Community Garden as a Third Place that Facilitates Social Cohesion in Neighborhood Scale Dynamics

Sahar Alinezhad, Silvano De La Llata, Pierre Gauthier

Urban setting is considered as an integrated socio-spatial system; thus, the urban built environment imposes inevitable effects on citizens. Oldenburg’s (1982) concern about disappearing places for casual social interaction in American societies shed light on the importance of informal public life for social structures of communities. According to him, third places facilitate public life. Jeffres et al. (2009) argued that the main competition among the authorities of cities is about paying attention to the resident’s quality of life by creating inviting environments as third places in order to foster community. They approved a hypothesized relationship between the presence of third places and perceptions of the quality of life. Furthermore, feeling to have access to a third place would enhance people’s quality of life in their community. According to Hooper (2015), neighborhood social environment affects the resident’s social well-being. They illustrated different modes of neighborly engagement is an effective way of capitalising local health-enhancing social opportunities, influencing well-being. Their research demonstrated that creating third places from everyday environments, such as community gardens, potentially results in success in people’s public and social life. Marshal et al. (2017) illustrated how gardens and other forms of a third place might contribute to developing a compassionate community. Regarding Thompson et al. (2018), people can socialize and develop weak ties in a third place. They defined a third place as “sociable spaces where users can relax and rejuvenate on neutral ground, where people from diverse groups can interact on equal terms and feel a sense of belonging” (p. 12). Community gardens can improve the neighborhood-level dynamics and act as an informal setting to pave the way for social interactions and neighborhood meeting occurrences, leading to social cohesion, as well as public and social life improvement. Therefore, having community gardens in the neighborhood scale provides the opportunity for residents to relief and respite urban life stressors. This helps residents restore from the daily routines of urban life so as to create a more vibrant neighborhood atmosphere. This research explores to what extent the physical/spatial layout of the community garden favors its socializing characteristics. Furthermore, it seeks for those physical/spatial conditions of the community garden layout and position that facilitate its function as a third place and also it takes into account how the community garden layout and position support social interactions, activities, and dynamics of everyday life in the neighborhood scale. Community garden as a green space in the heart of the neighborhood provides the platform for informal gathering. Our work seeks to investigate the social aspects of sustainable development of the community gardens in cities as a crucial factor towards neighborhood life success which improves people’s quality of life and well-being. This research clarifies the physical layout components of the community garden that contribute to the richness of the neighborhood in terms of everyday social life. This is to be done by producing knowledge based on the literature and providing guidelines that lead to a better future in the realm of sustainable placemaking.