



Linderud neighbourhood and community garden in Oslo has been cultivated by local residents and small-scale entrepreneurs for three years. Photo: W. Fjellstad / NIBIO.

Monitoring Motivations for Urban Gardening

Over three years, motivations of participants in a neighbourhood garden seemed to reflect the development of the garden from the start-up phase, through consolidation, until a state where further existence requires transitions in responsibility and funding.

Linderud neighbourhood and community garden in Oslo was established in 2020, as part of the project Edible Cities Network (EdiCitNet). In 2020 and 2021, master's students from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) conducted surveys among users of the garden. These projects explored motivations for urban gardening and future wishes for the garden. To uncover possible changes in motivations and future wishes, we conducted a similar survey in 2022. In addition, we interviewed international visitors from the EdiCitNet project to find out about their motivations for working with urban gardening.

THE SPLOT METHOD

Our method was developed by anthropologist Aina Landsverk Hagen. Splot stands for Space, Person, Learning, Observation and Tracks. It is an arts-based method that engages participants to use writing and drawing to express their thoughts and feelings. We used the Splot-method to investigate motivational factors and future wishes among users of the neighbourhood and community garden. The "tracks" module of the Splot-method involves walking with the participants and interviewing them along the way. We used the tracks module to gain deeper insight into motivational factors among local users



Recruiting interviewees at the Linderud fair. Photo: E.O. Peersen.

of the garden and to examine what motivates international participants in EdiCitNet in their work. We collected our data on two occasions. Splot and track interviews with the local users were conducted in connection with a fair held at Linderud farm in early September 2022. A total of 21 Splots were collected, from sixteen adults, three adolescents and two children. Five local users participated in track interviews. Nine track interviews with international guests from EdiCitNet were carried out at the event Oslo City Exchange in mid-September.

MOTIVATIONS

The written answers from the Splots were grouped into six categories, equivalent to those developed in 2020: gardening, social aspects, activities, feelings, neighbourhood, and aesthetics. The number of answers in each category were counted. Answers related to gardening and social aspects were mentioned most frequently, followed by activities and feelings. The distribution of the categories is shown in Figure 1.

“Gardening” was an important aspect for most of the users. Many of the participants mentioned that the garden gave them access to organic and healthy foods that were free from pesticides. In addition, they were motivated by the opportunity to contribute to a better world through sustainable, local food production.

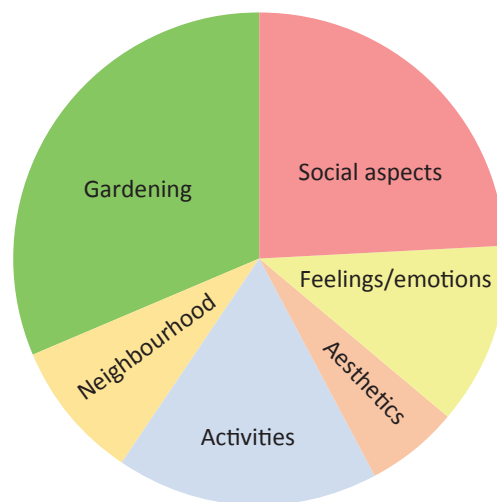


Figure 1: Main categories of motivations for participating in the neighbourhood and community garden mentioned in 2022.

“Social aspects” was mentioned frequently as well. The participants described the garden as an arena to meet and get to know people. This category also includes statements about cooperation, sense of community and social inclusiveness.

FUTURE WISHES

Many of the users wished for an indoor space for social activities, and a café or shop with produce from the garden. Some users wanted more people to participate and called for more promotion of what the garden has to offer. The most frequently mentioned wish was for Linderud neighbourhood and community garden to persist.

RESULTS FROM TRACK INTERVIEWS

During the track interviews, both local users and international guests from EdiCitNet were asked about their motivations for participating in urban gardening. The international guests were also asked about what motivates them to take part in the EdiCitNet project. We analysed the data using collective qualitative analysis and identified a few main themes of motivational factors for both groups.

Both local users and international actors from EdiCitNet were motivated by gardening/cultivating, by social aspects and by acquiring knowledge. However, there were a few differences between the groups as well: The international visitors had a more global perspective and were motivated by contributing to sustainable development at a societal level. They also emphasized the potential benefits for the environment, in relation to the climate crisis. Local users were mostly concerned with strengthening local

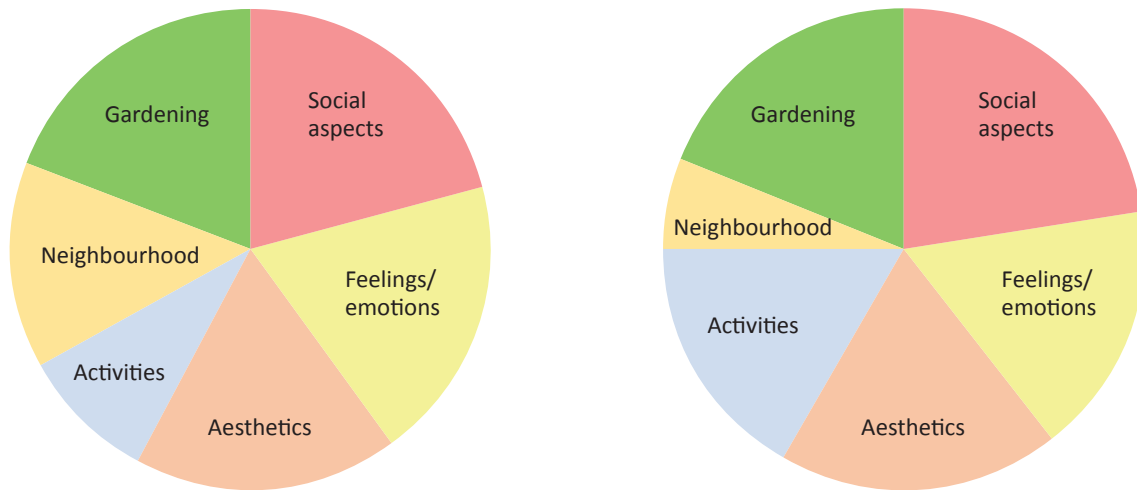


Figure 2: Main categories of motivations for participating in the garden mentioned in 2020 (left) and 2021 (right).



Figure 3: Collective Splot of future wishes for the neighbourhood garden by local participants.

resources and connections, and thereby promoting sustainable development at a local level.

MEMBERS CHECK

During an end-of-season meeting for garden members, we conducted a survey to check whether the participants agreed with our findings. We presented our preliminary results, then the participants answered a questionnaire using a paper form. We collected 22 responses in total. Only a few of the respondents had participated in the Splot-interviews.

The first question was “To what extent do the motivational factors presented correspond with your own motivations for using Linderud neighbourhood and

community garden?”. Fifteen participants responded ‘to a large degree’ and five ‘to some degree’. No one answered ‘to a small degree’ or ‘not at all’. Two participants left this question unanswered.

Regarding future wishes, we asked the participants: “To what extent do the future wishes presented correspond with your own future wishes for Linderud neighbourhood and community garden?”. Twelve participants responded ‘to a large degree’ and eight ‘to some degree’. No one answered ‘to a small degree’ or ‘not at all’. Two participants left this question unanswered.

Moreover, we asked the participants to rate to what extent they agreed with a set of statements about different motivational factors and future wishes. ‘Access to climate-friendly food’ was the statement that most people agreed with regarding motivational factors, while ‘work/financial gain’ was the statement that fewest people agreed with. Regarding future wishes ‘ensuring biodiversity’ was the statement that most people agreed with whereas ‘more places to meet’ was the statement that fewest people agreed with.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 2020, 2021 AND 2022

First, it should be noted that different people participated in the Splots over the years, so the results do not represent changes in the motivations of particular individuals. However, recruitment of local participants was conducted very similarly in all three years, with the aim to be as representative as possible. Therefore the results should be interpreted as reflecting the motivations applicable in each year, but we cannot say whether any changes were due to changes in personal motivations or changes in group membership.

We have uncovered some minor differences in motivational factors compared to the previous surveys. Gardening and social aspects have been mentioned frequently in all three surveys and seem to be the most important motivations over time. However, there has been an increase in the number of answers related to gardening, as they make up 31 % of the answers in 2022, compared to 19 % in both 2020 and 2021. There were fewer answers related to feelings and aesthetics in the 2022 survey compared to the previous two. This may reflect the transition from a hopeful vision of what the garden might become when it started in 2020, to a situation of well-established gardening routines and production. It would be interesting to follow up whether these differences can be explained by group membership. Have the visionary dreamers been replaced by more practical gardeners, or are they still working in the garden, putting their dreams into practice? This could be an interesting question for a future survey, and might also provide information that can be of use in recruiting new participants to the garden.

Regarding future wishes, past surveys found that many of the users wished for an indoor area and a proper toilet. An indoor area still seems to be a prominent wish whereas no one mentioned toilets in the 2022 survey, since a toilet is now available at the garden. The most frequent wish in the latest survey was for Linderud neighbourhood and community garden to persist. This was not found in any of the previous surveys. A probable explanation for this may be that the financing from EdiCitNet is coming to an end. This meant that the future for the garden was still uncertain at the time the survey was conducted, which the users were aware of.



Gardening and social aspects have been the most frequently mentioned motivations for participating in the neighbourhood garden by local participants. Photo: E.O. Peersen.

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