The Role of Urban Gardening for European’s Ageing Societies

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Introduction: Background of Topic

- Functions of existing and emerging forms of urban gardening in European cities in times of social, economic and climate change with special emphasis on ageing societies

- Two research backgrounds:
  
  Research work about living preferences of aged persons and about the future of the existing housing stock

  European research network
COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens

- 31 participating European countries plus New Zealand as International Partner Country

- 167 individuals nominated from over 90 institutions

- Involvement of stakeholders and practitioners
  - 5 organisations for allotment or hobby gardeners
  - Diverse municipalities from different countries

- 30 Early Stage Researchers plus 19 PhD students

- Gender Balance:
  - 99 female, 68 male → 60% female
Mission of COST Action TU1201 Urban Allotment Gardens in European Cities...

...is to fully comprehend relevance of and challenges for urban (allotment) gardens in Europe from four research perspectives:

1. Urban Development and Policy
2. Sociology
3. Ecology
4. Urban Design
Outline

1. Introduction/Background
2. About ageing
3. Future Challenges and the Functions of Urban Gardening
4. Examples
5. Conclusion
What do we know about Ageing: Ageing-quotient 2013

Source: Eurostat; population projections, base: 2010
What do we know about Ageing: Ageing-quotient 2013 and 2050

Percent

Luxembourg, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, United Kingdom, Finland, Cyprus, Switzerland, France, Malta, Ireland, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Croatia, EU/28, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Italy, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Germany, Spain, Greece, Portugal
What do we know about ageing: 
Results of a survey of people aged 60 and over in four German Cities by ILS and IOER Research Institutes.

[Survey image with handwritten responses]
What do we know about ageing:
Results of a survey of people aged 60 and over in four German Cities by ILS and IOER Research Institutes

- Conducted in
  - Dresden (apr. 500,000 inh.), Dortmund (apr. 580,000)
  - Döbeln (apr. 22,000 inh.) , Arnsberg (78,000 inh.)

- Survey
  - 15,550 participants aged 60 to 90
  - 4,769 evaluable questionnaires

- Some results from Dortmund
  - On average interviewees lived in their flat since 29 years!
  - 65% of the interviewees intended to stay where they lived

Photo: ILS
Results of survey by ILS: what characteristics of living situation are regarded as “very important”

- Safety in the house
- Flat has balcony or terrace
- Medical support nearby
- Shopping facilities nearby
- House has green space
- Quiet house
- Care in case of illness
- Quiet neighbourhood
- Elevator in the building
- Green space or park in walking distance
- SOS Call

In percent; multiple answers possible
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In percent; multiple answers possible

Rating: "very important"
What do we know about ageing: Topics to be addressed

- Results of a survey amongst residents of single family homes
- Research conducted by ILS together with IREUS and HFT, Stuttgart on behalf of Wüstenrot Stiftung

What older residents of single family homes missed:

- public transport facilities
- shopping opportunities
- public areas for leisure in the neighbourhood
What do we know about ageing: Age-friendly city topic areas

“The outside environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people and affect their ability to ‘age in place’.” (WHO guide Global age-friendly cities)

“Having green spaces is one of the most commonly mentioned age-friendly features. However, in many cities there are barriers that prevent older people from using green spaces.” (WHO guide global age-friendly cities)
Increasing differentiation of life-styles of aged persons

Facilities in the neighbourhood and access to green space are important issues to age in place

Cities have to be attractive for other groups also (e.g. young families with children)

Thesis:

Age-friendly cities are liveable cities for everyone

Need for an integral approach which can be supported by urban gardening
Urban gardening - what are we talking about?

- **Focus** not exclusively on *food production* but also on the *experience of horticultural activities and recreation*.

- **Different types of urban gardening** according to objectives, function, spatial context, user groups, legal status, location, accessibility,...
Urban gardening - what are we talking about?

- Allotment gardening
- Community gardening
- Assisted gardening
- Rooftop gardening
- Edible cities

Allotment Park in Lisbon; photo: Runrid Fox-Kämper
Allmendekontor Tempelhofer Feld Berlin; photo: ILS
Meine Ernte in Aachen, Germany; photo: Runrid Fox-Kämper
Rooftop Gardening in Camden, UK; photo provided by Silvio Caputo
Urban Gardening in a public park in Andernach, Germany; photo: Runrid Fox-Kämper
4. Trends and Challenges in European Cities

- Societal Change
- Climate Change
- Economic Change

“The emerging trends have an impact on the city, and on the public perception of the meaning of urban gardening. Concerns about the environment, uncertainties related to economy and the society in general trigger a new interest in gardening.” 
(Silvio Caputo, Chair of WG 4 in COST Action TU1201)
Functions of Urban Gardening: Societal Change

- Recreation for different life-styles in the direct neighborhood
- Physical and mental health, especially for aged persons
- Communication and integration of minority groups
- A place to be
Functions of Urban Gardening: Economic Change

- Creating local identity and place-making
- Transformation of abandoned urban spaces
- Reduction of direct costs (subsistence, health)

Allotment plots on vacant land in the dense urban fabric of Porto, Portugal, photo by: Sandra Costa

Maroussi Allotments, Greece; photo by Nera Moran
Functions of Urban Gardening: Climate Change

- Microclimate regulation
- Cleaning of air and **carbon storage**
- **Water cycle** regulation
- Enrichment of **habitat and biodiversity**

Urban gardening near London City; photo: www.capitalgrowth.org

Network of allotments in Stockholm; Figure by Colding et al. 2006
4. Example: Jardins Partagés, Paris

French Federation of Allotment and Community Gardens (FNJFC)

- Number of allotment plots decreased from 500,000 in 1940 to 150,000 in 1970
- New approaches to urban gardening to address new user groups, explicitly
  - Aged persons, disabled, groups
  - Smaller plots (20 – 150 m² instead of 500 - 600 m²)
  - Gardens in the unused open space between densely built flat blocks

Raised beds for persons in wheelchairs in an allotment garden in Quetigny, France; New allotments „Au pied d’immeubles“, Bobigny, photos: Hervé Bonnavaud
Les Jardins du Zéphyr, Aulny-sous-Bois

Urban Gardening between blocks of flats

- Small town 10 km NE of Paris
- Deprived neighbourhood with extremely bad image
- Creation of allotments as means for requalification
- Cooperation of housing association and French allotments federation
- 52 allotment plots of 30 m²
- Semipublic paths useable for neighbours
- Place for interaction

Photos: Ville de Aulny
Future Trends and Challenges for European Cities and the Role of Urban Gardening

Integral approach

Societal change

Climate change

The city

Green infrastructure

Urban Gardening

Built environment

Economic change

Economic change
5. Summary and Conclusion

- Facilities in the neighbourhood and access to green space are important features for liveable cities and for staying active as aged persons.

- The ecological, economical and social benefits of urban gardening have been described manifold.

- Especially in deprived neighbourhoods urban gardening has the potential to improve local climate, enrich habitat, help to transform abandoned sites and support local identity, but long-term effects need further research.

- Public authorities should recognize which important impact the integration of urban gardening – besides other facilities - in the urban neighbourhood – can have for ageing in place.
Thank You For Your Attention