

EMU

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Multilayered Identity of Urban Allotment Gardens

Comparative Study within context of Estonia, Poland, Denmark and UK

Linna aiandus krundid mitmekihiline identifitseerimine.
Võrdlev uuring Eesti, Poola, Taani, Suurbritannia uuringute põhjal



Master Thesis

Department of Landscape Architecture

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Relevance of Research Study

Urban Allotment Gardens (UAGs) as an “antidote to placelessness and urban alienation”
(Relph, 1976)

Place that is under people’s control, bounds community, creates identity and enhances attachment.

Objective of this dissertation

The objective of this dissertation is to explore the distinctive and common features of UAG across cultures to find out the qualities that make these places valuable and meaningful, that ensure continuation of this practice, its transformation and adaptation to people's needs.

Research Questions

- What are the activities that the environment of UAGs support in public and private space?
- What is the meaning that tenants attach to UAGs?
- What are the emotions that users associate with UAGs?
- What are the commonalities and distinctiveness of UAG identity within different cultural and historical context?
- What are the tendencies of UAG practice in researched countries?

Concept of Place Identity

Two dimension of place identity

- Similar qualities based on natural human needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan),
Biophilia hypothesis

- Distinctive qualities as result of social, historical geographical factors

Three components of place identity (Relph, 1976)

- static physical setting
- activities
- meaning

Methodology - data collection

QUALITATIVE DATA

open-ended questionnaire and
observations

Estonia
Poland

Denmark
UK



Establishment of UAGs

Economical and social
systems (Iron Curtain)

Climatic conditions

Countries

- Placed within an urban
environment

- No or temporal living

- Actively used and maintained

- Responds to main
characteristics of UAGs

- Limits and character are
clearly identified within urban
environment

UAG Sites

Methodology - research sites

ESTONIA - 50 respondents

Tamsalu - Paide road 6,7, Vasara street 5,7 ; Tapa - “Õunapuu AÜ”,
“Kirsipuu AÜ” ; Tartu - Kannikese street, Tiigiaed AÜ; Sillamäe -
“Sputnik AÜ”

summer 2013

POLAND - 50 respondents

Warsaw - “Sadi Zoliborskie”, “Piaski”, “Lotnik”

summer 2013

DENMARK - 51 respondents

Copenhagen - “Kloverblomsten”, “Aidersro” -, “Obro”, “Mayl”,
“Kolonihaven”, “Blomsten”, “Venner Lyst”, “Rosen”, “Strandhoj”,
“Klovermarken”

late spring 2014

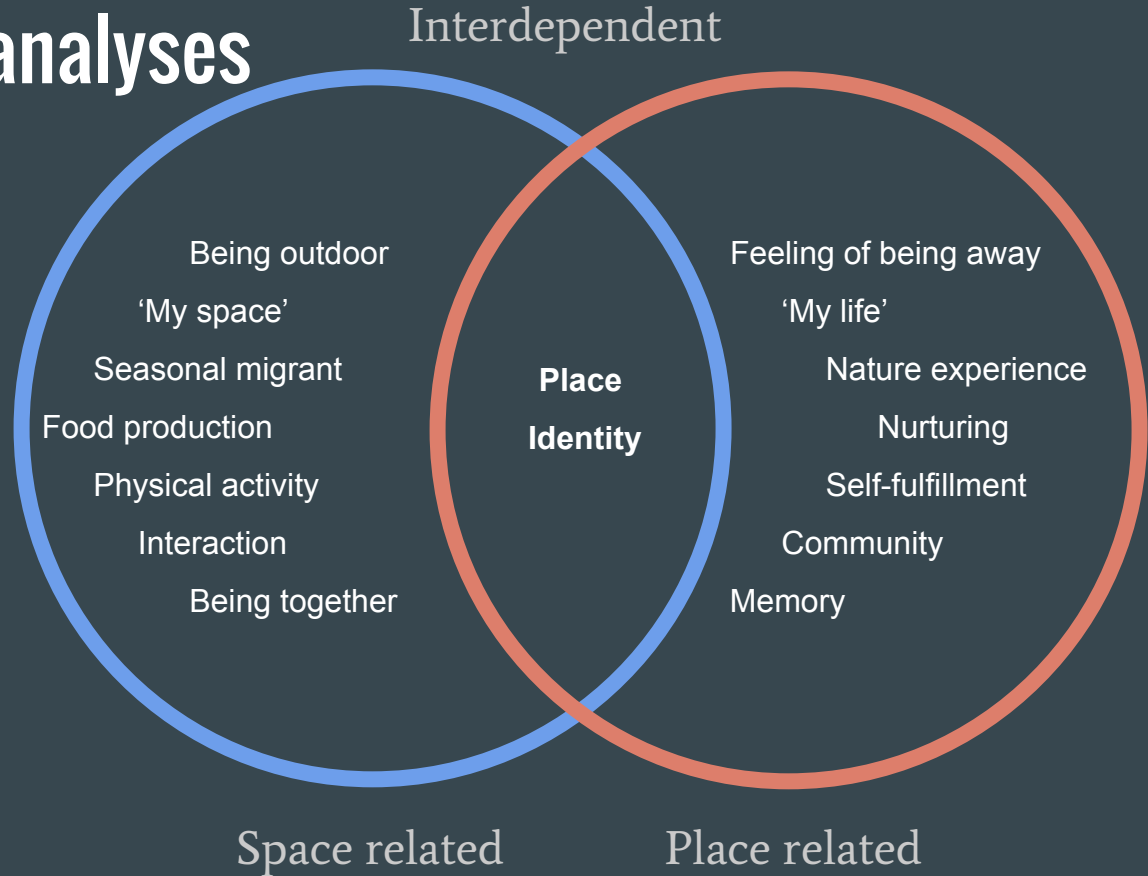
UK - 10 respondents

Shrewsbury - “Column AC”; “Bowbrook AC”

summer 2015

Methodology - data analyses

Emergent thematic groups is a result of thematic analysis based on theory of place identity (Relph, 1976)



Ranking of importance of space related themes

		UK	Denmark	Poland	Estonia
Majority	↑	Food production	Being outdoor	Physical activity	Food production
Many		Interaction	Seasonal home	Being outdoor	Physical activity
A lot of		Being outdoor	Being together	Being together	Being outdoor
		'My space'	'My space'	Interaction	Being together
Not many		Physical activity	Interaction	'My space'	Seasonal home
		Seasonal home	Food production	Seasonal home	Interaction
Few, some	↓	Being together	Physical activity	Food production	'My space'

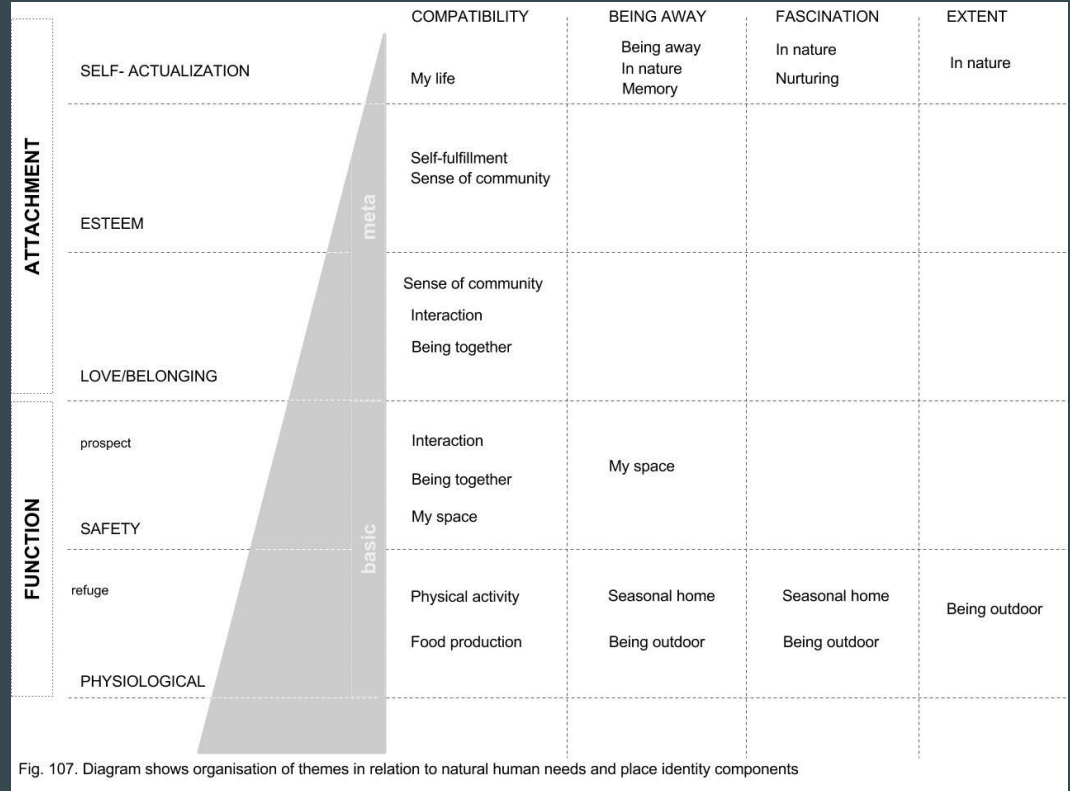
Ranking of importance of place related themes

		UK	Denmark	Poland	Estonia
Majority	↑	Being away	In nature	Being away	Self-fulfillment
Many		In nature	Being away	In nature	In nature
A lot of		Community	Memory	Community	Memory
		Memory	Community	'My life'	Being away
Not many		Self-fulfillment	'My life'	Self-fulfillment	'My life'
		'My life'	Self-fulfillment	Nurturing	Nurturing
Few, some	↓	Nurturing	Nurturing	Memory	Community

Discussion

The relation of themes based on place identity concept to natural human needs

The strong variation in space related qualities shows that allotment gardens are not considered today important only for satisfaction of basic human needs, but rather it is appreciated for meta needs and restorative potential to their users.



Summery

In summary, the UAGs' identity is formed on two levels. On a first level they satisfy basic human needs and are related to activities that their environment supports. As result of this, space is given identity that is related to personal preferences and cultural background of the allotment holder. On a second level, the allotment is a place for fulfillment of meta needs and results in an emotional attachment to it. Some of the meanings attached to it like 'community', 'memory' and 'self-fulfilment' do vary in the degree of importance. Whereas restorative qualities of allotments were generally described as most meaningful and are not conditioned by social and cultural distinctiveness.

Image of UAGs

Identity of UAGs in the UK:
allotment is seen as a valuable
place for contribution to the
local community and
sustainable living by producing
own food.



Identity of UAGs in Denmark:
allotment is seen as a valuable
green space for recreation and
socialising for everyone.



Identity of UAGs in Poland:
allotment as a place for
active retirement.



Identity of UAGs in Estonia:
allotment as a way for
production of healthy food
and support for families.



Potential of research

- Further studies can explore the relation of the function and meaning of allotments in relation to the physical setting.
- The research made be useful in a design experimental allotment site with a potential to develop, manipulate and assess different qualities of place identity in UAGs

- THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSEMENTION

1. Page 5, paragraph 2: Urban Allotment Gardens are described as the finest example of land use that builds up a commitment to place and an identity within the urban environment – what is the justification for this statement?

... the trend is towards an environment of few significant places' (Relph, 2008: 79).

...‘flatscape’, that is characterized by standardisation and gigantism that offer few clues to unique natural characteristics of place (Norberg-Schulz cited in Relph, 2008: 79).

...see landscape only in terms of more or less useful feature, or abstract model (Relph, 2008).

Jacobs (1961) to make places function well they must have meaning to their residents. Places that created on human scale, incorporates the character of the people and enables them to be in control of their community providing them with an identity and attachment to it.

(Logical flow of idea) Presenting allotment gardens as a traditional practise that is contrast to the recent tendencies

“This description could be applied to Urban Allotment Gardens (UAGs) that are the finest example of land-use that builds up a commitment to place and an identity within the urban environment”.

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

1. Page 5, paragraph 2: Urban Allotment Gardens are described as the finest example of **land use that builds up a commitment to place and an identity within the urban environment** – what is the justification for this statement?

- **They were originally created for urban residents to grow food but as wealth grew and time passed they became equally as important as identity resources and spaces for leisure and socialization (Bell and Keshavarz, 2016)**
- Allotments is a place that represents an individual and collective identity (Crouch and Ward, 2003)
- 'an important feature in the cultural landscape that combines utility, meaning and beauty with local distinctiveness' (Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, 1998: 1).
- Crouch and Ward (2003) have emphasized that the way people create structures and use the land is that allotment gardens represent something of their own identity and culture and thereby sharing what that piece of land and the activities on it mean to them.
- "...diversifying spatial configurations, and increasing place identity and sense of place" (Noori and Benson, 2016)
-

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

2. Page 25, paragraph 3 & page 52 paragraph 2.3: The data was collected using interviews with open-ended questions to structure the interview according to paragraphs 1 & 2. What, therefore is page 25, paragraph 3 and page 52 paragraph 2.3 referring to? What is being compared on page 25? Interviews with paper questionnaires? Were paper questionnaires filled in by an interviewer or by respondents (page 52)?

P25 The qualitative data that was collected through open-ended questions was taken during onsite interviews.

Word “interview” - is used to describe “a meeting at which information is obtained” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) not as a method

P26 The interviewer completed all the questionnaires, writing in detail and as far as possible verbatim the participants' responses. The time of the interviews varied between 15 minutes and **two hours in a few cases**.

P52 **Characteristics of allotment holders - respondents**

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENTION

3. Page 27, paragraph 2: How were the plot owners selected? Was there any selection criteria? Did the interviewees reflect the spread of ages and socioeconomic status of those who managed the plots?

There was criterion for selection of countries and UAGs sites P27.

First, it was not objective of this study to represent only one certain group of allotment users. Rather it was part of the research to find out who is engaged in UAG practice within these countries and variations. The question on age and socioeconomic statuses were replaced to a less “private” one that identified if person is retired, un/employed or engaged in studies. **The main criteria was that a respondent should have been engaged in allotment practice and a questionnaires should have been done on his lot.** (APPENDIX 6)

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

4. Page 27, paragraph 2: Why do you feel that 10 interviews from the UK was sufficient compared to 50 from the other countries? Can you expand on the reasons for this?

“The questionnaire in the UK was not as extensive as in other countries (only 10 people were questioned), but provided sufficient data for describing main characteristics.”

For ex. The part on “sense of community” PP 79-87

Respondents in the UK were more open and willing to participate (that for example in Estonia) that allowed to have sufficient data for comparison with other UAG areas. Also responses were more informative for interviewee in comparing to Poland and Denmark because of English language.

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSEMENTION

5. Page 32 Figure 6 and Page 34, ref 8: Community is low on the table for Figure 6 and yet the caption for the picture states that it “feels like community” was this the interviewers observation or the interviewee’s feelings? If there was a sense of community, why was it low down on the table?

Interaction was (APPENDIX)

interviewee’s feelings - Fig. 8. Allotments in Tamsula are small scaled and create unit with house where plot holders live. The allotments are organised very densely in sense of vegetation and structures. People naturally are very close to each other and feels like community.

2.2.1 The physical characteristics of UAGs in Estonia - Description of the research sites. The data from respondents is presented in the Result Chapter.

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

6. The word abundant is used on page 35 and elsewhere, should this be abandoned?
10. Page 95, paragraph 3: What does disdanled mean? Disabled perhaps?

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

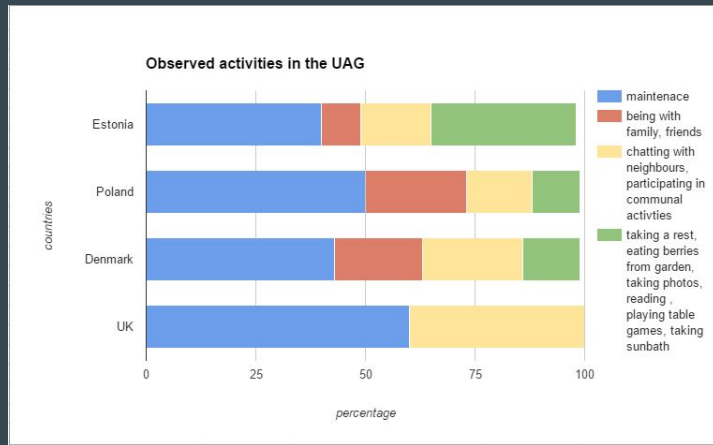
7. Page 52, last paragraph. It is stated that the Danish plot holders were mainly employed, is this from the interviews or statistics? Why is this?

The statistics are based on the information from respondents and this paragraph presents the Characteristics of allotment holders (that were interviewed) starting - ”
In total, 160 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey during this study...”

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSEMENTION

8. Page 55, paragraph 1: The range of activities on UAGs was this across the board? Were there differences between UAGs used for recreation and those primarily for food production? I would think that allotments on UK and Estonian sites with their lack of borders and primary food production function would preclude activities like sport, whereas it would be more likely in the garden chalets of Denmark. A table showing different activities on the different sites would have made this clearer.

P54



3.1.1 'Food production'

3.1.3 'Physical activity'

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

9. Page 57, last paragraph: This states that the allotments are placed a certain distance from the main residence of plot holders. However, it was mentioned earlier that the plots in the Estonian case were placed next to the main residence. What was the range of distances of the UAGs from plot holders main residence and did the plot holders live in specific types of residence?

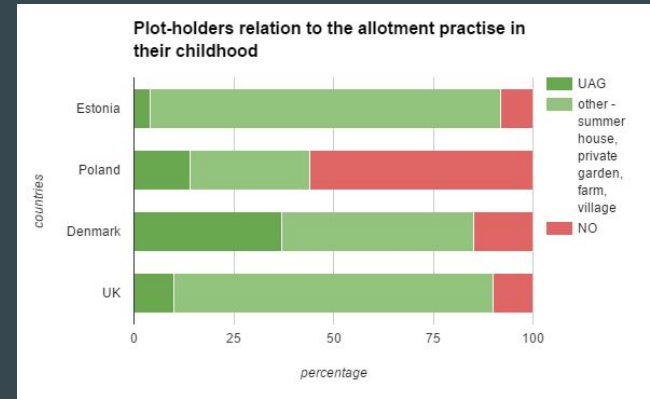
“...travelling to allotments tenants are distancing themselves physically from home.” said in relation to theme 3.1.2 ‘Being outdoor’. Estonian case - two types of UAGs P33 (allotments - Placed next to block houses; garden lots - distanced from main residents)

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

11. Page 96, paragraph 1: The motivation for most plot holders is a gardening background with the exception of Poland. If this is the case what was the main motivation for Polish plot holders to have gardens?

“Direct questions were asked about whether allotment holder’s childhood was connected to allotments, farming or gardening and the results showed that the 95 majority of respondents had a gardening background. The only exception was Poland where more than half of the people has not had any connection”

3.2.6 Graph is presented to support as a part of ‘Memory’ theme - it is **not a motivation**, rather What makes allotment practice meaningful



MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

12. Page 99, paragraph 1: It is stated that in the UK and Estonia food production is frequently mentioned quality of the allotment. To what extent does the defined legal status of each type of UAG in the various countries play a part in this? For instance Estonia does not have legal status – does this mean there is no or little permanent planting and Denmark specifically prohibits some plots from vegetable production due to contamination issues.

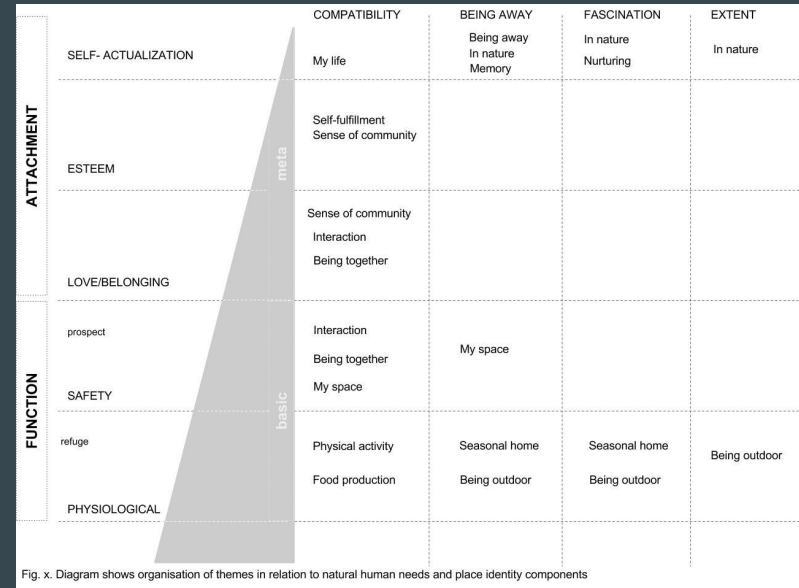
P40vegetable planting should be done in raised beds or as in case with Vennelyst is not allowed at all as the ground is contaminated.

P49 According to regulation at least 2/3rds of a plot should be used for the production of vegetables and fruits thus the main part of the lot is used for raised beds - **only in case with the UK**

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSEMENTION

13. Page 99, paragraph 2: Does the research in Denmark indicate that green space, which can be personalised is more supportive of human needs than general green space that does not need to be maintained by individuals? In other words do UAGs, with the ability to personalise the space, provide for human needs better than a local authority maintained park?

It does



MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

14. Page 101, paragraph 1 & Page 105, paragraph 1: Does the more active participation of the Danish and UK plot holders reflect the cultures in which they are embedded or the outside threats from possible redevelopment pressure?

Rather cultures and longer history of UAGs establishment

Is the aim of the participation to maintain the viability of the plots to reduce this pressure or just a reflection of the culture, particularly with reference to paragraph 2 where there is less trust between plot holders in Poland and Estonian?

In the UK and Denmark allotment is recognised and appreciated as a part of their heritage. Also high interest and active engagement in this practise makes local authorities consider the requirements of residents.

How important is the mix of communal areas and private spaces? Does this reflect culture at a national level or individual level?

It is equally important for any culture, the limited interest to communal activities in countries like Estonia and Poland can be related to the recent changes in social and economical systems in these countries and will need time to reestablish value of social interaction as it is practiced in the UK and Denmark.

MASTER THESIS DEFENCE: RETSENSENTIOON

15. Page 103, paragraph 4: Estonian UAGs do not have the same legal protection as in the other countries, does this affect the feeling of “My space” is the lack of legal status reflected in any of the other aspects of UAGs?

P99 My space - Allotments as a private space was considered important within most of the countries, except Estonia. Although individuals cultivating allotments are technically only temporary tenants, regulations ensure the they have sense that they are in control.

For example “community” (shared responsibilities), “food production”, “seasonal home”, “interaction”