



Hyphen 57

News from the Office

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux
association sans but lucratif | April 2016

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Need for self-examination?

Preben Jacobsen



The European political and economic cooperation is for many reasons under pressure – some would even say crumbling.

Fortunately this is not the case for the European cooperation in the Office International regarding allotment gardens.

However, we have recently seen members of the European “allotment family” leave our organization – others may also consider this option. And at the same time many of us have the feeling that there is a dwindling enthusiasm among member federations with regard both to initiatives such as the common website and to exchange of knowledge and experiences in general within the Office.

Moreover, and despite the efforts on the part of the Office to promote European cooperation, the majority of the individual allotment gardeners in our federations still do not know the Office International or what it stands for. And those who do, usually consider it to be something without much meaning or interest to them.

This situation should give rise to serious consideration – first about the causes of the situation and second about how the negative trend could be reversed.

Possible reasons for a dwindling interest in the work of the Office

The members of the Office should of course consider together these questions in more depth but I think we could already now identify a couple of reasons for the negative trend.

- Almost all initiatives and decisions are “born” in the Executive Board, the General Assembly most of the time merely playing the role of stamp of approval. What is cause and what is effect of this situation could be a subject of discussion. There remains, however, that at present the General Assembly is not playing a role in accordance with its status being the common representative of all the member federations. Consequently the federations that are not represented in the Executive Board are not inspired to engage wholeheartedly in the activities of the Office.
- Only few activities of the Office are directed towards individual garden societies and their members. Thus promotion of the Office is mainly based on prizes awarded to a very limited number of selected garden societies and in accordance with – some would argue – too narrowly defined criteria. The consequence of this lack of visibility of the Office International being that the Office to most allotment gardeners is something they don’t know about or don’t care about.

To this comes the general trend in society which is moving towards more comprehensive and complex rules regulating allotment gardens with a corresponding increase in pressure on the administrative resources of the member federations. Consequently, international cooperation as part of a priority is perhaps being assigned less time and effort by the federations.

How could we then reverse the negative trend? Well, there is probably no sole or simple answer to that question. A multitude of factors influence the functioning of the Office. Reversing the negative trend therefore could involve looking at both the formal legal foundation of the Office and at working- and communication routines as they have developed over the years.

The role of the president and the Executive Board

The Statutes of the Office International – in particular the rules concerning appointment of the president and the composition and role of the Executive Board – should be analyzed and if appropriate amended.

According to the Statutes the presidency is rotating every 3 years. The role of the president is in practice predominantly of a formal and ceremonial character. It could be considered whether the presidency ought to rotate more frequently and be combined with increased and substantial responsibility assigned to the president. It could also be considered to replace the rotation principle by an electoral system where the president is appointed for e.g. 2 years on the basis of a majority vote.

Traditionally the Office's activities have been designed to involve all member federations. However, nothing prevents us from benefitting from the Office as a mere framework for cooperation between member federations sharing interest in specific topics which are perhaps not of common interest to all. If necessary, the Statutes could be amended in order to allow for, and even encourage, also this kind of cooperation.

A framework for discussing a possible reform

In 2017 the Office will turn 90 and we plan to invite our colleagues to a seminar in Copenhagen in the summer of 2017 where focus in particular should be on ways to improve member federations' and individual members' involvement in the work and further development of the Office International.

Should there be interest in holding such a seminar, it could be considered also to invite federations that have recently left the Office in order to know and acknowledge their view of the topics under discussion – and perhaps persuade them to rejoin a renewed and altered Office International.

Activity report 2015

1st part

The executive board has the pleasure to present the activity report for 2015.

1) Internal activities

Since the last statutory meeting the executive board met on June 1st, 27th August, 27th and 28th November 2015 and is also going to meet again on 4th March, 2016.

a) Efficiency of the Office activities and internal and external presentation

Not only the congress subject 2014 "Focus on allotments" but also the daily reality have convinced the executive board to highlight the subject concerning the Office efficiency, even more than in the past.

An important task consisted and will continue to consist over the coming months to get to know and to transpose into practice the federations' opinions on how to improve the functioning of the Office and particularly the cooperation of all the federations and so their taking "possession" of the Office.

Two new brochures concerning "Children and nature" as well as "the presentation of the collected innovative projects" are in preparation. One can expect that both brochures will be ready for publication in the different languages in 2016. The information brochure of the Office has also to be reedited.

For 2016 the Office has issued once more an Office calendar. As the Office will celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2016, the calendar contains a short overview of the development of our international movement.

Much attention was given to our homepage, which could be updated

in regular intervals. The aim of these updates is to regularly present the activities of the allotment gardeners throughout Europe. The updating should, however, be even more optimised with regular information from the federations in order to be an enrichment for all and to give a positive and dynamic image of our movement towards third parties.

The discussion forum does not yet work. There is, however, the readiness to change this fact. It would be positive if this internet forum could be a means for discussions, between the national gardening advisers.

Together with the firm MAYERHOFER in Austria, the Hyphen could again be issued this year with two well designed editions. Putting the Hyphen online, as well as a large distribution of our magazine published twice a year is important to sensitize the allotment gardeners for the European dimension of our movement. The articles of the Hyphen can of course be used in national magazines. Articles on allotment sites in different countries will be sent, if requested, to national federations to be published in their national magazines.

After 2014 the International Office participated again in the action week without pesticides 2015. This both through a call to all our members and the insertion of our study session within this campaign.

In addition, the Office ordered plant cards, issued for the Luxembourgish campaign with the Office logo and specific information.

The general assembly has decided that the Office will become member

of the campaign in Luxembourg from 2016 onwards. This participation is useful for all our members and underlines at the same time the efforts the allotment gardeners do for a nature friendly gardening towards society. This demand was accepted by the Luxembourgish authorities in November.

The executive board decided to celebrate the Office's 90th anniversary at the occasion of the international congress in Vienna. A brochure should be published to celebrate this birthday.

b) Representation of the Office at the occasion of national ceremonies

This year the Office was again represented at different national events, for example, at the occasion of the European Day of the Garden in Germany by W. WOHATSCHEK and at the occasion of the congresses in Denmark, Luxembourg and Switzerland by M. WEIRICH.

c) Diplomas

This year there were eleven demands to get diplomas for ecological gardening, social activities respectively innovative projects.

These diplomas were granted at the occasion of the European Day of the Garden celebrated in Luxembourg and they were remitted by the Luxembourgish minister for agriculture F. ETGEN and the Office Vice-President H. BONNAVAUD. Because these diplomas have both an internal and external effect, a summary of these projects has been published on the internet and will be presented in detail in the Hyphen.

Have been honoured for their efforts in the area of an ecological gardening:

the association „Merl-Belair“ (L)
 the association „Am Waldessaum II“ Rostock (D)
 the association „ATV Zonneweelde“ Den Haag (NL)
 the association „Vlijpark“ Dordrecht (NL)
 the association „Sint Amandsberg“ Gent (B)

Have been honoured for their efforts in the area of innovative projects:

the association „Südhang“ Zwickau (D)
 the association „Wühlmäuse 2000“ Hamburg (D)

Have been honoured for their efforts in the area of social activities:

the association „Licht-Luft“ Kaiserslautern (D)
 the association „Ulmenweg“ Merseburg D)

Has been honoured for its efforts in the area of ecological gardening and innovative projects:

the allotment association „Jardins et Vergers“ de Marsannay-la-Côte (F)

The diploma for ecological gardening was given to the allotment association « Im Albgrün » (D) at the occasion of the German Day of the Garden.

d) European Day of the Garden

The European Day of the Garden was celebrated following the international study session in Luxembourg.

At the occasion of this day the delegates visited the impressive school garden in Tetingen as well as the allotment site “Cité Alfred Thinnès” in Luxembourg-Merl which is the first pesticide free site in Luxembourg.

A commemorative plaque was unveiled on both sites and a tree planted on the allotment site in Luxembourg-Merl.

e) Support of federations/ associations

During the general assembly in Switzerland M. WEIRICH promised to help the allotment gardeners of Sankt Gallen in their efforts to save the allotments from being closed down because the ground is planned to be given to the University of Sankt Gallen, if the Swiss allotment federation requires this help. The allotment gardeners from Geneva could receive the name of people/federations that could be contacted in order to help them in their efforts to integrate community gardens in their movement.

Since 2000 the Office and the national federations have supported the Polish allotment gardeners in their fight to save the allotment movement in Poland. In 2014 we were informed that apparently the Polish allotment gardeners were successful to save their gardens and the federation. It is so the more astonishing and incomprehensible that in May the federation informed the Office of its disaffiliation with immediate effect.

President E. KONDRACKI omitted to take part in the general assembly in March and to inform the Office of possible problems. If there really had been problems in the cooperation between the Office and the federation, we would certainly have tried to find solutions. Additionally, if the federation had ended its affiliation by end of the year as it should have been done according to the statutes, this would have given us time to find solutions acceptable for all the parties.

The presented arguments are extremely astonishing because on one hand they do not correspond to the reality and on the other hand, solutions could certainly have been found for other problems. It is always problematic if federations omit to inform on internal problems because thus there is no possibility to find solutions before it is too late.

Unfortunately, some weeks later the Slovakian federation also ended its membership. One has to underline that the Slovakian federation barely took part in meetings or activities of the Office. Up to the end of 2014 it was only a passive member, which has certainly to be regretted. In this case the federation also omitted to inform the International Office on problems or wishes. By the end of 2014, one could, however, acknowledge a starting cooperation and, therefore, the disaffiliation at this precise moment is astonishing.

The Office, together with the German and Austrian federations, have tried to react to this situation and to organise a meeting with the three federations from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic as a continuation of the discussions having taken place last year between the German federation and the three above mentioned federations. This proposed meeting would have possibly given the opportunity to find out what were the reasons/motivations of the current situation.

Despite the fact that the Polish federation had told the Office that it wished an external cooperation with the federations, it, however, informed that it could not take part in such a meeting because E. KONDRACKI had important professional obligations in his country and that such a meeting had to be organised by them. The Czech federation presented excuses because the president could not take part for family reasons and because he could not find anybody in the executive board to represent him. The Slovakian federation did not react at all to this letter.

It has to be underlined that still in November 2014 at the occasion of the meeting in the Czech Republic, the Polish federation warmly recommended to the Czech federation to join the Office.

The situation is of course very regrettable and an important setback. We have, however, in the future to find out the real reasons as well as how we can organise a cooperation which is wished for by all the parties.

f) Cost and scientific research

The Office took part in the two COST meetings organised this year.

A. HOBBELINK, F. FLOHR, H. BONNAVAUD, W. HEIDEMANN and M. WEIRICH were present in Nicosia. H. BONNAVAUD presented the French allotment movement whereas J. POURIAS explained the phenomenon of the community gardens around Paris. One had to acknowledge during these discussions that there are well administrated community gardens on one hand and badly looking allotment gardens on the other hand. In the middle, however, you find a steadily growing overlap where you see that community gardens pursue the same aims and make similar projects as the allotment gardeners.

In many important cities community gardens seem to be preferred by local authorities compared to allotment gardens, because they correspond to the people's wish to garden, but only need small and temporary grounds in opposition to allotment gardens that need large and long lasting grounds. In different locations the community gardens include the population more strongly in their activities than the allotment gardeners. This is a subject that we have to consider seriously and the Office will as well in the future deal with this subject.

The second COST meeting in which A. HOBBELINK, H. BONNAVAUD and M. WEIRICH participated took place in Birmingham. In addition to interesting lectures and visits the participants worked above all on factsheets to be issued. These factsheets aim at presenting different subjects in an easy and conclusive way to gardeners, planners or authorities.

The book with the findings of COST approaches its completion. The Office could by its secretary general write the leading article for this book. The Office information brochure was used to write the historical overview.

It is, however, a pity that the Office delegates had no possibility to have an insight in the data personally collected by the scientists and to take position on the limited examples that will be included in the book.

Despite this fact the participation in COST has to be considered as extremely positive.

The scientists, who had only few information about our movement or knew only clichés could get information about our movement, its projects and its real contributions to society and nature. Not only the information given by the Office representatives, but also the visits of sites contributed to this change of attitude.

During the COST meeting in Birmingham M. WEIRICH was approached by a scientist from Brighton University (GB) in order to write a letter of support for a new scientific research "Valuing Nature". Unfortunately, the project had to be postponed due to the illness of one of the leading researchers.

The fact that the Office was approached is positive news because such initiatives contribute to increase the significance of our movement and the level of people's awareness of the Office.

We must realize that we have to take part more often in such studies. Our claim concerning the value of the allotments has to be supported scientifically in order for us to get more influence among the authorities, the planners, the population etc.

2) International study session

This year the study session took

place in Luxembourg from 28th until 30th August. The subject was: "Gardening advice considering sustainability and a responsible use of resources". The lecture by W. HEIDEMANN presented the current situation of gardening advice in Germany and was the starting point for the discussions of what gardening advice should be like in the future. In his lecture F. KRAUS from Luxembourg explained the subjects that have to be dealt with, underlined the future challenges and gave some hints in this direction.

The good discussions in the workshops are the starting point for the coming work at the occasion of the international congress in Vienna.

The study session had its value increased by the presence during the opening session of F. ETGEN, Minister of Agriculture.

Great thanks go once more to the Luxembourgish federation for the good organisation of this study session and its hospitality.

To be continued

The allotment association “Licht-Luft” Kaiserslautern (Germany) received the diploma for social projects



The allotment site „Licht-Luft“ in Kaiserslautern has an exceptionally long history. The association has existed for 115 years and is the oldest association in Kaiserslautern. It is still active today and has a very lively community. One has to mention the long existing restaurant next to the site having the same name as the association. It contributed to make the association known far beyond its borders and many people who are not gardeners come to visit the site. Incorporated in a nearby leisure time area at the South-East border of the town the members garden here in the middle of a green area.

Due to the American military bases people are used to living together with other nations in Kaiserslautern. However, nowhere there is such a mixture as in “Licht-Luft” as twenty-two nations are represented in the association and nearly a quarter of the plot holders have a migration

background, which part is much higher than the average in Kaiserslautern. The living together is without problems. The exchange of plants, seeds, fruit and gardening tools unifies people above all culture and language barriers. Nobody remains a stranger for a long time. At the latest the celebrations organised to get acquainted with each other, bring people together and help to create many friendships that can then develop in the garden. Of course, there are sometimes problems like everywhere where many people come together. However, one can say that this multicultural mini state is considered as an absolute enrichment for all.

The association “Licht-Luft” also unifies with great ease several generations. With programmes for children during the holidays, a green classroom and a partnership with a nursery, the association invests many efforts in order to sensitise already

the smallest for the work on a garden plot. As children generally love gardening, plots, that have become vacant, are given with preference to families with children. The harvest in Kaiserslautern is extremely abundant due to the mild climate and not only busy gardeners take advantage of it. Because at the harvest time fruit and vegetables are more profuse as what one can eat, one has created a place to collect the excess of fruit and vegetables. The gardeners can bring the fruit they have in excess and the produces are then given to the food bank for people in need. Besides their social engagement the gardeners of course also care for nature and environment protection in the association “Licht-Luft”.

You do not notice the high age of this very old association and many other interesting garden years will certainly follow.

The allotment garden site "Im Albgrün", Karlsruhe (Germany) received the diploma for an ecological gardening



Gardeners from Northern Germany can become really jealous in Karlsruhe. As the mild climate in the South West of Germany allows not only to grow wine, but also many different types of fruit like kiwis, peaches or figs, that are only successful with a lot of luck in the rough climate, while they grow here without problems. So, according to the view of an allotment gardener from Northern Germany, everything is also growing exotically on the allotment site "Im Albgrün". Wine and kiwi grow around the sheds, which with a surface of 16 square metres are voluntarily kept small. Allotment gardeners like chatting with their neighbours, but they don't do so over a garden fence. Hedges and fences which are considered by many people as an expression of the narrow mindedness of the allotment gardeners don't exist here. Instead you find a large and idyllic allotment site, visible at a glance.

There are no empty plots which cause problems on this site, because

Karlsruhe is a growing town with a prospering economy. The dream of full employment is a reality here. This means, however, that every spot of ground is a very desirable product: Industry, commerce, building societies, nature protection organisations and other stakeholders fight to get the scarce grounds. It is the more important in such a situation that the allotment gardeners of the "Im Albgrün" site have good contacts with all political parties, represented at the communal council. And they are successful: the planning authorities in the growing town expressly take new locations for allotment gardens into consideration. So in Karlsruhe one really appreciates the value of these green oases.

Moreover, the allotment gardeners of the association "Im Albgrün" undertake many activities, the effects of which reach far beyond the borders of the site. Situated in the residential area of the Western part of the city,

the neighbours like using the site for their recreation. Especially people living in the nearby elderly people's home appreciate this green oasis. However, the allotment gardeners do not only have good contacts with the elderly, they also invest many efforts in working with young people.

The climate of Karlsruhe makes many things easy for the allotment gardeners, but despite this not everything might be successful right from the start. In the association "Im Albgrün" new inexperienced gardeners don't have to worry at all. The gardening advice service of the association is exceptionally well developed so that there is a partner ready to help if any gardening question arises. So, in the association "Im Albgrün", people are gardening together in a relaxed way and not side by side, which shows in a clear way that gardening simply makes people happy.

The allotment association “Wühlmäuse 2000” Hamburg (Germany) received the diploma for innovative projects



Hamburg is a growing town. The senate aims at creating the “modern Hamburg”: Prosperity and quality of life for everyone, a chance for everybody to organise and constitute his life by himself. This concept should in fact include above all the maintenance of allotment sites, because it is proven that green areas improve the quality of life as well as the climate in urban areas. Unfortunately, we notice the contrary: again and again allotment garden sites are considered as potential building grounds and so the tenants have again and again to worry if their sites will continue to exist.

The “Wühlmäuse 2000” have no reason to worry up to now. Their site in the quarter “Bergedorf” is located in the new residential area “Neu-Allermühle Ost” that was created just two decades ago. The competition to get the valuable urban grounds is less high than in the city centre. The di-

rect neighbours are again and again included in the work of the association: people that are not members of the association can rent the associative home to organise meetings and if during their visit at the occasion of the summer celebration they feel that they like gardening, they can immediately enrol on the waiting list. If a person goes for a walk through the site, he gets the impression of the colourful and much diversified gardens. He is not obliged only to watch this scenery, but he can also taste: the visitors can freely pick the fruit from the trees especially planted on the communal areas, which are open to the public.

In the federal competition the allotment gardeners of the association “Wühlmäuse 2000” have mainly impressed by their ecological efforts. The highlight is their exemplary use of water. Around this site you find watering ditches which create a unique reservoir for wild plants and animals.

There are steps in the ditches which allow the allotment gardeners to take water for watering. The person who, however, needs drinking water gets this from a common pipe with a pressure valve – a unique way to get water on an allotment site in Hamburg.

Moreover, in “Bergedorf” everything possible is done for the useful bees: There is an especially laid out meadow for bees offering a lot of food. Information in the information box tells the allotment gardeners which plants are especially bee friendly. Around the site the insects can also feel at ease. By an extensive cultivation, among others with hedges of blackberries, you find many wild plants offering food all year around. Finally, the voles, which are not appreciated by many gardeners, are honoured here: in accordance with the name of the association two species of voles have been nominated as official mascot of the association.

Services offered to their members by the National Allotment Society in Great-Britain



The voice of the Allotments movement

Become a member of The National Allotment Society

Membership of the National Society comes with a raft of benefits from discounts on horticultural products through to initial legal advice and horticultural expertise. To become a members visit www.nsalg.org.uk or call 01536266576

The National Allotment Society (NAS) is the national representative body for the allotment movement in the U.K. As a membership organisation it is our job to represent the views of our members on a national level and raise awareness of the social, cultural and heritage benefits of the allotment movement. We work with government at national and local levels, the media, NGOs, environmental charities and landlords to provide,

promote and preserve allotments for future generations to enjoy.

What we do:

Regional network: We have a regional network of Representatives and Mentors who can give advice and support to associations, councils and plot-holders.

Legal advice: We fight for the rights of allotment holders and advise in regards to tenancy agreements, land disputes, rent rises and misunderstandings.

Allotment disposal: Councils who are considering selling allotment land are obliged to seek the opinion of the National Allotment Society; this enables us to ensure that statutory allotment sites are not disposed of unfairly and that Local Authorities uphold their duty to provide allotment land.

Support for councils: We facilitate regional Allotment Officers Forums, giving local authority Allotment Officers the opportunity to network and share good practice. On a national level we serve the allotment movement by encouraging councils to provide sufficient provision of allotments and statutory allotment sites are not sold off or developed without consultation.

National Allotments Week: Each year, along with broadcasting a serious message about the need to protect our precious remaining allotment sites, we encourage allotment sites to open their gates during the second week of August and celebrate the enduring nature of the allotment movement with their communities.





Benefits of membership

We have a variety of membership types: individual, associations and societies, life, local authorities, landowners and schools, check our lively and informative website and magazine for details of membership categories, discount offers, growing advice, downloadable resources and regular updates.

www.nsalg.org.uk

Regional network: Most areas have a regional panel, which meets on a regular basis to help and support the members in the region, joining the Society gives you automatic membership of this group; where you can also work with others to promote allotment gardening at shows and events.

Quarterly magazine: The Allotment and Leisure Gardener magazine is a free quarterly publication full of gardening advice, horticultural news and information from around the regions. Members' articles and letters are welcomed for publication.

Legal advice and guidance: Whether you need help with a tenancy agree-

ment, land dispute or ideas on how to form and run an association, we can help you. We have an in-house lawyer and a team of regional representatives and mentors, all available to support you and your association.

"The Society's legal advisor was invaluable in offering professional advice and help which has now enabled us to take control of 7 out of 8 allotment sites in Blackpool, and so move to a self-management federation".

Andy Percival, Blackpool Federation of Allotment Associations

Insurance: Bespoke allotment insurance cover is available through Shield Total Insurance, offering our members a 15% discount on all policies taken out. Whether your association needs public liability insurance, cover for your trading hut or a policy which covers for theft of money going missing, Shield can help you. Members are also welcome to take advantage of Shield's full range of services at preferential rates – these include caravan, home, car and tent insurance.

Call 01277 243054 or visit www.shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk/allotment-insurance

Seeds scheme: Kings Seeds is one of the UK's largest commercial seeds companies and every packet sold comes with a no-quibble guarantee. Seeds cost on average 40% less than when bought on the high street and associations receive further discounts totalling 22.5% on bulk orders; along with a £5 voucher for their first ever order. Kings also provide potatoes, onion sets, soft fruit plants and all your garden sundries at reduced prices.

Horticultural advisor: the National Allotment Society offers members individual help and advice on all gardening issues provided by our horticultural expert, as well as regular gardening tips and articles on the website and in the magazine. www.nsalg.org.uk



Support services

Regional Representatives: are members of the management committee of NSALG but also have other additional responsibilities towards the region as follows:

- To represent the Society in the Region
- To provide advice and information on a local basis
- To assist where necessary in the Section 8 Applications process
- To act as a liaison between the regional bodies and the Society's Management
- To actively promote and encourage membership of the Society

Allotment Mentors: The NAS is developing a team of volunteer experts throughout the UK who give help and support to anyone managing or creating allotments. The service is free and the Mentors will work with anyone in the allotment community, so please do not hesitate to get in touch with your Regional Mentor.

The Regional Representatives and the Mentors can provide help with:

- where to go for funding
- how to set up an association
- becoming self-managed
- disability access
- different ways to promote your plots
- working with community groups
- what to do about security concerns
- setting up an allotment project.

Regional contact details

Our origins date from 1901, as a members' co-operative, and today we operate as an Industrial and Provident Society, whereby we are owned, managed and funded by our members.

In 2011, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales kindly agreed to become the Patron of the Society.

The food production role of associative gardens in urban areas ^{1st part}

Jeanne Pourias



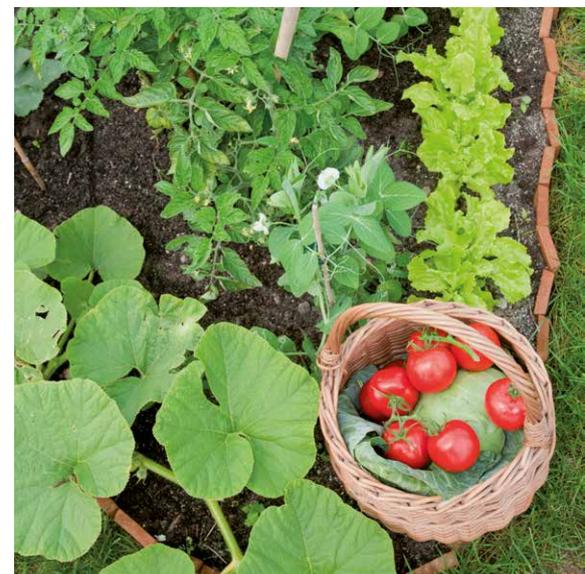
For over a decade, associative gardens⁽¹⁾ in urban areas have been growing in popularity in industrialised countries' towns and cities. Although gardens have always had media coverage, it is not just gardening advice or photos of the most beautiful ornamental gardens that you find in the press since the turn of the millennium: these days it is vegetable gardens that attract attention, installed as part of a local residents' or council's initiative in public or semi-public spaces, challenging the residents' capacity to invest time in abandoned urban spaces. Allotment, shared, community, collective and micro gardens, on the ground or on rooftops ... in New York, Paris or Montreal, you

can no longer keep track of the number of articles about these urban vegetable gardens, in the New York Times or Le Monde, in every press title imaginable, from decorating magazines to specialist publications on economy and finance.

On the ground, this trend is reflected particularly by the different types of gardens. In Europe, the traditional model of gardens, descending from the workers' gardens, are being reformed, driven by the federations of associations: the plots are shrinking, new gardens are being opened at the bottom of blocks of flats, and not just in the suburbs like their predecessors. New models are ap-

pearing, experimenting with ways of collective organisation, proposing cultural events and gardening advice targeted at the urban public, who are less and less qualified in gardening. More and more councils are putting in place programmes designed to meet the needs of allotments, which are flourishing.

The trend that these gardens is evoking a number of questions about both research and operations. Associated vegetable gardens are a new feature in town planning, and the councils must answer the question of their sustainability, especially in dense cities where land prices are extremely high: must gardens be seen as temporary usage of derelict land in cities? Or, at the other end of the scale, must they be permanent? If so, for which purposes?



1) The French research programme Jassur (Jardins Associatifs Urbains), financed by ANR Villes et Bâtiments durables defines "associative gardens" as a group of vegetable gardens presented and managed collectively by a community of gardeners, most commonly for self-consumption, located away from the members' homes.

It is precisely the roles of these urban gardens that I studied during my thesis, primarily their food production role, i.e. the quantitative and qualitative dietary support that they potentially offer to gardeners.

The food production role of gardens can take different shapes. In the United States, those interested in nutrition and public health as well as food education organisations care a great deal about the nutritional benefits that the gardens provide; studies have shown that people involved in community gardening activities consume more fruit and vegetables than those who aren't. The First Lady, Michelle Obama, has even made community gardens the spearhead in the fight against obesity by setting up a vegetable garden in the White House in 2009.

From a more historic view, gardens have often played an important role in providing food for citizens in times of economic or political crises, like during the two world wars in Europe, or even in Russia during the transition from Soviet rule to market economy. Nowadays in Europe, the current economic climate strongly questions the purpose of urban gar-

dens. In France, an INSEE⁽²⁾ study showed that since 2007 (start of the European economic crisis) the proportion of a household budget used for providing food has stopped decreasing, and it is becoming more and more difficult for more modest homes to meet the costs associated with providing food.

In my thesis, it is particularly on this individual level that I chose to study the food production role of gardens. Firstly I sought to understand gardeners' motivations, and the importance in their eyes of the food production role of their garden; then to study in more detail the gardens' produce: what is produced in urban associative gardens? With what returns? What is the destination of the gardens' produce?

All of these questions have been studied in close association with the gardeners: from 2011 to 2013 there were 39 gardeners who were questioned in 12 gardens in Paris and Montreal (4 shared gardens and 4 allotment gardens in Paris, 4 community gardens in Montreal, see Figure 1). We received a very warm welcome from the gardeners, to whom the success of this study is largely owed!

Figure 1: Map of the gardens studied (left: gardens in Montreal; right: gardens in Paris)

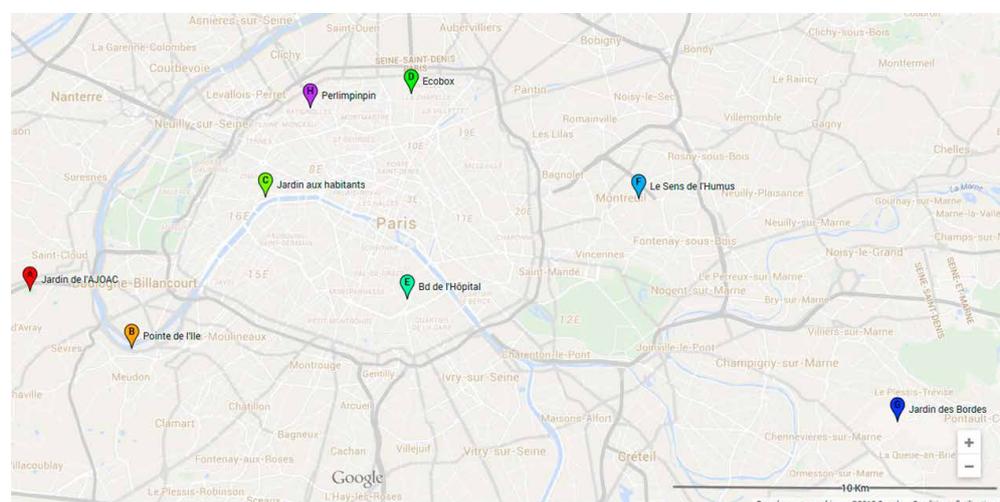
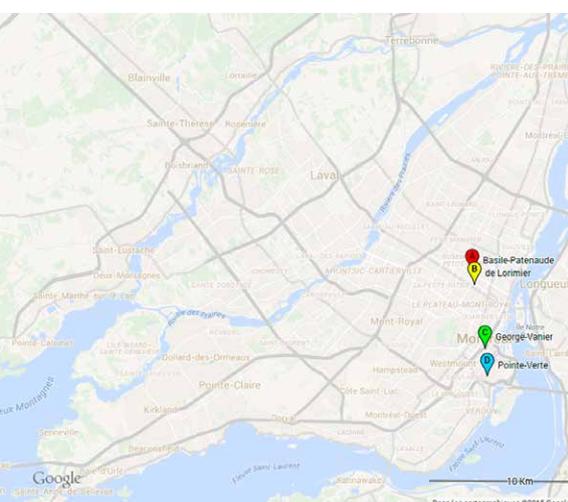




Figure 2: The harvest diary (left: a double page carefully filled in; right: the cover of the diary)

Amongst the 39 gardeners studied, 26 people also agreed to weigh their harvests during one or two growing seasons. This protracted work involved keeping a harvest diary throughout the season (Figure 2), in which the gardener noted the name of the produce harvested, the weight and, on an optional basis, how the garden produce was used (e.g. if they were frozen or scanned).

We also followed these gardeners' plots to observe the plants' growth and the harvests during the season.

Below is a brief summary of the results of this study.

The role of gardens

The gardeners we spoke to described a number of motivations that drive them to spend time in their garden, showing again if still necessary that a strong multi-purpose is in urban associative gardens. The beneficial effects on psychological and physical health, contact with nature, socialising and making new friends in the garden, getting away from urban life, the educational virtues, the garden as a place for leisure ... All of this was described by the gardeners we spoke to. Of course, the purposes attributed to the garden vary from one gardener to another, depending on the personality and expectations

of each one; however, we noted that according to the type of garden, the different purposes were mentioned more or less frequently. So, in the shared gardens of Paris, the social purpose was the primary role mentioned by the gardeners, whilst in the allotment and community gardens of Montreal, it was the food production role that came top. As such, the gardeners' discussions partly reflect the objectives attributed to the gardens by the institutions and networks of associations: Montreal's community gardens and allotment gardens were historically dedicated to food production, and even though today these gardens are equally called upon to play an important recreational and social role, the importance assigned in the past to their role in food production is carried forward in the gardens' organisation (notably the size of the allotments) and their regulations (in the Montreal community garden regulations as in the French allotment garden regulations you will find the obligation to dedicate the majority of the allotment to vegetable growing). On the contrary, the majority of the shared gardens in "intra-muros" Paris are affiliated to the "Main Verte" programme of Paris, which prioritises their social character and their role in local life, relegating their nutritional role to second place.

To be continued



Finland: Collaboration between the Vallila allotment garden and an association for promoting gardening among children and youth

The association "Lasten ja nuorten puutarhayhdistys ry" promotes gardening among children and youth and they have a workshop activity geared towards 16 to 29 year old unemployed youths. The objective is to support them in getting into work life or education. The young people are acquainted with gardening and

sustainable development principles. Their self-esteem is boosted through joint work in a garden with the sense of community that it brings, as well as through socially empowering work and personal coaching. The young people receive individual guidance to education, work life and relevant support services. In this way young

people in risk of marginalization can be helped. The activity has been running since its start in 2011.

An entry requirement for the workshop is the interest of the young person to take part in gardening work. No advance experience or skills related to gardening are required; all



the activities are guided. There are three guides available to supervise the work, together with visiting experts. A workshop work day is six hours long, of which the working time is five hours. The workshop undertakes commissioned works around the city in different yards and gardens.

During the year there are two workshop periods, one starting in August and one in March. Vacancies may be requested at any time. The young people receive a diploma for their work in the workshop and support in looking for further education and work opportunities.

One of the gardens where workshop work has taken place is the Vallila allotment garden. The collaboration spans the summers (May to September) of 2013 and 2014.

The work is undertaken in small groups. The group in Vallila has consisted of four people: a coach and three young people. The work in the allotment garden has consisted in caring for the public joint areas of the garden site. The work is mainly undertaken using machinery owned by "Lasten ja nuorten puutarhayhdistys ry". The allotment garden is billed for materials and consumables needed. "Lasten ja nuorten puutarhayhdistys ry" have insured the workers. The small group gets paid according to their working hours. The allotment garden is billed monthly for the working hours performed.

Japan: The association for Japan allotment garden, an advice organization for the establishment and management of allotment garden sites and the cultivation method in allotments

1. The trend of the allotment gardens in Japan

The first allotment garden in Japan was established in Kyoto in 1924. After that, it spread through to Osaka and Tokyo. However, during the intensification of World War II, they were closed one by one. The only allotment garden, which remained in

1946, was the allotment garden, that was first established in Kyoto. And it was also closed down in 1949 and so all the allotment gardens were lost in Japan.

Moreover, the Farmland Law was enacted in 1952. This law stipulated that only farmers could on principle

own farmland. This law also stipulated that dealing with and renting of farmland was also limited to farmers.

In 1960 and afterwards the economy grew rapidly in Japan. Big cities like Tokyo and Osaka, for example, expanded further and the living environment in the cities got worse. Around





1970, under such city environment conditions, the farmers and citizens in the urban areas collaborated and began to establish allotment gardens.

It was in 1973 that we organized the

Chigusadai Gardening Circle and established the allotment garden.

Since the existence in Japan of the Farmland Law we were not able to create a system of allotment gardens by lending and renting farmland.

Therefore, we created an entry obligation as utilization method of an allotment garden. A farmer establishes and manages the allotment garden. Citizens pay an annual entrance fee and then use the allotment specified by the owner. A gardener (allotment user) yearly renews a use contract.

In 1975, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) accepted that the entrance utilizing method is proper for allotment gardening. And so the allotment gardens spread. Then, some city authorities considered establishing an allotment garden. In order for city authorities to be able to establish an allotment garden, they have to rent farmland from a farmer. Therefore, the MAFF enacted the „special exemption law to the Agricultural Land Law“, which authorizes the renting of grounds for an allotment garden lot in 1989. Moreover, the following year MAFF enacted a

law promoting the establishment of the allotment gardens.

2. The present condition of the allotment gardens in Japan

Now, there are various types of allotment gardens in Japan. The number of allotment gardens surveyed by the MAFF amounts to 4,113 sites.

However, this figure does only take into consideration the sites, which were established and based according to the legal procedure. This number does not include allotments that have been created before the new law and still continue today.

In addition, the allotment garden established following the legal stipulation are distinguished according to their period of rent i.e. five years or less on principle.

In these allotment gardens, there is no possibility to perform a proper preparation of the soil or to have a crop rotation because the period of rent is not sufficiently long. Moreover, the gardeners cannot constitute their own organization. For this reason, allotments with a bad management increase on these allotment sites.

On another side you see that the allotment gardens, which continue from before the passing of the law, there is a good management, because the gardeners use the same plot for a long time. At some allotment garden sites, gardeners organize themselves and are performing a horticulture activity.

In Japan, since there is high-temperature and much humidity, the growth of a plant is very early. For this reason, the work of weeding out is very tight and it becomes difficult for us to use a large allotment.

Moreover, the land price of the city area in Japan is very high, for example, the average land price in Tokyo Gina amounts to 14,042,000 yen/per



m² (112,336€/per m²). Therefore the entrance fee (or rental fee) for an allotment is very high. Following from this, we consider in Japan that 30m² is a suitable size for an allotment plot.

In addition, the fee for an allotment is currently varying very much. For example, an annual fee changes from 3,900 yen/m² (31.13€/m²) till 200 yen/m² (1.6€/m²)

On an allotment managed by a farmer, a city office or an NPO organisation, an allotment plot measures at least 15-30m². And the annual charges per plot is 6,000 yen (48 €)/30m² – up to 15,000 yen (120 €)/per 30m².

The allotment garden run by the corporate management called “my farm”, which have been increasing in number recently, are collecting the charge of 67,500 yen (540 €)/per 30m² – until 117,000 yen (936 €)/per 30m²

Although it is a very rare example, one has to mention the allotment garden situated in the good residential district of the central part of Tokyo. The annual charge for an allotment of 1m² is 113,400 yen (907 €)/per plot. If this is converted into a plot of 30m², the charge will amount to 3,402,000 yen (2,722 €).

In Tokyo you find an „agricultural experience farm“ established by a farmer who received instruction of the Agriculture Committee. In this case, a farmer grows vegetables, and the citizens follow the farmer’s directions, experience so to sow, plant, cultivation management and harvest. Citizens cannot cultivate the farmland. The agricultural experience farm charges in this case an annual conversion of 40,000 yen (320 €)/per 30m² up to 45,000 yen (360 €)/per 30m².

Moreover, the usage of an allotment garden varies as well very much. Cultivation of fresh vegetables for a

healthy lifestyle, leading of various philanthropy activities, educational projects for school children and adults, teaching to enjoy a rich life fashion, aiming to obtain high profit by allotment garden management etc...

Currently in Japan, social management which gives top priority to the market economy called „Abenomics“ is performed, and the allotment gardens run by a corporate management are increasing in number.

The allotment gardens run by non-profit organizations tend a little to stagnate.

3. The aims of the allotment gardens, which Association for Japan Allotment Garden stimulates.

We promote following ideas for the allotment garden, which we consider as good:

- 1) Persons entitled to establish an allotment: farmers, an organization of farmers, an organization related to agriculture, city (town, village) authorities or an NPO organization. Even, if a person establishing allotment gardens is an incorporated company etc., we consider that their establishment is good if they do not make high profits while managing the allotment gardens.
- 2) We think that the management of an allotment garden is good if it has one or the other of the following items:
 - a) The allotment garden has a user (gardeners’) organisation and a good partnership exists between the representative and the allotment garden owner.
 - b) Although there is no user organisation on site, an owner can get and establish a users’ cooperation.
 - c) A user uses his allotment satisfactorily and cooperates in the management of the whole

allotment garden site.

- d) There is a rule about management and use of the allotment garden.
- e) A user alternates mutually and helps each other if needed.

3) The following usages of an allotment garden are desirable:

- a) The user can use the same allotment during a long period.
- b) A user cultivates his allotment and grows the crops he desires.
- c) A user strives to improve the soil where crops grow up.
- d) A user understands the problem of repeated planting, and so performs a crop-rotation.
- e) A user fully performs weeding-out management in order not to cause problems to the surrounding users.

4) We are aware of the potential strong growth of weeds and think that 30-50m² per allotment plot is a good size for an allotment.

4. Instruction & support organisations for the establishment, the spreading and development of a desirable allotment garden.

1) We increase the model of a good type of allotment garden and stimulate the organisation and the networking.

2) Therefore, we appoint a certified allotment garden coordinator in each area and nominate the specialists, who work for the whole country. The specialist is called an allotment garden master. Moreover, there is also staff ready to guide the allotment garden coordinator.

5. The allotment garden coordinator and the allotment garden master

1) We have established the allotment garden coordinator’s qualification. He is the leader of

allotment gardening in his area. The allotment garden coordinators pass an examination on the allotment garden and then become an allotment garden coordinator (2005)

- 2) They teach a landowner (farmhouse) the method to establish an allotment garden, they teach the citizens how to use an allotment garden and how to garden on an allotment.
- 3) Now, there are 56 allotment garden coordinators (Hokkaido, Miyagi Prefecture, Tochigi Prefecture, Saitama Prefecture, Tokyo, Chiba Prefecture, Yamanashi Prefecture, Shizuoka Prefecture, Osaka, Shimane Prefecture, Ehime Prefecture, and Nagasaki Prefecture that means 12 prefectures). 46 people among these coordinators continue the present activity.
- 4) We chose this year ten persons as allotment garden masters. They have professional expertise about allotment gardening. They work as advisers (lecturers) in response to the request coming

from different domestic places. And they also perform advice and instruction to the allotment garden coordinators. We choose as allotment garden masters talented people, who have been excellent for the past year.

Have been named allotment garden masters in Japan:

Mr Yohinori KASUYA
Mr Yoshikaru MEGURIYA
Mr Yusuke KATO
Mrs Kasumi HIRAOKA
Mrs Kaoru HIRAOKY
Mrs Yoshuo HASEGAWA
Mr Shigeo MATSUMARA
Mr Tomoyuki KUAKAWA

News from the federations

A. NATIONAL MEETINGS

a) Belgium

1st October 2016 Genk

Congress of the Flemish federation, organized every two years. The subject will be the ecological gardening. All the members of the local associations will be invited. It is a form of thanking them, a means to stimulate the social cohesion and to enable an exchange of ideas.

b) Finland

July 9th 2016 'Kohtaamispäivä' (a one-day Get-Together Event) for all allotment gardeners within the Finnish Federation will be arranged in Vallila Allotment Garden in Helsinki.

c) France

Organization of courses for the executive board members and gardeners concerning a natural gardening in relationship with the program of the Ministry for Ecology "Ecophyto". This program aims at reducing the pesticides outside the agricultural zones by half until 2018.

22nd April 2016

A day study meeting "Allotments and climate deregulations" with the intervention of Mr Claude FIGUREAU, botanist, Director of the Botanical Garden in Nantes.

23rd April 2016:

General assembly

d) Germany

June 12th, 2016, in Bremen

Opening celebration of the „Day of the Garden“.

4th – 6th March 2016

in Bad Kissingen

Management

Subject: communication adapted to the people addressed

22nd – 24th April 2016 in Mainz

Public relations

Subject: The basic rules for taking digital photos

27th – 29th May 2016 in Lübeck

Legal matters I,

Subject: Allotment rent agreements: from the contents to the judicial procedure to quid the plot

24th – 26th June 2016 in Osnabrück

Gardening advice I

Subject: Harvest me – an ecological vegetable cultivation on allotments

2nd – 4th September 2016 in Bad Mergentheim

Subject: The increase of the ecological and sustainable value of allotment sites

23rd – 25th September in Eisenach

Gardening advice II

Subject: Creation of community sites including playgrounds

21st – 23rd October 2016 in Berlin

Legal matters II

Subject: Zoning and construction plans – their significance for allotment associations

e) Japan

Seminars:

The Welfare power of an allotment garden

With the allotment garden make a city strong for disasters such as an earthquake.

Meeting:

Installation of a regional federation in the Northeast Area of the country.

f) Luxembourg

20th March 2016

National congress in Niederanven

g) Sweden

April 21st until April 24th 2016:

Nordic Garden Exhibition in Stockholm,

h) Switzerland

27th.May – 29th May 2016

eco Nature congress in Basel

9th September to 10th September 2016

final meeting of the COST Action TU1201 in Basel

Date to be fixed

Cost Network meeting in Biel

Date to be fixed

Biodiversity 2020

2nd November 2016

Biodiversity in the residential areas in Bern

B. DOCUMENTS

a) Belgium

The Flemish government supports the creation and the lay-out of allotment garden parks.Call for projects 2015

Our federation again gave its competent advice to authorities and associations while writing their demand and assembling the documents for the dossier.

Beginning of 2016 Minister Schauvliege approved 30 projects for allotment gardens in order to support financially the creation and lay-out of new allotments or the extension and/or modernisation of existing allotments.

Both for the existing and new allotments the main goal is the increase of the social cohesion. The allotments sites should be a meeting place for different generations and cultures. They should contribute to stimulate the creation of a good group or neighbourhood dynamic. The final goal is the autonomous management of the site.

By this initiative Minister Schauvliege

hopes that people will again have contact with a healthy food, with different flavours. In addition gardening constitutes an alternative form of physical exercise and stimulates an active life in the fresh air.

You can find more information on the criteria and the regulation concerning the financial support under: <http://www.ipo-online.be/Projecten/lopen-deprojecten/Volkstuinen%20in%20Vlaanderen/Pages/volkstuienieren.aspx>

Our federation has the heavy burden to start the realization of all these different projects in spring 2015.

b) Denmark

No new documents, but all documents have been updated and modernized.

c) Finland

No documents, but launch of a new website for the Federation

d) Germany

Weekly garden advice by dpa

Monthly garden advice on Internet

Monthly newsletter

The review "Der Fachberater" 1-4/2015

Grüne Schriftenreihe no.238 - 244 in form of a CD

Activity report 2011 – 2014

Financial report 2011 – 2014

e) Japan

Documents concerning the installation of an allotment garden master

f) Luxembourg

Review: Garden & Home: 9 issues per year for all the members

Pocket booklet

C. USEFUL INFORMATION

a) Belgium

Publication in 2016 of a brochure with approximately 30 pages concerning an ecological gardening for beginners

b) Germany

Preparation of the 4th federal congress 2017 in Berlin together with the IGA 2017

c) Finland

A working committee is set up aiming at creating an Environment Programme for the allotment gardens.

The eldest local allotment garden association in Finland – Niihaman Ryhmäpuutarhaydistys – will celebrate its 100 Anniversary.

d) Japan

Directives for the establishment and stable management of an allotment garden with a many sided function.

Relation of an allotment garden and the area – Allotment garden activity of the Chigusadai Gardening Circle.

e) Switzerland

Revision of the territorial planning law (proposal). Lobbying of the members of the federal Parliament 2016 – 2019

D. LAW CHANGINGS

a) Germany

1st trimestre 2015 – New issue of the 11th edition of the comment concerning the federal allotment law

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