

Luxembourg: The communal authorities of Steinsel start an innovative project

2013 planning

2014 creation of the site

On 30th September 2014 many people came to the new community garden site in Steinsel. The mayor Jean-Pierre Klein welcomed the president of the Luxembourgish allotment federation Martine Mergen, the honorary president Jean Kieffer, members of Parliament and members of the communal council of Steinsel, representatives of the allotment federation as well as many gardening friends. A nice late summer weather helped to make people feel at ease.

The members of the youth house and zealous allotment gardeners of the new site provided people with food and drinks.



The garden in Steinsel is an original concept mixing traditional allotment gardens and community gardens. It was underlined in the speeches that there were many people interested in getting one of the 24 individual plots as well as the four community gardens. Special importance is given to teamwork and the communication between the gardeners on this site.

On the community plots 6 or 7 families work together. Seeds, plants and later on the harvest is of common concern.

The youth club has also one garden plot.

The garden is surrounded by a lawn with wild flowers on which old species of local fruit trees have been planted.



The originality of this project resides in the fact that straight from the beginning, the future gardeners were involved in the discussions on both conception and realisation.

This is the reason why the project, that has been put into practice, has a mixed character. It is halfway between a traditional allotment site and a community garden. A great diversity of people have in fact participated in these discussions. Together with the future gardeners the plot size, the needs in infrastructure, the internal regulation as well as the plan were fixed. The gardeners have as well participated in the delimitation of the plots and the construction of the ways....

Additionally, in the functioning of the garden one has to share the water, the compost bins, the maintenance work, the common parts etc. Therefore, the notion “community” remains very important.

Principle of planning:

- To take into account the real needs of the interested people
- To include the future gardeners in the project straight from the planning phase onwards
- Flexibility: starting of the garden even when not everything was yet finished and thus leaving the possibility for later adaptations.

One of the main challenges was to succeed in unifying the different visions: the communal authorities wanted to see a “clean” garden, a certain number of gardeners who still cultivate the plot as did their grandparents in Portugal or in other parts of the world and are very individualistic and finally other participants, newcomers or not, more modern and concerned about the environment and the “community” character.

Another challenge was to introduce the notion of a participative and progressive project, completely new both for the communal authorities and part of the gardeners.

The gardeners exchange techniques, help and recipes. All the gardeners seem to be very happy about this garden, the fellowship and the exchange between people. The absence of a completed infrastructure during the first year caused only few problems, except for the lack of water during the dry period in spring.

At the end of the test period (2014) the gardeners met in order to modify the functioning (management of the compost, the collective sheds.....), the internal regulation as well as the plans of infrastructure. For the establishment of this first evaluation and the necessary adaptations, the asbl 4Motion helped us quite a lot. For example, the gardeners chose to divide the group into three sub-groups, each one responsible for the compost, the shed and one part of the collective maintenance work. (weeds on the common paths etc.)

This project is an answer to the demand to get a plot and to have again contact with the earth, but as well the great need for social links. The proof thereof is that half of the gardeners have already a garden at home, but they mostly come here more because of the community than for the production of vegetables. The ecological aspect also plays an important part in the motivation of most of the gardeners.

One can see the great satisfaction of the people living nearby and the passers-by following the transformation of the sweet corn field cultivated in a conventional way into an organic garden which is very lively.

The garden plots are separated by wood coming from the forest owned by the commune of Steinsel. The ways are made of wood chops also coming from this forest.

Further projects are in preparation:

- Termination of the infrastructure (well with a pump, 3 collective sheds, greenhouse)
- Construction of ecological toilets nearby (compost toilets without water)
- Possible future enlargement of the garden according to the demands of the inhabitants. Not necessarily according to the same model!
- For the moment the idea of the creation of an administrative structure (asbl, club) was not followed even if from time to time the gardeners speak about it.



