

**Regeneration of City by Community Action of Creating Agricultural Spaces
- City Farms and Community Gardens in U.K. -**

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ABSTRACT

We must think how to reconstruct the exiting city into more ecological and sustainable city. The city need to have the edible landscape. The city people have to be touch the nature, fresh air, fresh water and fresh foods.

This paper create It is important to create agricultural environments or spaces with local people in cities to change exiting cities into more sustainable and more ecological cities. This paper describes the recent movements of agricultural actions, City Farms, Community Gardens and Community Composts by local communities after researching in U.K. in 1999.

The results are as follows; (1) In U.K. the local people started some city farms to create educational, recreational and farming spaces for children in the first of the 1970's. The city farms has been managed by the local charity group. (2) The city farm groups and the community garden groups joined to make the foundation which has promoted the agricultural and environmental community activities in the city. (3) Recently we can see alternative and ecological community activities in the city called the community composting. The community composting means that a local community group makes composts for their gardening and producing vegetables from organic waste which are corrected in their community by themselves. Some city farms and some allotments have plots for making composts. (4) These community spaces are valuable in the city as the field of environmental education for children. We can learn that it is important to create these spaces through local community activities which are managed by the non-profit-organizations. In Japan we must develop the social system and city planning system which support these ecological and cooperative community farming, gardening and composting.

KEY WORDS: Urban Ecology, Permaculture, City Farm, Community Garden,
Community Actions, Community Compost, Regeneration of City

1. Introduction

On the basis of global understanding that we need to change the wasteful modern life style that has given a critical damage on our environment for our future generations, we need to develop an alternative concept of the city planning and a new vision of city life style. How to reconstruct the alternative and sustainable habitation is now the question critical in the city planning. To answer this question, I would like to begin by clarifying the meaning of a rather fuzzy word "ecology," as although when we talk about the sustainability, we tend to use this word, we usually do not share its exact meaning. According to Felix Guattari, the word "ecology" has three senses. They are "natural ecology", "social ecology" and "spiritual ecology". In other words, ecology means the infinitely complex relationship existing among living and non-living things

and spirituality. In the 19th century the word was coined to explain the sustainable and integrated natural system. As the expected alternative human habitation system in the urban areas should be alike to the natural ecosystem, it will be better to use this word in these meanings. We need to think three senses of the ecology to develop the ecological habitation in the city.

As the people living in urban areas have an increasing demand for the better environment that can provide them with more opportunities of touching nature, breathing fresh air, drinking unpoisoned water and eating healthy foods, the city planning should be made so that more natural space and agricultural spaces are allocated even in the center of the city. Especially for the people who are not wealthy enough to go to the countryside for recreating themselves or producing some fresh foods and for the children who need to have a close relationship with nature for their both physical and mental development, city planners should take it into consideration that much more spaces should be allocated to satisfy their needs. Given more greenery spaces in urban areas, we can have more opportunities of recreation and food production. This city planning method can be called "edible landscape planning". And if this planning is put into practice as a part of community activities, it can contribute to create communities where people can enjoy closer relationships with each other and safe and positive social life.

In addition, this planning method will be of great use to realize zero-emission society. In modern systems, energy, water and other materials flow in linear way. Especially people living in urban areas get their needs for their life from the outside and dump used materials as garbage to the outside. This system cannot function without damaging not only urban but also rural environment. We need to create an alternative recycling system that will form the basis of urban eco-system. The edible landscape planning insists that by allocating spaces for agriculture in urban areas, the garbage, rain waters and some parts of the heat can be used for producing foods and by doing that we can create a cyclical flow of energy, water and materials.

As the City Farms, Community Gardens and Community Composting are valuable as these ecological, recycling and cooperative activities, I researched these community activities in U.K. in 1999.

2. Community Gardens and City Farms activities

2-1 Community Gardens

Community Gardens are the gardens in cities managed by local communities to produce some foods. While allotments have been a part of city dwelling people's life in U.K. and are generally situated at the edge of cities and have considerably large areas of which small segments are rented to the users, community gardens have usually small spaces and used by local people mainly for recreation and producing some vegetables for their self-supply. In the 1960s raised movements aiming to recreate local communities by growing food together mainly in USA. Some community groups changed abandoned spaces in their neighbourhoods into community gardens.

The following is the list of the main functions of Community Gardens (citation from the conference report in 1998¹⁾).

“ • aids in community cohesion and understanding

- increases people' social skill and employability through their experience of community management and training
- improves the environment by creating varied habitats for human needs and wildlife needs
- affects the local community by encouraging other greening activities " 1)

It is reported that Britain has 493 Community Gardens by 1999. Most community gardens are run by volunteers and used by low-income people. Growing foods is a cross-cultural activity and some projects include a wide range of people with different racial and cultural background. The report describes that the majority of Community Gardens are supported by local authorities but not always. Therefore the sites are often threatened by development. It is important to make local governments recognize the necessity of community gardens for creating sustainable city life.

A case of community garden in London, called The Calthorpe Projects reported. It is an oasis (1.2 acres) in Kings Cross. The garden is managed by a registered charity organization and a company limited with guarantee. The project was initiated in 1983 by the local people who objected to the new development of office buildings in residential areas, because local people didn't like to be surrounded by more offices overlooking their homes and wanted to create their back garden. They could borrow the space for a community garden from Camden Council. It opens 7 days a week and runs activities for parents and children under 8 after school and has youth programs such as Bengali families working, horticulture training, volunteering opportunities, provision of sports facilities and a community cafe. This garden function as the space where the local people can get the identity of their community.

2-2 City Farms

In U.K. we can visit some city farms in the centre of big cities or key cities. This movement has recently spread into other countries such as Australia and USA. The city farms can be defined as a community farm in the centre of city managed by local people living in urban areas. They are usually managed by one or some local charity groups, which are registered on the law. As they need to make up funds to support their activities, they usually has a small company limited with guarantee. The city farm not only produces some vegetables for local peoples consumption, but also has a lot of domestic animals such as horses, pigs, chickens and sheep to make local children take care of them for the purpose of teaching them how to take care and make use of natural materials. As some city farms become the place where children can learn environmental issues, they also function as ecological centres in the city.

Ruth Frost described that by 1980, 30 city farms had already been set up in Britain ²⁾. Now in 1999, the number has grown up to 64. Funds to support the activities are often come from private sources or public ones. He reported that the city farms respond to the people's needs for outdoor recreation on healthy grounds, for the environmental education and for the small-grain structure of community organization. The first city farm in Britain, Kentish Town City Farm, was set up in 1972 by a community association in London, and another one was set up in 1975 to produce crops on the ground once used for waste treatment in London. These first cases explain the main background of city farms. The people who wanted to produce foods in urban areas tried to create alternative farming field anywhere available in cities. In 1976 the City Farm Advisory Service (CFAS) was founded to give advices on, for example, how to apply to official bodies for

funds and support to local farm groups. In 1977 the first newsletter was published by the CFAS. In 1980 the National Federation of City Farms (NFC) took over the CFAS by joining community garden groups together to promote a large movement of City Farm and Community Garden. City farms have the following activities (quote from the book " The Permaculture plots "3)

- ” • Recreational activities
- Educational schemes
- Nature projects
- Livestock husbandry
- Gardening
- Children's need (play/learning)
- Social events (open days, fairs)
- Business operations (shop, cafe, market garden) ” 3)



fig. City farms in London

Mudchute Park & Farm is the biggest city farm in Britain. It has a land of 34 acres including a public park in the Isle of Dogs on Thames River in London. The local people, who had opposed the office building development plan of government, set up a city farm in 1973. The farm keeps cows, sheep, horses, goats, pigs, ducks, rabbits, chickens and llama, It operates a cafe, a riding school, a shop and an education centre. Not a few families and children commute the farm to enjoy taking a walk, taking care of animals and riding horses. This farm has become an oasis in the city. The farm has an educational project centre operating educational programmes linked to the demands of the national curriculum on environmental problems, farming education and horticulture. The centre has two classrooms, a large wildlife area, a nature trail, a pond, hedgerows and grassland, and provides the opportunities of experiencing country life to London's inner-city community.

City farms and community gardens produce over 150 tones of meat, 6.5 tones of fruit and more vegetables according to the report of NCF. NCF has the perspective of promoting sustainable farming and gardening practices. Some groups provide opportunities of having the experiences of selling, cooking and eating their products at their cafes so that the local people can understand the value of producing fresh foods in the local areas. Recently some city farms and community gardens organize their actions on the Permaculture principles to produce vegetables and fruits as well as to recycle used materials by diverse ways to create urban eco-systems.

3. Urban-Permaculture activities

I think that the urban ecology should include the edible landscape and people's agricultural activities in the inner city. To create this urban ecosystem, Permaculture will be of great use. This integrated design method was developed in Australia, in 1970s by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. The word Permaculture means both permanent agriculture and permanent culture. Permaculture aims to create a sustainable human life style by producing foods everywhere possible, even in the inner city with the aide of nature and ecosystem.

Permaculture activities in the city have recently become active in U.K. In Birmingham a charity group named Urban Wildlife Trust develops a new ecological park called Eco-park in a residential area on the basis of the Permaculture concept. The local people grow fruit trees and vegetables by using Permaculture method and have created a bio tope pond where local native animals such as frogs, and butterflies live in. They also make composts from the wastes brought by the local people for fertilizing the soil and learn how the ecosystem works. The park has some nurseries, Permaculture gardens, a water recycling system, a plant bio diversity bank, a meadow, wildlife ponds, a bumblebee bank, new woodland, a forest garden and a Community Composting plot. This project has been managed by the Urban Wildlife Trust and supported by some private companies and EU funds.



Figure the Birmingham Ecopark

In Bradford City the local government supported the Permaculture group to generate new community gardens. This Community Garden is called Springfield Community Garden and considered to be a key place for alternative, ecological and edible action in the city. The principles of the garden are the following. ⁴⁾

- ” • The growing of food stuffs, vegetables, fish, eggs, nuts, berries etc. for local use.
- Provision of training opportunities for people with learning difficulties.
- Garden design and maintenance education for local people.
- Provision of plants and materials related to edible landscaping to local gardeners.
- Food processing and home economics facilities.
- Open space area to provide recreation and playing space.
- Provision of workshop spaces for carpentry and green woodwork activities. ” ⁴⁾

Another volunteer group BTCV (British Trust of Conservation Volunteer) sometimes organizes action events in this garden. Now this garden produces vegetables sold to the city people. The Community garden becomes the key plot for ecological activities.

4. Community Composting

Setting up alternative community activities is crucial to change the exiting society and make local communities more sustainable. The idea of making composts from kitchen scraps in a urban local community is an important activity. In urban areas a great mass of organic garbage are produced and dumped for nothing. But they can be a great resource if used as compost materials that can fertilize soil and grow trees and vegetables grow. Community Compost

Network (CCN) has 105 members in U.K. in 1998. City farm and community garden groups and Allotment Associations has been involved in the CCN. The CCN was founded with the support of the EU funds. The CCN promotes community composting projects at a national level and organizes talks and demonstrations on community composting sites. The office of the CCN is located in Heely City Farm in Sheffield City. The farm promotes community composting in its local areas.



Figure 3·4 the Heely City Farm

The first Community Composting activity generated in Devon. There a community composting business has been managed by a local group who has operated LETS and studied Permaculture. LETS means local exchange trading system, which promotes a local exchange of foods and services without using money. This local trading system has quickly spread in UK. I think that the Community Composting works should be operated with the local trading system.

The paper of CC describes the Community Composting as follows.⁵⁾

“ Where a group of people in a local community will pool organic materials at a separate site to recycle larger amounts of waste and make larger amounts of compost. Broader definitions involve projects where the primary intention of the composting is the involvement of people and the community, e.g. -- promotion of home composting by concentrated training and education. The benefits of Community Composting are the following.

Environmental

- Proximity principle: Community Composting deals with waste where it is produced.
- Small-scale projects minimize the pollution that can be associated with composting.
- Small-scale projects maximize the quality of compost produced
- Community Compost acts as an alternative to peat.
- Community Composting projects promote home composting alongside.
- Weight/volume of waste recycled and compost produced per annum: 10,000 tonnes.

Social

- Involves physical outdoor work, which has therapeutic value to individuals, those with special needs.
- Can provide a focus for community development.

- Estimated no. of volunteers actively involved in Community Composting: 500
- Estimated no. of people contributing waste to Community Composting projects: 5000

Economic

- Obviates the difficulties associated with marketing compost.
- Maximizes the potential for creating jobs and training opportunities in composting.
- Estimated number of paid staff in Community Composting: 30
- No. of community businesses established: 10⁵⁾

Heely City Farm Community Composting Enterprise in Sheffield City was founded in 1997 and has become a sustainable business based on the sale of compost. The enterprise collects kitchen material for composting from about 200 surrounding households and sells £ 5000-worth of compost per annum and employs over 4 staff and changes 70 tonnes of materials diverted from the waste to 35 tonnes of compost per annum with 30 volunteer days per month. This report explains that Community Composting business function to change a lot of organic material into the useful material by local people.

5. Conclusion

The society of U.K. is hierarchical. City farms and community gardens provide people in low social classes with recreational space, fields where they can produce fresh foods for their use and touch fresh soil and air, and opportunities to spend time with their family and community. Using open spaces as fields for food production makes the spaces more valuable and ecologically sound. Children can play there and get a lot of experiences of farming, gardening and learning the nature and agriculture. Young people can acquire skills of gardening, raising domestic animals and carpentering. Community activities on city farms and community gardens are useful to make the friendship of neighbourhood community stronger. Being recognized to be a good design concept to make the community place more ecological, Permaculture is now often used to design community gardens. Community Composting activities that change the waste material to organic compost will consist the basis of alternative city planning and will contribute to renovate an existing city towards an ecological and sustainable city. In U.K. these community activities to create edible landscape in their neighbourhood have worked together in the local area.

In Japan we need to develop alternative city planning method that can change wasteful and inhuman urban modern life style to ecological and sustainable one. Edible landscape planning will be an alternative and has the possibility of creating sustainable cities. We must develop the social system and city planning system which support these ecological and cooperative community farming, gardening, composting and environmental education in the local area. We, therefore, needs to study these creative, and ideal practices in U.K.

References

- 1) National Federation of City Farms, Community Gardens Conference Report, 1998, p2
- 2) Ruth Frost, Univ. Birmingham, The Development of the City Farms' Movement in Britain, 1981,p1-6
- 3) Simon Pratt, Permanent Publications, The Permaculture Plot, 1996, p139
- 4) Simon Pratt, Permanent Publications, The Permaculture Plot, 1996, p30

5) Papers of Community Composting Network, 1999

本研究は英国における都市の中の農的な市民活動に関する事例研究である。

持続的で環境共生型の都市形成にとっては、都市空間の中に農的環境をどう位置づけるかが重要となる。消費型の都市から、生産、消費、分解という生態系のシステムを活かした循環型の都市構造に転換していくことが持続性のある都市への転換を可能とする。その時に、市民ベースでの農的空間は重要場所となる。

以下のような結論が導き出された。

英国では1970年代以降、シティファームの創設が起き、現在は主要都市でチャリティ団体によって、都市内の遊休地を活用して運営されている。

コミュニティ・ガーデンの活動とシティファームの活動は合体して全国的な協議会組織を作り、社会的影響力を示してきている。

都市内の有機質のゴミ処理に関して市民活動として「コミュニティ・コンポスト」運動が90年代に起き、全国的組織も結成された。コンポストを造る場所はシティファームやアロットメント等の都市内の農的空間が活用されている。

これらの農的空間は、子供達の環境教育・学習の場としての機能も果たし始めている。

日本においても、この種の市民のチャリティ活動での農的空間づくりをもっと積極的に都市内で展開する必要性が指摘できる。市民農園というレベルを越えて、総合的な場として形成する必要がある。