland. The studies do not give answers on the motivation to participate in garden programs in particular.

The literature search found several studies on urban garden programs that to a smaller or larger extent examine motivation among volunteers. All were case studies from either Sweden or North America. It is likely that the geographical narrowness of the literature is due to the fact that those are the places where this essay was researched. This review

includes two American, one Canadian and three Swedish studies. It is a combination of papers, dissertations and master's theses. The master's theses are not as thorough work as the papers and dissertations, but are added to give a wider picture of different volunteer settings. The case studies examine everything from one garden (Löow 2010) to 63 different gardens (Armstrong 2000). They deal with diverse kinds of garden programs like community gardens, tenant involvement in residential yards and participation in maintenance/management of parks. An introduction of the studies will give an overview of the difference in level of control, activities and where the gardens are situated followed by a description of the gardeners' motivations to participate.

Three papers on community gardens in Toronto and New York present a picture of the experience of coordinators and gardeners from 63 different gardens including gardens in both rural and urban settings. All the papers include the motivation to volunteer found through interviews with gardeners or coordinators. All focus on one or more aspects based on hypotheses from earlier literature including health (Wakefield et. al. 2007) health and community feeling (Armstrong 2000) civic agriculture, open space and community cohesion (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004). The papers show reasons to participate connected to those themes, but do not draw a complete picture of the motivation. Most of the gardens studied are situated in low-income areas. Two of the papers represent multi-ethnic gardeners, while one paper is on Latino community gardens in New York. Most gardens are situated on vacant lots. They can be anything from vast areas to small plots between a building and the sidewalk. They can consist of one collective lot or several individual lots taken care of by individuals or organizations like school groups

or churches. The gardens often have at least one paid staff member or a manager selected by volunteers. Municipalities and others groups support the gardens through land tenure. Most community garden groups fundraise and get support from governmental agencies and non-profit societies (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004, Wakefield et. al. 2007, Armstrong 2000).

The possibility to grow one's own food is expressed as a motivation by the community gardeners in all three studies. Other motives include lowering the cost of food, obtaining a better quality of food and getting culturally appropriate food. The Latino garden study included examples of people who come to the garden to hang out, read and study rather than to grow vegetables. Those gardens are used as a meeting place and as a place for parties and weddings. They even include small houses called casitas (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004). A second motivation expressed is the health benefits of physical activity and stress-release. The gardens are also found to be a place to enjoy nature. The health issue is not expressed to the same extent in the Latino gardens where the focus is less on the garden activity itself. All studies included the motivation to meet other people. Community gardens are described as places where friend-ships are born, social gathering places and places where one can meet people from different cultures over the discussion of vegetables (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004, Wakefield et. al. 2007, Armstrong 2000). The garden can also serve as a place to recreate the cultural heritage of an ethnic group. This is found to be appreciated by the Latino gardeners in New York (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004). A common reason to initially create a community garden is someone taking initiative in a vacant lot considered to be neglected (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004, Wakefield et. al. 2007, Armstrong 2000).

The most thorough examination on motivation for volunteering in park maintenance in the literature study is a dissertation on user-participation in Swedish parks (Delshammar 2005). It includes cases with initiatives taken by the participants. The case studies include different environments and activities. Some participants create their own gardens in a local park, some maintain larger parks by lawn mowing and weeding and some thin and prune in wooded parks. The people in this study include several stay-at-home parents and retired people. Most of them have a background in gardening or maintenance work (Delshammar 2005). The dissertation presents four different motives based on the findings in the case studies. They include *status/amenity*, *function/accessibility*, *creativity/self-enhancement* and *symbolic action*. The most common reason to initially start an urban garden project is that an area is found neglected. In all cases the participants chose areas that were either in close proximity to where they lived, or in one case, close to a man's allotment. The participants aimed to create a better play environment for their kids, to be able to garden or to keep an area in good shape. They explained that it was nice to get out of the house, relaxing to do the gardening work and beneficial to work together in cases where a group was responsible for an area (Delshammar 2005).

A third area that the studies include is the maintenance of residential yards. A Swedish master's thesis made a questionnaire for residents from three different yards in Malmö, southern Sweden. In some of the cases the people involved received a small monetary reward for their gardening efforts, but in other cases the initiative came solely from the gardener. Often only some of the people living in a residence choose to participate. The gardening tasks range from all kinds

of maintenance of hardscape environments to emptying trash-bins to weeding. The participants were a mix of beginner and more experienced gardeners. The study is based on a questionnaire which asked participants to select the one of the four choices that was most true. Limiting participants to one of four responses doesn't give a full picture of their motivations, but does show that some factors are more important than others. A monetary reward is a much less frequent reason to participate than beautifying the place where one lives or socializing with one's neighbours (Johansson 2010).

A second thesis examines a garden on a street in Malmö. The term community garden comes closest to describing the study site. It is run by an organization working to integrate people from different cultural backgrounds and different age groups. They have created a vegetable garden by the street out-side their building and another in the backyard. One paid staff member runs the garden. People in the neighbourhood are welcome to join the program and the garden, where they collectively sow, water, weed and harvest.

The thesis searches for the gardeners' experiences. The results include six themes that tell something about the gardeners' motivations. The first theme is learning. They appreciate how things grow and gardening skills. The second theme is memory. One of the gardeners, a man from Somalia says that he used to garden in his home country and describes that it's like returning to his background. The third theme is meeting. The garden is a place where passersby stop and talk and people tell stories about plants and share recipes from their home countries. The fourth theme is pride. People express that they are proud when they harvest from the garden

that they have been part of caring for. The fifth theme is beauty. The last theme is achieving the unlikely. The gardeners expected that their garden would be sabotaged and they are motivated by the fact that others respect their achievements (Löow 2010).

This study only found one questionnaire made in Seattle that studied the motivation to plant flower gardens in streets. That study found that the gardeners' motivations for planting street gardens included the enjoyment of others and lack of space in their own yards (Winterbottom 2000).

Summarizing the literature review shows that there are thorough studies on some motives, such as health and benefits from community gardening but there are no earlier studies that focus solely on the motivation.

Methods

Method Choice

Since there are no other studies that solely focus on the motivation for urban gardening and since there are few studies done on community gardening in streets, the main focus in this study has been to use a method open to any kind of answers. This was done by in-depth interviews using open-ended questions.

In addition to the interviews, the results were compared in a light version triangulation using literature from similar areas, the interviewer's own experiences, and the Green Street Coordinator's view of the gardeners' motivation. The aim of the literature comparison has been both to discuss the credibility of the results, if the findings are realistic to those who have the real experience and transferability, if the findings are possible to generalize.

For the interviews there were three, alternative, qualitative research methods examined in the search for a method open to a holistic view of the problem: two classical schools, Grounded Theory and Phenomenology (Jackson 2003), as well as a more modern method, the Weiss Method, that focused on the cooperation between the interviewer and the respondent (Weiss 1994). In the end the Weiss method was chosen as a main method supplemented with parts taken from Grounded Theory.

Weiss was chosen mainly because it allowed for answers to the research question that were specific to this particular case (Weiss 1994),

while the two other theories used coding that focused on generalization and building theories that are possible to use under several different circumstances (Jackson 2003). Grounded Theory strives to avoid descriptions in favour of conceptualization (Grounded Theory Institute 2009). The Phenomenological analysis strives to find the meaning of a lived experience (Jackson 2003) and transform everyday language into psychological language creating categorizations from the findings (Yeung 2004).

Weiss' book was helpful during the research process because it gave hands-on advice in the art of interviewing. The techniques from Weiss that were implemented involved thinking through what kind of information that was needed before the interview and asking follow up questions if the first answers didn't cover the research question. The guide was also useful for keeping the interviewees relaxed, cooperating and trustful. The questions were asked in different orders depending on how the interviews developed so as to not interrupt people's thoughts and stories. The Weiss Method was also used in the final coding. The method proposes searching for groups and concepts in the interviews while keeping the research question in mind (Weiss 1994).

Grounded Theory was used to make the research questions in the interview guide. The method strives to develop new theories by starting from the data and by asking very open questions rather than starting from a hypothesis based on earlier literature. The interview guide aimed to include open-ended questions as the theory describes. A first analysis was also made according to Grounded Theory which suggests developing the theory while the interviews are being held. Groups and theories were compiled little by little at the same time as new

interviews were being conducted, transcribed and analysed (Jackson 2003).

The aim in this study was to produce a thorough picture of the holistic experience and motivation for each volunteer. The sample was not large enough to cover all of the possible personalities and motivations. To have a statistically significant sample size a study would need 60 participants (Weiss 1994). This study has only 12 respondents.

Literature Search

The literature was found through the UBC (University of British Columbia) Library as well as online resources from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Therefore, the literatures that is referred to is mostly Swedish and North American. The search included books from the UBC library and research databases as well as dissertations, theses, and papers published at both the universities. The article search contained the words community garden, urban horticulture, urban flowerbed, community open space, user participation, volunteer, motivation, garden, guerrilla gardening and street art. The term street garden gave no results in the database searches. The search engines used were Agricola, CAB and Google Scholars. The search was used as an introduction to the subject and later led to new literature that were pertinent to the subject being investigated. The literature includes research from a wide spectrum of fields including psychology, sociology, landscape architecture, planning and recreation and leisure studies.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way. They included standardized questions in an interview guide coupled with open-ended and follow up questions based on the respondent's answers. For further description of the method, see *Learning From Strangers – the Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (Weiss 1994). The interview guide contained two parts. The first part asked for background info about each respondent, and the second part asked three open-ended questions about reasons for joining and motivation to stay within the program (see Table 1).

The interviews were held September 26 – October 11, 2010 in the volunteers' gardens, except for one interview which was held in the volunteer's home due to cold and misty weather. The information was gathered with a voice recorder and handwritten notes. The notes did not transcribe the interviews, due to the speed limitation of handwriting. The notes were used during the interviews to formulate follow-up questions, but not for further analysis.

Sample

How the Sample Was Chosen

The respondents were asked to participate in the study by an e-mail that was sent out to all of the street gardeners in the Green Streets Program. They were asked to participate in either a 30 minute interview or in a one and a half hour session including an interview and maintenance work in the garden. The fact

Interview Guide
<p><u>Research Question:</u></p> <p>Why are the volunteers in the Vancouver Green Streets program participating in maintaining areas along the streets of Vancouver? What are their motivations and rewards?</p> <p><u>Background Info</u></p> <p>Age</p> <p>Profession and/or personal interests</p> <p>Background in gardening?</p> <p>Do you have your own garden?</p> <p>How did you hear about the Green Streets Program?</p> <p><u>Motivation</u></p> <p>Why did you join?</p> <p>Has it been the way you expected it to be?</p> <p>Which are your main motivations to be in the program today?</p>

Table 1. Interview guide.

that the sample wasn't picked randomly must be taken into consideration when reading the results. The first twelve gardeners that responded were chosen for interviews. Out of the twelve interviewees, three gardeners responded that they would like to do both an interview and maintenance work.

Sex and Age

The respondents included nine women, one man and two hetero-sexual married couples. In both couples the wives were more involved in the garden than their husbands and it was mainly the women that were interviewed. One of the husbands said: "She's in charge; I'm the garden boy" and laughed. The gardeners were aged 29 - 78, with eight gardeners over the age of 50.

Garden Types and Number of Gardens

The gardens that the respondents were caring for were diverse. The sizes differed from approximately two to 40 square meters, with the smaller gardens being most common. Most of the gardens were situated on residential streets and a majority were corner bulges. Five of the respondents were taking care of bulges and three of them had more than one. Traffic circles were the second most common garden type among the respondents. One gardener had both a circle and a bulge. Another woman had several gardens along three sides of a schoolyard.

Some of the gardens were on more busy streets. One respondent was having a plot in the pavement outside her apartment entrance



5.



8.



6.



9.



7.

Picture 5-9. Garden types. The gardens the respondents cared for were a combination of corner bulges and traffic circles. Most of them were situated on calm neighbourhood streets, while some were close to heavily trafficked streets. The sizes differed from around two to 40 square meters.



close to a major intersection. She was not a part of the traffic calming devices and wasn't given any plant material because of that. Half of the gardens were traffic calming devices situated along the cities bike routes. All the gardens were situated on streets with sidewalks except for one gardener who had two huge gardens along a heavily trafficked arterial road. All the gardens were on roads with a speed limit between 30-50 km/h.

Years in the Program

Just over half of the respondents were doing their first or second year as a street gardener. Some of the gardeners had been involved already from the beginning of the program.

Background in Gardening

All the interviewed gardeners had earlier gardening experiences except for one who had started her very first garden that spring. Half of the gardeners described that they grew up gardening. Some grew up on a farm, some were gardening in their parent's garden, and others had an orchard in the family. Half of the interviewees had moved from houses with a garden to homes without a garden.



Picture 10-11. Garden types. Half of the gardens were traffic-calming devices along the cities bike routes.

Analysis, Results & Discussion

Analysis of the Interviews

The recorded interviews were transcribed in their full length, with exception for things that wasn't relevant to the report. Things left out were questions to me. It could also be small talk about the weather, the Wallander series or hockey, things many people associated with Sweden.

The analysis was a way to be able to overview the material. This means that the themes couldn't include all the information. The same interviews could have made several very different stories. The focus was the common motivations and not the individual stories. The work was done in the following two analyses.

Analysis 1.

Each interview was read through immediately after each transcription. Finding categories and concepts that occurred in the interviews made ground for a first coding. The coding was done inspired by Weiss 1994, having the research question in mind: What are the motivations to volunteer? Two examples from the coding are "*I can't stand it looking awful*", coded as enhancing the environment and "*Because I don't have my own garden*", coded as a need for a space to garden on and later garden interest.

The concepts that appeared in the interviews were used for follow-up questions as the interviews went on. The last steps in the first

analysis were to sum up and code groups that appeared among the concepts found in the interviews. This was an issue-focused analysis that didn't include how frequent or dominating the different groups were.

The first analysis made it clear that each respondent had several motivations and that it would be interesting to do an individual analysis. The analysis did also lack information on reasons to join and the reasons to stay in the program which led to a second analysis.

Analysis 2.

This analysis started by doing a summary on motivation for each respondent grouped after the answers to the main questions Which were your main reasons to join the program? Has it been the way you expected it to be? What are your main motivations to be in the program today? The summary was used to change some of the themes and to add new information on the frequency of different concepts.

Eight Reasons to Street Garden		
<i>Samples from Coding</i>	<i>Sub Categories</i>	<i>Reasons to Street Garden</i>
<i>"I just want to grow something somewhere."</i> <i>"It's a part of who I am."</i> <i>"I don't have a garden, not even a balcony and that's why this traffic circle is so important to me."</i> <i>"Once a gardener always a gardener."</i> <i>"We do not have as much of a weed problem or slugs down here as in the community garden."</i>	- Offering a flower garden plot - Habit - Self-image	Garden Interest
<i>"It's just you and the dirt and impulsively you feel good."</i> <i>"Gardens make life simple."</i> <i>"It's very therapeutic."</i> <i>"You feel great, you feel like you belong to a society when you go out and volunteer."</i>	- Mental health - Commune with nature	Well-Being
<i>"I'm growing as I'm learning and I don't think there is a continuum for that."</i> <i>"You always learn something new."</i> <i>"The planning faze, doing a research, learning about plants."</i>	- By hands on experience - By own research - From professionals working for the city	Learning
<i>"I have created it and put the plants I want in it and the colours I want in it. It is that sort of idea, that it is your creation."</i> <i>"The creative outlet, to have control over sort of a design."</i>	- Individual creation - Planning	Creating
<i>"To me that it's really important educational piece that kids have access to understanding how things grow."</i> <i>"I want my kids to learn about gardening."</i> <i>"Because of the losses of habitat and to provide enough pollen and nectar for the bees."</i>	- Environmental values - Humanitarian values	Values
<i>"I just can't stand it being ugly where I live."</i> <i>"I think this area really deserves better."</i> <i>"Look at the streets. They are just lovely... and I'm glad to be a part of making it nice."</i>	- Beautification - Safety	Enhancing the Environment
<i>"I've met so many of my neighbours from just seeing me out there working in the garden. And people always stops."</i> <i>"It's like having a poppy, everybody stops and talks to you."</i>	- With neighbours and strangers in the street - Other street gardeners	Encounters
<i>"If that little bit of green and flowers brightens their day that is kind of what makes it worthwhile."</i> <i>"To bring some beauty for everyone to enjoy."</i> <i>"Everybody loves flowers."</i> <i>"I have the time and knowledge to do this."</i> <i>"It has to be visually appealing from the sidewalk and the street, and people driving by or going by quickly."</i>	- Beauty - Knowledge - Time	Sharing

Table 2. Reasons to street garden and their assessments on the coded interviews.

Results: Eight Reasons to Street Garden & Literature Comparisons

The analysis of the interviews resulted in eight different reasons to street garden. They are presented here one by one, each of them followed by a discussion on similarities and differences to findings in other studies.

The results show that all of the gardeners have more than one of the following motivations for being in the Green Streets Program. To have several reasons to volunteer seems to be the case for most volunteers. The same result is found in several studies (Delshammar 2005, Yeung 2004 and Clary & Snyder 1999, Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004, Larsson 2009, Francis 1987).

The study is qualitative and doesn't give exact numbers on how frequent the different themes are among the volunteers, but does rather give comments on if the reasons are found among almost all the respondents or just a few.

Garden Interest

"We're from England you know, it's in our blood. It's just something English people do, they garden."

When a 78 and 79 year old couple by their traffic circle among high-rise buildings in downtown Vancouver were asked about their main motivations to be in the Green Streets Program, they looked as if they were asked something very strange and very obvious. The answer is quoted above.

The English couple share their motivation with almost all of the other gardeners. Summarizing the experiences from the interviews the most prevalent theme that occur is that the people in the program are people who love to garden.

They have a deep rooted garden interest that they want to live out and develop. An interest in gardening is one of the most mentioned reasons to both initially join the program as well as to continue to street gardening.

Most of the gardeners have long backgrounds in gardening that started during childhood or in previous experiences in private gardens. Several have moved from rural areas, from cottages with their own gardens to apartments in Vancouver. They have brought knowledge and a garden interest. Several of them express that their passion for gardening is a part of their self-image and who they are.

"I think once a gardener, always a gardener, I suppose. It is something that I want to maintain; through out my life in whatever way I could".

There are several examples from the interviews in which a gardener implies that gardening is almost a basic human instinct.

"I just feel this urge to do this" or "I see potential to grow things everywhere".

The habit itself is found to be important. One woman watered her gardens every evening together with her daughter during the dry summer months. She describes the moment of the sunset as a special time of the day. Another gardener tells that she often goes out for an hour when she comes home from work before she starts with chores like cooking dinner.

Space is a crucial thing for those who have their own garden as well as those who don't. Two out of four respondents who have a garden of their own say they joined because they ran out of space in their own yard. One woman with a garden explains:

”from a selfish point of view it was a way to get rid of plant material and not feel guilty”.

For the majority of the respondents their street gardens are their only opportunities to grow things.

“As I said, I don’t have my own garden, I don’t even have a balcony, that’s why my traffic circle is so important to me”.

Even those who have a balcony feel that they need a proper piece of land to grow things on. They express that they grew out of space on the balcony or say that their plants didn’t thrive in pots.

Discussion – Garden interest

It seems plausible that an interest in gardening is one of the most important reasons for gardeners to join the Green Streets Program. The program is directed towards people that enjoy gardening. The main focus and support of the program involve getting compost, plants and gardening advice. The program coordinator supports this view by expressing that the gardeners join because they enjoy gardening and because they want a place to do it¹.

Several of the earlier studies have found that the activity of gardening and the social aspects of gardening are main motivations for joining urban gardening programs (Armstrong 2000, Wakefield 2007). There are also studies that argue that the function of community gardens has shifted from providing a place to grow food to providing a place for social gathering and open space for relaxation and recreation (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004). This study shows that there are many people longing for a spot to garden on. It is the most common reason to initially start and it is a very important part

in why people continue to street garden. This is the case in other kinds of programs as well. In Stockholm, a man named Karl just moved to the city. He misses having a garden, like he had while growing up. He creates a garden in a nearby park (Delshammar 2005). In New York, community garden coordinators explain that it is common for people join when they move from a house with a garden to apartments without gardening possibilities (Armstrong 2000).

The study on the street gardeners also shows that there are people that prefer to have something other than a plot in a community garden or an allotment. Some of the gardeners express that they prefer their street gardens to other garden opportunities offered by the city (community garden plots) because people can see and enjoy their effort there. There are also fewer problems with weeds and slugs when gardening on an island in a hardscape environment.

This is not to say that it is everybody’s dream is to create a flower garden. A bike trips around Vancouver shows several street gardens that are more art pieces than gardens. Homemade sculptures are a quite a common part of the gardens. The literature review on motivation to garden in other garden programs includes people who have chosen to take care of a forest park by pruning and thinning, while others like to grow vegetables. There is a need for different kinds of opportunities.

None of the other studies talk about the frequency of the garden activity, simply that the habit of gardening is part of the motivation. The Green Streets gardeners express that gardening is a part of their everyday lives and something that they just do. That gardens need frequent care is important to consider when planning



Picture 12. A *garden interest* and the possibility to get a piece of land to grow things on is the respondents most common reason to initially join the Green Streets Program.

for garden opportunities. Gardens placed in the street provide opportunities close to where people live.

Well-Being

“It’s just you and the dirt and impulsively you feel good”.

The coding shows that well-being from the hands-on experience of gardening is a common reason that people street garden. Several gardeners expressed that they found gardening to be therapeutic. The garden can be a support in times of sorrow, an escape from a complex and stressful life and a way to commune with nature right in the middle of the city. One woman talked about how her garden gave comfort after the terror attack on World Trade Centre in 2001.

“When nine eleven happened, that terrible disaster in the United States, I stopped phoning my friends. Because we had been phoning each other and I said: - I’m going outside to garden. And you go outside and you pull weeds and you feel way better, way better...”

A working mother told that she enjoyed her garden because:

“it’s simple really, gardens make life simple”.

A street garden can provide a possibility to interact with nature right outside the door. One woman said that she doesn’t have to go to the mountains like other people on the weekends because she communes with nature right in her own garden. One of the beginner gardeners expressed that:

“it’s really beautiful to see what nature does.”



Picture 13. The motivations for street gardening include *well-being*. *Well-being* can be expressed as comfort in times of sadness, a retreat from a stressful everyday life or a possibility to commune with nature. The findings are in line with results from earlier studies on diverse garden settings.

Discussion – Well-Being

As mentioned in the introduction several earlier studies have found that gardening has positive effects on human health. One example found that allotment gardening lower the body’s cortisol levels better than reading a book after a stressful task (Van den Berg 2011). The reduced level of stress hormone in the body is argued to come from physical activity and daylight (Stigsdotter 2005).

In addition to knowing that our bodies relax while gardening there are studies that show that mental health benefit can motivate people to join urban gardening programs. That is in line with the Green Streets gardeners’ experiences. Two of the community garden studies examined in the theoretical background focused on community gardening and health. Both studies found that stress-reduction and commune with nature motivated the gardeners (Armstrong 2000, Wakefield et. al. 2007). The dissertation on voluntary Swedish park maintenance found that the participants found the work to be therapeutic and meditative (Delshammar 2005).

One of the studies on community gardens compares gardens in urban and rural settings. Both the stress-reduction and contact with nature are more frequent answers in urban settings (Armstrong 2000). This study is an additional proof that a garden can be an important retreat from stressful urban life. It is interesting to see that gardeners caring for a small plot (some of them no bigger than two square meters) situated in a street, still experience stress reduction and well-being.

Studies on healing gardens have shown that a garden suitable for people recovering from burn-out disease should be a secluded garden room (Grahn & Stigsdotter 2002). It might be that this isn't as important for stress reduction in those who are not ill.

This study does not provide answers on what part of the experience gives the relaxation. Earlier studies have shown that just being in nature enhances the perceived health. A Swedish dissertation shows the importance of having greenery close to the home. It increases both the number and the lengths of visits, as well as the perceived health of the resident (Stigsdotter 2005). Even if the street garden is small, it is probable that part of the well-being comes from just being out-doors and experiencing greenery in addition to the garden activity.

Part of the well-being can also come from volunteering and the positive feeling of contributing to society. The studies on motivations to volunteer in different settings cited in the literature review show that volunteering improves people's moods, makes them feel good about themselves, and helps them feel pride in contributing to the community (Clary & Snyder 1999, Yeung 2004). One of the Green Streets gardeners explained that he feels good when doing something for

the community. The most common kind of well-being in the coding is the one received from the activity of gardening.

Learning

"I'm growing as I'm learning and I don't think there is a continuum for that."

Wanting to learn new things was mentioned by almost all of the gardeners. Learning was not one of the main reasons given for joining the program, but it was a main motivation for people to remain in the it. The coding includes several different ways to develop knowledge and skill as a street gardener. The gardeners learn by trial and error, from other gardens, from professionals in the municipality, and gardening friends.

The possibility to learn from experimenting in the garden is the most appreciated learning experience. This is true both for the beginners and more experienced gardeners. The beginners appreciate starting to explore the secrets of gardening and enjoy "*seeing what nature does*". For the more experienced gardeners the street garden is a place to try new plants and new combinations. It gives a chance to investigate what works in the extreme conditions. Part of the fun is to searching for advice in books and garden catalogues during the planning phase.

The gardeners mentioned that they developed their skills by looking at others street gardens. Seeing other gardens gives inspiration and knowledge for their own garden work. Since all of the street gardens share similar growing conditions, they use other gardens both as good and bad examples.

The advice given by gardening professionals in the city is appreciated. The interviews included

several examples of people who mention the benefit of being able to contact the coordinator for garden related questions. Some of the other gardeners were happy to receive advice from gardening professionals that they met at plant sales.

Many of the gardeners have a network of other people interested in gardening around them. They learn from gardening friends, meet other street gardeners, or belong to other garden related volunteer organizations.

Discussion – Learning

There are few examples of learning as a motive for community garden in the other studies. The most common motive present in the other studies in terms of learning is the educational role of community gardening. One example is the master's thesis on a children's garden in a street in Malmö where the coordinators explain to the children how to sow a seed, water, wait, and harvest (Löow 2010).

This study shows that learning can be a self-focused motive. People enjoy being able to learn and feel that they grow while doing so. This is not just important for children or beginners, but for all ages and all levels of experience. The Green Streets Program shows that learning opportunities in gardening help compensate volunteers for their efforts. To share knowledge within communities is a way to enhance people's willingness to become engaged.

Gaining new knowledge is a driving force. A lack of knowledge can hinder people's participation. The Green Streets Program mostly attracts people who already know how to garden. Among the twelve street gardeners in

the study only one is a beginner. She is an artist and is probably more confident about putting her creations on display than someone who has never gardened nor produced art. Similarly, Delshammar's dissertation, on volunteers participating in park maintenance in Sweden, mostly includes people with earlier gardening experiences and knowledge (Delshammar 2005). Garden programs for kids are a way to give beginner gardeners garden skills. The literature review does not give a full picture of programs that attract adult beginners. This is a topic that could be further investigated.

It is important to consider that having a place to garden on is a prerequisite for acquiring hands on experience. The garden writer Penelope Hobhouse poetically describes that gardening is something you learn over time. In her book *Flower Gardens*, she writes that gardening is an art form that in contrast to many other art forms includes a time scale. Living in a garden and watch the performance of plants and flowers over a period of time gives an extra sense of what plants can achieve (Hobhouse 2002).

Create

Part of the enjoyment of gardening is the opportunity to be creative. Creating is often described in connection with planning and learning. People explain that they enjoy the planing process. They get to find out about new plants and to choose new colours and sizes. The gardens are ongoing projects and several have long-term plans for coming seasons and years. The garden is something that engages people even during the winter. One girl describes how she usually gets garden sick in January and starts sketching in her notebook for the season to come. The garden can be an opportunity to live out a creative need. One woman says that if



Picture 14. Green Streets traffic circle with a personal touch. The motives to create is connected with making one's own creation and take your own decisions. Several strive to make their gardens different from the other street gardens.

she wasn't gardening she would probably find some other creative outlet.

The creative part is mainly connected with a personal expression. Several gardeners design their gardens to be unique from the other street gardens by adding driftwood as a part of their style or choosing different colour schemes than the neighbouring street gardens. Several express that they are happy and surprised that the city gives them so few restrictions.

"I guess it's individualism, you know, everybody is different. So it's however you see that it should

be. Nobody tells you how it should be. And nobody says I have to have a tree. I said I want a tree."

It is common for people other than the gardeners to plant things in the street gardens. These rogue plantings are often in conflict with the gardener's wish to make their own creation. It's not their choice, not a part of their plan, or they don't know what it is or how to take care of it. Others agree that as long as it doesn't take over it is fine. They explain that they don't really see the garden as theirs exclusively. The gardens are created with an audience in mind

and it is appreciated that the public can see their creations.

Discussion – Creating

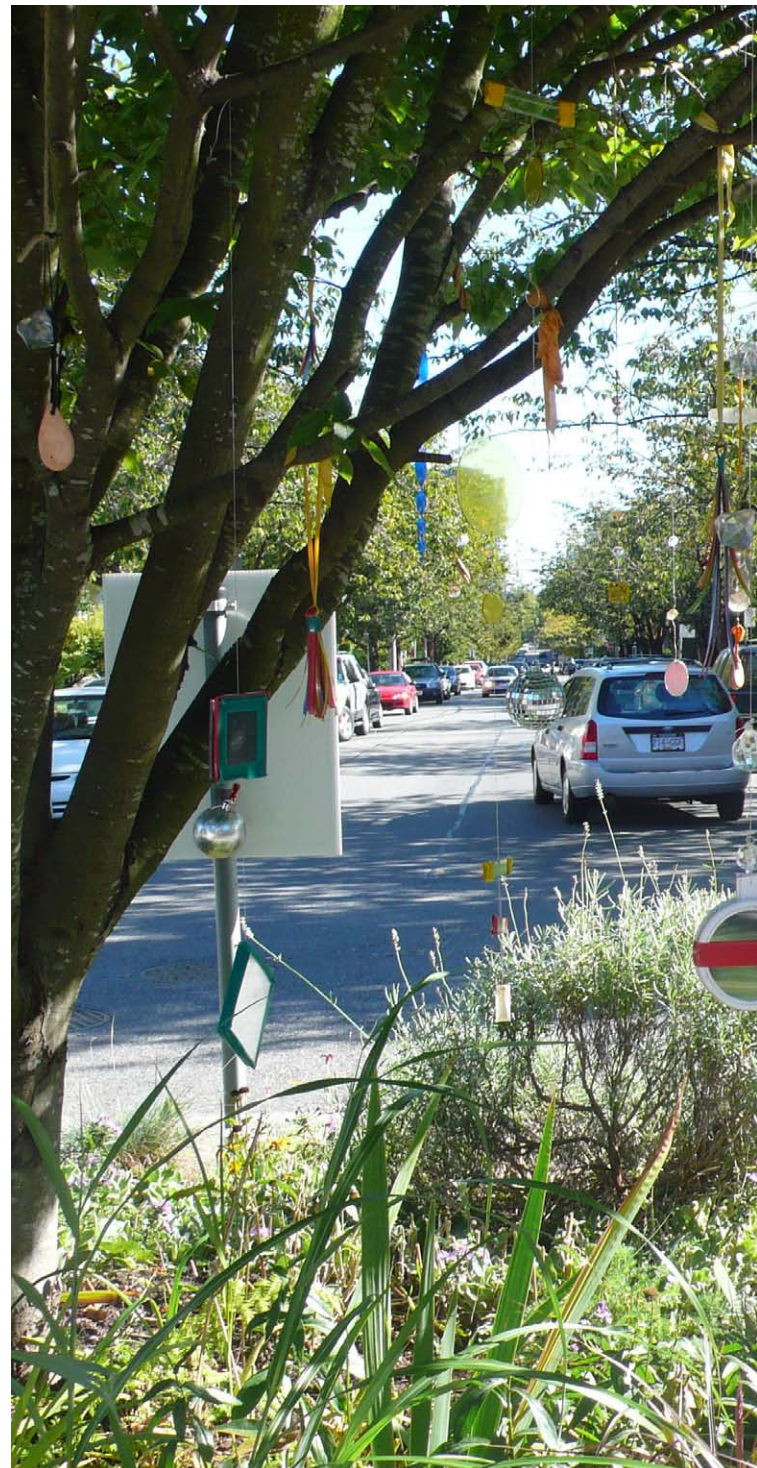
Among the studies in the literature review, there is mainly one other study that includes the creative motivation. *Creativity/self-enhancement* is one of the four motives discussed in the study on Swedish park maintenance. The issue is worth examining further. Delshammar uses references from a dissertation in 1982 by Lena Järlöv to strengthen his research results (Delshammar 2005).

One reason for the absence of the creativity motive in the other studies might be that the street garden offers more of a creative outlet than a traditional community garden. The possibility for individual creation on display is not as prevalent in other programs and is appreciated by the street gardeners.

The level of autonomy gardeners have over the gardens differ between the programs in the literature review. Greater control of a garden might be connected to the levels of creativity. One of the master's theses gives an example of a residential yard with tenant involvement where the tenants have designed and created the yard theme selves. They appreciated the creative



Picture 15. Interviewee with her sketchpad. The gardens are on-going projects. Most gardeners speak about their plans for seasons to come.



part of the work, a topic that isn't mentioned in yards where the involvement includes maintaining a ready-made design (Johansson 2010).

Not all street gardeners mention being creative as a motivation for street gardening. Some of the gardeners' main interest is growing

exotic and rare species. One of the gardeners confesses that she's a *plant nerd*.

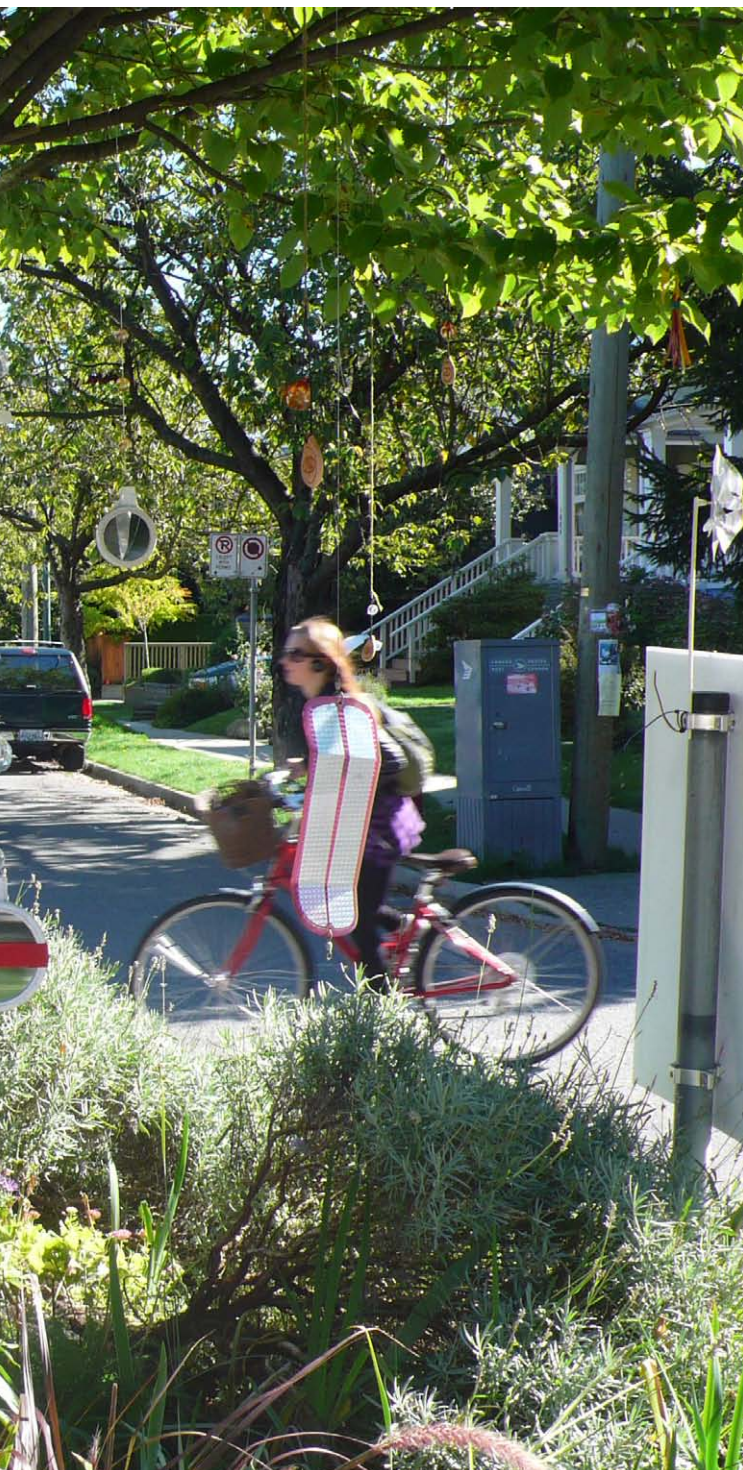
Values

Values are one of the less frequent reasons to be in the Green Streets Program but they are very important to a few of the gardeners. Two of the gardeners in the study didn't mention an interest in gardening as a reason to get involved but instead had strong values behind their initiative. One respondent says that it is not for her pleasure, but for educational and philosophical reasons that she street gardens. She wants kids to understand natural processes. The other respondent says he was raised to never sit and feel sorry for himself, but to go out and do something for others that are worse off than he is. He is not only responsible for maintaining street gardens but has also initiated a park created by local volunteers hoping to make a better community.

There are examples of values among the more garden oriented gardeners as well. Some respondents say that they either want to teach their own kids about gardening or hope that young people will walk by and be inspired to start gardening themselves. Several say that gardening is good for the environment.

Discussion – Values

None of the other studies on garden programs include values among the reasons to participate. Nor does the Green Streets program seem to particularly appeal to people motivated by their values. The two respondents who mentioned values in their interviews were both dissatisfied with the individual approach to the program and wished more people could help working



Picture 16. Creation on display. Few other studies on the motivation to community garden mention the motive to create. The Street Garden might be more attractive as a creative outlet than a traditional community garden since the work has an audience in the passers-by.

for a better environment or better community. Both would like the opportunity to expand their areas and do more.

There are other kinds of volunteer commitments where values are an important driving force. In environmental stewardship programs values are found to be the most important factor in volunteer involvement (Ryan et. al. 2001). Studies on volunteer motivation in general have found that the value to help others is an important factor (Clary & Snyder 1999, Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004).

According to the City of Vancouver's website, the Green Streets Program is part of an overall greening the streets program. The program aims to enhance the experience and convenience of biking and walking to reduce the impact of the cars (City of Vancouver 2010-10-10). The intention of the program, on a planning level, is environmental and a way to work towards reducing the carbon-footprint, but this is not the reason that the gardeners volunteer. Their reason to dig, weed, rent a car to pick up compost, water every day in the summer, move their vacation to the fall to take care of their garden during the drought period, use their time and money to buy new plants, and grow seedlings in apartment is not because they want to help the city enhance active transportation but because they love to garden and want to share with their community. The city understands this and the focus of the program is very on gardening.

Encounters

"If I am out working in the garden 90% will stop and talk to me."

The program is found to be a way to get to know your neighbours, talk to strangers, and

meet other gardeners. Two of the gardeners gave social encounters as a reason to join the program. Almost all of the gardeners gave social encounters as a reason to stay in the program. Almost everybody, even those who joined for the social aspects were surprised about the number of people who stop and talk to them. One woman told me that if she is just walking down her street no one stops or talks to her, but when she is working in the garden 90% stop to talk. Others say happily that there are times when almost no weeding gets done because everybody stops and talks to them. Several say that they would like to have a bench in their garden, so that people can sit down and chat with them while they are working. Some of the gardeners say that these meetings help them feel connected to their neighbourhood.

There are several examples of the different kinds of interaction experienced by the gardeners: some say that people know their name, others tell stories about how they have been asked to spray people with their hose during the summer and many are pleased and surprised by spontaneous help from people donating plants, assistance, or even money from people running businesses on the same street.

The gardeners express joy in being part of a community of gardeners as well. This appears less than the interaction in the streets in the coding. The following quote is coded as joy at being a part of the garden network.

"We get together and we refer to each other by where we are. We'll say oh you are on 2nd and Balsam (road crossing). We don't know our names, we just know where the gardens are."

Several of the gardeners are part of other volunteer organizations connected to gardening and they have friends there with

whom they share knowledge and plants. All of the gardens, except for one, are situated along roads with sidewalks. The other is situated along a busy car road. Even this gardener



Picture 17. *Encounters* are one of the motives to stay in the Green Streets Program. The gardeners didn't expect so many people would stop to talk to them.

mentions the social aspect, she doesn't get as many encounters as the other gardeners but says that people still sometimes park their cars to come up to talk with her.

Discussion – Encounters

The Green Streets coordinator confirms that social encounters are a key reason to street garden. She shares the notion that people are surprised about the amount of interaction they get from others with the findings in the interviews¹.

The time the interviewer spent in the gardens gave examples of several longer and shorter meetings with people passing by. Many people

just passed by and said “hi”, some made appreciative comments like “I love your garden” and others stopped for longer conversations about the garden. The conversations showed that people were following the gardens and usually knew about plans and things to come. During one of the interviews a neighbour, who was also a close friend to the gardener came out and stayed for the whole interview.

That people are attracted to opportunities to meet people is not surprising. Humans are considered social in nature (Glover et. al. 2005). Several studies have found socializing to be a key incentive to volunteer in diverse settings, including community gardens and user participation in public parks (Clary & Snyder 1999, Yeung 2004, Glover et. al. 2005, Delshammar 2005). The nature of the encounters differs with different settings. Most studies in the theoretical background discuss the interactions with other people involved in the same program. Among community gardeners, belonging to a group or making new friendships are common motives to volunteer (Mazzotta 2009, Glover et. al. 2005, Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004).

The interaction of street gardeners mostly include meetings with people passing by, strangers, and neighbours. The placement of the garden seems to be a key issue in the type of interaction that occurs. The study on a communal vegetable garden on a walkway in Malmö, Sweden found similar meetings in that street to the ones that Green Streets gardeners' experience (Lööv 2010). It is not only the placement in the street that is important for the meetings, but also the garden and the activity. The gardens seem to be something that breaks the ice. One of the Vancouver street gardeners made a parallel to having a puppy, everybody stops and talks to you.

The importance of meeting strangers in the street has been discussed by earlier studies. Just seeing other people in the street is said by Gehl to be a part of making attractive public spaces (Gehl 1987). A literature review of meetings in cities do on the other hand concluded that just seeing others in the street doesn't automatically lead to meetings. Working towards a common goal is something that makes different groups interact (Sjöberg 2010). The Green Streets Program shows that also shorter encounters and easy interaction with neighbours and strangers are important to people. Even if the type of interaction differs between community gardens and the street gardens, both community gardeners as well as the green streets gardeners say that they feel more connected to their community (Larsson 2009, Krasny & Saldivar-Tanaka 2004).

Sharing

"People will come and talk to me and they say, oh I really like those flowers. And I say they are called Cosmos, and you can tell they are not interested at all in what they are, what kind of plant they are, if they are an annual, they don't care. But they just know that seeing them makes them happy."

The quote above shows an example of a relationship between the gardeners and the people passing by who don't share their interest in gardening but definitely do enjoy their achievements. The opportunity to share or simply please others is a common motivation in the study. The coding includes sentences like make something for others to enjoy, make the world a bit more beautiful or brighten people's day. What the respondents say they share is mainly their time and garden knowledge. Sharing isn't mentioned as a reason to join. It appears among the reasons to continue street

gardening and it is one of the things people say that they didn't expect when they first started.

The gardeners can't pinpoint what people like about the gardens. More than one gardener says that gardens are intangible. They just know that people instinctively do like them. There is a common understanding that *"everybody loves flowers"*.

The appreciation of passers-by seems to be an important part of the joy in sharing with others. Almost all of the gardeners give examples of people passing by stopping, or people in cars rolling down their windows to say, "thank you", "thanks for doing this", or "it looks beautiful". Proud gardeners remember compliments given from others.

"One of my neighbours said – You know I haven't smiled when I left my apartment in a long time and the day that I turned the corner and I saw what you did, I smiled. I think that is really the big reward."

or

"we had a 92 year old lady who came by regularly, she said - this is the best thing that has ever happened in Point Grey - and she'd lived here all her life..."

Just watching others experiencing the garden is also a big reward. One woman says she enjoys sitting on her balcony watching old ladies stopping by her garden and pointing at different flowers, discussing what they are. Others express a joy in watching children stop to examine the garden.

The interviews give examples of how the gardeners plan their gardens with the audience in mind. One woman told me that it is a

challenge to make something that is enjoyable for pedestrians, bikers, and cars at the same time. Another garden includes stepping-stones for children's play.

The gardeners also express that they appreciate when people tell them that they plan their route choices to pass by their garden. One exception is a gardener who gets disappointed when people park their cars to tell her that they choose her street because of her garden. Her reason to street garden is to slow down the traffic, not to add more traffic she laughs.

Discussion – Sharing

The nature of human helping behaviour is sometimes debated to either be altruistic, to do thing for others without any personal gain, or egoistic, to always act to benefit oneself (Persson 2011). No matter the reason for the helping behaviour it is found to be a motivation to volunteer in general. Studies referred to in the introduction show that people volunteer because it feels meaningful to be able to reach out to people in need (Yeung 2004) and they feel good about themselves for doing something for others (Clary & Snyder 1999).

Sharing is rarely found among the motives to volunteer in gardening programs in the studies in the literature. The study on Latino community gardens in New York mentions that the gardeners appreciate giving to the next generation through teaching children about gardening and about their own culture (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004).

The fact that the street garden is situated in the street and that the gardeners create something beautiful that benefits all is likely a reason that sharing is more present in this study than any of the other studies on gardening programs.

Creating a vivid and colourful street garden in a grey environment makes a big difference. It is something that people acknowledge and appreciate. The street gardens seem to inspire other people to give. It is common for people on the same street to donate money and plants for the garden. The human sharing behaviour is definitely something that is worth considering in planning.

Enhancing the Environment

The last motive in this presentation on the summarized interviews is the willingness to enhance one's own street. The interviews give examples both of gardeners who started gardening because the existing environment was in bad shape and others who express that they enjoy taking part in maintaining their street, which they already consider well-managed. One example woman lives in an area that she says has a history of drug dealing and prostitution. She says that nobody cared about their street and she thought it deserved better. Another woman loves her street with its big trees and cherry blossom in the spring. She enjoys being a part of maintaining the beautiful environment.

People enjoy improving their local street. The gardeners think of the garden as a part of where they live. One woman gives "*I want my street to look good*" as a main motivation to be in the program. Seeing the garden from the balcony or passing the garden on the way to and from their home is appreciated by the gardeners.

The street garden can also function as a place to add things that are considered missing in the street environment. Some gardeners say that they make their plant choices to supply insects with nectar over the season. Others think that streets are grey and boring and can do with some more colours.

One gardener says that she started because she wanted to make her neighbourhood safer. She thinks that people throw less garbage in the street as a result of the street garden.

Discussion – Enhancing the Environment

The motivation to make it nice “where I live” is found in other volunteer settings as well. It has been found both among tenants caring for their yards and people maintaining a nearby park in Sweden (Johansson 2010, Delshammar 2005). Some examples show that the garden doesn’t have to be in connection to the own home. In Delshammar, there is a case where a man cares for a forest in connection to his allotment (Delshammar 2005). The children in a gardening program in Malmö are proud of harvesting and making something beautiful in their area. They consider the garden outside their activity house to be a part of their neighbourhood (Löw 2010).

Other studies have also shown that accessibility to the garden affects the time spent in the garden. A study on community gardens shows that gardeners whose lots are close to home visit them more frequently than those who live far away (Armstrong 2000).

The studies in the literature review found that perceiving an area as neglected is a common reason to initially start gardening. Community gardens in New York were started on vacant lots that were considered badly managed (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004) and several Swedes taking care of nearby parks started because their local park appeared neglected (Delshammar 2005). Gardeners who joined to care for an area already considered beautiful and well managed were only present in this study. One probable reason for the difference is that the other studies started as grass-

roots initiatives. It might be that people don’t take initiative in an area that they consider sufficiently maintained. However, when an opportunity like a street garden is offered, it is appreciated.



Picture 18-19. Nectar to the bees. The coded theme *enhancing the environment* includes the possibility to add things considered missing in the street environment as supply the insect population with nectar.

Conclusions

From Self-Focused to Altruistic Motives

The motivations for street gardening can be summarized as a combination of self-focused and altruistic motives. The self-focused motives include self-enhancement through gardening, learning, experience well-being, and creativity. The altruistic motives include sharing beauty and knowledge and acting through values to teach children about natural systems. Encountering others is a third motive that doesn't fit nicely on a scale from self-focused to altruistic. The altruistic part can be connected to the fact that people are gardening in public space. Sharing the beauty of the flowers with the general public cannot be done to the same extent in the private garden.

Similar to my findings do earlier studies on volunteer motivation in general show that volunteer motivation can be a combination of self-focused and altruistic motives. There are no discussion on the combination of the two in earlier studies on motivation for community gardening.

Reasons to Join and Continue

The most common reason to initially join the program is the self-focused motive of having a plot to garden on. Three of the gardeners mentioned other reasons to join either related to social bonding and a willingness to get to know their neighbours or related to values like teaching kids about natural processes or making a better community.

In addition to the opportunity of having a plot to garden on, the gardeners later

experience motives to stay in the program that included sharing beauty with the community, encountering strangers, and being a part of a network of gardeners. The gardeners expressed that they didn't expect so many people to stop and talk to them and they didn't expected so much appreciation from passers-by. They also didn't expect as much support from the city.

Implementation

The focus on motivation in this study aims to understand factors important to consider when planning for places where people can and want to participate. The following conclusions are drawn from the interviews and the literature review.

Taking Action

The study indicates that it is important to offer opportunities and not wait for people to take action. Even if the initiative needs to come from the individual it is important that people are aware of opportunities. Most of the gardeners joined after seeing a sign in a garden saying that it was available for volunteer gardening. Only a very few respondents took the initiative without knowing about the Green Streets Program in advance. The case studies show similar results. They all include a majority of cases where people knew that there was an organized way to participate including management contracts for parks, community garden plots or tenant involvement programs.

Try Participation in New Areas

The overall results give examples on a wide variety of skills and volunteer assignments. People have different abilities and interests such as making drift wood art, pruning forest parks, or watering newly planted street trees.

This shows that we should think of participation in new areas. What kind of activities or engagement could take place? Who would be interested in joining and what would they gain from getting involved? The last question is an important aspect to consider. One of the street gardeners captures this important motivation. *"It's never a shore, it's for your own pleasure"*.

The role of a community garden differs widely. The study shows that different gardens provide different functions such as providing a place to recreate cultural heritage for an ethnic minority or a place for an individual to develop his or her interest for rare plant species. The benefit of having different kinds of programs and engagements is obvious.

Dare to Think Individually

Some of the community garden literature emphasizes the importance of community gardens as places for social bonding and cohesion (Armstrong 2000, Wakefield et. al. 2007, Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004). The Green Streets Program shows that the individual garden plot has certain benefits that communal gardens don't hold. The freedom to be able to decide and make one's own individual creation is highly appreciated. Dare to consider individual garden programs in addition to the communal ones.

Accessibility is Important

A last prominent issue concluded from the interviews and the literature was making garden activities accessible and close to people's homes. Gardens close to home are appreciated, considered to be part of one's neighbourhood, and are visited more frequently. The street is one place where it is possible to have a garden in close proximity to where people live.

Method Discussion & Further Research

The aim of the method choice was to be open to any kind of answers. The results include some aspects that weren't found in earlier studies. In this sense, the method has been fruitful. Starting with a hypothesis would probably have given less correct results. There are still some aspects that have to be considered when reading the results.

The respondents chose themselves to participate (out of 350 gardeners asked to be interviewed twelve agreed). It is possible that people who enjoy showing their garden to strangers and enjoy talking to strangers are overrepresented. A possible consequence is that the social encounters and sharing motives are exaggerated.

The study did aim to give a holistic view of the experience, not among all gardeners, but among the group that were interviewed. The method used implies some possible sources of errors. Weiss highlights the difficulties with being an unbiased interviewer in *Learning From Strangers - the Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. He claims that there is no such thing as an unbiased interview. The results are born through a relationship between the interviewer and the respondent (Weiss 1994). The intention of this essay is to highlight the users' perspectives. The fact that the author is a student in landscape architecture and partly holds the experts point of view has to be taken into consideration.

The time of year is a second factor that might affect the results. The interviews were held in September and October at the end of the season. A study conducted in spring would

probably include more answers about plans for the season to come and it's likely that interviews conducted during the drought period would have given less optimistic answers since watering gardens in July is understood to be the most demanding part of being a street gardener in Vancouver.

Can the results be generalized to other cities in Canada or other countries? One possible answer is that the motivation might be similar once a program has occurred. The literature review point toward similar programs in similar settings holding similar motivations in different Western countries. A trickier question is whether the willingness to participate would be the same on other places. Differences in planning, climate, and culture can be factors that play a role in whether a street garden program is attractive or not. When is the traffic too loud, the passers-by too few, or the street so unpleasant or anonymous that people don't want to spend their time there gardening?

Appleyard writes in his famous book *Liveable Streets* that the street is both a place where we grow up and learn about the world and a network of transportation (Appleyard 1981). He discusses the conflict between the car and those who want to use the street as their outdoor living room. The street garden shows that the meeting between those travelling through and those living in an neighbourhood can be beneficial for both. The street is often considered to be mostly a network of transportation. It is worth thinking of the other functions of streets. Street gardening is one alternative activity that can happen in a street. What other functions could a street hold?

The study shows that the motivations for volunteering in garden programs are complex and varied. It's an area that needs be studied

from different points of views to get a thorough picture. This study highlights the special function of volunteers working with flower gardens and volunteers working in streets, two factors that are sparsely examined and deserve to be examined further. Since those programs seem to be uncommon it would also be beneficial to investigate how the program and the result from the study could be transformed and used in other cities. The Green Streets Program is an example of a beneficial relationship between the user and city management that could be used for further planning.

Endnotes

1. Erin MacDonald, Green Streets Coordinator, City of Vancouver, Interview 2010-10-08

2. Gregor Robertson, Mayor of Vancouver, Gaining ground summit, October 4, 2010. http://www.gaininggroundsummit.com/day1_Robertson.html

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Abstract: Volunteers create and maintain over 350 flower gardens in traffic circles and corner bulges in the streets of Vancouver. Vancouver's Green Streets Program is run by the City of Vancouver and started initially because citizens were asking for it.

In-depth interviews were conducted with twelve gardeners in their gardens. They were asked about their motivations for initially joining and staying with the program. The research on the benefits of community gardening is extensive and shows proof of improved mental health and social bonding. Motivation is more sparsely examined. No earlier studies have focused solely on motivation.

The reasons that the gardeners gave for maintaining their street garden were arranged into eight categories: *garden interest, well-being, learning, creating, values, improving environment, encounters* and *sharing*. The most common motivation for joining the Green Streets Program was an inwardly-focussed, personal joy of gardening. The motivations for remaining in the program tended to be the more externally-focussed desire to share their gardens with others and people passing by.

A final part includes implementations based on the interviews and earlier literature. Urban gardening programs are often referred to be a way to cope with climate change. Even if that might be an outcome is that not a main reason for people to participate in this case. Among other things is the accessibility to home and to offer an opportunity to participate factors to consider in planning.