



**BDG** BUNDESVERBAND  
DEUTSCHER GARTENFREUNDE E. V.

# Final Brochure

**International Seminar of  
the *Office International***

**Berlin, 22 - 25 August 2013**

## IMPRESSUM

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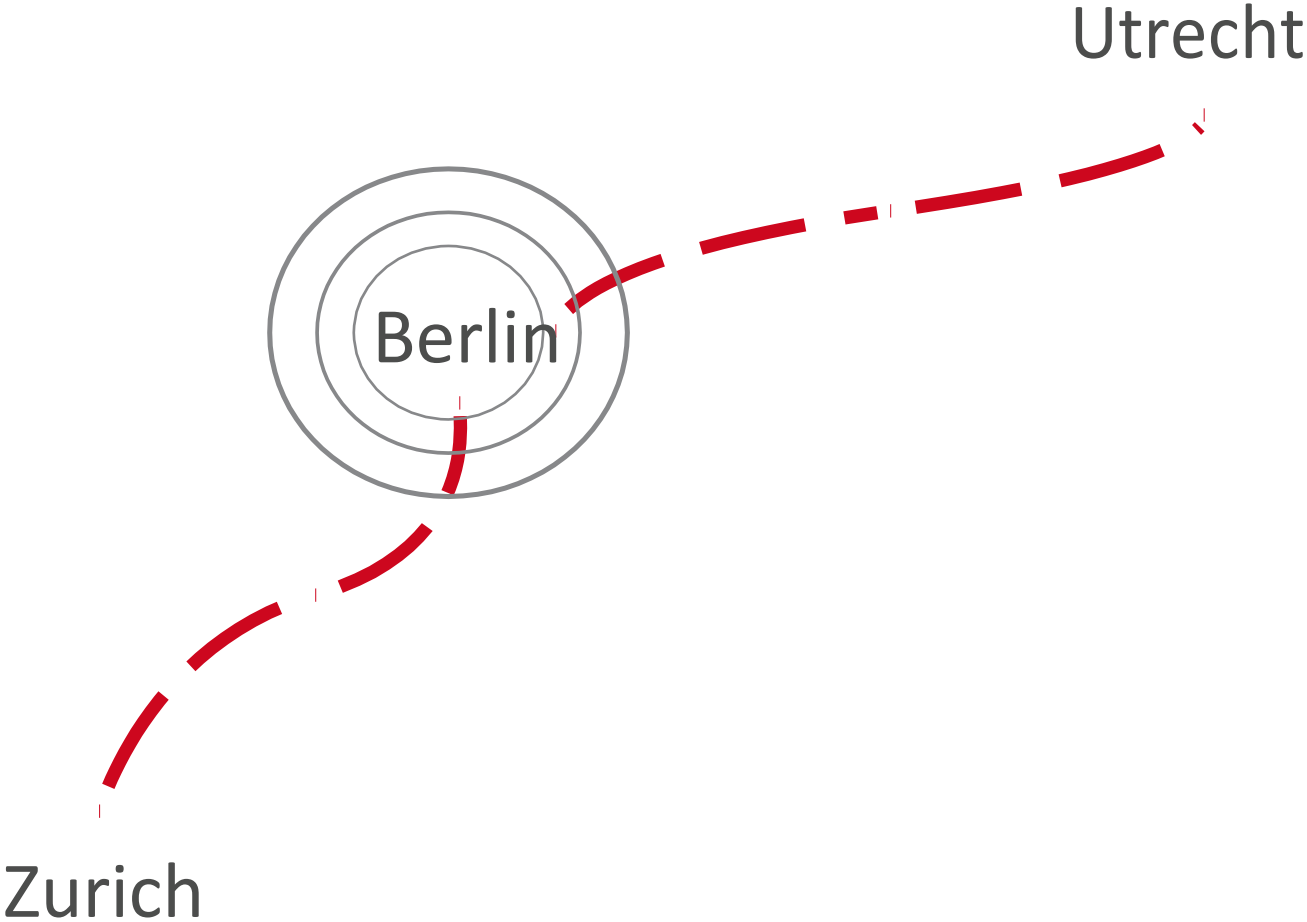


Office International du Coin de Terre  
et des Jardins Familiaux a.s.b.l.

 **BDG** BUNDESVERBAND  
DEUTSCHER GARTENFREUNDE E. V.

# International Seminar of the *Office International*

**Berlin, 22 - 25 August 2013**



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# EDITORIAL

## We, too, need Europe!



**Malou Weirich**, Secretary  
General of the Office  
International du Coin de Terre et  
des Jardins Familiaux

In 1926 the European allotment gardening association, i.e. the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux (Office) was founded. It has been and still is the organisation's objective to preserve and further develop allotment gardens throughout Europe.

Much has been achieved and yet, much remains to be done. Any issues have first to be tackled at the lowest level. There it is much easier to find solutions and launch projects. The exchange of experience, controversial discussions and implementation of joint projects on an international level will provide further enrichment.

We have to understand that our organisation can put out only what we put in. Together we have to design a strategy that takes us into the future. It was the purpose of a seminar held in Berlin in late August to find out how we can close the divide between the reality of allotment gardening and its image.

More than ever before we have to make people understand that we are top experts in our field and that we keep adapting to the society for remaining in this position. We have to make the numerous innovative projects of our associations known to underline that each of them is different and unique.

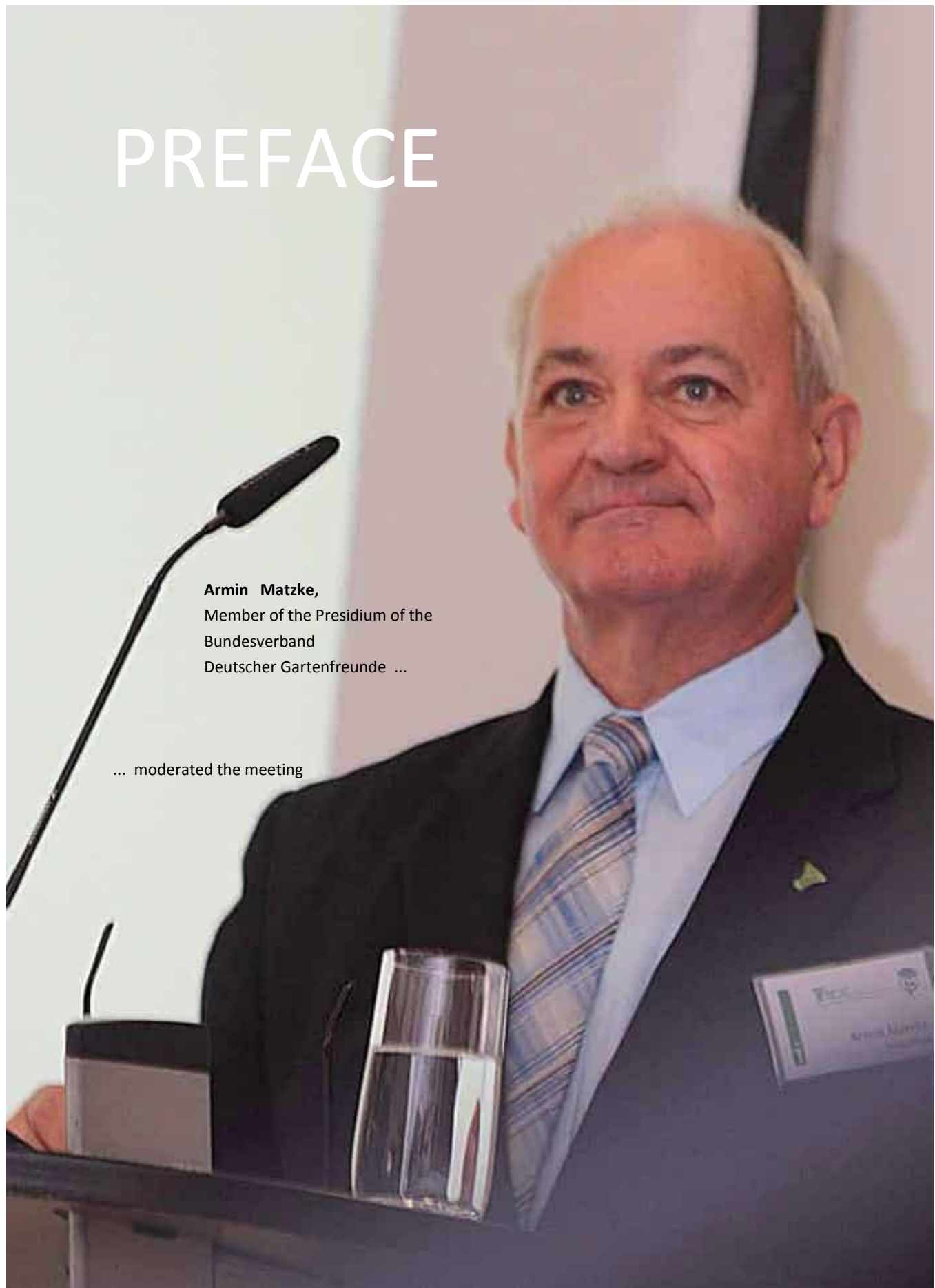
We have to go on representing our interests in the European Union and in the Council of Europe. With our membership in the pan-European organisation Europa Nostra we intend to enhance our image and the support our efforts on the European level.

We have to find the most suitable communication strategies so that everybody understands our message stating that allotment gardens will be necessary for all also in future. Conferences, seminars, meetings are events that attract media and should be used for optimum marketing. In addition to that they mobilise many people and we have to use them for preparing our future together as the African proverb says: "If you want to move quickly, you have to walk alone. If you want to go far, you should walk with others."

# PREFACE

**Armin Matzke,**  
Member of the Presidium of the  
Bundesverband  
Deutscher Gartenfreunde ...

... moderated the meeting







**Dr Norbert Franke,**  
president of Bundesverband  
Deutscher Gartenfreunde

Esteemed participants from eleven countries in the international seminar of the Office International in Berlin.

The umbrella organisation of approximately 12 million allotment gardeners in 14 European countries has adopted important resolutions for the future at its 36th congress in Copenhagen in 2011.

These resolutions focus on presenting as a so-called "thread" the significance of allotment gardening in general and the work of the individual allotment gardeners as well as the numerous contributions of their organisations that reach far beyond the boundaries of the allotment garden areas till the next congress takes place in 2014 at Utrecht. This is to be achieved by finding out how we can bring these contributions to the attention of the public and by creating plans for further activities.

# Participants of the international seminar of the Office International in Berlin

In a three-stage action programme and three central events the member countries of the Office intend to define criteria that show how these contributions made by the allotment gardeners in responding to their social responsibility are perceived and assessed by the society.

As main approaches have been defined two aspects that focus on the following questions:

- In what way are the contributions made by allotment gardeners taken into account on all political levels before decisions are made?
- How do the media reflect the fact that allotment gardening is an important aspect of social culture and makes important contributions to the society in each country, in particular by ensuring a good quality of life for the people?

What are the

- educational functions and
- the health functions and
- the economic functions in addition to
- the social functions,
- the ecological functions and
- the urban planning functions?

For finding answers and for drawing necessary conclusions for the future we have asked questions at the study conference in Zurich in 2012. Questions that were answered on the inter-

national seminar in Berlin and the answers to which will be included in a strategy paper regarding the future of European allotment gardening to be adopted at the 2014 congress in Utrecht.

For this purpose we will have several presentations at this seminar by the European leagues reflecting on the various facets of this issue; in workshops the member organisations will exchange their experiences and presentations on selected projects from three countries will show concrete examples for the achievements of allotment gardening.

For showing to the public their will to act jointly the member states of the Office will celebrate the European Day of the Garden in connection with the seminar.

On this occasion we will plant in an allotment garden area a European crab-apple tree (in 2013 tree of the year in Germany) as "Tree of Community".

During the same event we will hand over the European awards for innovative projects.

In addition to these activities the participants and guests will have the opportunity to have an exchange on the much cited "green oases" and acquire information on allotment gardening in the European member states.

Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde wishes us all a successful meeting which will hopefully bring us another step forward to the Congress at Utrecht.

# Dear friends of gardening,

I am very glad that I can welcome you for your international seminar to Berlin for and on behalf of Senator Müller in my position as the permanent secretary who is responsible for allotment gardens. He asked me to convey his apologies and heartfelt greetings. I hope you had a pleasant arrival yesterday and a successful General Assembly.

During your stay you will find that Berlin is always worth the effort coming here. What makes Berlin attractive are not only its many sights, lots of cultural offers and clubs but also the many green and open spaces. Berlin is a green city. Nearly 44 percent of the city's area is covered with forests, fields, water course, allotment gardens, parks or sport grounds.

The 73,000 allotment gardens with a total size of 3,000 ha cover approximately 3 % of the cities land. With its number of allotment gardens the Berlin association is one of the biggest in terms of membership in Germany. In 2011 it celebrated its 110th anniversary. You have decided that the achievements of allotment gardening and their reflection in the media and in political decision making should be the subject of your seminar. More than 110 of activities of the association mean also commitment for the benefit of allotment gardening during this entire period. Organised allotment gardening has enormous socio-political significance in Berlin. In allotment gardens people from different social strata live together and share their interests. Working for the preservation of the allotment gardens und the manifold social activities like events for children and elderly, summer and children's parties, collecting donations for socially disadvantaged or disabled persons or, as in the recent past, for allotment gardeners in other cities who

suffered losses due to the flood - these activities that were organised by the district units and by the Berlin organisation show the commitment and social value of the allotment gardeners' associations. Moreover, the Berlin hobby gardeners in the 925 allotment garden areas tend the paths and common greens in addition to their own gardens.

With many projects like herb gardens, gardens for school children, senior or disabled persons, nature trails, exhibitions and drama performances the allotment gardening associations make active contributions to the life in the city and open themselves for the entire Berlin population. The fact that the association has begun to create a network together with other green organisations and gardening initiatives, the association's setting up a hall on allotment gardening each at Grüne Woche, their participation in municipal events like district festivals or days on the environment and their proposed involvement in the international horticultural exhibition IGA 2017 show that the Berlin allotment gardeners are orientated towards the future and keep developing.

All this work is done by the officials and allotment gardeners on a voluntary basis in their leisure time. Politicians in Berlin are well aware of this. Even if we are not always able to fulfil all wishes I still believe that the allotment gardening initiatives and politicians in Berlin are collaborating well. Allotment gardeners are important partners of politics. On district and city state level there are many contacts, e.g. during panel discussions or walks with politicians through allotment garden areas, and we are cooperating closely. In 6 of the 12 Berlin districts and in my administration we have special



Christian Gaebler  
Permanent secretary, Senat  
administration for urban development  
and environment, Berlin

committees dealing with allotment gardens. These committees consist of representatives from various associations, parties, organisations and administrations and discuss a wide range of subjects with expertise so that together we can find solutions to any issues.

Because of the significance of allotment gardens for urban development, social aspects and ecology in Berlin we intend to preserve them wherever this is possible. 82 % of the Berlin allotment garden areas have long-term protection, another 9% are protected at least until 2020.

Today's event and the "European Day of the Garden" on Saturday are very suitable for presenting a strong international allotment garden community and its activities for the benefit of society and for a green environment. In this spirit I wish the meeting lots of success and all of you a pleasant stay to Berlin.



**Chris Zijdeveld,**  
President of the Office International

## Dear friends of gardening,

what I saw and experienced with your members during the past year is quite convincing.

I visited a garden where a group of elderly ladies who each had had an allotment garden in the past and who were no longer able to tend these gardens each on her own, together tended one garden.

I have seen that there is in Vienna, almost in the centre of the city, an allotment gardening area that shows that we belong in the centre of the cities and should not be displaced to their margins.

I have seen how disabled persons are getting assistance in tending their own gardens.

I have experienced how allotment gardeners are cultivating ancient or rare plant species or varieties.

And I do keep wondering how new words and expressions suddenly become so popular.

We have been tending community gardens and urban gardens for decades.

But we have to tell the world about that, too.

When I wanted to get information on interesting projects at our annual conference in the Netherlands I heard nothing initially.

It took a while until one man started to talk about the collaboration of his gardening area with a home for the elderly. When they perceived my enthusiastic reaction to this report four other participants got up and said:

"But that is nothing, we are doing the same."

And this is my point: we have to become proud again and tell the world how good we are!

Dear friends,  
unfortunately we have come to the end of some successful days once more.  
I am very glad that we have all cooperated in a very good atmosphere.

I thank our German friends, especially their president Dr Norbert Franke, for their excellent work.

And I do hope that many will join our 2014 Congress at Utrecht.

You can find information on the congress on our website:  
**[www.utrecht2014.org](http://www.utrecht2014.org)**

Thank you very much and good bye.

# Guests of honour, friends of gardening, ladies and gentlemen,

"If you do not think about the future, you will not have any" wrote Goethe a long time ago, yet, it is still true.

For one year we have been working on the subject of the 2014 congress "Focus on Allotments".

Here in Berlin we have to answer the questions which we asked last year in Zurich so that next year we can adopt an adequate strategy. The subject of our current seminar "The benefits of the allotment garden movement and their efficient reflection in public media as well as in political decisions" allows us to discuss how we can close the divide between the reality of allotment gardening and our image among politicians and the people in general.

Within this context we have to make politicians and the people understand that with our gardens and allotment areas we are

- 1) top experts in our field,
- 2) varied and
- 3) unique.

For preserving these three advantages we have to

- keep renewing ourselves and adapting to the permanently changing world and new needs of the people for remaining ahead of things;
- make the many innovative projects implemented in our associations/areas known outside to prove that we are varied and unique;

- work passionately on association and federation level to make our efforts sustainable;
- adhere to ethics and strict rules to get support from the people and authorities;
- last but not least apply appropriate communication and even marketing strategies.

Yes, even our associations and federations need communication and marketing strategies. These strategies must suit the respective local needs. The message, i.e. the answer to the question "What benefit do the allotment gardens generate for the society?" must reach the members and non-members, politicians and people in a clear language they can understand.

For that reason we have to ensure not only that the content of the messages fits the local needs; we also have to ensure that the message is spread with adequate words so that the people we want to reach can understand it.

Associations and federations, including those of allotment gardeners, have a great future lying ahead. However, the traditional working methods have to be altered. We have to be flexible so that we can motivate both young and older people and also volunteers, approach all ranks of the population and convince politicians and authorities of the benefits allotment gardens bring for all and everyone.

Let us use this seminar to critically study our environment, the new tasks, the needs and challenges and create the basis for positive action and pave the way into a great future.

The golden age does not lie behind but in front of us.



**Malou Weirich**  
Secretary General of the  
Office International



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# Chapter 1



# Summary of the results of the study conference in Zurich, 2012

Good morning. I am glad that after our event in Zurich I can welcome you to Berlin today.

Last year at Zurich we had very interesting discussions in the working groups and I hope that we will now have the opportunity to discuss these issues in greater detail. Before doing so I thank Walter Schaffner and Theo Geiser for the excellent organisation.

In Zurich the working groups defined the following questions that should be discussed at our meeting in Berlin:

- Are our public relations able to attract the attention of the politicians to our model and our ideas so that they are taken into account in decision making?
- How can we make our allotment garden areas accessible to that our achievements become visible and can be appreciated?
- Which instruments can help us to bridge the gap between our image of ourselves and the image others have of us and to improve our image?
- How can we make the public and politicians understand what allotment gardens are and which benefits they bring?
- How can we convince our members that it is important to do something for improving our image and how can we communicate with each other in this regard?
- How can we acquire funds for action research (a form of collective and self-reflexive research done by participants in interaction with others to enhance their own

**Ton Tuis**, Vice Chairman of the Dutch Association of Allotment Gardens

actions and their understanding of these actions) and for good practice research (question: what are moments of success and how can we develop and build on this success in future?)?

- Will all allotment garden associations/organisations have to open for the public?
- How important is it to make our projects and efforts better known to the public?
- Is it important to make our efforts better known?
- How can we present a positive image to organisations that are not yet members of our federation, the media, politicians and the public? What name should the Office International use in advertising for itself and which instruments (i.e. Twitter and Facebook) can be used for this end?

The main task of the seminar will be to answer these questions. My colleague Norbert Franke will explain in greater detail later on how these questions will be discussed during the seminar.

At this point I will disclose some of the information about the international congress to be held in 2014 at Utrecht. Of course I hope that I will meet all of you at this congress.

A new item on the agenda for the international congress twenty fourteen at Utrecht is the visual presentation of allotment gardening in each member country by means of a PowerPoint-presentation or a video film. The point is that you should show which image you want to create for allotment



gardening in your country. We hope that all countries and federal states will make a contribution for this item of the agenda. The contributions will be presented by Jack de Vries, former permanent secretary in the Dutch ministry of defence and election campaign consultant for Jan Peter Balkenende, our former five times prime minister.

Mr de Vries has already prepared a proposal which you may use as basis for your presentations.

Imagine that the existence of the allotment gardens in your country, your region or your city was at stake. Imagine further, that you would get the opportunity to explain within five minutes during a political meeting to explain why the threatened gardens must be preserved. You define yourselves which aspects you want to stress. However, you should consider that the message must be clearly understood by everyone irrespective of the language they speak.

This afternoon Mr Wim Hoentjen will show two examples illustrating how you could tackle this task.

I wish you a very successful seminar.





**Dr . Norbert Franke,**  
President of Bundesverband  
Deutscher Gartenfreunde

## The way from Zurich to Utrecht passes Berlin

**The umbrella organisation for approximately 12 million allotment gardeners in 14 European countries has approved fundamental resolutions for its future at its 36th congress held in Copenhagen in 2011.**

These resolutions focus on pointing out the significance of allotment gardening in general, of the work done by the individual gardeners and the many activities of the individual organisations that reach far beyond the boundaries of the allotment garden areas in a so-called "thread" until the next congress that will be held in 2014 at Utrecht.

Part of this activity will be to find out how these activities can be brought to the attention of politicians and the public and to define ways of ensuring this in future.

In a three-stage action programme and three central events the member countries of the Office intend to define criteria that show how the contributions made by the allotment

gardeners in responding to their social responsibility are perceived and appreciated by the society. After the Zurich meeting two main aspects have been defined for this Berlin seminar that focus on the following questions:

In what way are the contributions made by allotment gardeners taken into account on all political levels before decisions are made?

How do the media reflect the fact that allotment gardening is an important aspect of social culture and makes important contributions to the society in each country, in particular by ensuring a good quality of life for the people?

For enabling the congress at Utrecht to deal with these issues and to draw necessary conclusions for the future questions were asked at the 2012 study meeting at Zurich. These questions were answered at the Berlin seminar and the answers will contribute to a paper on the strategy of European allotment gardening to be adopted by the 2014 congress at Utrecht.

For this purpose several presentations at the Berlin seminar contributed by the European leagues reflected on the various facets of this issue, in workshops the member organisations exchanged their experiences and selected projects from three countries presented concrete examples for the

achievements of allotment gardening.

The lecture by professor K. Neumann on "Allotment Gardens and Allotment Gardeners Through the Ages – From Gardens for the Poor to Factors of Wealth in Urban Culture" and the contribution on "Allotment Gardens in the Media" by the journalist Deike Diening presented ways that may be used by allotment gardening for defending its claim to being part of the culture of society and to do this with such a public impact that the fact that allotment gardening will remain a necessity also in future becomes an inherent element in all decisions regarding its long-term preservation.

That this society needs the "green oases" in all their various forms has been underlined in the contributions made by Christian Weber, president of Bremische Bürgerschaft (the Bremen parliament) and by Dr von Zanen, mayor of the Dutch city of Amstelveen.

With regard to the Utrecht congress to be held in August 2014 it has become clear that the European leagues have to strive for collaboration with political decision makers even more consistently and that they have to use concrete projects for making the social, ecological and urban development functions of allotment gardening better known to the public. This applies even more for our competence in education and health and last but not least for our role in the economy.

# Allotment gardeners plant a symbol

**For showing to the public their will to act jointly the member states of the Office used the seminar as occasion to once more to celebrate the "European Day of the Garden".**

On that day they planted in an allotment garden area as symbol for their community a European crab-apple tree which is "Tree of the year 2013" in Germany.

During the same event nine the European awards were handed over to four countries for outstanding projects.

They are:

## List of participants

### Award for organic gardening

Germany	Hamburg	AGA Neugrabener Moor
Germany	Amberg	AGA An der Vils
Netherlands	Groningen	AGA Stadspark
Netherlands	Utrecht	AGA De Driehok

### Award for social activities

Germany	Dresden	AGA Dresden-Altleuben
Germany	Karlsruhe	AGA Verband der Gartenfreunde Karlsruhe
France	Marseille	AGA Die Kleingärten von Mazargues

### Award for innovative projects

United Kingdom	Bridgend County Borough	AGA Bron Fair
United Kingdom	Torfaen County Borough	Cold Barn Farm Association/ Abersychan - School for children at risk

In addition to these activities the participants and guests had the opportunity to have an exchange on the much cited "green oases" and acquire information on allotment gardening in the European member states.



# 22

## Chapter 2 Presentations



**Professor Klaus Neumann**, Expert for nature conservation and protection of the environment

# Allotment gardens and allotment gardeners through the ages

## From Gardens for the Poor to Factor of Wealth in Urban Culture

It is the 4th July 2012, 10 p.m. It is a warm summer evening with 28 or 30 degrees.

The air coming from the southwest is very humid and brings rain showers and thunderstorms every day. Many hobby gardeners have probably spent this Wednesday evening in their gardens together with nice people having a cold beer and grilled sausage and did not really feel like switching on the TV. However, on this 4th of July for the first time ever in the history of the second German public TV-channel the allotment gardeners play an important role in the main daily news programme, the HEUTE-Journal. The anchors Marietta Slomka and Heinz Wolf report "about a phenomenon, an element of Zeitgeist". They talk about the fact that many rural regions become deprived of their people, ever more people move into cities or their vicinity and that at the same time the people's interest in the rural areas, their longing for countryside and outdoor fun is growing.

As a result of this they are looking for substitute countryside and nature havens in the cities to quell their longing for relaxation and closeness to nature: "Allotment gardens" say Marietta Slomka and Heinz Wolf, "allotment gardens have long ceased to be stuffy and old-fashioned.

Allotment gardens and gardeners are HIP, the post-modernistic vegetable patch were city-people want to relax and can do so. Relaxing through gardening has become an important economic factor meanwhile. The Germans spend every year 18 billion Euro for their gardens and for work in the gardens. Almost 30 % more than 5 years ago." Dear "hipsters on post-modernistic vegetable patches" - this is how you might address hobby gardeners after this news presentation of the 4th of July. This is one point of view.

The other one was published a little later on 6th October 2012 in the newspaper "DIE WELT". Ulf Poschardt wrote there under the headline: "Allotment gardens are the favelas of the middle classes": "Berlin is characterised by a shortage of

housing and an urban design that is unfortunate in some places. Why not remove allotment gardens that are blocking valuable building land ..., ... there are many hectares where trimmed hedges and worn, half rotten plastic garden chairs block the prospects for a future that could include more social housing construction and this situation is under a silent taboo.

... The allotment gardens make only the owners of these parcels happy. It is a privatist idea of a city worth living, characterised by fences, hedges and narrowness, that often extrapolates the unattractiveness and shapelessness of petty bourgeoisie. The fact that now people with academic background who declare themselves to be trendsetters push into this petty-bourgeois form of life does not abolish its narrowness but enhances it. In the same way in which the contemporary Bionade-bourgeois reconstruct their own provinciality in the hip quarters they now refresh the bleak kitchen garden areas with slightly more daring colours, contemporary summer house architecture and the waiver of patriotic flag displays. They and their families consider themselves to be ironic allotment gardeners who secretly despise the skilled worker in his undershirt at their side and share with him only the hope that the next government will be a red-green coalition. Those who learn to see the difference between good and failed urban planning when approaching Berlin by air perceive the degree of destruction caused by the allotment gardens for the city's overall structure. Like favelas of the lower middle classes they eat away at the woven structure of the city and even from above they are strikingly ugly and not even when the fruit trees are in full bloom in spring or when the sun is bathing them in July this ugliness is reduced."



Both of these publications, the one in the TV-news "HEUTE-Journal" of 4th July

and the one in the newspaper "DIE WELT" of 6th October mirror the relationship of city and urban society, of allotment gardens and hobby gardeners and their acceptance and appreciation in the city and the media. The trench between "favelas of lower middle classes" and the new "hipster on post-modernistic vegetable patches" is more than obvious. It shows the change of the approach to allotment gardening both by the public and by municipal politics - praising and appreciating and also provoking and almost insulting. The hobby gardeners, the allotment gardeners have the opportunity (and I am convinced, also the social obligation) to bring this urban green into the city and future society: "From Gardens for the Poor to Factor of Wealth in Urban Culture"; to celebrate it and present it to the media and politicians and economists and investors (Neumann, 2013).

## A look back

"Gardens for the poor!" What times were these! More than 80 years ago the very apt question was asked (as it is sometimes done now): "Are three opera houses too many for Berlin?" At that time the same



demand was raised: "We have to get rid of our debts!"

And also at that time the preservation of gardens, green areas and parks was questioned. The question that applied then: "In what quality, on which level and in which amount can the city afford this?" applies now as well. Martin Wagener, the well-known doyen of German municipal planning and building control officers who got his doctor's degree in 1915 in Berlin with a thesis on "The sanitary green of the cities" and who controlled urban development in Berlin from 1926 until 1933, coined a statement that remains true even today: "During a period of severe economic struggle the city has invested capital in its open spaces that will bear interest". Gardens for the poor and the interest bearing investment in that past period of economic struggle in Berlin - a factor of wealth in urban culture today?

It seems appropriate to think back and then to think ahead.

To think ahead which opportunities and also which obligations are connected with this investment made by the city during times of severe economic struggle. From the scientific, political, economic, social point view. Just in a human way. For many people of that time the world they lived and worked in was almost unbearable. That



was the early 19th century.

People hired from the rural areas were housed in tenements resembling bee hives. Rooms were not much more than combs, often never reached by a ray of sunshine. Hygienic conditions defied description, leisure time or family life were nearly inexistent.

While higher ranking officials and factory owners enjoyed their tea on the wide terraces of their villas for instance in the Grunewald area in Berlin, the migrants lived in deepest poverty and darkness. They missed all they had left behind. The longing for home and the severe shortage of space in everyday life inevitably caused tensions.

The reason was the staggering growth of the population, an increasing pressure in the hopelessly overpopulated cities. Since the gross national product did not grow with the same speed doing something about poverty was recognised as a high-priority task. Well-meaning political leaders, factory owners, municipal administrations and charity organisations looked for ways to calm the ever more rebellious people.

The solution was: a garden, a garden for poor people - the garden for the poor. A kind of parcelled gardens that had been created around 1797/98 in Kappeln at the river Schlei (at that time still part of Denmark) following an initiative of Carl von Hessen, the so-called Carlsgärten" are considered to be one of the first areas of gardens for the poor in Germany.

Their main purpose was to counteract hunger and impoverishment. In 1826 this kind of gardens existed already in 19 cities. In 1830 the "Gesellschaft freiwilliger Armenfreunde" (society of voluntary friends of the poor) followed the example. In the middle of the 19th century gardens for the poor were created in many cities. In Berlin these were in particular the garden colonies of the Red Cross ("Rotkreuzgärten")



and those of the workers' movement ("Arbeitergärten") as well as the gardens of the railway agriculture ("Eisenbahnergärten").

Gardens of the poor of the 18th century, the gardens provided by factory owners, the Red Cross workers' gardens or the allotment gardens of the 19th and early 20th century: all these garden areas were created by people who were not poor themselves. Factory owners, high-ranking officials of administrations and their wives discovered that they had a heart for the socially disadvantaged; at least they wanted the public to think so. Another line of development can be traced back to the Leipzig physician Moritz Schreber. Although it is often claimed he did not invent the "Schrebergarten"-movement; it was just named after him. The initiative to found the first Schreber (allotment garden) association goes back to his fellow, the school director Innozenz Hauschild. The organisation was a school association originally, created in collaboration with parents of his pupils, but the founders did not want to call it 'school association' or 'educational association'. For that reason it was named in honour of the deceased Moritz Schreber.

In 1865 Leipzig celebrated the inauguration of the first "Schreberplatz". It was a playground where children of factory workers could play and exercise under a teacher's care. However, this place had nothing to do with gardens. It was the

teacher Heinrich Karl Gesell who created gardens at that place. Initially they were meant to be another way to keep the children busy but soon these gardens became refuges for their parents and entire families. The "children's beds" at the margin of the Schreber area turned into "family beds" and these were later divided into parcels and fenced in. Thus the "Schrebergarten" was created.

The early history and the structure of allotment gardening mirror European and in particular German social history. On the occasion of the invitation extended by the central federation of allotment gardening associations for the allotment garden congress at Berlin-Neukölln to take place during the Whitsun holidays 1921, Otto Albrecht, then head of the federation's journal wrote in an editorial: "At its core the entire allotment gardening system is truly proletarian. However, this did not apply for the allotment gardening movement. This was to a large extent actually a bourgeois movement with patriarchal influence and controlled by pietistic and nationalist-monarchist interests" (Landesverband, 2001).

The gardens reflected the political-bureaucratic strategies for satisfying the needs of the poorest of the poor. An effective means for preventing social unrest. The Romans called it 'Panem et circensis'.

What the nobs really felt about the poor was described by Hartwig Stein in his doctoral thesis "Inseln im Häusermeer" (Islands in the ocean of houses). The



wealthy were mainly driven by the fear of the red spectre of socialism. Keeping this at bay was the task of the gardens. A spacious, bright contrast to the usual confined living spaces and the dark hours at work. When looking forward to leisure under the apple tree people would worry less about breathing in the dusty factory air. In addition to this the allotment garden associations of which thousands were founded during the last third of the 19th century were "well camouflaged educational institutions" in accordance with Schreber's spirit. Instead of meeting fellow boozers at the pub the fathers were to meet their wives and children in the garden. They were to invest their wages not in corn schnapps but in seed potatoes. Not their minds were to be exercised in political discussions but their bodies by tilling the soil since this was true also: only a healthy worker with suitable ways of thinking was a productive worker. Since the parcels were usually allocated for one year only people did not plant trees or bushes. Huts had to be removed when the landowner wanted to erect a building or sell the land. Let's compare this with the present situation: "Remove allotment gardens that are blocking building land" (die Welt, 06/10/2012) or "18 allotment gardens to be removed to make room for a new building" (Berliner Morgenpost, 15/08/2011) are current headlines. The model of "allotment gardens as places for preventing social and political unrest" was successful. Until today allotment gardens have remained politically mostly uneventful places. The small gardens were simply too beautiful for developing revolutionary ideas there. "Red petty bourgeois" as Hartwig Stein calls them, enjoyed their lives in their little paradises too much for posing any threats. During the Weimar republic the allotment gardening system grew further in size and refinement. The association's power grew. Allotment garden areas became a subject of urban development. Giving the areas a

permanent status became a persistent demand.

Regulations and guidelines penetrated everyday green policies ever deeper. Considering the consequences of the first world war and the related famine we can easily understand what led to the slogan "We will mobilize even the last potato" among allotment gardeners. It was hoped that putting wounded soldiers to gardening would improve the supply with foodstuffs and their mental health as well. On the eve of the Third Reich people even found occasion to consider which of the allotment garden areas was the most attractive. Competitions were held. The darkest chapter of German history changed also the character of the allotment gardens and gardeners. Jews, communists and social democrats were as unwanted on German garden soil as were colourful flags. Only when you displayed right-wing thinking you could become chairman of an association. They controlled the flag displays. A regulation prohibited all flags with the exception of the black/white/red flag. They also controlled the soil and had the gardens raided to find secret hideaways, had people taken away and books burned. The allotment gardens still were places without political discussions but they were places of political actions. (Leppert, 2009). "People who are rooted in the soil make the best soldiers" knew Hans Kaiser, leader of the Reichsbund (national allotment federation) in 1936. "Allotment gardeners are the Fuehrer's musketeers who will break through the enemy's ring of siege and together with the farmers they will feed the German people", stated Kaiser in his speech. No matter how hard the Nazis worked to turn the allotment gardens into satellites of their party - they never fully succeeded. In the maze of the amateurishly designed gardens developed uncontrolled areas, some of them virtual thickets of wooden sheds, systems of caves and holes in the

ground. All of them excellent hiding places for people. The allotment gardens became oases for saving human lives. (Neumann, 2011) Erich Honecker did resistance work in an allotment garden area in Essen as from 1933. Entertainer Hans Rosenthal, known from the TV-show Dalli-Dalli, survived when he was a boy only because courageous hobby gardeners hid him - in Berlin alone this fate was shared by approximately 1400 other Jews. During the war the allotment gardens did not only serve as food sources and hideaways for members of the left and Jews. During the second half of the war they mainly provided housing for people who had lost their homes due to bombing. During the last years of the war many Germans even abandoned their undamaged homes in the cities and escaped to the ever more spontaneously growing allotment garden colonies. Here they thought they were protected from allied attacks. And quite a few cellars under garden huts had been turned into bunkers. For many people the garden hut remained the main residence for many years.

## Post-war period

As is well known the post-war period of the German allotment gardens was a period of division.

Three important phases characterise the development.

- While the destroyed cities in 1950 had more allotment gardens than ever before their number decreased rapidly as consequence of industrial expansion, building boom and road building in West Germany with its economic miracle. In most cities with few exceptions growing economic wealth rigorously reduced the significance of allotment gardens as it had been the case in the 1920s. However: in West-Berlin allotment gardens were considered to be oases of nature in that city surround by a wall. Only gamblers dared challenging them. It might have meant the end of their

political careers.

- But then came 1972–1973! A revolution began for the allotment gardens and hobby gardeners. It was brought about by the Club of Rome and Dennis Meadows and the theses regarding "The Limits to Growth" that shook the world. They also challenged the use of nearly all chemical and biochemical substances in gardening that were used in allotment gardens, too. In 1973 the oil crisis hit. Rachel Carson with her book *Silent Spring* (1972), Urs Schwarz with his book "Der Naturgarten" (the natural garden) (1980) presented many hobby gardeners as people who destroy nature. Allotment gardens that were praised as "good nature" for a long time became dens of iniquity because of the fungicides, herbicides and pesticides used there. For many eco-ideologists of the emerging nature and environmental awareness allotment gardens were "urban pesticide boils". So-called in a leaflet in 1976. The natural garden was born. It challenged many traditional ideas of happy gardening. It also led to the falling apart of quite a few good neighbours over the now ecologically accepted nettle and goutweed culture on the other's parcel.

- After the border was opened politicians in the Berlin government began to reconsider the significance of the allotment gardens. They claimed that around the city there was ample space for recreation. What do we need urban gardens for? The next attack against allotment gardens threatened. Yet, in 2004 the allotment garden development plan was approved. 79% of the areas got a permanent status. Peace had come (presumably) to the allotment gardens. Except for those areas that are threatened by partial abolishment.

So much for thinking - thinking back to the gardens against poverty; to the gardens as instruments for calming

people and quieting altogether too rebellious socialist intellectuals; to the gardens as safe places in times of war and terror; to the gardens as places without political discussions that were nevertheless pervaded by political actions; to the gardens as places of personal happiness in a Germany that was destroyed by bombs; to the gardens as places of new/old ways of understanding nature.

### **What lies ahead of us? Ahead of the gardens and the friends of gardening? – Europe and the world are changing –**

At this moment we have to make a stop. The ways of dealing with states and cities, with green spaces and gardens are changing thoroughly. Ulrich Wickert, media-guru, former correspondent to Washington of the first German public TV-channel (ARD) and anchor-man of the main news programme of long standing, recently stated under the headline "The world is changing": The world order is shifting. New world powers emerge in Asia. China and India will turn into economic superpowers in the coming decades and they will overtake Europe and perhaps even the United States. The world's metropolises are growing rapidly; another 30 % of the world's population will move into the metropolises by 2030. Globalisation and urbanisation influence economy, society and culture of Old Europe. Only if the European economic zone unites with the United States both will be able to stand up to Asia. These and similar forecasts are presented to us every day and they influence thinking and the need for action ever more. (Wickert, 2008). What does this mean for the people in Europe, for us Germans, for our future urban and social development, for the allotment gardens and their future? Ever more industries, not all of them "dirty", are transferred to faraway foreign countries. The population pyramid will soon stand

on its tip and our social security systems are changing dramatically. Our old continent's economy has ever less space to manoeuvre, waves of migrants from African countries who suffer even greater losses due to modernisation and globalisation than we overburden mainly the Mediterranean countries but also many municipalities in Germany. Especially in the European cities and urban conglomerations emerge new social structures with new values, ideas and expectations regarding a future globalised, multicultural society. Be it discussions about mosques to be built or lessons on religion at school, about new educational systems or the approach to urban green spaces, from burial cultures up to new forms of utilising gardens and parks: the big global changes will have impacts on the smaller affairs of our future towns and cities. In addition to that forecasts of a climate collapse or the change in the energy supply system, discoveries of food scandals and ever shorter intervals between dramatic weather events like floods and storms unsettle people ever more and ever more frequently. (Neumann, 2013).

### **Germany is changing**

A glance at a map shows that in Germany more than 80 % of the population live in the more than 3,200 towns and cities.



Their quality of life, their centres that have grown over centuries, their extensive green spaces and cultural and natural wealth fascinate the people. This wealth reaches from historic palace grounds through public parks open for

sports and biotopes for bats up to allotment oases.

Our cities attract people of different social status and many age groups from the vicinity and from all over the world. Our cities also display cultural and architectural achievements, innovation, openness, offer freedom and opportunities. On the other hand they are also symbols for the need to modernise, for delinquency and social problems. Other than many of our European neighbours Germany does not have the one centre that dominates all others and is the focus of the economic power and cultural life of the entire nation (e.g. Paris in France). Rather, our cities form a colourful mosaic with many facets. Every one of our cities has a character of its own, something that is typical for it, that makes it different and special. That the German cities fascinate and attract us so much is anything but a matter of course. After the second world war many of them were so destroyed that they had become unrecognisable. The myth of the city was still alive but the cities were not. This has changed. Over time the double character of the cities as centres of tradition and of new beginnings has become obvious. Allotment gardens as places of tradition, of 'yesterday', and as places of 'starting into the future' are part of the past and future of German cities.

While in the 1990s people moved away from the cities and to the countryside in many places in Germany, people feel more like living in cities nowadays. Contemporary residential buildings with modern façades close gaps in the streets. Ever more towns and cities manage to achieve a mix of ancient and contemporary architecture that results in a harmonic design. In ever more towns and cities municipal green spaces merge with the parcels of allotment garden areas to form harmonic systems of green and open spaces.

In cities like Munich or Berlin, Frankfurt am Main or Stuttgart this leads to

growing population numbers. Many major cities will become ever more attractive. In these urban conglomerations the search, the longing for the natural oases offered by allotment gardens will continue to grow. On the other hand towns and villages are dwindling in many regions, be it in East Germany or the Eifel region, in the Ruhr area or in Mecklenburg. They are not able to compete with the booming metropolises and have to cope with an ongoing drop in population number. The young move away, many houses are empty, are 'taken from the market'.

Being 'taken from the market' also happens to many allotment gardens - where there are fewer people, fewer who work and live, there are also fewer to use allotment gardens. A current study of the BMVBS (Federal ministry for transport, construction and urban development) of 2013 describes the issue. In the East German Länder declining population numbers on the one hand meet a large number of allotment gardens on the other hand. Dropping demand and lack of occupation will become typical for the allotment garden areas.

In Sachsen-Anhalt 12 % of the gardens are not occupied; in the other East German Länder this ratio is 5 % to 6 %. However, similar situations exist in Schleswig-Holstein and in some regions of Lower Saxony and in Bremen. Currently BDG estimates that approximately 45,000 gardens (i.e. 4 % - 5 % of the roughly 966,000 gardens) of member organisations are unused. The trend goes upwards. Yet, this development offers the opportunity to make good wrong decisions for urban development dating from the 1970s and 1980s in all fields of urban development, also with regard to allotment gardens.

Unused areas or unused parts of areas also offer opportunities, options for improvement, for a future. In particular in housing development, in real estate business, an unused capacity in the range of 3 - 5 % is even acceptable,

because this offers opportunities for changes and rehabilitation, for responding to new wishes and expectations of the tenants with regard to housing (e.g. larger or smaller apartments for larger or smaller families, moving to apartments specially designed to respond to the needs of the elderly, etc.).

"For having a choice people need options, i.e. a certain 'surplus' is always desired in a market economy", stated real estate expert Dr Rolf Brüning. Cities and with them the allotment gardens are not only places that offer opportunities; they are also mirrors of our society with all its challenges.

Will we be able to master demographic change and the transition to environmentally friendly energy generation?

The cities will show if political willingness stands the test of practice. Housing and infrastructure that respond to the needs of the elderly are required. Just as the conversion for making the cities more energy efficient must not be done at the expense of the inhabitants who are struggling to pay rising rents, just as historic façades must not all be hidden behind heat insulation replacing the historic ambience of the cities by monotony; the need to erect new residential buildings must not be satisfied by abolishing the allotment gardens that are winning new meaning as multifaceted oases of nature.

Will there be smart concepts for what to do with schools and churches, graveyards and allotment gardens that are no longer used? And the allotment gardens? In what way will they have to change for the sake of the old people who are living alone and perhaps have physical limitations? Or for the sake of young children who were brought up in a virtual and technology-orientated world? Will the gardens have to become smaller to allow for the more limited ability to tend them? Will they need more lighting for security reasons? Will they have to be equipped with therapeutic furniture and devices for health reasons? Will mouse pads offer

children planting instructions? Judgement, wise thinking and creative commitment are needed - also in the allotment gardens.

## The society changes and responds

We are living at a time in which the people are more mobile, less dependent on one place and more free but also ever more uprooted. The speed of the means of transport turns space into an annoying inessential matter that people want to get done with quickly. At the same time demographic and socio-cultural changes lead to the growth of new values in living together, in dealing with nutrition and health. As contrast to the striving for further, faster, higher, cheaper life gradually grows a counter-movement: healthier, with better quality, internal deceleration, social communication.

We are living at a time in which people are getting ever more separated from nature. Today, most children know more car brands and computer games than names of plants. They are able to give better explanations for the online-structures of laptops and avatars than for the natural structures of climate change and loss of species. Residual nature as it is found in landscapes becomes a colourful photo wallpaper in the fitness room, a cute object of pity that people want to protect from destruction or it becomes a software-update for the iPad.

At the same time the desire for an authentic experience of nature seems to get ever stronger. In an artificial environment the natural being "man" remembers its natural environment as an important space for experience that has created social, cultural and ecological benchmarks and limits for living together for centuries. Healthy nutrition becomes a benchmark for values once more, the "experience garden" often becomes the saving island for urban wellbeing. It provides that which ever

more people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds in this automated, technological and totally globalised world are looking for: roots, social cohesion, ecological and cultural wellbeing.

People who have learned not to step on plants, especially those they sowed and planted themselves, have also learned not to step on people. Such a person knows what it means to have "respect for life" and a home, i.e. roots. "Home", says Ulrich Wickert, long-time moderator of ARD (2008), "home" has got to do with emotions. "Nation", on the other hand, with common sense and reason of state. "Home" does not mean a place just as emotions do not mean definite places. "Home" means something vague, an environment into which persons are born or which they choose for their home. It means a familiar place; a cultural, social, political place where persons gather experience, where they find their views and values that shape their identity, character and mentality. All this can be provided by the allotment garden. "Home". Feeling at home, having roots, feeling well irrespective of place and nationality - this is essentially the greatest value of gardens, of socially, culturally and ecologically future-oriented and cleverly structured allotment gardens in the transformation processes of cities and societies that lie ahead of us.

Allotment gardens can become homes for many people in a globalised and often "homeless" world.

However: understanding and knowledge alone are not enough. For creating values we need a kind of club-mania shaped as "Creative Innovation Pool" (CIP). Knowledge has to be organised, combined and put together in new ways. Real innovation is generated at the limits of disciplines. What we need is the joy of trying new things, of experimenting and the drive of going beyond the new findings. We need creative debates in an environment that promises success. Such kind of limits are

reached when we are faced with the need to initiate a new urban allotment garden culture, open up new markets, enthuse people for ensuring the success and further existence of the allotment gardens. This new challenge that the allotment gardeners and the associations of hobby gardeners and especially the Office International du Coin de Terre at des Jardins Familiaux are facing is like the "sleeping beauty" of the fairy-tale. This beauty has to be kissed to become the princess of tomorrow's cities and societies. For that reason an innovation offensive, an innovative initiative for all should mobilise the hobby gardeners and it should be launched by this meeting in Berlin. For that reason you, the Office and your meeting are so important for the city, the people, the future. To give courage and wake up the people, i.e. to act as "Green Creative Innovation Pool". For that reason it is so important and inevitable to have the debate about the "city and society of the future".

## Allotment gardens in tomorrow's cities

The allotment gardens as urban open spaces will have to master new challenges, follow totally new development trends with the ensuing consequences:

1. the digital, IT-era;
2. the changes of the working and urban society;
3. biological and health-ecological functions;
4. new values of urban culture.

### 1. The digital, IT-era

What I mean is the spreading of multimedia communication services in businesses and private households bringing tele-working, tele-shopping and

tele-conferences. Ever more frequently living, working and social communication take place in virtual web-worlds.

Stefan Reiß-Schmidt, Munich city manager, stated in connection with "Perspektive München 2030" "... the changes that lie ahead of us will lead to a virtualisation of the city and to a further "mediatisation" of the public". This will lead on the one hand to an even more dramatic estrangement from nature; on the other hand it will bring about an ever greater quest/longing for nature and home-grown green stuff. In the news programme of 04 July 2012 it was called informatively and respectfully "digging in dirt"; on 03 June 2013 the ARD/SWR science journal in its programme "Planet Wissen" (planet knowledge) presented the "edible city of Andernach". Citizens "conquer" the city with urban gardening, with fruit and vegetables, by growing herbs and potatoes. The urban, open, green space of the future will be the main place where the "principle of hope" (closeness to nature, healthy living and feeling at home) of tomorrow's urban dwellers is reflected.

It is not by chance that the world of the virtual cities needs images of real cities to provide an orientation to its users. Market squares, streets and other urban elements fill the screen of the web-community, virtual shopping malls simulating the real malls substitute the mail-order catalogue. But not ever do they replace nature! The ever greater penetration of the working world by technology and virtual reality with its estrangement from nature is to be opposed by the garden as place of real nature.

In December 2012 the journal "Psychologie Heute" (psychology today) in its article "Wie viel Natur brauchen wir" (how much nature do we need) states that for health and psychological reasons there is only one correct answer: We cannot live without nature - the more, the better. "Medication, meditation, Merlot - a lot of things can

offer purpose and consolation. The only sustainable cure we find in nature."

Nearly all polls and opinion polls on "city and society in future" show the same findings for the significance of urban nature. With regard to their significance for cities and society green spaces, gardens are ranking far higher than the opera, culture, discotheques and video tape libraries or car-free city centres. In a study of the foundation Deutsche Stiftung Telekom about the significance of early childhood education for the society "getting to know nature, regional plants and animals" is ranking first and far ahead of "using computers and the web" or "mathematical education" and "learning foreign languages". The study of the "Global Green Space Report", a scientific survey that involved 4500 participants in 9 countries whose results were published in 2013 comes to the remarkable conclusion that "Green spaces are more important than sex, money and religion: according to the survey's findings staying in green spaces is even more important for wellbeing than work, sex, money or religion". (Husqvarna, 2013)

## **2. Changes of the working and urban society**

The fundamental changes of the working world that lie ahead of us which mean, that for a growing number of people the traditional uninterrupted fulltime employment by one employer will become an exception (which leads to discussions about additional sources of old age income since for many the pensions generated by the "normal" income will no longer be sufficient), generate new urban social structures and new competences for leisure and voluntary activities. Munich city manager Stefan Reiß identifies "new forms of purposeful activity, of free-lance service provision and new systems of minimum care and acknowledgement

of socially beneficial voluntary activities and civic commitment" (Munich 2020) and considers that we as planners, as managers of green and open spaces have to study and debate these new requirements for the public spaces. Even today we experience many different approaches, we find that forces hitherto unknown mobilise themselves for giving value to urban green spaces. Citizen, children, young people, associations, social care centres, companies take responsibility and become committed - no longer just for arts and culture - but to a growing degree for urban green, urban places and parks, graveyards and playgrounds. And what is more: because of the ever scarcer financial and human resources of those who have been responsible for the urban green to date (the local greenery offices) and because of the desire for "purposeful activity" this civic commitment, the transition of the former state obligation to private and civic parties becomes almost the sheet anchor for some of the urban green spaces.

A simple statement defines these new structures: "In future quality and utilization of the urban green spaces will probably depend less on the citizen's leaders but rather more on leading citizens".

Allotment gardens turn into new/old places of civic commitment, social competence and integration: places of urban home, places for leading urban citizens. We have to find new solutions for old responsibility and organisational structures and to integrate new forms of allotment and urban gardening. Be it inter-cultural gardens, temporary gardens on land awaiting building or guerrilla gardening. They all belong to urban gardening. For that reason the new terms of "urban agriculture" coined by politicians in agriculture or associations are wrong. The point is not to have food production to supply markets or economies, the point is to have gardens, urban greenery, to feel at home and well in tomorrow's cities.



### 3. Ecological and health functions

Scientists expect that in the period between 2021 and 2050 we will have 26 hot summer days more than now. This means that we have to prepare for getting up to 72 days with maximum temperatures higher than 25 degrees. In densely built up areas this limit will be exceeded probably even more often. Also the number of hot days with a temperature above 30 degrees and the number of tropical nights with temperatures not dropping below 20 degrees will grow. To date the knowledge about the urban climate was mainly used for damage mitigation, e.g. when designing new development areas.

In future designers will have to take conscious measures for making the urban climate more bearable by means of more greenery and shade in the built-up areas. This makes it necessary also to ensure a purposeful development of allotment gardens since they have a major impact on the climate. This is because the hobby gardeners provide what the (micro)-climate of cities needs: unsealed surfaces for water and air to penetrate the soil; plants for assimilation, air purification and humidification; water for climate exchange and cooling; canopies formed by the leafy boughs of trees to provide shade.

Just as nature conservation ensures legal protection for areas ranging from large nature reserves to small stepping stone habitats we need legal and lasting procedures to protect allotment gardens ranging from large allotment parks through small (stepping stone parcel) gardens. We need it because allotment gardens will play an ever greater role in preserving biodiversity and in the conservation of species.

Many animal and plant species are threatened by extinction; intensification

and growing monotony in agriculture abolish ever more plant species. Around the year 1900 still up to 30% of the plants on meadows were weedy plants; today this share has dropped to 2 % (Kimmerle, 2011). Allotment gardens - they are by tradition places for being close to nature. They are like Noah's ark for endangered animal and plant species, a "green pharmacy" offering healthy nutrition and nature as elixir of life, a green fitness-studio against sickness, dullness and boredom.

### 4. New values of urban culture

Our generation and our children have experienced many happy hours thanks to the allotment gardens and gardeners. Not least the allotment gardeners and gardens have helped democratic thinking to survive during years of political oppression and lack of freedom and contributed to the creation of a new democratic society. This has made them an element of European and German history, of European culture. It is not important if a greater number of people relax in concerts, operas or museums every year. Numbers are not important. What is important is that all three - the culture of music, of paintings and sculptures and also the culture of allotment gardens make indispensable contributions to the quality of life. "Soft factors" urban planners call it now. A green culture that now has the same importance for many cities as a concert hall, an opera house or a museum. Culture is not only fashion and painting, hip design and party locations - it is also gardening culture, allotment garden culture.

The future belongs to urban development directed to the inside, making existing open and green spaces inalienable elements of the quality of living, housing and working. Extensive urban development "in the green field"

belongs to the past. The ideal city of tomorrow will be the European city, pervaded by nature and culture, where working and living, leisure and culture once more form a spatial and functional entity; where poor and rich, young and old can live together and side by side easily without division or marginalisation. A remarkable study regarding the wishes and needs of the citizens for leisure in tomorrow's cities ("Freizeitleben in der Stadt der Zukunft", Opaschowski, 2005) shows an interesting ranking:

1st (most important): green spaces, parks; 28th: video tape libraries; 29th: (last) opera.

Ensuring the further existence of the cultural good "allotment gardens" is as important for the people as is the now doubtlessly vital ensuring of the further existence of the "classical" cultural offers. For that reason a certain ratio of unused gardens is not the main problem for allotment gardening in the urban centres; the main problem is rather that they have to resist an ever growing pressure to give up land that is usually demanded for building or traffic development.

However: culture must open itself. This applies also for the allotment garden culture. Ever more allotment gardeners, allotment gardens and their associations of cities and in the society must open themselves for people with other ideas for using the gardens, for people with different backgrounds. They have to open and become part of the public green spaces and parks that are accessible for everybody at any time. They have to open for people with other ideas of what can be called a beautiful garden, with other values for life in gardens coming from their own, different, origins and socialisation.

For that reason this cultural opening of the allotment gardens and gardeners has to include also other "cultural workers" in the cities.

Among them should be the cultural offices supporting events like exhibitions, drama and concert performances in the gardens; the officers for people with migration



background and the social office supporting (also with funds) gardens of integration, perhaps gardens of prayer or places where traumatised people from other countries can find peace. Of course sports associations, sport offices and youth associations should contribute sports and health-oriented offers in the green, safe and well-tended oasis of marvellous allotment gardens. Natural partners for the classical places of learning are the schools which can use the allotment gardens as new/old places for learning and teaching, giving them a renaissance as "green classrooms". Children, in particular those in urban kindergartens and those from socially disadvantaged background who know words like "trackball" and "mouse pad" in connection with computers but who have never experienced a real ball or a live mouse in a garden, can gain in the allotment gardens a fundamental understanding for the growing and thriving of plants and animals. Which allotment gardener of long standing would not be proud to explain to an upcoming young citizen, three or four years old, what a carrot is and what a currant looks like. Allotment gardens might also become new urban places of commemoration.

**Planting a tree when a child is born:** this may create an avenue of new citizens;

**planting a rose when people get married:** this will become the path of the newlyweds;

**for the silver anniversary:** planting an oak at the square of the faithful;

**when someone dies, to say farewell:** planting that person's favourite tree or flower at a place of memory.

There is so much that is possible or imaginable in the open allotment gardens.

**Allotment gardens, the former gardens of the poor, can become the new cultural green places of worship, the "rich places" of the future. "Place of**

**worship", "urban place" in the sense of**

- **fitness centre:** for health, exercise, therapy;
- **organic food shop:** for healthy nutrition and urban organic food production;
- **social care centre:** for integration and communication across age groups and ethnic communities;
- **kindergarten:** as place of care for the younger generation and for bringing them close to nature;
- **home for elderly:** as place for mental and physical fitness training for the generation 70+;
- **pharmacy:** according to the slogan: 'health grows in the garden and not in the shop';
- **Noah's ark for preserving biodiversity;**
- **museum:** as new location for garden and land art;
- **theatre:** as new location for open air entertainment, drama and music performances;
- **DIY-market:** as place for manual work and for passing handicrafts to the next generation;

## Summary

We are living in the best and most peaceful Europe ever.

Berlin is the most beautiful and perhaps happiest Berlin ever.

You: citizens of the perhaps best and happiest time of your countries ever. All of you, no matter where you come from, all of you: friends of gardening, allotment gardeners, hobby gardeners or "dirt-digging city-dwellers", you mirror European urban and social history and thus you are part of our common culture. Culture is not only fashion and painting, hip design and party locations - it is also gardening culture. European allotment gardening culture. And this society, this culture of ours, our future cities, this global mix of humankind and nature, of culture and technology, comprising techno-freaks and nature

freaks, nuclear power fans and biomass-producers, working poor and people living on social benefit as well as DINKs (Double Income, No Kids) - this new urban society is undergoing very significant changes. Jennifer Edelmaier said in April 2011 with regard to the current discussion about energy: "Future cities will conserve energy. But is ecological architecture beautiful? Today's cities are no longer built to stand eternally. They are subject to demographic change and climate change, and they will not remain untouched by the debate about energy. When all nuclear power plants have been switched off our houses and cities will have to use energy even more efficiently. The metropolises have to change their ways of thinking. Perhaps in future our cityscapes will not only be characterised by solar cells and heat insulation, but sugar beet, cereals or potatoes for fuel production may be grown in the parks."

**The allotment gardens and their culture are changing. From gardens for the poor to factors of wealth in urban culture, to ecological, cultural, social jewels of tomorrow's cities and societies. Allotment gardens and gardeners ever more often turn into sheet anchors: when people are lonely, when the society needs to integrate people, when biodiversity and sustainability are threatened, when sources of fresh air are needed, when people fear that fast food abolishes healthy food or dioxin-fraud threatens humans and animals. We experience such kind of events only too often now. This is to say: Gardens are the last luxury good of our time because they demand what has become the most valuable goods: time, attention and space.**

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# Which Preconditions must Allotment Gardens fulfil for their achievements to become effectively public?

J.H.C. Jan van Zanen

Mayor of the city of Amstelveen, Netherlands

## Do people not like what they do not know?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

the Dutch allotment gardening association AVVN has asked me, virtually a lay-person, to talk at this international seminar about the significance of allotment gardening. I felt deeply honoured by this request. It was a request I had to consider for a while before accepting the task.

Actually, I quite like gardening. It is relaxing. It satisfies me. Sometimes more than meetings that last for days or seemingly endless poring over files and preparing, adopting and implementing resolutions. However, you could certainly not call me an expert. Neither could you call me skilled or experienced. With a bit of good will you might say that I am an amateur gardener for personal use with a light-green thumb. But does this mean that I know something about allotment gardens? This, too, is certainly questionable, and for that reason AVVN bears the full responsibility for the honouring request. I grew up in the rural community of Edam-Volendam. As far as I remember there were some allotment gardens there. I also remember that I went with my father to North Amsterdam regularly where we let his carrier pigeons fly so that they could exercise the flight back to the pigeon loft on my parent's land at

home in Edam. There were large allotment garden areas in the immediate vicinity of the place where we let the pigeons fly. Most of my life I have lived and worked at Utrecht. This fourth biggest city of the Netherlands is located in the country's exact centre. In this urban environment there were also many allotment gardens and allotment areas.

As local politician, at that time responsible for public and green spaces among other things, I felt very much involved with the allotment gardens. I understood soon how important green spaces were for many people in this urban environment. Not just in public parks but also in a very special way, somehow 'protected', in the allotment gardens. I remember very vividly how pleasantly surprised I felt by the atmosphere and feelings evoked when I first visited the allotment gardens. A real eye-opener. Fantastic. Up to that moment I never knew that there were places like this in Utrecht. I never forgot this. I always remembered it each time when in the (political and societal) debate about space, a rare good in the Netherlands and most certainly in the urban conglomeration of "Randstad" - allotment gardens were brought to the focus of attention.

In a nutshell: I am not a gardening expert. I never had an allotment garden, either. And I never felt the desire to have one. Neither did my closest relatives (at



least as far as I am aware).

Nevertheless I accepted the invitation to make a contribution to today's event. The subject fascinated me. As a committed lay-person, so to say. To prepare for my contribution to this seminar I talked to some representatives of Dutch allotment gardening associations before the summer holidays.

It was a very lively meeting at the association's seat in the wonderful allotment garden area Langs de Akker in Amstelveen. Funny and inspiring.

My admiration for the people and the ideas behind the phenomenon of allotment gardening grew and so did my understanding of this phenomenon. And I thought: I will go to Berlin.

During the meeting I became immediately aware that also among my own (Dutch) people opinions regarding allotment gardening vary a lot.

Of course this may be due to the Dutch character, but perhaps it is due to allotment gardening itself. If I understood

things correctly it is for some people strictly a hobby, for other it is a way of living or just work.

Some people think that allotment gardening associations are some kind of sect, for others they are a form of socialising, of being together and meeting people.

I did not find a clear answer to the question I was to treat in my presentation, which was what significance allotment gardens have.

Actually this also applied for the question of what we have to do to attract more attention to our allotment gardens.

At least I did not get a clear answer. And most definitely I did not get a comprehensive answer. Should we even try to attract more attention? Do we need this attention? What for?

Then the following thought suddenly popped up in my mind: dear allotment gardeners, what is your problem?

Should we turn the Netherlands (figuratively speaking) into a large, cosy vegetable garden?

Before I go into greater detail I have to tell you something about the city of Amstelveen.

Amstelveen has approximately eighty-five thousand inhabitants. (Among the four hundred eight Dutch municipalities Amstelveen is ranking thirty-sixth). Amstelveen is located south of Amsterdam, close to the international airport of Schiphol. The city of Amstelveen is known for its culture, sports, its international and green character. With regard to the latter aspect let me explain:

Amstelveen has many green districts, parks, water courses, a beautiful large forest and a number of allotment garden areas. Next month we will find out if Amstelveen will be permitted to call itself the "greenest community of the Netherlands" in 2013.

By joining this competition the city of Amstelveen tries to make its image of being a "green city" even better known.

Allotment gardens are an important part of the green spaces.

Both in the Netherlands in general and in Amstelveen in particular. You understand what I want to say: expectations are great in Amstelveen.

This was another reason why this honouring invitation to make a contribution to today's meeting came just in the nick of time for me ...

Back to our subject: the significance of allotment gardens.

If you have a garden and a library, you have all you need". This is a quote by Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman writer, politician, solicitor and philosopher.

Does this also apply for allotment gardens?

And not only for them but also for others?

These questions I want to discuss in greater detail from three points of view.

1. Do allotment gardens have an added value? What do allotment gardens offer?
2. After answering these two questions I will discuss the (added) value of allotment gardens and their significance on the background of some current developments.
3. Finally I will make some proposals for making allotment gardens better known, that is, how the unknown can win greater appreciation in accordance with the Dutch proverb "People do not like what they do not know".

**Regarding the first question: Do allotment gardens have an added value?**

**What do allotment gardens offer?**

Relaxing? Food? For whom? Only for the tenants and owners or also for others?

There are not only trees, bushes and decorative plants growing in allotment gardens. Some people use their allotment gardens also for satisfying a fundamental need: They grow food. What is wrong with that? Is there any more elementary need than food (with the exception of love)?

Many enthusiastic allotment gardeners are growing their own fruit and vegetables, for instance. A side effect of this is that these people themselves make sure that they have healthy plants.

In addition to that working in the allotment gardens has a social element. It is an emotional component, if you want so. It is well known that tilling the soil and growing flowers and home-grown fruit and vegetables makes people relax. This is a considerable benefit in today's hectic life. I know that from my own experience. Mowing the lawn in our garden is a very refreshing activity for me. Other elements have an (added) value, too. Hardly anyone will doubt the positive effects on mental and physical health which are regularly proven by scientific studies.

In allotment gardens people are inclined (and perhaps even a little bit forced) to collaborate.

Is there a better remedy to loneliness? Allotment gardeners exchange tips and ideas in a cosy atmosphere. Or is this too idyllic?

One should think that with so much (added) value allotment gardens should sell like "sliced bread". ("An allotment garden is a friend whose door is always open."). Yet, in reality things are not like that.

At least in the current political and social reality. From my point of view this has - at least in the Netherlands - often to do with the fact that the allotment gardens are separate, fenced in areas.

Fences, like walls, give rise to questions.

What is behind the fence? This sometimes creates negative images.

People outside might get the impression that those inside have something like a



closed hobby organisation, that they form an elite or perhaps even a sect.

But perhaps this closedness is a secret added value.

One that is very important for those inside. One they cannot do without. This is perfectly alright. But you should also be aware of its effect.

Of its impact on those outside. Consider this. And not only the fences but also the mere creation of the allotment garden area itself may establish barriers although they may not be visible for you; barriers to access you may not be aware of (if always totally unintentional I am not sure).

Just think about it: do all the allotment gardens (in the Netherlands) always send the message "Welcome"? A hearty welcome for everybody?

I repeat my question: is that too idyllic? Probably. We can see that despite the added value "proven" (or thought to be proven for many years) the further existence of allotment gardens is regularly questioned or even "threatened".

Being a local politician in Utrecht and Amstelveen I am only too aware of it. "Allotment gardens are luxury goods, reserved for small groups of people, and hopelessly outmoded, outdated" are the claims then. This has often something to do with developments in spatial planning, with the scarcity of space that has been mentioned before.

And if there is a scarcity money plays a role. You will have noticed: these are the words of a liberally minded politician. And if allotment gardens indeed have added value (and I think that this is the case and it is sometimes underestimated) it is for you and for the society equally important that the allotment gardens and the allotment gardeners shed their almost mythological image and get well presented - or at least better than before,

for instance in the social and political discussion about the allocation of the

(scarce) space.

## **I come now to the second approach I intend to take for debating the subject: the (added) value of allotment gardens and their significance on the background of some current development aspects.**

A quote by Johan Cruijff that is well known in the Netherlands is "Every disadvantage is connected with an advantage".

For those who do not know (anymore or do not want to know) who Johan Cruijff is: during the very first minute of the soccer world championship final 1974 in Munich he made a goal - in vain. (It turned out that we remained two goals short. I was thirteen then and suffered a trauma.)

Back to that quote:

"Every disadvantage is connected with an advantage". The current difficult economic situation may offer a unique opportunity to make the public understand the significance and added value of allotment gardening. What happens at the moment?

For instance the strife for land has lessened.

The economic climate is less favourable for ambitious development projects. Areas of and for allotment gardens are less contested. The silver-haired generation is growing. It will continue to grow. (Weed your garden if you have nothing to do!) Unfortunately many people have lost (and more are losing) their jobs. People have more leisure time. And many people have less money to spend. What happens now? More people become interested in handicraft and gardening.

Ever more initiatives emerge that allow private persons themselves to produce what they need. People take the initiative themselves more often. They create new initiatives, new initiatives that offer the opportunity to present allotment gardening in a positive way.

In the recent past ever more initiatives

for urban farming have emerged in the Netherlands.

Local authorities or other land owners provide land free of charge where people may create gardens.

This is a low-threshold and positive way of attracting people to outdoor activities. Moreover people feel refreshed and happy when working with soil, plants and other people.

The harvest of beautiful flowers and edible products is a nice or tasty side effect in this case.

In the city of Leeuwarden in the North of the Netherlands there are already many of these projects. Sometimes they use provisional building land, unused strips of fields or parts of public green spaces.

Leeuwarden is developing a profile as a city with "edible green initiatives" focussing on the health and well-being of the citizens.

Recently I read about a neighbourhood initiative where the neighbours merged the rear parts of their gardens and turned this section into a large common garden and all of the neighbouring families who shared in the work could get fresh vegetables.

In a supra-regional Dutch newspaper I discovered the following headline recently: "Growing vegetables in apple crates, the so-called natural supermarket". This is how small areas can be used for growing vegetables and herbs. Another advantage: if the land can be used only temporarily, the mobile plant containers can easily be moved to another place so that the harvest is not lost.

In the community of Ede in the Eastern Netherlands a survey among the population studied the question how a neighbourhood could be better integrated in an allotment garden area. Among other things the survey showed that the people living in that district had many social contacts with each other. The neighbours did lots of things together. An allotment garden area can make use of this kind of behaviour, of existing social networks. For instance by offering space for coming together. Joint activities can be organised.

In addition to the social aspect the idea

of sharing is an interesting one. The people living in a neighbourhood could enjoy nature in an allotment garden (or an allotment garden area). You could show what you have to offer, show what you have been doing for many years with great enthusiasm.

To say it in a nutshell: I think there is a social trend now that is favourable for the significance and actual (added) value of allotment gardens, gardeners and their associations. Move with the current.

Or has more to be done? If that is the case and if you want to do more or think it is necessary, of course you should feel free to do it.

### **This is why I want to present to you finally my third approach. Some ideas for improving public awareness of allotment gardens**

We have the proverb 'Onbekend maakt onbemind' which means 'People do not like what they do not know'. If this is (always) true I do not know. For politicians it is definitely not true always. Sometimes it may be good to be unknown: in that case you will not have enemies.

Well, let's assume that the proverb applies in your case and that the opposite is good for you. The current is favourable for you. Can you swim with it? Do you want to swim with it?

Can you generate additional benefits?

- Do keep up the positive reporting about the opportunities offered by allotment gardens.
- Participate in activities in your vicinity, for instance by making your allotment gardens as accessible as possible.

Accessible both in the literal and in the figurative sense. - Join new initiatives. I mention an example in this context: perhaps you could visit neighbourhoods on a regular basis

together with experienced allotment gardeners and local authorities and present your knowledge there. This might make more people interested in allotment gardens, garden owners might get tips for growing vegetables or community initiatives like the "natural supermarket" mentioned by me might be launched.

- I also think that you could collaborate with the so-called food-banks. In the Netherlands the food-banks distribute food free of charge to people in need who can prove that they have a very low income. Some of these food-banks have been founded by private persons, sometimes with state support. Often these food-banks do not have enough fresh fruit and vegetables. Allotment gardeners - who usually do not have malnourished families or neighbours - sometimes have a surplus of fruit and vegetables, for instance because all the lettuce is ready for harvest at the same time and if you wait too long it goes to seed.

Actually there are ample opportunities. Especially now.

With this I want to conclude my contribution.

In general I think that for those who like gardening allotment gardens and gardeners present an added value both from the social and from the economic point of view and are good for health and community spirit in our contemporary society.

The time is ripe for finding open minds welcoming this (added) value both in the society and in politics. You have more to offer than you think. You hold "black gold" in your hands. Show it. Share it.

And - please forgive me for returning to soccer (one of the strongest connections between Germany and the Netherlands other than Rudi Carrell, Conny Froboess, Frau Antje, Prince Bernhard, Prince Claus and Linda de Mol):

"Keep the ball!!, "Make sure that you

play up front and not in the defence line!"

Thank you for your attention.





# Green is the new Gold

When the journal "Landlust" stabilised its circulation at 850,000 copies at the latest the other journalists began to wonder: had they missed something? How could two women who had not even come from a big publisher become so surprisingly successful? Which social needs expressed in greenery had we missed? Which answers that are obviously to be found in the garden?

"Landlust" was by far the most successful newly founded journal in an industry that is otherwise subject to crisis and self-doubt. In journalism green was considered to be the new gold.

Also in the Berlin newspaper Tagesspiegel urban green has been ranking higher in recent years. Reports appear in all forms and fields of journalism. Using Berlin and Tagesspiegel as examples I have analysed under which conditions "green" in general is interesting for a

newspaper - and in which way allotment gardens are covered in particular.

From this analysis some interesting conclusions can be drawn and recommendations can be given.

The "green" topics that are currently covered by all facets of journalism do indeed reflect many terms and debates that are currently important in the world - or at least in the world of the media. They deal with issues of society, politics, nature and urban development. For all of them there is "a green example".

Here are some examples from everyday editorial work:

1. **Social responsibility/regional character/awareness for the environment/biodiversity**  
Example: urban bee-keeper
2. **Cohesion in the neighbourhood**

Example: Prinzessinnengärten

3. **Urban development, administration, social participation**  
Example: "edible city" Andernach
4. **Celebrities/glamour**  
Example: Time Magazine, special „Über das Glück im Garten“
5. **Originality/creativity**  
Example: wild herbs, "urban harvest"
6. **Star cuisine/trends:**  
own kitchen garden  
Example: Star chef Michael Hoffmann discovers vegetable gardening and is now at least as enthusiastic a gardener as a cook
7. **Education**  
Example: Jamie Oliver brings vegetables to the English school meals

## 8. Political will, personal freedom, self-sufficiency, social resistance, re-conquest of urban spaces

Example: Guerrilla Gardening, Urban Gardening, turning fallow land into parks, Community Gardens in Detroit – trend from New York, Tempelhof airport in Berlin

## 9. Participation in international trends: Sharing (see: car sharing, swapping apartments, swapping services for everything from drilling machines to clothes, flat-sharing communities for elderly persons)

Example: shared fields in the north of Berlin

## 10. Architecture, design

Example: Garden huts as design objects

Why are all these subjects interesting?  
Why have we reported about them?

Because in each of these stories a small example reflects a big issue and because each of these stories is new in its very own way. It is the basic impulse of the media to report not about what is known but about what is new.

What has all this got to do with allotment gardens?

Many of these debates are actually going on in the allotment gardens, the public simply does not learn much about them. The reason is that allotment gardens are not considered novelties. People perceive them as something traditional. For that reason we detect a strange discrepancy: green becomes an ever more important topic for the media, but allotment gardens don't.

With the exception of occasional reports about the "alternation of generations" in the allotment areas

(Attention: new!) media report about them from two perspectives and in two ways that keep repeating:

1. their **threatened position**;
2. their **regulation**.

Allotment gardeners are mainly considered to be an endangered species, the last of their kind who insist on law and order on endangered urban areas. Of course this perspective is very narrow.

Headlines from this year's Berlin "Tagesspiegel" regarding allotment gardens:

"Laws for petunias" - 9 March 2013 in the real estate section;

"Ever more allotment gardens to give way to development" - 08 June 2013;

"The Land of Berlin, too, intends to develop allotment areas" - 08 June 2013;

"Schmargendorf allotment gardeners looking forward to partial victory in the struggle for their huts" - 13 August 2013.

This is certainly not all of the truth. But it determines people's perceptions.

Even in most of the well-meaning reports about the alternation of generations in the garden colonies the authors express their surprise that not only "petty-bourgeois" are tilling garden land. This surprise tells you something about the public image. For a long time allotment gardens were perceived by the public as places where a parallel society with its own rules was living. Even in 2007 when perceptions of allotment gardens began to change this image still gave rise to satirical art: they seemed to be strange and closed societies. People perceived this near, far world as extremely strange. Even five years ago a visit to such a place was thought such an exotic idea that the surprise felt about the social spaces and their rules could be turned into literature:

"Mein Leben im Schrebergarten" (my life in the allotment garden) by the Berlin satirical artist and writer Vladimir Kaminer was published as a book.

With the background of the almost cartoon-like regulations the liking for the allotment gardening worked as a joke.

Certainly this is not the entire truth either. But it does define perception.

It is also noticeable that new perceptions are connected with the gardens that are supposedly implementing "new models of gardening" like "urban gardening" or "guerilla gardening".

1. The "new" green stresses the abolishment of barriers while in allotment gardens barriers seem to get more solid in the form of precisely measured hedges and quarrels among neighbours.
2. The "new" gardens stress the aspect of freedom, they virtually make the breaking of rules their goal.  
In allotment gardens rules have to be obeyed - a requirement to ensure that the laws protecting them apply.
3. While the community gardens stress the sharing with friends allotment gardens are dominated by the fear of social control.
4. While the new, wild gardens "conquer" urban spaces allotment gardens "defend" them. This is why the gardeners on the airfield at Tempelhof are called "pioneers" - although they grow their vegetables with the same methods as allotment gardeners. They are pioneers only from the point of view of urban politicians.

You will find this when analysing the current press. And it might be a reason

why allotment gardens seldom appear in the media as something new, contemporary or current.

Probably the limitation of public perception is also due to limited presentation. We all know it from our families: An image of a person is created by the way in which people talk about him/her. People talk about allotment gardens as if they were a cranky, slightly pesky old aunt from a past century whom people tolerate because she will not live much longer anyway. The narrative, the way in which people talk about allotment gardens has got stuck on the perspective of threat and regulation.

This is not only due to the way in which the media report about them but also due to how the people involved treat them in their talks.

If the allotment gardens can be connected with the present debates, their presentation (in the media) will change.

For that reason it is important to change the views taken on allotment gardens.

From your Zurich programme of 2012 I took it that you have started to deal with this already with regard to education: You establish school gardens and nature trails, offer information and education on traditions and ancient techniques like the pruning of fruit trees and beekeeping. Yet, there are many more perspectives possible from which you can look at the gardens:

They touch upon:

- architecture;
- urban development;
- (star) cuisine;
- self-sufficiency/rationality/health/bio-/nutrition;
- deceleration/wellbeing/happiness;
- trends like "sharing";

- being together with friends;
- recreation, leisure activities;
- biodiversity;
- ancient trades.

All these issues are subject to extensive debates.

It is just that in the public mind they are not connected with allotment gardening. Before the media can create this connection you have to create it yourselves. If you create connections with these currently debated issues people will find that they can discover things in the allotment gardens.

Certainly one key to success in this respect is terminology. A "new tale" also has to use the terminology used in the current discussions.

You can say: "working on the parcel with like-minded people" or: "meeting friends in a green place".

Perhaps both expressions mean the very same thing, the same situation, the same promise of happiness. Yet, the first expression sounds old, the other one new, the former evokes the idea of "duty" the other one that of enjoyment.

You might start by using the word "parcel" less often.





# Which significance are allotment gardens given in politics and administration and how is that respected in decision making?

**Christian Weber**, *President of Bremische Bürgerschaft*

Ladies and gentlemen,  
thank you very much for the invitation to your seminar. It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity to address you. I like using green ink for the mail on my desk. If my "green thumb" works as reliably as my pen I cannot really say. Yet, I am doing my best to help nature, for instance in my front garden. And I believe that I can say something on the topic of "Which significance are allotment gardens given in politics and administration and how is that respected in decision making?" from my position as

citizen for whom a green city is very important and as honorary member of the association of the Bremen allotment gardeners.

I am actually not qualified to talk about decorative plants and breeds, so I will start with a quotation: "When in Detroit unemployed people grow vegetables on the land of former factories, places where they used to assemble cars, because they can no longer afford buying everything in the supermarkets, I support it wholeheartedly.



If in Berlin some hipster throws a seed bomb in a park according to the old war-slogan 'fire and forget' I think this is too much attitude and too little sustainability." This is a quote of Professor Udo Weilacher, a renowned landscape architect from Munich. I like this statement because it describes the enormous width and diversity of everyday gardening.

Allotment gardens, by some people still smiled at as symbols for German petty-bourgeoisie, mean quality of life and ecology and at the same time they have great social and urban development value. Most importantly: they are closely tied with politics. Bremen citizens especially profited from this during hardships in the past. In our Hanseatic city it is still a tradition to live in the so-called Kaisen-houses. These houses were named after mayor Wilhelm Kaisen. During the housing shortage after the end of the war he permitted Bremen citizens to erect small houses in allotment gardens and live in a green place for one generation.

There are still roughly 1000 Kaisen-houses in allotment garden areas, however, most of them are now overgrown and left to decay. By the end of this year the city's government intends to present a utilisation concept because according to currently valid building law people are not allowed to live in Kaisen-houses. At the same time poverty is growing and finding affordable housing is getting difficult. Perhaps the Kaisen-houses in the allotment gardens will have a renaissance.

Ladies and gentlemen, the allotment gardens, at least those surrounded by building land or trades and industries, are a recurrent political issue irrespective of their beauty. As Bremen politician who has been involved in politics on the level of the city and of the Land I can tell a long story about

that. When we wanted to allow Mercedes-Benz to erect a factory at Holter Feld 35 years ago we had to work hardest to convince the allotment gardeners to accept this plan. They accused us to breach trust and to commit treason and they got great support from the population. After unprecedented battles of words some of my fellow politicians who had supported the idea of getting the industry there no longer wanted to take the blame of being "servants of capitalists" and thought of giving up the struggle for the car factory. In the end the jobs won but also the allotment gardeners profited: they got attractive substitute land and - let me say it like this: financial accompaniment that was by no means stingy.

Another example: Berlin, 20 years ago: Politicians and business consortiums wanted to use parcels that had existed for a long time to erect residential buildings. Immediately the allotment gardeners announced their protest and that they intended to defend their land. Even more: they considered in public to join the 1995 election campaign for the Berlin parliament with a party of their own. This example like the one from Bremen shows how much pressure allotment gardeners can exercise. They are one of the biggest civic initiatives in the cities - and an enormous electorate. Former federal chancellor Gerhard Schröder was very well aware of this. He cared for his allotment gardeners, visited them frequently and was awarded medals for his support of allotment gardening - and probably votes.

However, power lies not only in the allotment gardeners, it lies also in the gardens themselves. About ex-chancellor Schröder we know that he could recover from government work nowhere better than in the allotment garden of a friend of his in Ricklinger Marsch in Lower Saxony. It is said that

Claude Monet once claimed: "I am not interested in anything in the world but painting and my flowers." His gardens are places of pilgrimage for friends of arts from all over the world. And Konrad Adenauer or Winston Churchill loved their gardens for taking breath and marshalling their thoughts.

Let me remind you of the fact that here in Berlin the so-called invalids' gardens were established in the early 19th century. At that time the authorities sent soldiers who were wounded in body and soul to the gardens. It was found that sowing, planting and harvesting, creative work, could save the wounded mind. Gardens inspire - the own garden more than others. People who tend gardens create something alive that changes with the seasons and yet maintains its fascination. If you want to hear the grass grow, you have to go to the garden; there it seems to exist: the peaceful, humane world. We are brought here by the desire for deceleration and probably also by the longing for paradise!

Ladies and gentlemen, I feel very much that allotment gardens are deeply rooted in political and bureaucratic decision making processes; today perhaps more than ever before. This has mainly an ideal or perhaps even ideological character, not so much a material one, although the allotment gardeners may mourn that. After several catastrophes in recent years people have developed much more awareness for the environment. Those who are more sensitive for the environment are also more willing to protect it. This starts in the garden. Of course an intact environment is attractive and at the same time the desire grows to lead a healthy life and grow own fruit and vegetables. Some make a virtue of necessity. For years I have been glad to buy tomatoes and spring onions from "my" Turkish



hobby gardener at the Domshof-market.

Ladies and gentlemen, every year the Germans spend almost 15 billion Euro for plants and gardens. This is about as much as the Greek state deficit. You can imagine that some Greek people do not like Germany anymore, however, they do miss allotment gardens there - for instance in Langadas in the North of Greece. A mayor in Langadas said recently: "The municipal institution of allotment gardens would be a way out of the crisis: allotment gardeners could grow vegetables and other products on land given to them by the municipality and thus enhance their income." Well, the allotment gardens may not be the most effective instrument for global crisis management but obviously the concept is something like an export good that meets with a demand. In any case allotment gardens are an important ecological and economic foundation that is necessary for the functioning of society and that should be protected.

Allotment gardens belong to the municipal services of general economic interest and their existence is justified by the welfare-state principle laid down in the constitution. This principle means that also those citizens are entitled to use land who do not own land. And it also means that the municipalities are obliged to provide sufficient allotment gardens as it is still done with cultural and sports facilities. For social reasons and also for giving low-income groups the opportunity to find "green oases" the costs, in particular the rent, must remain limited, as the federal law on allotment gardens requires. This is an essential demand of solidarity and an act of social justice. We do not want to embellish the world of allotment gardens. Not all its potential is used. In Germany on average 4 to 5 per cent of the gardens are unoccupied. In Bremen

this ratio is much bigger. However, this should not mislead us to think that unused land should be covered with structures. Especially in urban conglomerations we must not sacrifice even a square centimetre of green, especially not without offering substitute areas, because of the climate change. Wherever allotment gardens have to be abolished green areas must remain - and these have to be public green spaces. These areas have to be integrated in the municipal system of parks and biotopes. Let me mention in this context the concept of "urban gardening" that enters ever deeper into the sphere of ecological urban development.

With gardening in open urban spaces and on fallow land the citizens show that they have greater sensitivity for their urban environment and that they want to contribute to its shaping. Often this also has a positive influence on neighbourhood activities and communication. Basically, urban gardening projects arise from a civic impulse. Because of the generally tight municipal budgets, not only in Bremen, it is unfortunately improbable that individual values and wishes can be supported by funding. For that reason everyone involved has to tackle these activities with openness, tolerance and most of all with vigour.

At this point I want to mention a guideline of Deutscher Städtetag (German Association of Cities) which I support wholeheartedly. Municipalities should develop utilisation concepts for all their allotment gardens in time before establishing land use plans and binding regulations should be created for implementing these concepts. Round tables involving the various stakeholders are suitable institutions for achieving this purpose. One of the objectives of this approach is also to prevent that allotment gardens remain land reserved for building in

any form. No! Allotments have to remain allotments and must not be absorbed into the matter reserved for political manoeuvres. Sometimes I wish we in Germany would lead a more enjoyable, productive debate about how we want to shape our living environment. In this respect the Swiss who are something like a role model for direct democracy are far ahead of us.

In Switzerland the people have to be involved in decision making on large building and infrastructure projects. This is not done by plain voting but every household gets a prospectus of the project weeks before the actual voting. This prospectus describes the project showing images, plans, investments, follow-up costs, and so on, so that the people understand what is in store for them. Such kind of actions train the critical view and lead to a better understanding of architecture and the shaping of communities in the long term.

Bremen prepares for laying down a so-called privatisation brake for companies of general economic interest (e.g. public transport or housing companies) in its constitution. It will be the first and only federal German state doing this. It means that the companies working for the benefit of the public may be sold only with the express approval of the citizens. This will prevent attempts to subject this kind of companies to the strife for private profit. I don't see any reason why such an instrument should not be applied also for allotment gardens. So, please introduce a prohibition to sell public allotment garden areas to investors who are all too much interested in profit.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have already mentioned the Kaisen-houses as a Bremen peculiarity in allotment garden areas. The remaining 400 of these houses are now so much consolidated and inhabitable that I think that their

state is far from the original idea dating back to times of general poverty. This takes me to the federal law on allotment gardens and in particular its section 3 that is generally considered to hamper progress. It reads: "In allotment gardens may be erected simple huts with an area of no more than 24 square meters including a covered open air outdoor living area." And: "It is not allowed that their nature, in particular their equipment and furniture, permit their use for permanent living."

This limitation prevents an attractive, family-friendly development of allotment gardens. Anyway, these restrictions are only seemingly maintained since for a long time already buildings in many gardens have been built in violation of this law. The run-of-the-mill hut is no longer in keeping with the times. Electricity, water supply and ecological waste water treatment should become standard equipment. It should be left to the families to decide if they want to have a decorative garden or a vegetable garden or perhaps a mix of both. Leisure time and family life would certainly become more enjoyable if overnight stays and living in the allotment gardens during weekends and holidays were officially allowed.

By the way: when studying the respective legislation one starts wondering inevitably if the self-administration of the allotments is still sufficiently modern for not to be perceived as a hindrance and burden. I am neither able nor willing to comment on this. The people involved have to answer this question themselves. I just propose to think about it. Well, I am a supporter of the subsidiarity principle: everybody should do what they are best at and do it within their own responsibility just as the allotment gardeners are doing.

Ladies and gentlemen, allotment gardens become ever more intercultural places. Especially the social diversity in allotment garden associations in contrast to the ghettoization in certain residential areas is an achievement that deserves respect. The living together of people with different social, ethnic and religious background is a green and good example of practical integration. In the allotment gardens young together with old, singles and extended families, Germans and foreigners, craftsmen, physicians, people living on social benefit and museum directors should have the opportunity to spend their time and go in for their hobbies. Gardens offer the best conditions for developing a model society.

An emotive issue, of course, is finance. The costs related to rent, contributions, charges, insurances, power and water supply, impose major limitations on the associations in their role of intermediate lessee. These costs make it ever more difficult to provide gardens for poorer and disadvantaged people. I am not against aid or special conditions in special cases. I am very much in favour of reasonable projects like environmental education. However, I cannot imagine and I do not think it is inevitably necessary to ease the financial burden on allotment gardening in general.

I come from the Free Hanseatic city of Bremen and I experience the need to cut public spending almost daily, also at my own workplace. Sometimes I am under the impression that it is an almost hopeless Sisyphean task to try and balance the nearly inexistent wealth and the scarcity that has mounted especially in towns and villages. Cannot allotment gardening as it is organised now be self-sufficient just as the allotment gardeners are becoming ever more self-sufficient with regard to food supply?

There is a positive aspect that I praise expressly: allotment gardeners are practically minded nature experts. In designing future ecological residential and living spaces their knowledge, their work and experience should be taken into account as in providing environmental education. In doing so there is little financial scope as I said before. But we must not forget: without the mixed and active community of the allotment gardeners the city would no longer be able to afford to tend a lot of the green spaces in the city.

The Landesverband Niedersächsischer Gartenfreunde (association of hobby gardeners of Lower Saxony) has found that for tending green spaces many municipalities face costs of 10,000 Euro per hectare and year. On an area this size 25 allotment gardens could be established. A public green space that is operated as an allotment garden area does not only save this cost, it even generates rental income ranging between € 1,000 and 4,000, depending upon the location. Yet, what is this money as compared to this grand feeling, ladies and gentlemen? "To understand something like the world you have to look at the small things. Allotment gardens are equivalents for the world. There, too, sustainability is important, and how you treat nature, other people, the entire planet." Unfortunately these words are not originally mine but those of Vladimir Kaminer who wrote the book "Mein Leben im Schrebergarten". Reading it is contagious!

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your attention and wish your seminar with its diverse topics great success.



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## Chapter 3 PROJECTS

**Walter Schaffner**,  
President of the  
Swiss  
Association of Family Gardeners



# Action Plan Strategy Biodiversity Switzerland until 2020

## Long-term General Objective of the Swiss Biodiversity Strategy (SBS)

*(Resolution by the Federal Council of  
01/07/2009)*

- "Biodiversity is rich and able to respond to changes"
- "Biodiversity and its contributions to the ecosystem have to be lastingly conserved"

## The strategic objectives

1. Sustainable use of biodiversity
2. Creation of an ecological infrastructure
3. Improvement of the state of species with national priority
4. Maintenance and promotion of genetic diversity
5. Consideration of financial stimulus
6. Recording of eco-system contributions
7. Generation and dissemination of knowledge
8. **Promotion of biodiversity in settled areas**
9. Strengthening of the international commitment
10. Monitoring of changes of biodiversity

### Biodiversity in settled areas

"Biodiversity in settled areas will be promoted by 2020 in such a way that

settled areas will contribute to the formation of a network of habitats, specific species of the settled areas will be conserved and the population is able to experience nature in the vicinity of their homes and in local recreation areas.

## Action plan

Ten strategic aims - **five** fields of action (AB)

- AB I: Sustainable use of biodiversity
- AB II: Promotion of biodiversity
- AB III: Economic values
- AB IV: Generation and dissemination of knowledge
- AB V: International commitment

The five fields of action are subdivided into **26 fields of activity (HF)**.

Tasks for each field of activity:

Development of concrete measures for achieving the ten strategic objectives of the Swiss Biodiversity Strategy.

- Measures for all political levels
- Identifying conflicts with other objectives of the FC
- Identifying necessary adjustments of laws
- Identifying funds needed for implementation
- Defining responsibilities and deadlines
- Participative process

## Action plan: Information

BAFU – Action plan for Swiss Biodiversity Strategy

[www.bafu.admin.ch/ap-biodiversitaet](http://www.bafu.admin.ch/ap-biodiversitaet)

Current information on the work within the action plan and fields of activity is shown on the website of BAFU (federal environmental office).

Participants:

- approximately 250 organisation
- approximately 600 persons

## Biodiversity in settled areas – for humans and nature

Scientific findings

- great diversity of habitat types
- most of them are small
- isolated and fragmented
- common species ...
- ... also specialised species and rare habitats
- thermophilic species
- many alien species

"Biodiversity in settled areas will be promoted by 2020 in such a way that settled areas will contribute to the formation of a network of habitats, specific species of the settled areas will be conserved and the population is able to experience nature in the vicinity of their homes and in local recreation areas."

#### Obligations:

- Contribution to creating a network of habitats



- Conservation of settlement specific species



- Experience of nature in the vicinity of the homes and in local recreational areas



#### Present situation:

- Contribution to creating a network of habitats
- Conservation of settlement specific species
- Experience of nature in the vicinity of the homes and in local recreational areas
- Growing density of buildings and sealing of surfaces in settlements
- "Hard edges" at margins of settlement
- Pollution of air and water
- Uniform greenery in the gardens
- Spreading of invasive species
- Homogenization of habitats
- Spatial conflicts and conflicts of objectives

#### Objectives/levels of action

- Long-term ensuring of a multi-

functional network of green and open spaces

- Biodiversity fulfils its roles
  - Partner for "micro-climate", water management, etc.
  - Experience of nature, well-being, health
  - Identification, sensitization
- Conservation of settlement-specific species
- Dealing with introduced species to be regulated
- Education and consultation to be ensured
- Promotion of synergies and collaboration

management, well-being, local recreation, education, attractiveness of location, ...

- Growing density: high-quality development within settlements
- Recreation
- Space for experience
- Air quality
- Micro-climate
- Health
- Health
- Water retention
- ...

#### Key processes

- Planning
  - Criteria for green spaces and ecological values on all levels of planning and in design plans
  - Coordination of needs and networking structures in planning/designing neighbourhoods and settlements
- Implementation
  - Nature-orientated design for all zones of public and private structures and properties
  - Green façades and roofs
  - Systems for stimulating the implantation of ecological measures
- Communication
  - Education/consultation for vocations/professions that are relevant for biodiversity
  - Sensitization
  - Marketing as biodiversity location
- Collaboration
  - coordinated collaboration of all stakeholders, intermediate utilisation, ...

- Finding and using synergies
- - micro-climate, water



# Project "Park of Generations", Seniorenzentrum Sinzheim

## Park of Generations for Young & Old



### Project partners:

- Verband der Kleingärtner Baden-Württemberg e. V.
- Bezirksverband der Gartenfreunde Karlsruhe e.V.
- Förderverein Seniorenzentrum
- Municipality of Sinzheim
- Curatio GmbH

### Comments regarding the project:

"A federal pilot project, showing how all generations can be included." *Patrick Meinhardt MdB*



### Initiators and partners of the project:

Verband der Kleingärtner Baden-Württemberg e. V.;  
Bezirksverband der Gartenfreunde Karlsruhe e. V.:

"A project that we have developed after the model of the first Karlsruhe allotment garden designed for senior citizens."

### Bezirksverband der Gartenfreunde Karlsruhe e. V.;

### Verband der Kleingärtner Baden-Württemberg e. V.

The Verband der Kleingärtner Baden-Württemberg e. V. (Allotment gardening association of Baden-Württemberg - VKBW) is a non-profit organisation for allotment gardening, independent, neutral with regard to political parties and religions.

VKBW includes the regional associations of Karlsruhe, Freiburg and Heidelberg, the district associations of Bruchsal and Durmersheim, the local association of Baden Baden and the hobby gardeners association of Lörrach. VKBW represents the interests of 143 associations with a total of 14,837 members.

### Förderverein Seniorenzentrum Sinzheim

Chairman Patrick Meinhardt, member of the federal parliament (MdB) and Lothar Kanter, manager of the senior citizens centre (Seniorenzentrum) Sinzheim, insisted from the very beginning that changes should be made in the garden and together with the society for the promotion of the centre (Förderverein) they decided that the centre should be opened for the public. The garden was to be turned into a meeting area.

### Municipality of Sinzheim

The "Park of Generations" will be accessible for all and a public meeting place in the centre of Sinzheim. Most important element will be the "Garden of memories".

*Erik Ernst, Mayor of Sinzheim*



### Curatio GmbH

"Our motto for the project: Hand in hand - young and old"

*Lothar Kanter, Manager,  
Curatio GmbH*



The voluntary work of associations and employees of the centre has yielded

**Alfred Lüthin**, 1st Chairman of Verband der Kleingärtner Baden-Württemberg e. V.

lots of results already.

The "Park of generations" gradually becomes visible:

- new, wide paths,
- the bridge,
- the stage,
- the place of silence;
- the memorial place,
- the garden of memories;
- the barbecue place.

### Award for "Park of generations" in Sinzheim

On 3 November 2010 the foundation "Lebendige Stadt" (living city) has presented its award for the "Most Senior-friendly City" in Munich in front of an audience of ca. 500. One of the four prize winning projects of this year's competition is the town of Sinzheim with its project "Park of Generations". From among the 239 concepts from home and abroad submitted to the jury the "Park of Generations" has been chosen as one of the best practice models for other municipalities.



2010 Award as Best Practice Model for other Municipalities by



### 2012 Award for "Park of Generations" in Sinzheim

In 2010 the "Park of Generations" and the voluntary work of the allotment gardening associations have been nominated by the campaign "Geben gibt" (giving gives) of the Association of German Foundations for the award "Deutscher Engagementpreis 2010" (German Prize for Civic Engagement).



### "Park of Generations" in Sinzheim Finalist for Award 2012

"Auszeichnung Städtebaukongress 2012" (award of 2012 urban development conference)

The conference with more than 600 participants is the climax of the initiative "So wollen wir wohnen! Generationen gerecht / Integriert/Nachhaltig" (This is how we want to live: fit for all generations/integrated/sustainable) that is held every other year by the consortium of building societies in collaboration with the chamber of architects of Baden-Württemberg.



Main speaker at the conference will be well-known Matthias Horx from Vienna who will present in his lecture

"Living Future" the most important aspects for the future of urban and residential development, mobility, energy and architecture.

Main event of the conference is the presentation of awards by the initiative. This will be the first time that the decision regarding which of the 18 shortlisted submissions will receive a prize (total value 80,000 Euro) will not be published before the conference.

### Award winners

- Verband der Kleingärtner Baden-Württemberg e. V.
- Förderverein Seniorenzentrum Sinzheim e. V.
- Municipality of Sinzheim
- Curatio GmbH
- Michaela Senk, Technician for horticulture and landscaping, Karlsruhe

### Laudatory speech

"The significance of open spaces for the attractiveness of municipalities as residential locations can hardly be overestimated. Apart from the surrounding landscape and closeness to nature it is mainly the quality of the urban green and open spaces that determine the housing and living quality within the communities. With the concept of a multi-generation park the municipality of Sinzheim has extended the underused green spaces of a centre for senior citizens by buying additional land and turned it into a much used public green space for all. The civic project 'Multi-generation park' in Sinzheim convinces with its participative approach and leads to a high degree of social integration. It has activated an urban green resource for the community and the senior citizens living in the neighbourhood are better integrated in the urban activities. The process of dynamic participation and integration in planning and execution is exemplary."

## Financing "Park of Generation"

This is how you can help:

- Donations;
- Förderverein Seniorenzentrum Sinzheim e. V.
- Sponsors
- Voluntary commitment
- Patronage

## Project background

The garden is to have special features for the day-care centre at the senior citizens' centre. It is important to ensure that the garden can also be used by visitors with dementia.

Many opportunities arise from integrating schools, pre-schools and kindergartens in the park. Children profit from the experiences of the older generation.

School gardens are very important for pre-school and school lessons. Children get to know interactions in nature there. At the same time social competences are developed by working together in the garden.

## Design example



The concept envisages that the existing outdoor area should be extended by 4000 m<sup>2</sup>. This will provide room for a garden for persons with dementia (garden of memories) and areas where young and old people can be physically active.

The various parts will be linked by a system of barrier-free paths so that they will be accessible for all. Everywhere in the park will be places for sitting and socialising and resting.



## Parts of the park



The parts in the unmarked area have already been completed.

The elements surrounded by the red line are currently in the design phase.

## The bridge



The hard working volunteers have altered the bridge and the pond. Now everybody can use the bridge.

## "Place of silence"



The "Place of silence" provides opportunity for contemplation and commemoration. We have been able to establish it thanks to the courtesy of the Lamprecht family from Sinzheim.

## Open-air stage



The open-air stage could be erected thanks to the friendly support of VG-Bank.

## Barbecue place



In a 72-hour work initiative we have built the barbecue place. People can use it after applying for confirmation of a date.

## Raised beds



The raised beds have been built by members of BDKJ (German federation of catholic youth) and employees of Curatio GmbH.



## Garden of memories



Building the garden of memories was the main activity in 2010. Lots of earth works were necessary for raising the ground and building paths and areas for green spaces.

## Physical activity course (in design phase)



Weather-resistant, firmly anchored pieces of equipment invite people to exercise - on their own or supported by experts.

## Playground (in design phase)



On the playground the youngest visitors are invited to compete at climbing frames.

## Play area for children

Completed in 2013



## Summary

- **Continuation** of the only German pilot project of this type
- **Design** of a semi-natural space for making experiences
- **Participation project** involving the Sinzheim citizens and associations
- **Co-determination and Co-Design**

In several phases over a period of 2 - 6 years, supported by sponsors

# Social pilot project: Wathlingen Youth, Sport and Multi- Generation Park

## Kleingärtnerverein Wathlingen e.V.

Member of the regional allotment gardening association of Celle (Bezirksverband der Kleingärtner Celle e.V. Stadt Celle)

Size: ca. 17,900 m<sup>2</sup>,  
common spaces: 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>

Gardens: 43

Members: 66

Founded in: 1954

The regional association is responsible for ca. 720

Coordinates: 52°32' N, 10° 9' 0

German federal state: Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony)

District: Celle

Association of communities: Wathlingen

Altitude: 43 m a.s.l.

Area: 17.68 km<sup>2</sup>

Number of inhabitants: 6,079

Administrative unit ca. 15,000 inhabitants

Population density: 344 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>

The Office International du Coin de  
Terre et des Jardins Familiaux:

## Social functions of allotment gardens

- **General public** – better quality of life;
- **Families** – meaningful leisure activities; contact with nature;
- **Children and young people** – space for playing and communicating; spaces for experiences; learning by experience;
- **Working population** – recovery from stress at work;
- **Unemployed people** – feeling needed and included;
- **Immigrants** – opportunity to establish contacts and integrate;
- **Disabled persons** – overcoming isolation;
- **Senior citizens** – place for conversations and activities during the 3rd stage of life.

Social function of the allotment gardeners ... practical advice for the future of amalgamated communities.

## Reason for demographic change

- Less young people, more old people
- population number in Germany declines

## Reasons for leaving the countryside:

- lack of cultural offers
- limited social life
- lack of shopping facilities
- lack of sports facilities
- lack medical care
- lack of opportunities for life-long learning

## Target group analysis without excluding the working population

- children and pupils – **childhood phase**
- trainees and students – **training phase**
- working population – **development phase**
- Senior citizens – **harvesting phase**  
= 4 GENERATIONTARGET Develop an attractive village with offers of culture, sports, social life and life-long learning



**Torsten Harms,**  
Wathlingen mayor

**Kerstin Biedermann,**  
Manager  
Four-Generations-Park Wathlingen





## Current overall concept

### Networking of activities

- of schools,
- associations and
- involved institutions,
- citizens.

Concentration on one location in the centre of the community

## Networking leads to integrated youth work activities

### Youth services offer of Linerhaus foundation

- Compulsory offer for district,
- training and ongoing qualification,
- networking with school and kindergarten, associations and youth welfare,
- treatment of nature

### Youth welfare

- Meeting place for young people (open area, two rooms for groups, workshop, anti-aggression room),
- collaboration between school and youth welfare, senior persons and associations,
- bicycle workshop,
- green projects together with allotment gardeners

## Networking ensures attractive learning conditions

### School

- Ensured existence,
- Extension to secondary school with grammar school unit,
- forum for municipal cultural activities,
- use of the 4-Generation rooms/school restaurant
- school rooms for extra-curricular activities,
- school garden and treatment of garden produce

## Networking ensures lifelong learning

**Library** (1,700 readers, 25,000 visitors, 95,000 books borrowed),

- complements lessons -

Seminar of the Office International 2013

guided tours for school children, traineeship placements,

- reading and other events; leisure time group "School meets book",
- advice for "green book corner"

## Networking creates new attractions in the village

### Cinema (44 seats)

- Cinema shows - scheduled and private (hall left rent),
- lectures,
- films in foreign language training,
- contact with foreign countries through Skype

## Networking creates room for opportunities

**Hall** with beamer and sound equipment,

- school restaurant,
- hall for celebrations for up to 200 persons,
- room for meetings of allotment gardeners' land and regional associations

## Networking leads to creativity

### Discovery World

- 10 multipurpose areas (5 x 5 m) for presentations on diverse topics: agriculture, mining, technology, arts ...
- fitness trail for all generations,
- hedge theatre,
- landscape trail

## Networking creates future

### From park to village - future tasks

- Nature contact station,
- nature trail,
- trail on local history,
- collaboration of associations,
- potash mining waste tip should be used as unique selling point,
- art from generations for generations,
- ensure medical care, shopping, care and services.

As from 2012 joint model and concept, various co-operation projects;

27/11/2012 Inauguration of 4-Generation-Park;

2012 Closed meeting of "Network 4G"; ideas for collaboration, coordinating office, library of association of communities, foundation Linerhaus and school restaurant move in;

2011 Laying of foundation stone, topping-out ceremony, working group created for developing educational concept;

2010 Ground breaking ceremony, conference on educational concept; silver medal in federal competition "Gardens in urban development" with special award 2009 design phase, architects' competition, 1st prize and contract to: Architekturbüro Haslob Kruse + Partner; gold medal in competition on the level of the Land "Gardens in urban development"

2008 Euro 3 million grant approved by district of Celle and European Union - beginning preparation of competition "Gardens in urban development";

2007 1st working group meeting including representatives of school, municipality, association of communities, district, groups of community parliament; application for grant for "Youth, Sport and Multi-Generation Park" submitted to EU-structural funds;

2006 Municipality intends to apply for target 1 EU-grants; district agrees

2005 Council of municipality resolves: creation of a "Youth and sports park" with participation of youth welfare and services as well as school social workers and all associations; initial design sketch and order to architect; Idea: connection with multi-generation house;

2004 Preparatory meetings with district of Celle, schools and Linerhaus foundation

2003 Administrative committee decides: administration to produce a concept for creating a youth and sports park



**Wim Hoentjen**, Vice-Chairman of the Dutch allotment gardening association AVVN

## Presentation of projects from the Netherlands

### Allotment Gardens as Engine for Greener Cities

#### Food for life – Projects for healthy nutrition in the allotment garden area "De Hoge Weide"

Dear colleagues, this afternoon I will present two of the most innovative allotment gardens of the Netherlands. Both areas are located in the city of Utrecht that plays a pioneering role for the Dutch allotment gardeners in many ways.

Both associations will also act as hosts during the international congress at Utrecht in 2014 so that you will be able to see the areas yourselves.

The films you will see here may also be taken as models for the public relations films we ask you to produce for next year. Subject and script were chosen freely. Both films advertise associations whose continued existence has been threatened by plans to raze them and erect residential buildings in their place. Under this pressure both associations have decided to totally change their policy and to open for their surroundings as much as possible. They also worked hard for establishing a close collaboration with stakeholders in their vicinity.

The allotment garden association **Ons Buiten** managed to conserve most of its area and integrate it with the new residential area. From that time on the gardens became a public park with space for nature and ecology and with a varied offer of leisure time activities for the people living around them.

The film shows the close collaboration and the many contacts among the people living in that urban district. Schools, kindergartens and local residents are not only using the facilities, they are also responsible for them. The allotment garden association has given its advertising film the title "**In the Neighbourhood**" which shows that they have focused on the human aspect and close collaboration.

The allotment garden association **De Hoge Weide** that was at home in the park Groenewoud had to move and start totally from scratch. The new allotment garden area is now a green annex to a modern business park where thousands of people go to work every day. The companies and the allotment gardens now are one harmonic entity.

The allotment garden area Groenewoud has five sections, each of them treating a particular subject. Yet, all of them have been designed with "food" in mind:

- food for humans (table garden),
- food for animals (sheep pasture, butterfly garden and bird forest),
- food for the soil (compost garden).

The allotment garden association **De Hoge Weide** has chosen "Food from the garden" as central topic for their advertising film.

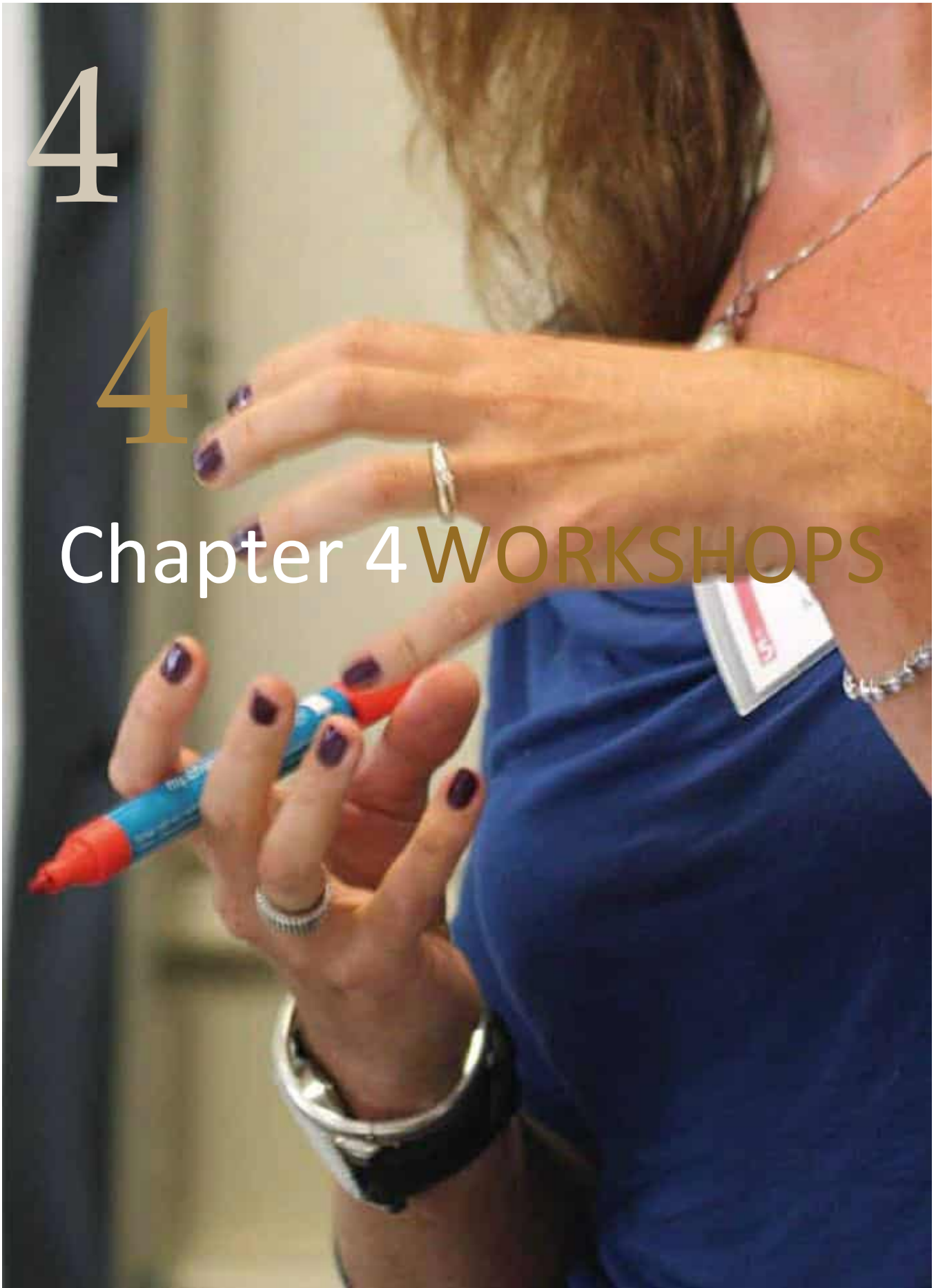
They have now a close collaboration with the Utrecht food bank, the Papendorp park administration and neighbouring companies.

Please take into account when watching these two films that they have been produced with very simple means. A simple video-recorder, a digital photo-camera, a tripod and editing software were sufficient for the production. I hope you will enjoy them and feel inspired by them.

4

4

# Chapter 4 WORKSHOPS



# Possibilities and examples for a successful cooperation of allotment gardeners and media



Nancy Fischer, Journalist, Moderator, Berlin

Concept: I will base the structure of my presentation on the questions from your previous seminar at Zurich. The presentation will include a brief repetition of the fundamental journalistic knowledge Annette Moll provided for you last year. I will not answer all the questions. Some of them you have to discuss internally, some can be treated together with other questions. This will save time.

## 1.

### How can allotment garden areas attract more public attention?

- Of course by using the media, for that reason the following question is important: What attracts journalists?

Let me briefly look back to the 2012 seminar in Zurich:

Usually those topics make it into the media that fulfil the basic requirements for being picked for the news. They have to be interesting news that are related to the region and location, i.e. they have to give orientation (What important news?);

- they have to have a service value, i.e. knowledge and orientation value (How do I benefit?);
- they have to be surprising, i.e. entertaining and stuff for discussion (What do people talk about?);
- they have to be relevant for the target group, i.e. be useful (What concerns many people?).

In general I can say that allotment gardens are a trendy topic!

- The DIY-sector is booming, be it as handicraft, home improvement or gardening ("urban gardening").
- Things are changing in the world of allotment gardening and in the media: gardening in the allotment area, tilling the own garden, be it with the family or with friends, growing own fruit and vegetables is trendy. In particular in big cities so many people now want to have an own gardening parcel that it has long entered the league of lifestyle and trendy topics.

According to surveys nearly 40 per cent of the Germans say that gardening is one of their favourite hobbies. In recent years the average age in the allotment gardening associations has decreased markedly, probably also thanks to Deutsche Schreberjugend. BDG has approximately one million members, all in all as many as 5 million people use an allotment garden; a very large group of the population whose interests and worries are covered and reflected by the media.

If you wanted to get an overview of the news and reports about allotment gardens in the media it would take you days to check all the material even if you restricted this to the contributions in the public radio channels. Thousands of film have been produced. They cover all topics ranging from seasonal and rather general reports

(e.g. preparing the gardens for winter) up to daily news (e.g. protesting Berlin allotment gardeners). Often they include socially relevant issues like:

social, ecological and political activities. If an allotment garden association does something for people in need, like having a food bank garden or collecting donations for a charity project, this is newsworthy - and of course good PR for the association. The same applies for ecologically sustainable gardening. People who insist on getting fruit and vegetables that are free from pesticides and offer their children a bit of nature will certainly be interested in reports about that kind of activities in allotment garden areas. (E.g. the trend regarding "misfits" - imperfect vegetables are O.K.!)

The longing for an intact world is now expressed by the enormous success of journals like Landlust, Landidee, Mein Schönes Land, etc. Landlust has reached a circulation of nearly one million copies within only a few years. NDR (one of the German regional TV-channels) follows this trend and broadcasts a programme under the same title (Landlust TV) that is very successful. It is a boom of interest from which allotment gardening draws indirect profit.

The situation is worse when bad news are concerned: xenophobia, quarrels among neighbours or even murder are emotive issues that usually



make it into the news quickly. These are very emotive issues and because people like discussing them very much they will remember them for a long time - as negative events.

## 2.

### **Which projects and efforts should be made better known to the public?**

Of course it is important to make projects and efforts known - they show that you are active! Like the journalists, BDG can choose what to publish on the basis of own definitions for newsworthiness for a potential audience: What is new for the members? What might be surprising for potential allotment gardeners? What concerns me and my summerhouse? What generates an added value for my gardening?

Media strategies: Raise own topics. Taking the initiative is worth the effort: Associations can report about special events (e.g. a visit by a celebrity) or reports about their social and ecological commitment can enhance their presence in the media. In doing so they should apply the following basic rules, e.g. for drafting own press releases: consider the information value:

What is new for us and important also for others?

Which of the aspects of the association's activities is related to a relevant and current topic?

What concerns many people in our region?

Propose topics for service and advice:

- provide own experts,
- maintain contacts with editorial boards,
- keep journalists among the personal acquaintances informed of scheduled events.
- Offer seasonal subjects!

Especially during the silly season in the middle of summer or during holidays many editors are glad to be

offered attractive topics!

How to write a press release? Most important: Keep it brief! Journalists are getting innumerable press releases every day - and most of them do not have the time to read all of them. For that reason press releases should begin with the highlight and make the reader curious (short, striking headline followed by the so-called teaser text that makes more curious; in the first paragraph follows the actual text with all important pieces of information). What is also helpful: an own Facebook account where the allotment garden association shows current deadlines, invites for events or reports about incidents. Ever more journalists use this instrument among others for finding topics and in particular the young generation can easily be reached by means of this medium. Similar: Twitter.

## 3.

### **How can we get a more positive image?**

The question is: What does "more positive image" mean? Do you want to appear in the media exclusively in connection with positive subjects? Do you want to appear as more creative, younger and be in the media more often? Depending upon your objective you can also control your image by means of the media. For showing this let me recall Zurich 2012 once more:

#### **When the journalists are coming - Modes of working of radio and TV**

Every medium has its own modes of working and technological and design requirements. In particular for meetings with radio and TV-reporters it is important to find eloquent partners for the journalists. Nearly all voice recordings (original sounds) will be edited, usually they are shortened. It is very helpful for radio journalists to

have partners at the microphone who can express their ideas vividly and use relatively short sentences.

#### **Current example film**

Beautiful images and actions that are easy to follow are especially important for TV-journalists since they want to give the audience a lively impression of the place they report about. Camera-shots made only in the small meeting room during a board meeting are not really attractive. It will always be helpful for the association to recommend locations and schedules. Virtually the same applies for photos to be taken for a paper. You know your gardens best - make creative proposals! Why should people always stand in front of their garden house if that garden has a treehouse or special plants?

#### **Current examples from print media, model film**

All media have special formats that depend upon the target group and the subjects treated. For every meeting with journalists it is important to know for which medium they are working and in which context the planned report will be published. A news programme wants to inform people, a popular magazine rather intends to touch people emotionally, shock or entertain them. The latter need not always have the result intended by the subjects presented. People like to have fun at other people's expense. So: always get information on the medium and its orientation before you agree to grant them an interview.





# Possibilities and examples for a successful cooperation of allotment gardeners and media

## Workshop report

We have discussed and looked for solutions to be presented at Utrecht with regard to the questions that had been asked at the workshops in Zurich. Regarding this topic the following three questions have been discussed:

It is especially important to attract children by letting them put plants in the soil or by creating educational trails, etc. And we must not forget those children whose parents do not have a garden! Especially these children can be given access to nature by means of school or project gardens.



**Walter Schaffner** ,  
Association president, Switzerland

**1.**

**Is it important to make our efforts better known?**

The only possible answer is "Yes". We have to make ourselves better known and we have to approach the media ourselves. The media will approach us only occasionally. The journalists Deike Diening and Nancy Fischer have presented very good examples for the point of view of the media.

A good proverb states: "Do good and let people know about it" and for letting people know also the web, homepages and - this is new - also Twitter and Facebook should be used.

We can also attract attention by having stands at fairs and exhibitions or by selling seedlings or plants.

Opening the garden areas is a very important and necessary signal for people outside. Only this way the people get to know the appearance and value of allotment gardens.

**2.**

**How important is it to make our projects and efforts better known to the public?**

**Even now we are already implementing many projects. The question is, however, for whom are these projects made or benefits from them?**

Projects should be published especially when they concern the public, e.g. school gardens in Germany or "green classrooms" etc. Many projects can easily be introduced by means of a PowerPoint-presentation, for instance at fairs, exhibitions, meetings or on the web.

This will be very beneficial for the image of allotment gardeners.

By means of Twitter and Facebook we can reach especially the younger generation.

# 3.

**a) How can we present a positive image to organisations that are not yet members of our federation, the media, politicians and the public?**

We have already started to collaborate with new organisations like COST or Europa Nostra.

We should consider if we could enhance our opportunities within the EU by collaborating with the WWF, Greenpeace or associations of professional gardeners.

We must not forget politicians. We cannot exist without them.

**b) What name should the Office International use in advertising for itself and which instruments (i.e. Twitter and Facebook) can be used for this end?**

Do we have to consider the name of our organisation? Is there any other and better name? Do we have to acquire legal protection for the name? To date we have not found a new name.

For advertising we should use the media, the web, homepages, Facebook.

Finally I thank the workshop group for the very active participation.

Unfortunately time was too short for showing the two examples from Switzerland as an introduction. They are examples of well-made TV-programmes to make large groups of the population interested in allotment gardening.



**Hervé Bonnavaud,**  
President of the French  
Association



# Possibilities and examples for successful cooperation of allotment gardeners and politics

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Allotment gardens must be regarded as a brand.

Do we use the same technique, the same arguments to promote and sell a Rolls Royce and a bicycle? What is the common denominator?

In Europe is there one unique model of allotment gardens?

What is the common denominator between a 300 m<sup>2</sup> plot and a 2 m<sup>2</sup> one?

**Public Relations:** phrase often associated with companies selling products, services, with political bodies.

Does that apply to allotment gardens too?

## What is PR? What/who does it concern?

Public **relations** is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning **understanding** and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an **organisation** and its **publics**.

Every organisation, no matter how large or small, ultimately depends on its reputation for survival and success.

## Three essential terms are used in the definition of PR:

**‘Organisation’** can be a government body, a business, a profession, a public service or any corporate or voluntary body large or small.

**‘Publics’** are audiences that are important to the organisation. They include members – existing and potential; employees and management; investors; media; government; suppliers; opinion-formers.

**‘Understanding’** is a two-way process. An organisation needs to listen to the opinions of those with whom it deals and not solely provide information. Propaganda is not enough in today’s open society.

Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

Members, employees, journalists and politicians can have a powerful impact. They all have an opinion about the organisations they come into contact with – whether good or bad, right or wrong. These perceptions will drive their decisions about whether they want to join, to work with, shop with and support these organisations.

In today's competitive market, reputation is the thing that makes you stand out from the crowd and gives you an advantage. Effective PR can help manage reputation by communicating and building good relationships with all organisation publics.

PR not only tells an organisation's story to its publics, it also helps to shape the organisation and the way it works.

Public relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.

Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

Research and evaluation help the managers to find out the concerns and expectations of an organisation's publics.

## How to build an effective/successful communication strategy with the media or politicians

A successful product / a brand has a name, a quality, customers: it must be attractive, answer a need or a demand.

If the need and/or demand do not exist, you must create it, convince them that it will be good for them, fashionable, exiting, healthy, interesting, useful ...

### As a management function, public relations also involves the following:

1.

Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.

2.

Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.

3.

Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims. These may include marketing; financial; fund raising; employee, community or government relations; and other programs.

4.

Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy. Setting objectives,

planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities — in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.

Knowledge required in the professional practice of public relations include:

- communication arts,
- psychology,
- social psychology,
- sociology,
- political science,
- economics and the principles of management and ethics.

Technical knowledge and skills required for opinion research:

- public-issues analysis,
- media relations,
- direct mail,
- institutional advertising,
- publications,
- film/video productions,
- special events,
- speeches and presentations.

### Make our projects fit public demand/opinion



Ingo Kleist, Honorary member of BDG

# Possibilities and examples for a successful cooperation of allotment gardeners and politics

## 1

**Are our current PR-activities able to attract the attention of politicians to the model and ideas of allotment gardening in such way that they are taken into account in political decision making?**

Currently the individual associations use a range of PR-activities. This is partially due to a lack of models and also to legal standards that apply for allotment gardening and due to the situation in the allotment gardens in the various associations.

It would be good to have uniform European regulations to ensure the long-term existence of allotment gardens and providing equal conditions for all of the associations.

Political decisions can only be achieved if the allotment gardeners themselves bring them about. However, this would mean that allotment gardeners become politically active and perhaps even join political parties and become active as their members in the parliaments on local, district, Land and national level and even in the European parliament.

Since only few of us will be able to achieve this we should at least try to establish close contacts with the politicians on the various levels, maintain these contacts during the term of parliament and build a basis of trust. Best results in this regard can be achieved during the election campaigns. When candidates want to

be elected or re-elected they always pay attention to the socially relevant organisations and groups of the population. Usually they keep the issues presented by the allotment gardeners, for instance, in mind and take them into account in decision making.

## 2

**How can we make allotment garden areas accessible for the public so that achievements are seen and can be appreciated?**

There are many ways to show the achievements of allotment gardeners.

They range from summer parties in the allotment garden area up to international horticultural exhibitions. Most important in this context is public relations work using posters, flyers, press releases, radio and TV-interviews attracting attention to the events. Invitations to politicians, mayors, socially relevant organisations and of course also the people working in the public administrative bodies that are responsible for allotment gardening are door-openers. If you do not use them, you may destroy your good image.

## 3

**Which instruments may help to close the gap between our self-image and the image others have of allotment gardening, i.e. to improve our image?**

As long as we allotment gardeners remain focussed on ourselves we will hardly be able to change our image of being small-minded.

However, we need not hide our light under a bushel. We are well organized, our members come from all walks of the population. We are not the alcohol-dependent workers of the late 18th century anymore. Allotment gardening has changed thoroughly. Allotment gardens are no longer used only for growing food, they are also used for recreation. Young people with children want to be active outdoors and take an allotment garden. Today we have people from more than 80 nations in our gardens and the new petty-bourgeoisie is engaged in "urban gardening" - a movement that believes that allotment gardening has to be re-invented.

We need an active PR-campaign.

This campaign should be coordinated by the leagues and the Office.



4

**How can we show to the public and the politicians what allotment garden areas are and which advantages they offer?**

Own publications like garden papers, brochures, flyers will help; on special occasions like the "Day of the Garden" press-releases are useful.

5

**How can we convince our own members of the significance of actively improving our image and can we communicate about this with each other?**

For this we will need patience because most allotment gardeners are happy to be left alone. They are only interested in their own gardens and perhaps their association.

It is a heroic task for every board to change this.

6

**Will all allotment gardening areas or organisations have to open for the public?**

Since allotment gardens are part of the public green the areas or organisations have the task to open for the society. Since allotment gardening areas and organisations are almost exclusively focussed on their members (as required by their byelaws and lease contracts) we can achieve this opening only by approaching and motivating them.

7

**How important is it to make our projects and efforts better known to the public?**

Internal projects and efforts should be made public only if they are things that concern the public like gardens for people with disabilities, school gardens, areas for day-care activities for children, public playgrounds, etc.

These activities will enhance our acceptance and image. "Do good and tell people about it."

8

**Is it important to make existing and planned efforts better known?**

Only in particular cases. Internally it should be done because the members may have to decide about them.

9

**How can we present a positive image to organisations that are not yet members of our federation, to the media, politicians and the public?**

Only by on-going self-presentation. Having 'unique selling points' is essential; without them you get nowhere.

10

**What name should the Office International use in advertising for itself and which instruments (i.e. Twitter and Facebook) can be used for this end?**

Already by its name the Office International should show that it is mainly a European organisation so that we can claim EU-grants. An own mission statement might be helpful. We have to achieve that the European parliament and the Commission feel obliged to create equal conditions for all allotment gardens in Europe by means of suitable legislation.

By means of Twitter and Facebook we can reach many people, especially young ones. These accounts have to be kept up-to-date. This needs a lot of time.

Since the Office does not have any fulltime employees we can only warn against such commitment.

11

**What are moments of success and how can we develop and build on this success in future?**

The working group was not able to agree on an answer here.

## Workshop (English)



Top:  
Chair: Nancy Fischer/  
Hervé Bonnavaud

from left to right: Mogens  
Ginnerup-Nilsen/Madelon  
Veerman/ Marieke de  
Boe/Wilhelm Wohatschek/ Jean  
Kieffer/Allen Rees

## Workshop (German)



Chair: Walter Schaffner/ Ingo Kleist (on the  
right)



# Development of Approaches for Drafting a Strategy for the Office International at the Utrecht-Congress in 2014

**Ton Tuis**, Vice Chairman of the Dutch Association of Allotment Gardens

Ladies and gentlemen,  
in Zurich and Berlin we carefully studied the question of how we can enhance the position of allotment gardening in future. In this process we used the assistance of external experts who helped us to see ourselves through the eyes of people from outside. Now it is our task to actually implement the proposals for enhancing our image. Next year the results of our meetings in Zurich and Berlin have to be merged into a joint strategy. As preparation for our international congress in Utrecht in 2014 we request you to reflect the findings of our meetings in Zurich and Berlin in a visual contribution.

As I mentioned already yesterday all of the member countries and federal Länder are requested to prepare for the international congress in 2014 a visual contribution showing their allotment gardening activities. This contribution may have the form of a PowerPoint-presentation, a video-film or a home-video. We ask you to show with sounds and images how you intend to attract attention to allotment gardening in your countries.

Let me mention once more that the moderator, Mr Jack de Vries, has already produced a proposal that you may use for getting inspiration.

Imagine that the existence of the allotment gardens in your country, your region or your city was at stake and that you would get five minutes during a political meeting to show by means of sounds and images why the endangered gardens have to be preserved. You define yourselves which aspects you want to stress.

However, you should take into account that the message must become clear to everyone irrespective of the language a person speaks.

The presentation should last five minutes at the most.

In Utrecht the Auditorium will be a very special cinema where we will present your contributions.

Jack de Vries, one of the best PR-consultants in the Netherlands, will be the moderator of that workshop and on the basis of your contributions he will provide tips and ideas that will help us in our future PR-activities.

Perhaps the presentations can be published on the website of the Office; each in the section of the organisation that has produced it.

In recent decades the interest in allotment gardens has been growing in some parts of Europe, in particular in and around large cities. However, the competition for the scarce land in these areas is getting ever fiercer. For that reason it is important to make the added value of the allotment garden areas for a sustainable urban development better known.

We hope that we can complete our work at the international congress 2014 in Utrecht and define a common strategy for our future activities. The Utrecht allotment gardening associations are looking forward to welcoming you to their allotment



garden areas in 2014. Most of the Utrecht allotment gardening associations have an active PR-strategy and offer not only gardening but also other activities in their areas. In 2014 the Utrecht associations would like to exchange views with you with regard to these activities.

I would be very glad, indeed, if I could welcome all of you to Utrecht next year.



# European Day of the Garden



For showing that a garden, in particular an allotment garden, does not just bring joy to the gardener but fulfils also important tasks for the living together of the people and for the ecosystem the Office International has established the **"European Day of the Garden"**.

It began with an event in the Gardens of the World. In the so-called Hall of Receptions, a room that is beautifully decorated with mosaics, tiles and cedar wood carvings, senior park manager Beate Reuber addressed the participants with a speech of welcome.

Then the participants split into three groups to be taken on guided tours through the flowering park that was bathed in sunshine.

The tour started at the oriental "Garden of the Four Streams" that is adjacent to the Hall of Receptions. (image left)

After a lovely stroll through the park, guided by experts, the walk ended at the Kienberg-gate. There members of the allotment gardening association "Am Kienberg" in attractive costumes waited to take the guests through the allotment area. After visiting some impressive gardens tasty cakes and lots of drinks were distributed at a beautifully decorated stall.

From that place the tour continued to the allotment garden area "Dahlwitzer Strasse".

Here the event continued with the planting of a crab-apple tree as symbolic "Tree of Community".



## In the Gardens of the World...

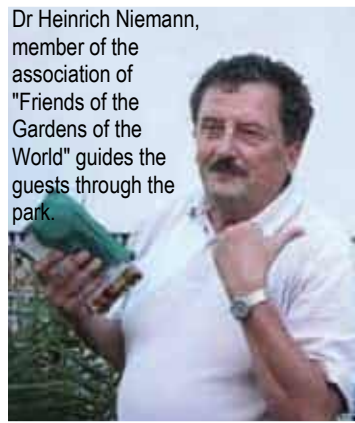
Photo: Lothar Fritzs

After that nine allotment gardening associations from four countries were awarded with honorary certificates.

In addition to these activities the participants and guests had the opportunity to have an exchange on "green oases" and acquire information on allotment gardening in the European member states.



Dr Heinrich Niemann, member of the association of "Friends of the Gardens of the World" guides the guests through the park.



Senior park manager of the "Gardens of the World" Beate Reuber welcomes the guests



## ...Hall of Receptions







## Allotment garden area "Am Kienberg"



European Day of the Garden 2013

# "Tree of the Year 2013" becomes Tree of Community



For showing the will of the allotment gardeners to engage in joint action the "European Day of the Garden" was celebrated in conjunction with the seminar because allotment gardeners have to create symbols for the future.

This symbol is to be a reminder of the fundamental objective of the community of allotment gardeners: the conservation of the flora, and it is hoped that this symbol will remain standing for many years as an expression of the will of the 14 European allotment gardening associations to act together.

A suitable place had soon been found: the allotment gardening area Dahlwitzer Strasse in the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Here the tree will be a symbol representing the ca. 12 million allotment gardeners covered by the European umbrella organisation.

The Office International, BDG and the company Bruns Pflanzen-Export GmbH & Co. KG provided a tree for this purpose that has been proclaimed "Tree of the Year 2013" in Germany. Representatives of the various levels of allotment gardening and politics were to plant it to commemorate the meeting

in Berlin as the intermediate stage between Zurich and Utrecht. The planting was then done by Patrick Meinhardt, member of the German parliament, Christian Gäbler, permanent secretary in the senate administration for urban development and district councillor Christian Gräff representing politics and by Chris Zijdeveld, president of the Office International, Willi Wohatschek, chairman of the Office International, Dr Norbert Franke, president of BDG, Günter Landgraf, president of the association of allotment gardeners of the Land of Berlin and Rüdiger Kaminski, chairman of the allotment gardening area.

The crab-apple tree that was 7 m tall when it was planted as Tree of Community is to be a symbol for the united action of allotment gardeners and for the strength of the organisation in Europe.

Dr Norbert Franke, president



## From top to bottom

1 Tree of Community, 2 Landgraf (president of the association of allotment gardeners of the Land of Berlin), Gräff (district councillor), Meinhardt (member of the federal parliament), Gäbler (permanent secretary), Franke (president of BDG)

3. Zijdeveld (president of the Office International)

4. see image 2





## European Day of the Garden 2013

# Awarding of honorary certificates

All that is important for 2011 describes Christian Schwägerl in the chapter with the title "Mensch macht Natur" (Man makes nature) as follows:

*"From the old world of industrialisation and militarisation, for instance in the region of Berlin, surprising post-modernistic biotopes may evolve that can be models for other places worldwide. Berlin is home to 140 bird species, i.e. half of the species that occur in Germany. Eagle-owls are living at a shopping mall and peregrine falcons use the lamp light at Alexanderplatz for hunting.*

*In the age of urbanisation Berlin might become an ecosystem that can be a model for the future.*

*It could become this model by covering roofs and façades with greenery, building lanes and tunnels to keep animals away from the roads, by turning allotment gardens into biotopes and fields - these are not petty things but survival strategies.*

*At the beginning of an urban period it is important to remember that the towns gave rise to the gardens.*

*If gardens and an urban agriculture could be characteristic for the new cities a host of problem might be avoided..."*

Awarding honorary certificates is part of this approach.

Authorities and the population should learn about the efforts made, allotment gardeners should be encouraged to engage in similar activities and the pioneers or active associations should be rewarded.

The Office is happy that this year we can award four honorary certificates for organic gardening, three honorary certificates for social commitment and three honorary certificates for innovative projects.

## Awarded an honorary certificate for ecological gardening:

1. Allotment gardening association "Neugrabener Moor Hamburg e.V."



The gardeners of this association pay great attention to ecology and sustainability. Among other activities they are keeping bees in the allotment area. The activities of the

beneficial insects have a positive impact on the gardens. Since the bees have been brought to the area more fruit is harvested. The bee-keeper's station is only one station along an extensive trail.

The trail also includes

- a forest and moor section,
- a pomaceous fruit tree avenue,
- a farm garden with an extensive herb garden,
- a farm cottage.

Especially for school children this trail offers the opportunity to get to know nature in close contact and understand the ecosystem.

2. Allotment gardening association "An der Vils e.V." in Amberg (Bavaria)

The most important strength of this allotment garden area is its expert advice. The



expert advice provided to the association members has an impact in the village, too. The home owners also follow the recommendations of the experts. In their work the experts focus

on ecology and sustainability.

They promote the diversity of cultivated plants and the bees are kept according to ecological standards. For passing on the knowledge about protection of species and ecology the association has established a teaching garden and a nature trail.

### 3. Allotment gardening association Stadspark in Groningen (Netherlands)



The association Stadspark was established at its current location west of Groningen in the sixties of the past century. The area consists of 205 gardens, each of them with a different size.

In 2004 the association Stadspark started to compete for the national award for ecological gardening. In 2012 the organisation achieved the best result with four dots on the ladybird.

Stadspark developed an impressive number of projects, among them:

- a website with lots of information on ecological gardening;
- guided tours, a tree-trail, areas left in their natural state;
- wild native plants at public places;
- social activities that promote cohesion within the association and stimulate ecological gardening;
- publication of information on ecological gardening in their own journal;
- local advertising;

- dune garden and decorative plants in a nature-garden near the toad pond;
- taste trail through the park with 20 different fruit, nut and berry plants;
- more than 40 different nest-boxes, e.g. for swallows and other birds, for hedgehogs and bats.

Currently roughly 85% of the association members join these activities.

### 4. Allotment garden association De Driehoek Utrecht (Netherlands)



The association De Driehoek has been at its current location since 1963. It consists of 137 gardens with an average size of 250 m<sup>2</sup>.

In 2003 the board of the association drafted a "vision document" for convincing the city of Utrecht, among other reasons, that the garden areas were important. The garden area of De Driehoek is part of the main ecological structure in the Netherlands.

A characteristic feature of the land covered by the gardens of De Driehoek are two parallel trenches. They are remnants of the historic division of pasture land. Along these trenches apple and pear trees are growing. Some of them are more than 50 years old. A belt of trees and another trench surround the entire area.

In 2010 the association began to strive for the "National Quality Mark". In 2012 their efforts earned them "four beautiful dots on the ladybird".

The association De Driehoek develops many projects, among them:

- four times per year a newsletter for the gardeners;
- information boards at special places (e.g. on life in the water, fruit trees, birds, grass snakes, butterflies);
- organisation of courses and working groups on ecological gardening, how to build insect-hotels, nesting boxes, composting, pruning, etc.;
- islands and stairs in ponds for ducks;
- name tags for traditional fruit-tree species;
- a wall for kingfishers;
- a common compost heap including a grass snake;
- ecological mowing of the banks of the trenches.

### Awarded an honorary certificate for social activities:

#### 1. Allotment garden association "Dresden-Altleuben e.V." (Germany)



Apart from having rebuilt the allotment gardens after the flood of the century in 2002 and their commitment for ecological gardening with a very noticeable stress on productiveness the social commitment of the association is its greatest strength.

This strength finds its expression in several projects within the "social city" programme.

For socially disadvantaged families who cannot afford to make the down payment for a garden the association makes this payment to the tenant who is passing on the garden. The new tenants can then pay the amount to the association in instalments.

Another social project of the association is a therapy garden for persons with mental disabilities.

## 2. **Park of Generations,** Bezirksverband der Gartenfreunde Karlsruhe e.V. Baden-Württemberg (Germany)



**The Park of Generations** is a meeting place for young and old and creates a connection between children, adults and senior people. Wide, barrier free paths past a newly established pond with a bridge are connecting the various components of the park.

They include a small open-air stage, a Place of Silence, a garden for persons with dementia, raised beds and a barbecue area.

The entire community centre is involved in implementing the ideas.

## 3. **The family gardens of Mazargues in Marseille (France)**

The gardens of Mazargues were established in 1905 and they are a unique example for France since they are the only family garden area with climatic health resort facilities. These were created for controlling tuberculosis which was widely spread when the gardens were founded.

With 3.7 hectares of pine groves the gardens of Mazargues are the green lung of the district and a unique reserve for biodiversity.

The allotment gardens of Mazargues allow more than 100 families with low incomes to grow a large proportion of the vegetables they eat.

These gardens are accessible also for persons with disabilities. At the same time they are also a place for educating children.

At a time when our society shows a tendency towards breaking apart the allotment gardens of Mazargues create social cohesion and offer a privileged place for an exchange between the generations.



## **Awarded an honorary certificate for innovative projects:**

### 1. **Allotment garden association of Bron Fair**



At the end of summer in 2009 the Bridgend County Association was asked if we had a piece of garden land that might be used for people with impaired vision.

In late September 2009 we had 450 square meters of land located in the allotment garden area of Bron Fair that we could use for the project.

Then the really hard work started: to find funding. We approached the community council of Maesteg hoping they could help us. To our great joy the councillors gave us £ 9,200.

Now we had money and could start to look for more support for our project. It would be the first of its kind in the Bridgend County Borough and consists of an area that was especially designed and built for people with impaired vision and other handicaps.



We were successful and happy about our achievements: 20 raised beds, one plastic greenhouse, one tactile garden and a compost toilet as well as a house with a patio for meetings. All paths were made wide enough for wheelchairs and the area was fenced in and secured.

In early April building works were finished. The raised beds and the house had been erected and everything was ready so that the gardening club could start its work.

On 23 June the Bron Fair Garden for the Disabled was officially inaugurated.

Four years ago a willow tree and bamboo plantation was established within the allotment area with the objective of using the plants in the gardens and in the youth centre. The young people harvest the willow twigs and show the gardeners the many uses of willow twigs in gardens. The willow twigs are also used for many handicraft products.

This summer the young people will build an aviary of willow branches. The reason is that they are very interested in ornithology.

Malou WEIRICH, Secretary General

## **2. Allotment garden association Cold Barn Farm together with the Abersychan school for children at risk**

The Cold Barn Farm allotments are collaborating closely with the Abersychan comprehensive school and with the Torfaen youth service in a project that has the title ASDAN.

The objective of this project is to integrate young people who are about to be expelled from school. A group of ten young people is coming to the Cold Barn Farm Association every week and recently they began to extend the allotment gardens. They have done all the earth works and built raised beds.

Currently the young people are erecting a new plastic greenhouse within the allotment area. We have learned that even the most difficult young people can work hard when they get guidance and a project in which they can get involved. The teachers have found that the young people are less prone to truancy and show a better behaviour since they have started this project.







