

PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE

GOOD PRACTICES CATALOGUE

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Danube Transnational Programme
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PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE: Good Practices Catalogue

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Image on the front page: Students developing irrigation system for easier future maintenance of garden on top of Jože Plečnik grammar school. Photographer: Luka Vidic

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



image credit: Bojan Erhartič

The Good Practices Catalogue of Participatory Urban Agriculture addresses some of the main challenges related to governance systems within the Danube Region that can be attributed to the decreasing capacities of public authorities to incorporate a participatory approach into planning. Recent austerity measures have left public administrators with limited instruments and channels for involving relevant stakeholders and civil society into decision-making processes. The absence of participatory mechanisms is contributing to a reduced motivation of people to engage in governance and administration, because they feel relegated from political, social and economic agendas and not competent enough to act as an equivalent counterpart and a considerable driver of change. The gap between citizens and public authorities is therefore increasing on all levels and leading to intensified mistrust and lack of public participation, especially among the most disadvantaged communities at risk of exclusion, such as the poor, unemployed, homeless, Roma communities, migrants, elderly, women on maternity leave and children. The growing social and economic inequalities are reflected in a

reduced livelihood and quality of place. To overcome these challenges, the AgriGo4Cities project designed The Good Practices Catalogue of Participatory Urban Agriculture as a repository of knowledge, a source of motivation and a key element to building a common methodology that will improve public institutional capacities, tackle the social exclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups and stimulate sustainable urban development in the Danube Region. The catalogue aims to offer concrete lessons on how to enhance public services, promote active citizenship, reinforce public participation and contribute to the sustainability of cities by means of urban agriculture. It is intended for anyone interested in the fields of urban agriculture, participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable development. The main target groups are politicians and decision-makers, vulnerable and marginalized groups and other interested stakeholders (NGOs, academics, students etc.).

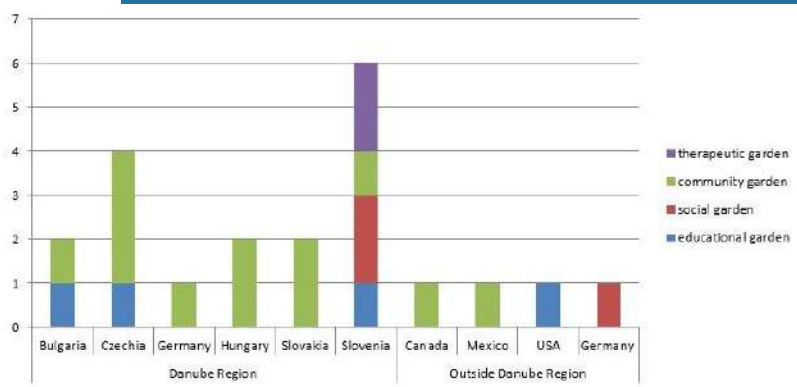
The Good Practices Catalogue of Participatory Urban Agriculture is structured along four chapters reflecting on the scientific, political and practical implications. The first chapter offers a comprehensive conceptualization of participatory urban agriculture. It systematizes the different types of urban agriculture and frames it as an innovative, effective and efficient tool for fostering participation, social inclusion and sustainability. It is commonly accepted that urban agriculture is a broad term that describes food cultivation and animal

husbandry on urban and peri-urban land. Urban agriculture is characterised by the heterogeneity of the involved actors, dimensions, backgrounds and objectives on the one hand, and by the multifunctional external effects on the urban economy, society, and environments on the other hand. During the last few decades, new forms of gardening and farming practices have been emerging using high levels of social innovation, environmentally friendly lifestyles and mixed bottom-up or top-down approaches. However, for urban agriculture to be sustainable as a livelihood and resilience strategy, it requires decision-support tools that allow planners and participants alike to jointly develop strategies and assess potential leverage points within urban food value chains.

The second chapter analyses the political framework that supports participatory urban agriculture in the Danube Region. It reviews the selected strategies and policy documents that have strongly influenced the development of urban agriculture in the Danube Region and their potential to increase public institutional capacities, tackle social exclusion and stimulate sustainable urban development. The conclusions show that urban agricultural activities comply with local policies on sustainable urban development and actions for social inclusion. They are at least partially included in national strategies for urban development of the countries in the Danube Region, while urban agriculture governance for social inclusion is an emerging concept in national policies and strategic documents.

It would therefore be advantageous to utilize the potential of urban agriculture to improve public institution capacities in tackling social exclusion and effectively governing the area using participatory planning and management. Despite its potential to contribute to the major European and macro-regional strategies (e.g. CAP, Europe 2020, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and EUSDR), urban agriculture is seldom used as a cross-sectorial field of action, even though it would surely enhance their positive effects. It is thus crucial to better harness the integrative potential of urban agriculture, especially in addressing citizen participation, social inclusion and sustainable urban development.

The third chapter deals with the relevance of urban agriculture in the universe of EU-funded programmes and projects and their relevance for the scope of AgriGo4Cities. Based on the six predetermined keywords, a total of 44 programmes were selected. 18 of them displayed results by keyword search. 29 projects out of these 18 programmes were deemed to be of interest from 2007 onwards. More than two project hits for one funding programme were found by looking through the following EU-funding programmes: CREATIVE-EUROPE-CULTURE, Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2007–2013 and Interreg South East Programme 2007–2013. The various projects are focused on different target groups and build upon citizens in general as well as young adults, women,



Geographical distribution and typology of the selected good practices of participatory urban agriculture.

communities, new citizens, immigrants, (long-term) unemployed, disabled, as well as cultural workers, certain stakeholders, producers and politicians.

The final chapter presents the heart of the catalogue, by examining good practices of participatory urban agriculture. The main aim of collecting these good practices was to find the ‘recipe’ or ‘ingredients’ for the ‘secret sauce’ on how to design a successful application of participatory urban agriculture. The criteria for the selection of the good practices were the inclusion of vulnerable groups, the use of a participatory approach and the pursuit of sustainable development principles. Altogether, 21 good practices were identified, 17 from the Danube Region, and 4 from elsewhere. The good practices are categorized according to the included vulnerable groups into educational, social, community and therapeutic gardens.

The good practices, covering various types of gardening, were further analysed through field visits and phone or Skype calls, where most of the pieces of information were obtained through semi-structured interviews with the relevant stakeholders. Each good practice is described as a story through the following subsections:

- Basic information including a short abstract and target groups;
- Taking the first steps, where the start of the good practice is described and the initiator is stated;
- Every single person matters, describing and explaining the different roles and stakeholders;
- Secret ingredients tries to pinpoint the specific advantages;
- Participatory aspects is dedicated to the involvement and participation process;
- Brighter future explains the likely potential development of the good practice;
- Guidance for beginners is dedicated to tips and instructions for anyone wanting to initiate a similar practice;
- One person can change the world aims to highlight the value of the personal motivations of the stakeholders included in the good practice.

We hope the stories will give you precious insight into the various gardens, which engage diverse vulnerable groups. In many cases, we included short quotes from the interviews to connect the stories to real people. Knowing what can be achieved, even with a small garden, just by involving different people has great potentials in dealing with different groups of people in the future. In most cases, the gardens provide the necessary framework in which a community can be established and grow. As mentioned in the story of the Beyond the Construction Site garden: “The garden gives its members “stability in life” (in a psychological sense); they can decide



This cottage's address is "285 Garden" (image credit: Bojan Erhartič)

what to do there and have control over it. The most valued qualities of the garden are that it connects the community and opens the space up for use in line with the community's desires; through this, it has transformed a sleeping settlement into a lively place."

The AgriGo4Cities project team wishes you an enjoyable read of the catalogue. For those who are trying to set up a new garden or perhaps only modify an existing one, we hope that the material gathered and especially the good practices will motivate you enough to take the first step and then the second, the third ...

[The AgriGo4Cities partnership](#)

I.

**CONCEPTUALIZING
PARTICIPATORY
URBAN
AGRICULTURE**



image credit: Bojan Erhartić

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND URBAN AGRICULTURE

The main objective of the introductory chapter is to conceptualize participatory urban agriculture (UA) as a method to improve public institutional capacities in order to tackle the socio-economic exclusion of vulnerable/marginalized groups and stimulate sustainable urban development.

The definition of urban agriculture in the AgriGo4Cities project has been adopted from the recent study of the COST Action on Urban Agriculture Europe (Lohrberg et al. 2016). Urban agriculture spans all actors, communities, activities, places and economies that focus on biological production in a spatial context, which is categorized as 'urban' according to local standards. Urban agriculture takes place in intra- and periurban areas and one of its main characteristics is that it is more deeply integrated in the urban system compared to other types of agricultural activities. Urban agriculture is structurally embedded in the urban

fabric; it is integrated into the social and cultural life, the economics and the metabolism of the city.

To systematize urban agriculture, a distinction must be made between the gardening and the farming level. Urban food gardening encompasses agricultural activities with a generally low economic dependence on material outputs, while using the production of food for achieving other, mostly social, goals. Urban farming refers to intentional business models taking advantage of the proximity to the city by offering local or regional agricultural products or services. This concept does not apply to all farming that takes place in larger urban areas. Non-urban-oriented farming includes all farm enterprises that maintain 'business as usual': the farmers practice their conventional farming activities on areas that were previously rural and have been converted to intra- or periurban areas as a result of urban growth. The adjacent city is usually perceived as a threat rather than an opportunity, except for the improved access to transport infrastructure. The production is mainly oriented towards domestic or international markets.

At the gardening level, and according to production, urban food gardens can be divided into those based on individual production (family gardens and allotment gardens) and those based on collective schemes (educational gardens, therapeutic gardens and community gardens). Squatter and social gardens can fall into either category.

Multifunctionality in urban areas has been associated with farm diversification strategies, mainly addressing urban demands for recreation and tourism.

Over the years, urban farms have expanded the provision of services and goods and now include landscape management, environmental measures, land rental and direct marketing. The farms in intra- or periurban locations that have adapted their business strategies can be subdivided into two main groups. One implies the provision of on-site

services, like leisure and educational farms or therapeutic and social ones. The other includes local food farms and environmental farms that provide benefits through material or environmental flows connected to the urban metabolism and the urban environment.

In line with the AgriGo4Cities project focusing on vulnerable groups, another type of urban food gardening was added, i.e. social gardens.

Typology of urban agriculture (Lohrberg et al. 2016).

1. URBAN FOOD GARDENING

ALLOTMENT GARDENS: Subdivided garden, whose plots are rented under a tenancy agreement; highly formalized, often managed by an organization or association

FAMILY GARDENS: Non-commercial food-producing undertakings for the household provision with produce; no institutions or organisations involved

EDUCATIONAL GARDENS: Teaching tool addressing food production, processing and consumption; high potential for raising public awareness and spreading gardening ideas

COMMUNITY GARDENS: Based on bottom-up initiatives and tended collectively; their purpose is food production as well as social functions for the community

THERAPEUTIC GARDENS: Located at physical and mental health care institutions; sub-types are contemplative gardens and production-oriented, active gardens

SQUATTER GARDENS: Food production on idle land; due to their informal, extra-legal character, they are not registered nor subject to public policies

SOCIAL GARDENS: Gardens intended to address social problems and aimed at promoting the integration of people at risk of exclusion

2. URBAN FARMING

LEISURE FARMS: Offering recreational opportunities linked to farming activities

SOCIAL FARMS: Farms intended to address social problems and aimed at promoting disadvantaged people's rehabilitation and the integration of people at risk of exclusion

EDUCATIONAL FARMS: Pedagogical function is dominant, e.g. in the form of learning programmes or short-term stays for schools; recreational component is optional

THERAPEUTIC FARMS: The therapeutic use of farming-related activities promotes physical and mental health and well-being, e.g. hippotherapy, occupational therapy

LOCAL FOOD+ FARMS: Oriented toward local markets and a direct relationship with consumers (cooperative, CSA), the + indicates non-food production (cosmetics, fibre)

ENVIRONMENTAL FARMS: Farms with high natural and environmental value and/or contribution to biodiversity or agro-diversity conservation; as part of flood or fire prevention plans or green infrastructure, networks, green belts, Natura2000, etc.

CULTURAL HERITAGE FARMS: Intentionally contribute to preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage through the maintenance of traditional materials, buildings, crops and breed varieties and cultivation techniques

EXPERIMENTAL FARMS: Tests new agricultural technologies, production methods, varieties and breeds or models of social and economic interactions with their urban environment

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Participatory planning is a planning paradigm that emphasizes involving the entire community in the strategic and management processes of planning; it also designates urban or rural community-level planning processes. It is often considered as part of community development (Lefevre et al. 2000). Participatory planning aims to harmonize views among all of its participants based on bottom-up principles and prevent conflict between opposing parties. In addition, vulnerable / marginalized groups have an opportunity to participate in the planning process (McTague and Jakubowski 2013).

A top-down process may alienate local community members and fail to capture locally important factors (Fraser et al. 2006). This is especially true for community planning projects. Evidence shows that top-down initiatives achieve statistically significantly lower results in accomplishing local communities' goals and end-user satisfaction (Larrison 2002). Responding to the gap between the desires of local communities and government programs such as urban renewal, Sherry Arnstein wrote *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* to "encourage a more enlightened dialogue" (Arnstein 1969). She developed the ladder as a typology, with eight rungs ranging from various degrees of nonparticipation to degrees of tokenism and, ultimately, citizen power. Her critical account on planning methods of the time has informed policies affecting the growth

and change in participatory methods, broadening access to planning processes (Griffin 2014).

The roots of participatory planning can be traced back to developmental projects from over fifty years ago that dealt with ethnic, racial, and poverty issues. They drew on Kurt Lewin's problem-solving research model of planning, action and investigating the results of those actions. They tried to carry out focused research to challenge the power relations within communities in order to benefit the local community (Minkler and Wallerstein 2008). According to Racadio et al. (2014: 50), community-based participatory planning originates from the 'Southern' tradition of 'action research', wherein researchers believe their role is to support and educate the community, while the transformative change has to come from the community itself.

In contrast, the 'Northern' tradition emphasises the co-participation of researchers in institutional settings, such as schools and workplaces. There they can jointly solve problems on a small scale and thus affect their own lives. Going even further, Tress et al. (2005: 487) define the participatory process as a project in which academic and non-academic participants exchange knowledge in a parallel process to try and solve a problem. However, 'the focus is not on the integration of the different knowledge cultures to create new knowledge and theory', but 'might be development or the application of research.

PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban agriculture has become an important research topic in recent years (Rich et al. 2016), as there is an increasing convergence in motivation to do urban agriculture related to food security and livelihoods development, particularly for poor and disadvantaged segments of society (Ellis and Sumberg 1998; Rich et al. 2016). However, for urban agriculture to be sustainable as a livelihoods and resilience strategy, it will require decision-support tools that allow planners and participants alike to jointly develop strategies and assess potential leverage points within urban food value chains (Rich et al. 2016).

Recently, there has generally been a significant disconnect in developed countries between those actors that drive and organize urban agriculture and those that regulate and manage it. Without any formal support, urban agriculture in both developing and developed countries has mostly been a bottom-up process, typically initiated by individuals or non-governmental organizations rather than by governments or facilitated by planners (Rich et al. 2016). Indeed, while attitudes towards urban agriculture have been shifting among planners over the past 15 years (Lovell 2010; Morgan 2013, 2015), the mainstreaming of a policy consensus to facilitate urban agriculture remains lacking, as does knowledge at a planning level to support it (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000). Given the important

role that urban agriculture can play from a livelihoods and social cohesion perspective, the question is thus how to support and mainstream urban agriculture as a strategy that could be used not only as a reaction in times of crises, but also as a livelihoods strategy that can enhance the resilience and sustainability of urban areas and populations. More specifically, what types of systemic planning tools are available to integrate planners and practitioners in a process of joint learning that can guide the development of urban agriculture more effectively (Rich et al. 2016)?

Despite the growing interest in urban agriculture, urban planners and landscape designers are often ill-equipped to integrate food-systems thinking into future plans for cities. The challenge (and opportunity) is to design urban agriculture spaces to be multifunctional, matching the specific needs and preferences of local residents, while also protecting the environment (Lovell 2010).

Urban agriculture offers unique research opportunities that require alternative methodological approaches. Participatory research can be very effective for gathering data, while at the same time engaging and informing the public (Lovell 2010). For example, local residents might get involved in the mapping and inventory of those green spaces that could be used for food production (Fraser 2002). The urban agriculture gardeners/farmers themselves could be involved in the data



image credit: Bojan Erhartić

collection by documenting their activities, tracking their inputs and yields, inventorying the plants and spatial mapping of the garden site (Airriess and Clawson 1994). Other studies have engaged residents or gardeners/farmers in focus groups to determine the factors most important for protecting and expanding urban agriculture (Thapa and Murayama 2008).

Redwood suggests that participatory approaches for urban agriculture research should consider the following questions: (1) “Who is growing what and why?”; (2) “How are the interests of the local people reflected by the research?”; (3) “What are the economic factors influencing decisions?”; and (4) “What institutions are involved and in what capacity?” (Redwood 2009).

As Lovell (2010) indicates, the food system and urban agriculture are multifunctional and multi-faceted issues that involve a number of diverse stakeholders, with the successful implementation of policy initiatives requiring broad knowledge and expertise.

In order to maximize the potential of urban agriculture, the crucial factors include participatory tools and processes that appreciate the multi-functionality of land use, a diversity of stakeholders, and spatial and temporal interactions of people and place. While the participatory tools used in planning increasingly incorporate spatial influences, they often miss the feedbacks and unintended consequences that could arise from policy interventions. As such, more tailored, fit-for-purpose planning tools are needed (Rich et al. 2016).

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND URBAN AGRICULTURE

The concept of social inclusion has been inseparable from the concept of social exclusion; when discussed, the latter prevailed as a starting point in the sense that ‘socially excluded’ people have been “in need of the receipt of policy to enable their ‘social inclusion’” (Hall 2010: 48; cf. Cameron 2006). Over time, policy discourse shifted from exclusion to ‘inclusion’, a seemingly more positive or affirmative term that is now ubiquitous, and many synonyms, such as solidarity, cohesion, social capital, integration, have come into regular use in different political and social settings (Silver 2015).

In politics, the concept is used as a common denominator for various topics falling under the umbrella of social policies. It came into the EU political vocabulary from the French term ‘exclusion sociale’ in the mid-1980s (Peace 2001: 18). Social exclusion did not exclusively signify the monetary aspect

but also encompassed the inability to participate in economic, political, cultural and social life as well as exclusion from the “mainstream” orientation of the society (Filipović 2005: 168). However, as the EU is primarily an economic union, the common social policy has been hard to enforce, except in terms of the economic aspects.

According to Robert Peace’s (2001) analysis of EU policy documents, the concept of social exclusion is used when discussing (1) labels/names/categories for excluded people (by age, gender, disability, ethnic or racial origins, economic resources or by “choice”); (2) names for different kinds of exclusion (e.g. political exclusion, poverty, exclusion from work, family, mainstream life etc.), (3) names for factors identified as accentuating exclusion (lack of access to resources, lack of “fair recognition”, spatial, personal and economic intensifiers); (4) metaphors for states, conditions or places of exclusion (e.g. being on the margins, least-privileged groups, poverty trap, situations of risk, ghettos etc.); (5) structural causes of exclusion (over which individuals have limited control, e.g. child labourers, precarious workers, long-term unemployed, living in bad housing conditions, on derelict land, affected by vandalism etc.); and (6) names/labels for particular psychosocial effects of exclusion (e.g. psychological problems, loss of identity, mental depression, disintegration from family ties, work and social relations etc.).

‘Social exclusion’ is a concept that can be —at least in politics—generally

defined and deployed in two ways. In the narrow sense, it is used as a synonym for income poverty, referring specifically to the unemployed or people in low-wage work. As such, it is often used alongside the concept of ‘social cohesion’ in the sense that a cohesive society is one in which (political, social and economic) stability is maintained and controlled by participation in the paid workforce. In the broad sense, ‘social exclusion’ denotes a dynamic process in which people experience a lack of resources and/or a denial of social rights that result in multiple deprivations, breaking of family ties and social relationships as well as in a loss of identity and purpose. In this sense, the concept of social exclusion can be useful for developing a different and more complex understanding of the factors and influences that lead to well-being and relative advantage on the one hand, and disparities, inequalities and relative disadvantage between members of a community on the other hand. Such understanding and definitions specifically highlight ‘participation’ and ‘social inclusion’ (Peace 2001).

Sociologists in general underline that social inclusion/exclusion is a result of a lack of equality, which is an immanent feature of every society, even the simplest ones. They have used various terms to grasp the differences between individuals or groups regarding the possibilities and opportunities they have, such as deprivation, marginalization and exclusion. Anthony Giddens (in Nowosielski 2008: 173), for example, identified 4 dimensions of social exclusion: economic (caused by unemployment), in consumption, political and social (inability to participate in

social networks and a lack of contact with others). Similar is the model proposed by Burchardt et al. (2002) with these dimensions: production, consumption, social interaction and political engagement. Some researchers have added other types of exclusion, such as spatial (i.e. from particular spaces) and cultural (Nowosielsky 2008: 173). Sociological research often links the phenomenon to other concepts, mostly to social solidarity (in English translation see Durkheim 1933, Weber 1947) and social capital (in English translation see Bourdieu 1986, Putnam 2000).

These dimensions and features are also highlighted in research and case study analyses in the field of social work and occupational therapy. They generally focus on any of the indicators of social inclusion: employment, housing, education, participation in leisure/social activities, access to health services, health insurance, security/welfare support and community services. In such studies, social inclusion—along with socio-economic security, social cohesion and empowerment—is strongly related to social equality, defined as the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions that enhance their well-being and individual potential (Lloyd, Tse & Deane 2006: 1–2). Social inclusion involves being able to rejoin or participate in leisure, friendship and work communities (Townsend, 1997).

Gardening supports health and wellbeing, as it brings many mental and

physical benefits. It provides a sense of affirmation, contributes to a healthy diet, and demands physical activity. Social work researchers or practitioners of occupational therapy have so far produced the greatest number of studies linking urban gardening and social inclusion. Their and other approaches using nature have been termed green care (see Sempik et al., 2010). One of the first structured approaches using nature and working within it, e.g. farming and gardening as a therapy, was horticultural therapy. This is a specialised form of occupational therapy using plants and horticulture as its main activity. Related to it is therapeutic horticulture, which adopts a more generalised way of using horticulture and gardening to promote health. The distinction is that horticultural therapy has a predefined clinical goal similar to that found in occupational theory, while therapeutic horticulture is directed towards improving the wellbeing of the individual in a more generalised way and has a more important social context; this is why it is usually referred to as social and therapeutic horticulture (at least in the UK) (Sempik 2010: 16–17).

Small-scale agriculture has been widely used in Europe as a form of rehabilitative social care, particularly for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties. In some European countries, this involves the continued development of hospital farms, while in others, it represents an evolution of agriculture becoming ‘multifunctional’, i.e. not simply producing food but also providing care (Hine 2008). Such farms have been termed ‘care farms’ (see



image credit: Peter Kumer

Hassink & van Dijk 2006). Alongside farming activities, the animals themselves have also been used as ‘co-therapists’ for promoting health and wellbeing within treatments (Sempik 2010: 17).

In the sense of green care, gardening addresses all dimensions of social exclusion: production, consumption, social interaction and political engagement (cf. Burchardt et al. 2002). As assessed by Sempik and Aldridge (2002), gardening and farming projects enable production through activities that have many of the attributes of paid employment and that are regarded as work by project participants, staff and others. Planting, cultivation and other garden work are seen as both meaningful and productive. Such projects give participants access to a popular leisure activity from which they are often excluded. In some cases they also provide them with food, which contributes to their quality of life. In this way, they are able to participate in the process of consumption. The activities also provide opportunities for many forms of social interaction; parallels have been drawn between green care and (forming of therapeutic or/and social) communities (see Hickey 2008, cf. Haigh 2008, Sempik et al. 2010).

Additionally, such projects can enable participants to manage a garden or oversee activities and in this way, include them in a specific form of political engagement (Sempik and Aldridge 2002). The potential of green care is thus considered to reside within the activities, the setting and the social environment (Sempik 2010: 18).

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN AGRICULTURE

Agricultural production is not “the antithesis of the city”, but often an integrated urban activity that contributes to the resilience of cities (Barthel and Isendahl 2013). Urban agriculture (UA) is characterized by its heterogeneity of the involved actors, dimensions, backgrounds and objectives on the one hand, and by its multifunctional external effects on the urban economy, society and environments on the other hand (Lohrberg et al. 2016).

There is plenty of scientific evidence of UA’s contribution to sustainable urban development. In their review paper, Pearson, Pearson and Pearson (2010) highlighted the importance of three different dimensions of UA’s sustainability, i.e. social, economic and environmental. In a similar way, but focusing on developing countries, De Zeeuw, Van Veenhuizen and Dubbeling (2011) briefly summarize the available evidence regarding UA’s potential to respond to a number of key urban

challenges and review the perspectives on UA applied by local and national authorities. Authors provide evidence that UA can tackle issues such as urban poverty alleviation and social inclusion, urban food security and nutrition, and urban environmental challenges. A similar example is given by Scheromm (2015).

However, the lack of inclusion of urban gardens in politics and planning makes them the most endangered green space category (Pearson, Pearson and Pearson 2010; Deelstra and Girardet 2000; Breuste 2010). This is especially true for allotment gardens, which are valuable green spaces with high social functionality, but insufficiently realized ecological potential and often disadvantaged by urban planning in comparison to other green spaces (Breuste 2010; Breuste and Artmann 2015). UA is also seldom used as a cross-sectoral field of action by local stakeholders (Lohrberg et al. 2016). It is crucial that planners start recognising the importance of urban farming and incorporating it into the rich mix of activities that characterise modern cities (Deelstra and Girardet 2000).

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Public opinion and decision-makers in Europe often reduce UA to community gardening activities. It is in fact much more, as proven by numerous enterprises and projects all over Europe. While most UA promoters focus on the societal and ecological benefits of projects, the economic dimensions remain understudied or even neglected (Van der Schans et al. 2016).

According to estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 800 million people around the world are engaged in UA, of which 200 million are commercially active. It is estimated that UA produces between 15 and 20% of the world's food (Pölling et al. 2016). Income from consumed food from a household's own production is particularly important in the poorest developing countries, reducing urban poverty and increasing food security; however, most scholars agree that its role should not be overemphasized (Van der Schans et al. 2016; Altieri et al. 1999; Ellis and Sumberg 1998; Zezza and Tasciotti 2010).

In Europe, the world of professionally operating UA is still relatively young and has a great variety of forms. Economically based forms of UA are the "hidden champions" of an urban green development strategy. One of the important synergies fostering low-cost production is using resources that are currently underutilized: vacant plots of land, empty buildings, urban organic and heat waste and excess rainwater (Van der Schans et al. 2016).

Meso- and macro-scale UA has a potential for commercial market value and significant employment opportunities (Nugent 2000). A micro- and meso-level of UA can have a significant enterprise development and value-adding potential to UA production, e.g. retail (local food markets), marketing and supply chain opportunities (Pearson, Pearson, and Pearson 2010).

During the last few decades, new forms of gardening practices have been emerging using high levels of social innovations, environmental friendly lifestyles and mixed bottom-up or top-down approaches: for example, community supported agriculture (CSA), community composting and gardening, guerrilla gardening and squat farming, urban food strategies, support of small entrepreneurs, local food chains, including market gardens and farmers' markets, the Slow Food initiative, including a revival of local food production and farm shops and markets (Giacchè and Tóth 2013; Spilková and Perlín 2013). Some of them use the internet as a market tool for online fresh fruit and vegetable shopping, prepared vegetable and fruit boxes.

UA is also important from the aspect of informal food production, which is more frequent in the former command economies of Central and Eastern Europe, where it mitigates the effects of low income and has a significant positive impact on subjective wellbeing (Alber and Kohler 2008). The share of households producing products in home gardens varies strongly, being the highest in Romania, where it was declared that traditionally almost every household (99.2%) owns a garden (Marlier, Atkinson, and Eurostat 2010).

SOCIAL DIMENSION

In their extensive review, Pearson, Pearson, and Pearson (2010) found that UA positively contributes to the social dimension of sustainability:

food security and access, diet and health, personal wellbeing, psychological benefits, increased physical activity, sense of place, aesthetic pleasing, social interactions, community building, personal skills and gender equity. On the other hand, urban gardening can also be viewed negatively, for example as a nuisance, trivial, and unsightly (Mbiba 1994), or a potential health threat due to its inappropriate location, such as proximity of major traffic routes (Smrekar 2009), but such evidence is scarce.

Furthermore, gardening increases neighbourhood attachment (Comstock et al. 2010). The physical and social qualities of garden participation awaken the senses and stimulate a range of responses that influence interpersonal processes (learning, affirming, expressive experiences) and social relationships that are supportive of positive health-related behaviours and overall health (Hale et al. 2011). A range of social benefits, from food security, overall health and well-being was also found in a study by Kortright and Wakefield (2011). Regular gardening on allotment sites is associated with improved physical, psychological and social health (Soga et al. 2017).

UA can also be seen as a power to transform the urban landscape and the food system, as citizens, including immigrant gardeners, can assume an active role in the transformation of the space surrounding their apartments (Baker 2004).



image credit: Peter Kumer

Urban gardening can also be understood through ecosystem services. Allotment gardens, for example, provide a range of urban ecosystem services and hence combine utility, social meaning and beauty. Although the importance of traditional food production in developed countries is in decline, the undoubted qualities of gardens, especially their contribution to recreation and nature experience, should promote their integration into urban planning (Breuste and Artmann 2015).

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

The environmental aspects of UA have often been addressed through the concept of ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, pollination and food provisioning. While the majority of papers focus on the positive aspects, they also warn about the potential negative impacts/trade-offs on the environment. In general, the main positive environmental aspects of UA are found to be waste recycling, mitigation of the urban heat island effect and carbon sequestration. The main negative environmental aspects are noise, odour and pesticides, the latter being a potential threat to the quality of

groundwater (Pearson, Pearson and Pearson 2010).

It is worth pointing out a recent and very encouraging review paper from Lin, Philpott and Jha (2015), where an examination was made on the biodiversity patterns in urban agriculture, ecosystem services provided by urban agriculture and the challenges of promoting urban agriculture systems that support biodiversity and ecosystem services. Although the authors emphasized that urban agriculture provides an important contribution to urban biodiversity, pollination, pest control and climate resilience, they also stress the potential disservices or trade-offs urban agriculture can trigger, such as increased mosquito breeding sites, the potential for spill-over of chemicals into natural and human habitats, leading to environmental pollution and air- or water-borne health risks and potential competition for water in arid environments.

In another review paper, Wang and Clark (2016) mentioned gardens' contribution to biodiversity (e.g. by providing habitats for a variety of native plant and animal species). However, the authors also highlighted that more and more popular urban gardening will have an impact on the abiotic and biotic environments which might be negative in some cases (e.g. altering cycles of carbon, nutrients and water in urban and suburban areas). As such, gardens should be seen as a potential agent to global environmental changes.



image credit: Bojan Erhartič

Using the city of Leipzig as a case study, Cabral et al. (2017) discussed ecosystem services, specifically the local climate, water regulation and biodiversity provided by allotment and community gardens. They concluded that community gardens, compared to allotment gardens, contribute more importantly to water regulation and nutrient cycling properties and are more prone to fostering native, spontaneous plant species. Authors highlighted that old mature trees provide a considerable contribution to climate regulation; however, they are restricted to communal areas due to regulations.

**II.
POLITICAL
FRAMEWORK
SUPPORTING
PARTICIPATORY
URBAN
AGRICULTURE IN
THE DANUBE
REGION**



image credit: Bojan Erhartič

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this chapter is to review the selected strategies and policy documents that have strongly influenced the development of urban agriculture in the Danube Region and their potentials to increase public institutional capacities, tackle the socio-economic exclusion of vulnerable groups and to stimulate sustainable urban development. Since the analysis of the governance and the policy context of urban agriculture, done in the framework of the COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe, showed that national governments are more or less absent from the urban agriculture agenda and play no major role, the chapter focuses only on key European and macro-regional strategies. It analyses them in reference to three strategic goals of the AgriGo4Cities project: participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development.

EUROPE'S COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a common policy for all the

countries of the European Union. It is managed and funded at the European level from the resources of the EU's level from the resources of the EU's budget. Its main mechanism is the Rural Development Programs (RDPs) 2014–2020; however, CAP does not distinguish between rural and peri-urban areas. Despite the fact that it focuses on rural areas, it explicitly excludes urban agriculture only in a few cases (e.g. diversification of rural areas). The policy thus gives member states the flexibility to implement it in urban areas as well. It offers a broad range of measures or instruments suitable to support urban agriculture. These include direct sales, local food labelling, short supply chains, quality schemes, marketing, agri-environmental schemes, cooperation, pilot projects and investments (through LEADER/CLLD programs). Other CAP elements relevant for urban agriculture include young farmers support schemes as well as fruit and vegetables market measures (Lohrberg et al. 2016: 202–207).

EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY AND RELATED DOCUMENTS, AGENDAS AND PROGRAMMES

Europe 2020 is a strategy that sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century and aims to turn the European Union into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy,



image credit: Bojan Erhartič

delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. It includes three mutually reinforcing priorities: smart growth (developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation), sustainable growth (promoting a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy) and inclusive growth (fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion). It aims to increase employment, strengthen research and development, mitigate climate change and energy use, improve education and decrease poverty and social exclusion. Urban agriculture can especially contribute to the targets addressing employment, social inclusion and sustainability (The analysis of the Europe 2020 strategy is strongly inspired and partly based on the chapter Urban Agriculture Goes Brussels, Lohrberg et al. 2016: 208–213).

It is envisioned that by 2020, 75% of people aged 20–64 will be employed and that at least 20 million fewer people will be at risk of poverty or social exclusion. As urban agriculture is a popular activity relying more on a common knowledge than formal education usually offers, it has a great potential to provide a venue

for vulnerable groups to engage in activities with economic potential, e.g. for unqualified and disabled people. On the other hand, it is capable of serving as a social corrective for the poor by providing food, thus alleviating food insecurity or generating employment positions (also) for them. Due to a generally lower intensity and limited land availability in comparison to rural agriculture, sustaining families or even small communities is another potential worth encouraging at a policy level. With measures towards increased employment of vulnerable persons in urban agriculture and towards their social inclusion through agricultural activities, urban agriculture could then greatly contribute to the 3rd priority of the Europe 2020 strategy to achieve inclusive growth.

Examples of good practices in urban gardening, designed to fit specific needs of children and youth, also illustrate its great educational potential. The most important EU document on education and training is the White Paper on Education and Training: Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society. The Europe 2020 strategy identified education as an essential driver for economic growth. With its hands-on experience, urban agriculture provides a great venue for informal and lifelong learning, especially about ecology, participatory planning and social inclusion, which all constitute the key stones of sustainable (urban) development. Used as a method to integrate children back into the formal education system or to provide them with practical skills needed for the job, it has a

great potential to contribute to another target of the Europe 2020 strategy: to lessen the % of early school leavers to a maximum of 10%.

In the field of employment, education and social inclusion, urban agriculture also complements two flagship initiatives. Empowering people through developing their skills throughout the lifecycle contributes to an agenda for new skills and jobs, whereas enabling poor and socially excluded people to take an active part in society supports the European platform against poverty. In this sense, urban agriculture fits well into the European Commission's strategies for active citizenship within its education and cultural policy (cf. Grundtvig and Europe for Citizens programmes). Furthermore, as proved by some good examples of including a Roma community into urban gardening, urban agriculture can also contribute to the ROMACT programme's goal to strengthen the capacity of local authorities for developing and implementing inclusive policies and public services.

The Europe 2020 strategy also sets up targets addressing sustainability issues, such as climate change mitigation and increasing the use of renewable energy. It is envisioned that by 2020, greenhouse gas emissions will be 20% lower than 1990 levels, that 20% of energy will come from renewables and that there will be a 20% increase in energy efficiency. Although the potential of urban agriculture as a source of renewable energy (e.g. production of a biomass, biogas plants) is still underutilized,

especially in the Danube Region, urban gardens and farms have been greatly recognized for their considerable contribution to a lower carbon footprint, greening the city, waste reduction and reuse, improving biodiversity and air quality, as well as increasing environmental awareness. It is especially important for developing short production and supply chains and consequently for reducing emissions from transport. Its sustainable effects make it fit well with some European Commission climate action multisectorial policies. Furthermore, its low-intensity farming activities also promote biodiversity, which is high on the European development agenda (cf. Biodiversity Strategy 2011, Habitats Directive 1992, Birds Directive 2009, Green Infrastructure Strategy 2016, Natura 2000 network etc.), and by preserving tradition in food production and consumption (e.g. techniques, recipes, dishes, eating habits) adds to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, addressed by many EU and Unesco strategies, action plans and conventions.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, which expired at the end of 2015, have made a great contribution in raising public awareness, increasing political will and mobilising resources for the fight to end poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development builds on this experience.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



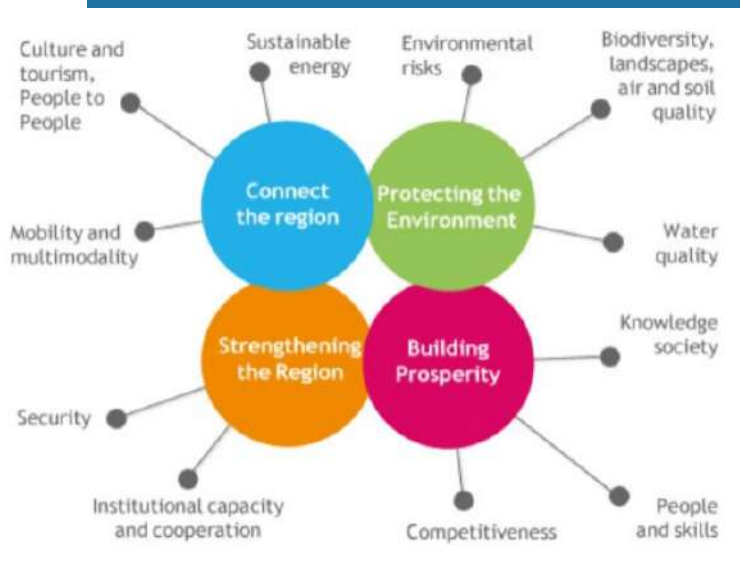
At its core are the Sustainable Development Goals, which address poverty eradication and sustainable development for all, but also issues such as effective institutions and good governance. The EU has committed to implementing these goals in its internal and external policies.

Urban agriculture has the potential to contribute a great deal to the set goals. It can mitigate poverty by ensuring food security and new jobs for low-skilled people. It can decrease hunger by providing a venue for healthy and nutritious food production. As an outdoor activity with generally low intensity, it enhances health and well-being. It offers an opportunity for hands-on and lifelong learning, increasing a quality education. Not requiring specific strength or dividing the tasks between men and women, it adds to ensuring gender equality. With low-intensity and ecologically-oriented farming, it keeps the underground water clean. It can provide renewable energy by producing biomass and supplying biogas plants.

With the possibility of creating jobs for people who are hard to employ, it provides a venue for decent work and can add to economic growth. It also offers opportunities (especially) for social innovations. Good examples of social inclusion in the context of urban gardening prove that it has a great potential to reduce inequalities (at the social and economic level). It adds greatly to the sustainability of cities and communities, encourages responsible consumption and production, mitigates climate changes, does not affect the sea biodiversity due to its low intensity and predominantly ecological orientation, provides a contact with nature and introduces a rural dimension of urban living, has the potential to strengthen social institutions and encourages partnerships to improve its functioning.

EU REGIONAL POLICY

For the first time, the EU regional policy in the 2014–2020 programme specifically underlines the need to strengthen the urban dimension and fight for social inclusion. By tackling societal challenges through an inclusive approach and testing methodologies to improve urban governing, urban agriculture fits well into the policy objection to improve the efficiency of public administration. Furthermore, it has a great potential to add to the socially-oriented thematic objections, which are specifically addressed by the EU's social policy and its platforms or funds. It promotes



sustainable employment; directly (in situ) and indirectly (by raising awareness on discrimination and special needs of vulnerable groups) addresses social inclusion; provides practical training and informal education; and ensures the production of healthy, nutritious food for people in need (poor, unemployed etc.).

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) sets up 12 priorities, divided into 4 pillars. They aim to connect the region, protect the environment, build prosperity and strengthen the region. Urban agriculture has the potential to especially contribute to the priorities addressing sustainable energy, culture and tourism, environmental risks, biodiversity and landscapes, people and skills as well as institutional capacity and cooperation.

Despite not being primarily associated with culture and tourism, urban agriculture preserves rural traditions, which are nowadays considered intangible cultural heritage (manual work, traditional farming techniques and tools, mutual help, rituals connected

with preparation of the soil and seeds, traditional recipes and dishes, eating habits etc.) and provides recreational facilities for a variety of inhabitants. It is also often linked to artistic practices, addressing participatory planning and offering cultural events for the general population.

When addressing sustainable energy priority, improved efficiency is crucial, including energy saving and more renewable sources. Urban agriculture can be a considerable source of renewable energy (biomass production, biogas plants), although this aspect is currently still underutilized in the Danube Region.

Urban agriculture can add a great deal to preserving biodiversity, landscapes as well as soil and air quality. By occupying the brownfields, it prevents land use intensification and urban sprawl, which are major environmental pressures in the Danube Region. Low-intensity farming supports biodiversity, prevents ecosystems loss and sustains soil quality. By greening the areas, it creates places that act as a CO₂ sink and the lungs of the cities.

The EUSDR strategy also prioritizes knowledge and inclusion. As stated, “investment in people is needed so that the Region can sustainably progress and grow, prioritising knowledge and inclusion. Building on the success of parts of the Region will open access to further education, and modernise training and social support” (EUSDR 2010: 9). Urban agriculture can contribute to a knowledge society at many levels, especially by providing a venue for interdisciplinary



image credit: Drago Kladnik

research and encouraging social innovations. However, it is particularly strong in addressing the people and skills priority. It offers opportunities for hands-on training with the aim to develop diverse skills and supplements formal education by providing infrastructure for informal education and lifelong learning. In this way, it increases employment opportunities for vulnerable groups as well. As one third of EU's population at risk of poverty—many from marginalized groups including 80% of the Roma communities—live in the area, social and economic exclusion, spatial segregation and sub-standard living conditions are top issues that need to be addressed. Urban agriculture has a great potential in doing so, as it is an activity not requiring formal education, special skills and division of labour, providing the space for inclusion, awareness-raising, socialization and recreation. It also builds opportunities for jobs, potentially contributing to the competitiveness of cities, states and the region.

Furthermore, by encouraging participatory planning and social inclusion, urban agriculture can provide

a great method to increase institutional capacities and decrease public service related problems in the Danube Region (e.g. insufficient participatory governance of the locales/regions, low public authorities' sensibility to social exclusion issues etc.). By involving various forms of civil society and citizens' groups including marginal communities, it can positively affect the trust of citizens and stakeholders in political authorities.

CONCLUSION

Politics and experts agree that key world problems can only be solved by active participation of citizens and the inclusion of civic initiatives is becoming one of the most cost-effective ways to govern local areas. On the other hand, people often lack motivation to get involved in local governance and administration, since they feel disregarded in political and economic/development agendas and not competent enough to act in decision-making processes. In urban and peri-urban areas, however, agriculture or urban gardening are activities that many vulnerable groups employ as the key part of their livelihood strategies, presenting the ground to include their ways of engagement, skills and knowledge in the management of public spaces. The method of participatory urban agriculture thus has a great potential to facilitate an active citizenship of socially marginalized people, who are generally less politically engaged and rarely included in lifelong learning processes. Furthermore, it can also provide a way to

build institutional capacities. Using urban agriculture as a method, the authorities can better support and promote the engagement of citizens, including the marginalized, in urban issues.

Urban agricultural activities comply with local policies on sustainable urban development and actions for social inclusion. They are at least partially included in national strategies for urban development of the countries in the Danube Region, while urban agriculture governance for social inclusion is an emerging concept in national policies and strategic documents. It is therefore fruitful to utilize the potential of urban agriculture to improve public institutional capacities in tackling social exclusion and effectively govern the area using participatory planning and management.

Despite its potential to contribute to the major European and macro-regional strategies (e.g. CAP, Europe 2020, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and EUSDR), urban agriculture is seldom used as a cross-sectorial field of action (Lohrberg et al. 2016: 213), which would surely enhance its positive effects. It is thus crucial to better use the integrative potential of urban agriculture, especially in addressing citizens' participation, social inclusion and sustainable urban development.

**III.
EUROPEAN
PROJECTS
ADDRESSING
PARTICIPATORY
URBAN
AGRICULTURE**



image credit: Bojan Erhartič

INTRODUCTION

What is the relevance of urban agriculture and gardening in the universe of EU-funded programmes and which EU-funded project results can be of value for the scope of AgriGo4Cities? To answer this question, the AgriGo4Cities project partners carried out a systematic review of European transnational funding programmes. The results are expected to not only inspire AgriGo4Cities partners in their activities, but are also an indicator for the role agriculture and gardening play in respect to sustainable urban development in Europe.

METHODOLOGY

The starting point for the project research was a set of relevant EU funding programmes. The strategic partners used a fixed set of keywords to screen these projects and documented results in a template spreadsheet.

In total, 44 funding programmes were analysed, including several transnational INTERREG programmes, URBACT, ESPON etc. The funding period was limited to projects that started in 2007 or later. Coordinated by ifuplan,

the AgriGo4Cities' strategic partners cooperated in the analysis, identifying the relevant projects of each funding programme through a standardized search of the following keywords related to the topical focus of AgriGo4Cities: garden, gardens, urban gardening, urban agriculture, urban farming, urban food.

For each identified relevant project, meta-information was compiled, including basic information on the project and its partnership, the geographical coverage, the spatial level at which it worked, a brief summary, information on the relevance of the project in regard to each of the three thematic objectives of AgriGo4Cities as well as references to project-related further reading.

The analysis was carried out by the AgriGo4Cities project partnership from March to May 2018.

MAIN FINDINGS

Based on the six predetermined keywords, a total of 44 programmes were collected. 18 of them displayed results by keyword search. 29 projects out of these 18 programmes were deemed to be of interest (see table on the next page). It is worth mentioning that more than two project hits for one funding programme were found by looking through those EU-funding programmes: CREATIVE-EUROPE-CULTURE, Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2007–2013 and Interreg South East Programme 2007–2013.

List of EU transnational funding programmes that were analyzed.

FUNDING PROGRAMME
CREATIVE EUROPE CULTURE
Interreg Europe
Europe for Citizens (EACEA)
Life +
JPI Climate - Topic 1: Societal Transformation
NORFACE
ESPON 2020
HERA Joint Research Programme "Uses of the Past"
Erazmus+ (EACEA)
NWE ENO - European Community Initiative INTERREG IIIB
ENPI
Horizon2020
Life Long Learning
COST-European Cooperation in Science & Technology
Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013
Interreg Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013
Interreg IVB - North West Europe (NWE) 2007-2013
Interreg IVB North Sea Region 2007-2013
Interreg Atlantic Area 2007-2013
URBACT II – III
ESPON 2007-2013
Interreg Alpine Space 2014-2020
Interreg Alpine Space 2007-2013
EYD - European Year for Development
Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic 2014-2020
Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2014-2020
Interreg Atlantic Area
Interreg Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020
Interreg Sudoe 2014-2020
Interreg IVC 2007-2013
European Social Fund
Anna Lindh Foundation Grant
ERA-NET
Copernicus
Interreg Mediterranean 2014-2020
Interreg Danube Transnational programme 2014-2020
Interreg Adrion
Interreg Central Europe
Interreg Central Europe 2007-2013
Interreg Sudoe 2007-2013
Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2007-2013
Interreg South East Programme 2007-2013
Interreg North West Europe (NEW) 2014-2020
Interreg North Sea 2014



FUNDING PROGRAMME	#
CREATIVE EUROPE-CULTURE	4
Life +	1
NWE ENO - European Community Initiative INTERREG IIIB	1
ENPI	1
Horizon2020	1
Life Long Learning	1
COST-European Cooperation in Science & Technology	2
URBACT II – III	2
EYD - European Year for Development	1
Interreg IVB - North West Europe (NWE) 2007-2013	1
Interreg IVB North Sea Region 2007-2013	1
Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2014-2020	1
Interreg Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020	2
Interreg IVC 2007-2013	2
European Social Fund	3
Anna Lindh Foundation Grant	1
Interreg Mediterranean 2014-2020	2
Interreg Central Europe	2

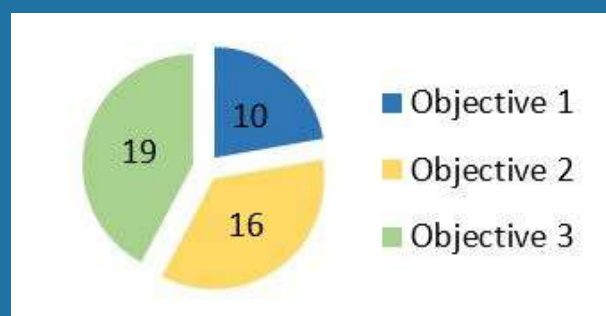
¹ Directly none of them targets UPA, but they are related to sustainable urban environment, social inclusion and/or participatory planning.

Taking the three thematic objectives into consideration while looking at the 29 project hits reveals:

Objective 3 (“Promote sustainable urban development”) and Objective 2 (“Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”) are more represented than Objective 1 (“Integration of the participatory approach in the decision-making processes”).

The relevance those three objectives have for AgriGo4Cities are listed in the chart below and are classified as low, medium or high. The various projects are focused on different target groups and build upon citizens in general as well as young adults, women, communities, new citizens, immigrants, (long-term) unemployed, disabled, as well as cultural workers, certain stakeholders, producers and politicians.

The following pages present the projects that were found to contain useful basic information concerning the project and its relevance for AgriGo4Cities. Projects are presented according to their relevance (from high to low and in alphabetical order) for the AgriGo4Cities project. The country codes are abbreviations of the International Standard for country codes (ISO 3166).



The structure of analyzed projects, targeting AgriGo4Cities three specific objectives.

Overview of projects and their relevance in terms of the AgriGo4Cities project.

Project title	Relevance for AgriGo4Cities	Target group	Relevance for project objective 1	Relevance for project objective 2	Relevance for project objective 3
COST – Action Urban Agriculture Europe	high	authorities	yes	yes	yes
Food Smart Cities for Development	high	citizens	none	none	yes
HORTIS - Horticulture in Towns for Inclusion and Socialisation	medium / high	citizens (unemployed)	yes	none	none
MADRE - Metropolitan Agriculture for Developing an innovative, sustainable and Responsible Economy	high	citizens (vulnerable groups)	yes	yes	yes
SAUL (Sustainable & Accessible Urban Landscapes)	high	citizens / authorities / business	yes	yes	yes
SIDIG MED - Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture, Cross Border Cooperation in the Mediterranean	high	authorities / citizens (cultural workers)	yes	yes	yes
Sustainable Food in Urban Communities	high	citizens / authorities / business	none	yes	none
AgriRent	medium / high	citizens (unemployed)	none	yes	none
AGROLABS	medium / high	business (food producers)	yes	none	none
BALKANET	medium / high	business (SME)	none	yes	yes
COST – Action Urban Allotment Gardens	medium / high	citizens	yes	none	none
Ecovillage Strategies for Community Mobilization	medium / high	citizens (women)	none	yes	yes
EUROSCAPES	medium / high	citizens	none	yes	yes
Green Mental Health	medium / high	citizens (disabled and family members)	none	yes	none
Hybrid Parks	medium / high	citizens	yes	none	yes
LANDSCAPE CHOREOGRAPHY From Wasted Land To Shared Space	medium / high	citizens	yes	none	yes
Ljungnäs villan	medium / high	citizens (unemployed and migrants)	none	yes	none
UGB - Urban Green Belts	medium / high	citizens	yes	yes	yes
URBACT Network AGRI-URBAN	medium / high	citizens (young adults) / authorities	none	none	yes
HICAPS – Historical Castle Parks	medium	citizens (disabled)	none	yes	none
IFOAM EU - LIFE16 NGO/BE/200043	medium	authorities	none	none	yes
Making Places Profitable – Public and Private Open Spaces	medium	authorities / business / citizens	yes	none	none
RDI2CLUB	medium	authorities / business (SME) / R&D institutes	yes	yes	yes
Transparent Boundaries (Lace – Networks – Space – Architecture): Dialogue with the Elder	medium	citizens (elderly)	none	yes	none
CAMARG - Cluster of Innovative Zero-km Agro-food Marketplaces for Growth	low / medium	business (food producers and retailers)	yes	none	yes
Supurbfood - Towards sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning	low / medium	citizens / authorities	none	none	yes
Resilients	low	citizens (cultural workers)	none	none	yes
Supporting Pioneers in Urban-Rural Entrepreneurship to create vital new hubs	low	citizens	none	none	yes
+UP TO NATURE	low	citizens	yes	none	yes

COST ACTION – URBAN AGRICULTURE EUROPE

Programme: COST

Countries: AT, BE, BG, CZ, DK, EE, FR, DE, GR, IS, IE, IL, IT, NL, NZ, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, CH, TR, UK

Reference: <http://www.urban-agriculture-europe.org>

Urban Agriculture (UA) plays a key role in two global challenges: urbanization and food security. It can provide an important contribution to sustainable, resilient urban development and the creation and maintenance of multifunctional urban landscapes. In the globally emerging research field of UA, an European approach to the subject needs to be created. It has to integrate the unique European context regarding its urban and landscape pattern, the important role of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and the needs of the European society. The COST-Action Urban Agriculture Europe (UAE) will initiate the definition of this European approach on the basis of existing research projects and reference regions in the partner countries.

The outcomes of the Action should help to focus future research on UA, modify the CAP and stimulate private and public activities in UA projects and planning. The Action used an innovative approach crossing bottom-up and top-down methods, using the method of research by design and creating interfaces between the three methods. By working in close cooperation with regional stakeholders from the domains of urban development and agriculture, the Action contributes to sustainable, resilient territorial development in Europe and aims for leadership in research on UA in developed countries.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

General state of the art in Europe, Definitions, Case studies, Report especially for the AgriGo4Cities aspects of governance and the role of UA

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

Important aspects of the future development of urban societies are at stake in UA. Cities and urban regions have to develop strategies on UA to assure food security and quality, environmental quality and the well-being of their citizens. But they can also use UA to strengthen social inclusion, citizens’ responsibilities and active participation in the development of their urban environment. To reach these objectives, countries, regions and cities, but also civic and societal initiatives are establishing new kinds of public policies and new forms of governance dealing with UA. WG 2 “Urban Agriculture and governance” of the COST-Action has carried out a survey of existing public policies on UA that can be established in close cooperation with the stakeholders present in the Action and the reference regions. The policies will be analysed on the background of the different national and regional institutional settings and classified accordingly.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

WG 3 has analysed and evaluated the entrepreneurial models that were developed in the partner countries through an inventory of the case-studies and established a catalogue presenting their characteristics, success factors and income potentials amongst other aspects, to allow knowledge transfer among the partner countries that create innovation.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

WG 4 “Spatial visions for Urban Agriculture” will develop new approaches and visions for spatial planning in urban regions that integrate urban agriculture. This has been done on the basis of an analysis of the role of UA in important spatial visions and designs from the last 10 years and in close cooperation with the Training Schools of the Action that work on spatial visions of UA for reference regions. The results of the WG were a definition of a design-toolbox for UA in multifunctional urban landscapes. The project WIKI is a helpful information source e.g. for case studies.

Main target group: authorities

FOOD SMART CITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Programme: EYD 2015

Countries: IT, ES, NL, CH, BE, FR

Reference: <http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicyact.org/project/>

Food Smart Cities for Development – cities and civil society organizations aimed to foster the role of cities in changing the urban food production and consumption paradigm. Reducing food waste, promoting healthy eating and encouraging the purchase of food produced by respecting the rights of people and the environment are local actions that can trigger a global change.

The collaboration wanted to create a coordinated urban food policy agenda and show the potential of European decentralized cooperation in the fight against poverty and hunger.

The project has three main objectives:

- To raise public awareness on the impact of European cooperation policies, with particular emphasis on decentralized cooperation, food security and sustainable development.
- To strengthen the role of European cities as facilitators in the promotion of sustainable development, focusing on global food security strategies.
- To entice partner cities and CSOs to participate in the debate about the post-2015 development agenda.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

The purpose is to help cities and civil societies to translate food strategies into action on a policy level. Building more resilient urban food systems is essential for sustainable development and in this way foster the debate and discussion on the Post-2015 development agenda.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:
none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:
none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

The International Protocol (Milan Urban Food Policy Pact – MUFFO) focuses on food policies that are fundamental for the renovation of suburban areas. One of the most important goals of the project is to push participant cities to adopt a sustainable food policy by exchanging good practices and building a common framework of actions: the Food Guidelines.

Main target group: citizens

HORTIS – HORTICULTURE IN TOWNS FOR INCLUSION AND SOCIALISATION

Programme: Life Long Learning

Countries: DE, IT, ES, HU

Reference: <http://www.hortis-europe.net>

HORTIS – Horticulture in Towns for Inclusion and Socialisation – is a project co-funded by the European Union in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, sub-programme Grundtvig for adults learning. HORTIS wants to contribute to fight social exclusion, poverty and unemployment, as well as to promote lifelong learning among adults through community and urban gardening.

The HORTIS concrete objectives are as follows:

- To develop a set of educational materials in various formats (video tutorial, e-book etc.) and languages (English, German, Italian, Hungarian and Spanish) to illustrate the different aspects of the social and community gardening.
- To organise training courses for trainers on community gardening in Berlin (DE), Budapest (HU), Bologna (IT) and Cartagena (ES) and to set up an involved a space for learning and gardening in each town (“training community garden”).
- To organise pilot courses on urban gardening for adults and especially low-skilled unemployed persons.
- To create an interactive and multilingual web portal with all the educational materials created by the project that fosters communication and networking among stakeholders and end users, especially civil society associations, trainers, local government officials in social work, urban planners etc.

Community gardens are a great resource for our cities. They help rebuild relationships between people, create a healthy urban environment, encourage people’s creativity in order to take care of urban public spaces. Moreover, community gardens provide fresh and healthy food to urban gardeners. The HORTIS project wanted to contribute to fighting social exclusion and to promote lifelong learning among adults through community and urban gardening.

More information: <http://www.hortis-europe.net/files/documenti/inglese/briefhortis.pdf>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

The main focus of the project is empowering people in their urban gardening skills, while participation and governance are side issues, playing a less important role in the project. The educational material (videos, cards, e-books) may be interesting for the pilot regions as direct input to practical work

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: 10 cards with short advice about practical issues e.g. biodiversity, participation, moderation, fertilizers etc.

WP2: Methodology and educational materials development: Users’ Needs Analysis Report /

WP2: Methodology Report on Community Gardening and Key Competences Acquisition

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”: none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”: none

Main target group: citizens (unemployed)

MADRE – METROPOLITAN AGRICULTURE FOR DEVELOPING AN INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE ECONOMY

Programme: Interreg Mediterranean 2014–2020

Countries: AL, FR, GR, IT, ES

Reference: <https://madre.interreg-med.eu/>

The aim is to supply Metropolitan and Periurban Agriculture (MPA) with key players (from the quadruple helix) and create a transnational cooperation in the MED area. Aiming to foster a change process in the metropolitan food supply model, the project will capitalize on the wide set of academic knowledge, pilot actions and policies, networks and transnational cooperation in order to allow MPA to reach a critical level in the MED area.

More info:

http://www.medcities.org/documents/10180/708002/MADRE_brochure_en_01.pdf/62bf0b4b-4c69-4df4-93fa-19842dcce41

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

Very similar focus on urban and peri-urban agriculture in metropolitan areas, very similar expected results (local workshops to identify hot topics and local challenges, study visits and transnational working groups, best practices catalogue, thematic web platform, joint policy recommendations).

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

The project follows the multi-stakeholder approach by operationalizing the so called “quadruple helix model” (academia, business sphere (farmers and SMEs), civil society (consumers), decision makers) into the “innovation system”. The aim is to identify the best practices of cooperation and to try to explain the interrelations between the different stakeholders.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

One of the 8 key challenges addressed by the project is social innovation. To this end, the MADRE project approach to social innovation in urban and peri-urban agriculture focuses on social diversity and the integration of the most vulnerable population groups into social life, particularly into the labour market. Some examples of this approach include agricultural farms and community gardens, which offer recreational or work-related activities for social services recipients, disabled persons, elderly people, young people and children, psychiatric patients, (former) drug addicts, burn-out victims etc.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

Among other key challenges of urban agriculture, the project also widely addresses job creation, education, quality upgrading and value creation, territorial integrity and land management and environmental benefits.

Main target group: citizens (vulnerable groups)

SAUL (SUSTAINABLE & ACCESSIBLE URBAN LANDSCAPES)

Programme: NWE ENO - European Community Initiative INTERREG IIIB

Countries: UK, DE, NL, LU

Reference: <http://3b.nweurope.eu/page/projet.php?id=456>

SAUL (Sustainable and Accessible Urban Spaces) sought to take the IIC project (New Methods in Socially Compatible Development of Urban Landscapes) to the development phase, to tackle the question of the role of “socially-inclusive” spaces in metropolitan regions, as well as the themes of regional identity and learning in planning cultures and partnerships. The objective of the action project, which involved eight partners from four Member States, was to develop and test a range of practical solutions formulated through a transnational partnership to the challenges described in four key areas. It aimed to i) recognise and demonstrate the vital role of socially-inclusive spaces in the sustainable development of the metropolitan region; ii) promote regional identity and the importance of the regional dimension within spatial planning in the NWE; iii) establish more effective planning through transnational partnerships by moving towards a new planning culture; and iv) develop a transnational and regional process of learning. The SAUL project comprised of several transnational teams charged with the joint planning, design and implementation of a range of demonstration projects. Encompassing 12 investments across 6 regions, the project partners intended for their newly-tested strategies to be taken up as integral parts of national regional strategies.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

Even though it is a project from before 2013, the outcome of its work is worth mentioning, especially as there are a lot of references in literature about this project(s). It includes community engagement projects, the development of a stronger sense of belonging and presenting the importance of new urban landscapes as well as engaging businesses in partnerships with public authorities.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

The SAUL partners share the aim to engage residents, businesses and policymakers in creating and improving urban landscapes that contribute to economic vitality and social cohesion. Partners recognise, however, that each region must devise a distinct approach that draws on transnational contributions and new methods of public and business engagement, while respecting regional heritage and local sense of place.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

SAUL projects have given particular attention to traditionally under-represented groups, like the youth and immigrants. Believing that engaging these groups leads to innovation and long-term sustainability, the partners learned techniques from each other and then each designed tailor-made involvement processes to suit local situations.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

Introduction to newly-tested strategies to be taken up as integral parts of national regional strategies; As SAUL partners look forward to adapting landscapes for future generations, each group also values its own sense of place and local heritage. Some partners, such as Luxembourg and Saarland, are exploring new regional governance structures that recognize the strengths of existing institutions while adapting them to better accommodate the regional needs of the future, particularly with respect to new urban landscapes.

Main target group: citizens / authorities / business

SIDIG MED – URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE, CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Programme: ENPI

Countries: IT, ES, JO, TN

Reference: <http://urbact.eu/resilient-urban-and-peri-urban-agriculture>

The SIDIG MED project aims to use urban and peri-urban agriculture as a means to improve governance processes for public authorities and to promote social and intercultural dialogue through cooperative organizations and associations fighting social exclusion and poverty. Implemented in cities and territories characterized by vast agricultural areas (Rome, Al-Balga, Mahdia and Barcelona), the project will adopt permaculture and organic farming concepts including innovative and energy-efficient techniques for water harvesting, composting to enrich the soil and beekeeping for income generation and pollination.

General Objective:

-To promote social and intercultural dialogue through cross-border cooperation in the realm of local urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) related governance issues.

Specific Objectives:

- To improve the capabilities of project partner cities and public administrations towards implementing governance policies and strategies on local urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA).

- To fight urban social exclusion and poverty in city groups involved in urban and peri-urban agriculture.

More information can be found on their homepage: <http://www.sidigmed.org/about-us/>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

The partnership and therefore the projects aim to mobilise a wide range of policies and actors to deal with poverty and social exclusion. This promotion of social and intercultural dialogue through cross-border cooperation in the realm of local urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) related governance issues concerns AgriGO4Cities.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

Network called EU MED UPA Network

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

The project tries to fight social exclusion and poverty in the urban and peri-urban areas (UPA)

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

The project aims to improve the governance processes for local development by promoting social and intercultural dialogue

Main target group: authorities / citizens (cultural workers)

SUSTAINABLE FOOD IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

Programme: URBACT II - III

Countries: UK, ES, FR, IT, GR, RO, SE, NO, NL

Reference: <http://urbact.eu/sustainable-food-urban-communities>

The thematic network "Sustainable Food in Urban Communities" involves ten European cities that wish to grow, deliver and enjoy more sustainable food. It will focus on developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems:

- GROWING fruit and vegetables in the city, in gardens, in parks, on rooftops, on balconies, on derelict lands etc., safeguarding and improving fertility of lands;
- DELIVERING food stuffs in a more sustainable and less carbon intensive way;
- ENJOYING more sustainable food (local products, without pesticides, seasonal and fresh products etc.) while improving diets (reducing the share of animal protein and processed foods), using products that meet environmental and sustainability criteria (certification) and preventing waste (food and its packaging).

This transition will involve changes in perceptions, attitudes and, finally, behaviours.

The handbook provides a range of materials and different entry points that cater to different interests.

The focus is on nine key topics that have emerged from the exchanges between the partner cities and their joint experience. Three main categories of information are provided for three main audiences:

- Insights for city policy makers on the importance for cities to build a sustainable and more localised food system.
 - A series of key learning and practical tools for practitioners and actors who would like to start a similar process in their own cities.
 - A rich and varied set of short case studies for a wider circle of interested readers included throughout the handbook that illustrate ways in which sustainable food initiatives can change daily life in the city.
- For more information, please visit: <http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-sustainable-food/>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: high

Relevant tools targeted at local stakeholders to transform the local food system, grow and deliver food in cities and to promote healthier and more sustainable diets.

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes": none

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":

The project involves many consumers, but especially concentrates on the inclusion of those with a low income.

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development":

none

Main target group: citizens / authorities / business

AGRIGENT

Programme: ESF Contribution – Social enterprise, social inclusion. Access to employment and social inclusion

Countries: DE

Reference: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=1801>

Social stigma and a lack of support often mean that the long-term unemployed, including those with disabilities, do not always have the opportunity to reach their professional potential. The Agrigent project in Germany is trying to change this for the benefit of participants, the environment and the community at large. Agrigent is a biological farm in the district of Göppingen, comprising 45 hectares that offers work experience and skill-building opportunities to the long-term unemployed. Apart from boosting the confidence of the participants through meaningful work opportunities, Agrigent has the broader effect of promoting a better understanding and improved integration of people with disabilities. For more information: <http://www.sab-gp.de/index.php/projekte-und-angebote/waldeckhof-agrigent>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

Agrigent is interesting for local pilot areas and the follow-up planning activities.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

AGRIGENT has reached 412 long-term unemployed people, 61% of whom came from a migrant background, 20% had a severe disability and 45% had no qualifications. 59 participants entered education, training or work immediately after attending, while 46 found a job within 6 months thanks to the skills they had acquired. The initiative continues to blossom and the follow-up project now boasts an international element with partners in France and Austria.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

none

Main target group: citizens (unemployed)

AGROLABS

Programme: Interreg Balkan-Mediterranean 2014–2020

Countries: GR, AL, CY, BG

Reference: <http://www.interreg-balkanmed.eu/approved-project/31/>

The agrofood sector plays an important social and economic role in the Balkan Med region, especially in rural communities and is emerging as the central element for the region's development. Despite the diversity of production systems and the different degrees of obstacles, Balkan Med territories are facing common challenges that limit the development of the agrofood sector and particularly weaken the small producers. Most of the constraints are common in rural Balkan Med areas, such as a lack of innovation and productivity, quality and food safety, difficulties in promoting typical products, access to funding and the structure of the value chain at a regional level. In addition, agricultural policies implemented by Balkan Med countries in recent decades have led to their increasing dependence on imports and to their total exposure to volatile international markets. The AgroLabs project aims to foster the production and distribution of innovative agrofood products of the Balkan Med area by organising local value chains, supporting producers in their development projects and creating new markets for their products. To achieve these aims towards the sustainable growth of the Agrofood sector, all the relevant actors should be engaged. The promotion of sustainable agrofood development requires that "enabling environments", in particular those aimed at ensuring innovation, continuing human resource development and capacity building, are promoted and maintained. This will be achieved through the development of Agrofood innovation clusters, a place where research, industry and authorities can meet to co-create the Balkan Med area's competences in innovation of the agrofood sector. This will contribute to the organisation of agrofood value chains, support SMEs and producers and promote their products in local and international markets.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project is relevant for the methodology of a transnational event, AgroLabs and Methodology of the Local Action Plan.

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes":

An open transnational event (Innovation Summit) will bring together multiple stakeholders from each region and will capture, share and transfer the knowledge and experiences from the stakeholders' consultation at the regional level. All the lessons learned will be summarized in 4 Local Action Plans and these will also serve as the operational plan for the establishment of AgroLabs in WP5. WP5 aims to develop and operationalize 4 AgroLabs as a transnational network. AgroLabs' operation involves support, monitoring, mentoring sessions and training activities, so as to ensure the sustainability of the developed cluster.

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":

none

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development":

none

Main target group: business (food producers)

BALKANET

Programme: Interreg Balkan-Mediterranean 2014–2020

Countries: GR, BG, AL

Reference: <http://www.interreg-balkanmed.eu/approved-project/33/>

The BALKANET project is inspired by the following three elements: the awareness that it is strategically important to facilitate innovative business models in the agrofood sector of the BMP area, the conviction that it is important to improve transnational cooperation opportunities of the target area and that it is necessary to enhance an operative Network through local SME's and research centres with particular focus on young innovators skills, the importance of communication, transferring best practices to foster the sustainable growth of the area. The overall objective of the project is to favour the potential of innovation, the promotion of applied research and the support to SME's sustainable adjustment capacity.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

Focusing on civil society and local stakeholders to share project outputs and to promote a new model of sustainable socio-economic growth (Transnational Balkanet agrofood Festivals).

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes": none

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":

The project proposal answers some of the specific needs of the target areas: optimize the role of a key local activity, like the agrofood sector; face the actual socio-economic frame, conditioned by high unemployment rates, especially of young people; to increase SME's competitiveness with special reference to sustainable innovative models.

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development":

The project approach (quadruple helix) is based on the development of joint analyses, methodologies and ICT services that favour an integrated transnational process. According to this, Balkanet can secure the critical mass, enhancing mobilisation capacity and an innovation potential to overcome markets fragmentation.

Main target group: business (SME)

COST ACTION – URBAN ALLOTMENT GARDENS

Programme: COST

Countries: AT, BE, HR,CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, MK, DE, GR, IE, IL, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RS, SK, SI, ES, SE, CH, TR, UK

Reference: <http://www.urbanallotments.eu/>

The mission of the COST-Action Urban Allotment Gardens is to fully comprehend and manage the relevance of Allotment Gardens in political, social, ecological and urban design aspects within the urban context of European Cities by creating an interdisciplinary network to foster the multi-dimensional aspects of knowledge about Allotment Gardens and by the identification of practices supportive for the management of Allotment Gardens within urban planning processes.

Expected benefits of this Action are diverse. The Action's primary objectives are to expand knowledge base in social integration; to expand the knowledge about the ecological function of allotment gardens; to improve knowledge about the integration of Allotment Gardens in relation to urban morphology, spatial distribution over urban territories and their spatial impacts; and to maintain integrated approaches in urban development by the identification of municipal/national development and planning policies that are supportive of or against allotment garden functions. In addition to the contribution to the ecological, societal and sustainable development needs of allotment gardens and scientific needs, the second important objective is to disseminate knowledge, specifically as outputs of the Action.

More information can be found on their homepage: <http://www.urbanallotments.eu/action-in-detail.html>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The fact sheets provide clear and short information; the training has to be screened for interesting input(s).

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes":

The fact sheets provide clear and concise information; the training has to be screened for interesting input(s).

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":
none

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development": none

Main target group: citizens

ECOVILLAGE STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Programme: Anna Lindh Foundation 2012

Countries: DE, EG, MA, DZ, PS, TR

Reference: <http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/ar/node/2213>

The project Ecovillage Strategies for Community Mobilization aims to promote intercultural dialogue and equip women multipliers with the skills necessary to apply integral approaches to sustainable development and community empowerment (ecovillage strategies). These women will help fill an IT database, a 'solution library', with best practices that honour traditional cultural heritage in the area of sustainability from their regions.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project is interesting, because it was able to build a strong GEN network (<https://gen-europe.org/home/index.htm>) and its developed solution library.

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes": none

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":

The project enabled six women from the Southern Mediterranean (Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Palestine and Turkey) who were fulfilling grassroots leadership roles in their home countries to join an Ecovillage Design Education course in the ecovillage of Sieben Linden, Germany. One of the project's aimed outputs was a collection of innovative and traditional sustainable solutions from the women's home countries. This collection was the start of the Solution Library. It means leaders at local level were acknowledged and offered additional support in the form of education for the better performance of Ecovillages.

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development":

The Solution Library is a directory of sustainability solutions. It provides short descriptions, vital information, pictures and links to more information. It is a place where solutions from all over the internet are gathered in one easy-to-browse platform to help create a more sustainable world. Additionally, the Solution Library provides the possibility to share experiences with solutions, enriching the knowledge available about the solutions in the library. The Solution Library also creates a global community by enabling members to connect with one another, or with projects where the solutions are being or have been used. This way, the SL facilitates direct knowledge exchange around sustainable solutions, making it easier for people to co-create a more sustainable world.

Main target group: citizens (women)

EUROSCAPES

Programme: Interreg IVC 2007–2013

Countries: ES, PT, DE, SK, LV, IT, HU, RO, GR, PL, BE, UK

Reference: <https://www.keep.eu/keep/project-ext/822/EUROSCAPES?ss=8eb10e4f3a4a8d10e31dde71d888f848&espon=>

EUROSCAPES is a shared vision of 14 partners coming from 13 EU Member States on the necessity to tackle natural and cultural landscape management issues in urban and peri-urban areas at an interregional level and in a sustainable way. In dense and contrasting urban environments, tackling the concept of landscapes and its related issues will prevent their loss of specificity and identity and help to make best use of these areas. In urban and peri-urban areas facing demographic changes, climate change issues, increasing economic constraints, environmental challenges and other issues, exchanges of good practices and expertise will help regional and local authorities to be more efficient in protecting, maintaining and enhancing their natural and cultural landscapes in a sustainable way. Partners of EUROSCAPES have the ambitious objective of offering a new management model for these landscapes, as a milestone policy instrument to implement the European Landscape Convention treaty objectives. Partners of the project have identified complementarities in their tools, practices and policy instruments to deal with landscape management. They will refine these complementarities, exchange and transfer good practices with a scientific support and use these good practices to feed the Landscapes Management Plan (LMP) they will develop: new approach meant to become a real public policy at the regional/local level. These LMP are based on an environmental, quality and economical approach in the maintenance and management of our natural and cultural landscapes. They will integrate important education and sensitization dimensions and take into account the territorial strategy, urban master plans etc. The project will produce a handbook of good practices and a policy recommendation paper on the LMP approach as main outputs. The main results of the project will be improved local/regional landscapes management practices and policy instruments and a more sustainable living environment. The project rests on three main innovative aspects. The areas concerned—natural and cultural landscapes in urban and peri-urban areas (green spaces like gardens, parks, squares, but also paths, riversides, deprived landscapes etc.)—are not well taken into account in planning and protecting instruments today and not managed in a coherent and sustainable way. Secondly, the approach is based on a global strategic plan using the differentiated management methodology (to be environmentally responsible, different kinds of management are defined for different kinds of landscapes identified based on their use and quality). Thirdly, the partners have all committed to jointly develop a Landscapes Management Plan as a new model of sustainable and integrated management strategy, which will be based on the good practices analysed and exchanged in the EU (European Regional Development Fund); <http://www.euroscapes-eu.org/>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project is interesting for the methodology use and developed materials: analysis of the good practices and especially landscapes management plan.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

Analysis of the good practices and more in-depth exchanges between partners’ specialist officers through workshop sessions organized around the topic of sensitization and community involvement actions.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

Development of a common framework for the Landscapes Management Plan (LMP), taking into account the relevant good practices identified to be integrated into it; use as an example that can be compared to action planning.

Main target group: citizens

GREEN MENTAL HEALTH

Programme: ESF – Opening Pathways to Work Inclusive approaches

Countries: ES

Reference: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=1801>

Green Mental Health offered two courses in the horticulture sector. One course provided training for work relating to the management of ecological vegetable gardens; the other focused more on garden maintenance and also offered participants the chance to work in a garden centre.

The project aimed to improve both the personal and professional outlook of people who were at risk of exclusion. Some of the participants had spent time in prison, while others had never previously undertaken any kind of training. Green Mental Health therefore sought to provide the emotional, intellectual and social skills required to work autonomously and in the wider community.

A Personalised Plan for Labour Reintegration guided the development and activities of each participant. In addition, efforts were made to get families and carers involved in the reintegration process.

The project can boast a high level of continuity, as only one person withdrew early. Eight beneficiaries have since gone on to find jobs and one person has secured an internship.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project is interesting because of its result: successor courses are enabling a number of project graduates to gain further skills in areas, such as garden centre retail, floristry and plant health. The developed curricula can be used as a frame for workshops in the AgriGo4Cities project.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

A total of 269 people with disabilities and, indirectly including family members, 2388 people were included in workshops. The developed and tested programme can be used as an example when planning local events and workshops for vulnerable/marginalized groups.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”: none

Main target group: citizens (disabled and family members)

HYBRID PARKS

Programme: Interreg IVC 2007–2013

Countries: DE, SE, MT, PL, FI, GR, IT, AT, FR

Reference: <http://www.hybridparks.eu/project/>

Parks, both historic and modern, are intensively managed, high quality environments. They add to the attractiveness and success of cities and regions and to the quality of life for citizens and visitors. The partnership includes many of those cities and regions energetically enhancing and using parks in a wider policy context, such as economic development, rural diversification, the protection of cultural heritage, landscapes and environment or urban renewal. The partnership also includes some “newcomers” who have started similar policies recently. They all acknowledge the unique resources of parks, the advantages of cooperation and the need to achieve additional economic, social and environmental benefits to diminish the risks of decline or loss caused by conflicting demands, budget reductions etc. Climate change is a growing threat which will affect park features. It will attract more visitors using parks as comfort places. Finally, parks will be part of risk prevention strategies such as green corridors to mitigate climate change. It is the project’s key objective that parks can fully be used for sustainable local and regional development and for policies to mitigate climate change by enhancing their abilities to better serve economic, social and environmental purposes. Such policies ensure that different functions work “hand in hand” in each park. Analogously, the idea of “Hybrid Parks” came into being. Activities cover the 3 pillars of sustainability by individual and interrelated activities, based on experiences and resources of the partnership and the objectives of “Hybrid Parks”. Best practice studies include “Economy: Tourism and urban (re)development”, “Social: Widening the audience” and “Environment: Public awareness”.

Policies using parks for economic, environmental or social development are investigated in two workshops each. Another six, cross-cutting or “hybrid” workshops investigate how to combine these approaches to increase the contribution and synergies of parks to sustainable development policies and the mitigation of climate change. Study tours to the UK (focus: economy), Sweden (social) and Lower Austria (environment) and four open conferences further support exchange and transfer. This feeds into improved skills, policies and regional development plans, championed by regional support teams. The final conference presents the project report, with best practice case studies and the “Hybrid Parks Model” for the integrated management of parks within sustainable development and climate change policies.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project is relevant because of: public debates about Lund’s city park, conferences, presentations on workshops and a compilation of best practice case studies. The best practice studies include “Economy: Tourism and urban (re)development”, “Social: Widening the audience” and “Environment: Public awareness”. Policies using parks for economic, environmental or social development are investigated in two workshops each. Another six, cross-cutting or “hybrid” workshops investigate how to combine these approaches to increase the contribution and synergies of parks to achieve sustainable development policies and mitigate climate change.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

Partners, local politicians and external experts joined in Lund’s city park to discuss the needs and the challenges of the transformation of this 100–year-old public park into a multi-purpose or Hybrid Park. Study tours to the UK (focus: economy), Sweden (social) and Lower Austria (environment) and four open conferences further support exchange and transfer. This feeds into improved skills, policies and regional development plans, championed by regional support teams.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:
none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

The huge variety of actual uses and the great expectations related to the contribution of parks, gardens and urban spaces to sustainable urban and regional development across Europe have become very obvious in the situation reports delivered by the partners.

Main target group: citizens

LANDSCAPE CHOREOGRAPHY FROM WASTED LAND TO SHARED SPACE

Programme: CREATIVE EUROPE-CULTURE

Countries: GR, IT, RO

Reference: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/projects/ce-project-details/#project/522544-CU-1-2012-1-IT-CULTURE-VOL121>

LANDSCAPE CHOREOGRAPHY supported collective practices of urban gardening and encouraged an innovative European culture of common spaces through an interdisciplinary approach that integrated public art, landscape architecture, performing arts and socio-anthropological analysis. The project's objectives were:

- To engage different users through artistic workshops and comparative analysis in the anthropological and urban landscape field
- To develop new interdisciplinary creative languages
- To initiate public events, a trans-national circulation of works and an international festival

Its foreseen outputs were:

- Creation of new urban gardens
- Production of artistic performances and their circulation
- Comparative analysis in the anthropological and urban landscape field

The project activities were divided into 5 phases that metaphorically described the agriculture cycle: to dig up, to seed, to maintain, to crop, to continue.

The aim was to engage the citizen in creating a new urban garden through workshops for participative construction and to stage this process through art performances: the citizen was the “creator” of the performance, the art simply gave an expressive form to these actions. The project's title emphasized the value of this choreographic process: the bodies entered into a mutual physical relationship in order to cooperate in the creation of new urban landscapes. Some representatives of the partners involved moved to participate in the workshops in the other countries, spreading the outputs. The practice of spontaneous and creative use of abandoned public spaces can inaugurate a virtuous cycle to increase new forms of social and cultural cohabitation at an European level. These peculiar social dynamics were disseminated as examples of “best practices” and also constituted the Project European Added Value.

The results for this project are not available yet.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project focus lied upon creation through participation, including citizens as “actors”. It was an artistic type of sustainable urban development using abandoned public places with the ambition to be copied at the European level. Unfortunately, no final report is available for a deeper insight into this project.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: They tried to engage citizens to create new urban gardens through workshops structured as participative project development.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”: none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

Motivation to reuse abandoned public space.

Main target group: citizens

LJUNGNÄSVILLAN

Programme: ESF Contribution – 1.1.1. Opening pathways for work

Countries: SE

Reference: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=2797>

Ljungnäs villan is giving people who are long-term unemployed, new to Sweden, or born abroad, better employment chances. The project, based in a country house by the sea in Småland, offers on-the-job training in restaurant and café work, organic farming, property maintenance and the conference and rental business, as well as vital language skills.

Although many immigrants already have practical job knowledge, finding work in Sweden is more difficult because of the language barrier. So Ljungnäs villan combines on-the-job training with regular SFI (Swedish for Immigrants) language classes. The Ljungnäs villan project, run by DEL-TA Produktion, expects to recruit between 80 and 90 participants in total, each working with a dedicated counsellor to create a personal development plan. So far, attendance rates have been very high, which is thought to be down to the social and self-improvement elements of the project. Participants can stay at Ljungnäs villan for up to six months, after which they are expected to be ready to enter the market. The goal is for as many people as possible to find a job, start studying, or establish a foothold in the labour market by the end of the project.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

Inclusion and education of migrants through education, personal development planning in the field of organic farming can be relevant for local pilot actions and preparation of follow-up project activities.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

Ljungnäs villan expects to recruit between 80–90 participants and see 60 people complete the entire training programme. A dedicated matching counsellor is employed by the project to follow the individuals throughout their training. The counsellor works at the individual level (currently with 16 participants) and creates individual development plans and matching initiatives. After the training, the participant is expected to be ready to enter the labour market. The project’s goal is for all participants who have completed their training to find a job, start studying or establish a foothold in the labour market. The participants get to stay at Ljungnäs villan for up to 6 months before they move on to the next step in their development plan.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”: none

Main target group: citizens (unemployed and migrants)

UGB – URBAN GREEN BELTS

Programme: Interreg Central Europe

Countries: HU, AT, SI, CZ, PL, HR, IT

Reference: <http://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/UGB.html>

Green belts are the “lungs” of densely populated cities and can provide various environmental, social and economic benefits. To achieve these, however, traditional authority approaches are no longer enough and have become inefficient. So the challenge was to manage these green spaces smartly through the cooperation of inhabitants and various authorities, also using innovative tools.

The main objective of the project is to improve the planning, management and decision-making capacities of the public sector in Functional Urban Areas related to urban green spaces, thus creating sustainable urban green space management systems. These will essentially contribute to the improvement of life quality in urban cores and their hinterlands.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The project focuses on urban green spaces and their sustainable management in particular, including urban gardens, but they are not targeted in any of the project activities. However, the project has similar objectives and key elements, such as fostering the adoption of participatory approaches, developing smart methods of community involvement and co-management models aiming at multi-level and integrated management of urban green spaces, all of which will foster the capacity strengthening of the relevant public authorities.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

The project addresses an almost identical specific objective with an emphasis on active community engagement linked to planning, creating and maintaining urban green spaces. This will be facilitated by interactive community and competence building supported by smart communication tools and methods.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

Minor relevance: there are pilot actions in the project, testing community involvement techniques and tools aiming at inclusive urban green space governance, but do not address vulnerable/marginalized groups in particular. However, the smart model of community involvement, which is being developed, also takes into consideration “resource distribution equality” (with vulnerable and marginalized groups explicitly mentioned) and identifies a method and guidelines on how to engage vulnerable/underrepresented groups.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

The project tackles a similar objective (sustainable, integrated management of urban green spaces): enhancing the capacities of the public sector by creating transnationally replicable smart multi-level governance models and through developing smart methods for urban green spaces assessment and integrating the green infrastructure approach into urban planning in order to improve environmental performance and mitigate climate change impacts.

Main target group: citizens

URBACT NETWORK AGRI-URBAN

Programme: URBACT II - III

Countries: PT, UK, BE, SE, LV, HR, GR, IT, FR, ES

Reference: <http://urbact.eu/agri-urban>

AGRI-URBAN is about rethinking agrifood production in small and medium-sized cities. Many small and medium-sized cities across Europe have a relative specialization in agrifood production. Roughly speaking, it is a seemingly mature industry that still plays an important role in terms of GDP, employment and environmental sustainability. That is why new growth potentials have to be activated by means of innovation, new business models or making the most of the cluster approach.

AGRI-URBAN tackled initiatives related to short circuits of production and consumption, access to land and employment for youth in agriculture, training policies and support for the inclusion of new producers, urban agriculture, organic products or planning regulations related to agricultural land. The main purpose is a new link between urban and rural spaces through an integrated urban focus and putting the target on employment creation. This link is based on a multi-dimensional concept of sustainability that includes three types of objectives:

- Socio-cultural: promoting quality of life and wellness; strengthening the sense of place in the local communities and creating jobs in the food sector; empowering communities by strengthening the role of citizens in economic development.
- Economic: territorial integration attracting and retaining population, improving city image, increasing competitiveness, attracting professionals and entrepreneurs.
- Environmental: promoting organic farming and good practices, as well as environmental measures; soil preservation avoiding urban occupation of fertile land and incorporating agriculture in appropriate urban spaces and in the urban-rural interface; fostering multi-functionality in rural lands.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium / high

The employment- and inclusion related aspect of urban agricultural systems is relevant for AgriGo4Cities, particularly when developing value-added chains based on sustainable urban agriculture.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”: none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

Topics they are dealing with: Promoting organic farming and good practices, as well as environmental measures; soil preservation, avoiding urban occupation of fertile land and incorporating agriculture in appropriate urban spaces and in the urban-rural interface; fostering multi-functionality in rural lands.

Main target group: citizens (young adults) / authorities

HICAPS – HISTORICAL CASTLE PARKS

Programme: Interreg Central Europe

Countries: HR, SI, PL, IT

Reference: <http://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/HICAPS.html>

Historical castles that form part of the European cultural heritage are often decorated by parks. In the past, such parks were kept in high-quality aesthetic standards reflecting social and cultural values of their owners, demonstrating their political and economic power. However, nowadays many of these parks vanish due to a lack of financial resources and missing knowledge on how to protect them.

The HICAPS project will strengthen the capacities of the public and private sector to improve the management of historical parks and raise awareness about the parks as cultural heritage. The project will develop a strategy for evaluating cultural heritage and the potentials of historical parks. Other outputs include local action plans, a decision supporting tool for self-evaluation for local and regional development and an educational outdoor trail tool. The project will specifically address people with disabilities and test its newly developed approach in seven pilot areas by revitalising historical gardens.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium

Urban agriculture/gardening is not specifically mentioned. The project also aims to strengthen the capacities of the public sector (although from the cultural heritage perspective) and tries to include people with disabilities in the process of historical park revitalization.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

The project will specifically address people with disabilities and test its newly developed approach in seven pilot areas by revitalising historical gardens.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”: none

Main target group: citizens (disabled)

IFOAM EU – LIFE16 NGO/BE/200043

Programme: Life +

Countries: All EU Member States, along with EFTA and EU candidate countries

Reference: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=6011#PD

The IFOAM EU Group – a NGO-foundation – campaigns for sustainable food and farming and for the development and integrity of the organic movement in Europe. The NGO is an umbrella organisation of the organic agriculture movement in Europe.

The NGO focuses on stimulating the wider adoption of organic agriculture, emphasising how these practices can significantly contribute to the implementation of EU environmental and climate policies and to economic growth. The goal is to influence the implementation of the 7th Environmental Action Programme, the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy and the Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe, so that they become a driver for profound changes in our agricultural systems.

IFOAM EU will raise the awareness of policymakers through events, position papers and direct meetings. It will provide them with practical knowledge and expertise from grass-roots organisations as well as scientific evidence, in order to help them address environmental and climate challenges in an effective way. It will also contribute to better coordination and cooperation among NGOs, so as to give civil society a stronger voice in the policymaking process. In this way, IFOAM EU will build on its vision for the organic movement, based on ‘transforming food and farming’, to express the need for change in food and farming practices. The NGO will further develop the organic movement in the EU, improve its knowledge and advocacy capacities, as well as synergies and links with its members.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium

Through addressing policymakers directly (events, position papers and direct meetings), it is able to support a sustainable development by providing them with practical knowledge and expertise from grass-roots organisations as well as scientific evidence.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”: none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

Policymakers learn from experts how to address the topic of climate and environmental challenges in urban planning

Main target group: authorities

MAKING PLACES PROFITABLE – PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPEN SPACES

Programme: Interreg IVB North Sea Region 2007–2013

Countries: UK, DE, ND, BG, SE

Reference: <https://www.keep.eu/keep/project-ext/20138/MP4?ss=865a45cf76bc4f8e7ea5b82f6050401a&espon=>

Making Places Profitable focuses on innovative approaches for planning and designing, maintaining and using public places. The project aim is to demonstrate how open space improvements offer positive socio-economic benefits and how the benefits offered to key communities can be maintained in the long run ('place-keeping'). In cooperation with key EU policymakers and networks, the project activities illustrate support for greater interaction between all those involved in the open space management process. The project created a model agreement for partnerships and social enterprises and implemented 8 urban regeneration projects.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes":

MP4 focuses on innovative approaches for planning and designing, maintaining and using public place.

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":

none

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development": none

Main target group: authorities / business / citizens

RDI2CLUB

Programme: Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2014–2020

Countries: FI, NO, PL, LV, EE

Reference: <http://www.rdi2club.eu/>

RDI2CluB aims to help innovation actors apply EU smart specialisation approaches to their specific field and region. The transnational partnership and network of the project plans to, for instance, support new business development in rural areas and create bio-business hubs to improve innovation management. Bioeconomy means economic activities that utilize the biological natural resources and turn them into food, energy and other products and services providing jobs and business opportunities. The rural areas of the Baltic Sea region have a great potential for bioeconomy, as they have abundant natural resources. However, these regions struggle to reach their full potential due to limited human capital, business networks and clusters. So far, the small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) in bioeconomy are mostly in traditional, resource-based industries that have not taken full advantage of the latest technology and service innovations.

RDI2CluB unites authorities, research, development and innovation (RDI) institutes and business development bodies from five regions to a joint quest of boosting smart and sustainable bioeconomy development in the rural regions around the Baltic Sea. At the core of RDI2CluB is a transnational learning process that results in regional bioeconomy profiles and joint action plans for developing innovation capacity and enhancing smart specialization. Thereafter, the partner regions have built a joint innovation model and a digital platform that functions as a virtual working environment for the collaborative development of new products and services. The platform offers an interface to access data on natural resources and bioeconomy potential that can spark new ideas and market entries both at regional and transnational levels. Finally, piloting with the SMEs provides feedback on the smart specialization potential in bioeconomy as well as helps to validate the usability and functionality of the transnational innovation model and to scale up the digital platform.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium

The Open Virtual Biobusiness Hub as virtual working environment that enables active participation of all stakeholders.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

The Open Virtual Biobusiness Hub is a virtual working environment, a digital platform that enables the joint development of new products, services and business opportunities. The platform enables matchmaking, collaboration and creative encounters between experts of different fields in a regional and transnational context. Furthermore, it functions as an interface to access data on natural resources and socioecological environment. Interaction on the platform can spark ideas with business potential and support the transition to smart and sustainable bioeconomy.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

Pilot models will be created in the project that evaluate the ecological and social sustainability of new bioeconomy products/services as well as create business plans that incorporate an ecological, social and economic sustainability evaluation.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

In a pilot model in Poland, a model for innovation management will be created based on the 5-helix approach. By involving the natural environment and surrounding society, the Quintuple Helix supports the formation of innovations that create a win-win situation between ecology, knowledge and innovation, creating synergies between economy, society, and democracy.

Main target group: authorities / business (SME) / R&D institutes

TRANSPARENT BOUNDARIES (LACE – NETWORKS – SPACE – ARCHITECTURE): DIALOGUE WITH THE ELDER

Programme: CREATIVE EUROPE-CULTURE

Countries: UK, IT, EL, DK

Reference: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/projects/ce-project-details/#project/522676-CU-1-2012-1-UK-CULTURE-VOL121>

The Aim of the project is to explore the visibility of the elder in contemporary Europe through creative dialogue informed by the structural and cultural understanding of lace “net-works”. The Objectives are:

- Question the materiality and form of boundaries and thresholds in order to challenge their purpose and function.
- Develop lace net-works both materially and conceptually as a means of forming a series of innovative connections, surrounding but not enclosing space, thus affording access.
- Capture the impact of lace net-work structures on community inter-connectedness through trans-generational and cross-cultural creative collaborations.
- Disseminate outcomes through a series of exhibitions, performances and workshops

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: medium

It is a good example how to communicate in a cross-generational way.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”: none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

It is a cultural project with the goal to have a transnational, interdisciplinary and crossgenerational exchange between the older generation, society and cultural settings in which they live.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”: none

Main target group: citizens (elderly)

CAMARG – CLUSTER OF INNOVATIVE ZERO-KM AGRO-FOOD MARKETPLACES FOR GROWTH

Programme: Interreg Mediterranean 2014–2020

Countries: HR, FR, IT, ES

Reference: <https://camarg.interreg-med.eu/>

Project CAMARG aims to test and validate an advanced e-Commerce solution suited to support small producers (farmers, food artisans, small retailers) in MED territories characterized by agrofood excellence.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: low / medium

The CAMARG project is relevant for the AgriGo4Cities project only indirectly. By clustering the agrofood producers and developing the e-Commerce solutions, it may represent a transferable practice to support the development of urban agriculture (production and consummation) in other areas as well.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:

The project touches on this field only briefly by exposing the involvement of citizens in the decision process of new/updated electronic services.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:

CAMARG does not explicitly target vulnerable/marginalised groups.

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

The CAMARG project supports small agrofood producers exposed to the market competition of the emerging mass retail business models. It attempts to change consumer behaviour and show them the best way of getting fresh and authentic products directly from the local producer. Although the urban context is not explicitly mentioned, the solutions brought forth may also help urban citizens to pay for excellent food at the same price spent in supermarkets for lower-level goods. The ICT technology helps eliminate wasting time visiting different producers’ sites and find everything easy to reach and possibly have products at the same price at one’s own home, office or hotel.

Main target group: business (food producers and retailers)

SUPURBFOOD – TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MODES OF URBAN AND PERI-URBAN FOOD PROVISIONING

Programme: Horizon2020

Countries: NE, IT

Reference: <http://supurbfood.eu/>; <http://www.ruaf.org/projects/supurbfood-towards-sustainable-modes-urban-food-provisioning>

Short food supply chains have been advocated as a means to reduce the environmental impact of the agro-food system. However, to improve the ecological performance of the agro-food system, other flows (e.g. nutrients, water and urban waste) need to be considered as well. In the current context, these aspects are usually treated separately. This project will treat them in an integrated manner.

The research will be carried out in seven European city-regions (Rotterdam (NL), Rome (IT), Ghent (BE), Vigo (ES), Bristol (UK), Zürich (CH) and Riga (LV)) in collaboration with a diverse group of SMEs and will identify innovative modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning, nutrient, water and waste management and the multifunctional use of urban and peri-urban space.

The project will also establish links with researchers, policymakers and SMEs in these domains in developing countries. This will be organised through a process of dialogue, sharing of experiences, exchange of best practice and joint learning. Until recently, short food supply chains and multifunctional agriculture were considered to be part of the rural development realm. This project looks at these topics from the perspective of urban rather than rural development.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: low / medium

Has a strong focus on UA practice and more technical improvement. Governance and participation is not emphasized.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach in decision-making processes”:
none

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:
none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

The project partners described and analysed the agri-food dynamics, policies and governance arrangements in 7 European city regions. The goal was to develop a platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience among various stakeholder groups. It is also guidance for experimenting with innovations in each of the key themes of the Supurbfood project.

Main target group: citizens / authorities

RESILIENTS

Programme: CREATIVE EUROPE-CULTURE

Countries: AT, BE, SE, UK, SI

Reference: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/projects/ce-project-details/#project/513701-CU-1-2011-1-BE-CULTURE-VOL121>

Resilients (RT) fostered cultural resilience by blending diverse European traditions with emerging arts and technologies, strengthened through the intercultural exchange of people, ideas & works. Resilients are cultural workers of all ages preparing for uncertain futures by studying and experimenting with new models of living and working as a form of artistic practice. Each partner had a specific approach to resilience, adding value to RT's transnational collaboration. The project provided the partners with an opportunity to empower cultural workers to engage in an Europe-wide cultural resilience, while functioning as a compelling narrative to engage with diverse public contexts. RT had four primary motivations: to collect, create, share and support the development of resilient creative practices that can contribute to the long-term sustainability and prosperity of European culture.

Current and historic models of resilient culture were collected in residencies and field trips. These models were integrated with contemporary artistic forms in five case studies: experiments with new materials, media and technologies in the context of endangered crafts, urban gardening, sustainable forestry, contemporary pilgrimage and future readiness. Theoretical reflections on collecting and creating, together with their practical applications, were gathered in the "Resilients Handbook". For the duration of the project, the process and results of RT were shared at public events and online. Support of resilient creatives took the form of workshops, gatherings, apprenticeships and meetings. These activities provided a stable foundation for RT's long-term vision: to form a transnational support infrastructure called 'Guild of Resilients', a fellowship for learning, experimentation and reflection on temporal, resilient creative practices. More information is available on their homepage: <https://libarynth.org/resilients/start>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: low

It gives a very good introduction to the expression of resilience and what it constitutes. It supports sustainable urban development and talks about different experiences in the Resilients Handbook, which reads like a diary. With regards to urban gardening, they describe their activities, but the handbook is missing a tangible toolkit that would explain not only "what" they did, but "how" they did it.

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes":
none

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups":
none

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development":

Resilience to share accumulated skills, knowledge and cultural products

Main target group: citizens (cultural workers)

SUPPORTING PIONEERS IN URBAN-RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO CREATE VITAL NEW HUBS

Programme: Interreg IVB - North West Europe 2007–2013

Countries: BG, NL, UK, DE

Reference: <http://www.purehubs.eu/>

The Pure-Hub-Project aims to enhance the economic and social performance of cities and their rural hinterlands and establish better functional links between urban communities and rural production in the Northwest Europe area. This general aim is translated into 3 objectives:

3 objectives: Objective 1: To enhance the SOCIAL relationships between urban communities and adjacent rural areas enabling cross-sector cooperation and ultimately more effective supply chains for locally produced goods and services. Objective 2: To strengthen innovative urban-rural entrepreneurship stimulating new ECONOMIC relations between cities and their hinterlands and developing new business models that better exploit the economic potential of peri-urban areas and also directly meet the socio-economic demands of the cities. Objective 3: To sustain and to further improve these urban-rural linkages through embedding them in the long-term area development policies of local and regional authorities. This project sets out the proposition of 'PURE Hubs' (PURE=Pioneers in Urban Rural Entrepreneurship) as a specific strategy for generating urban-rural economic and social resilience.

The project sets out the proposition of 'PURE Hubs' (PURE=Pioneers in Urban Rural Entrepreneurship) as a specific strategy for generating Urban-Rural economic and social resilience. We see a 'PURE Hub' as an active node, or connection point, in a comprehensive Urban-Rural network which can incorporate infrastructural as well as organisational elements. A PURE Hub can be a physical building, or an organisational node linking networks of people and organisations. The common factor is that it would: - Reconnect the relationship between rural practice and the needs of urban social and economic well-being, contributing to prosperity and enhanced quality of life in both cities and their rural hinterlands. - Provide economic and social added value through the empowering of urban and rural stakeholders by involvement and commitment within PURE networks facilitating interaction and knowledge transfer.

<https://www.keep.eu/keep/project-ext/21108/PURE+HUBS?ss=71de826602d98438712ac79afb9c8b71&espon=>

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: low

Focus on food production and connecting rural and urban areas; the creation of therapy farms.

Relevance for objective 1 "Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes": none

Relevance for objective 2 "Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups": none

Relevance for objective 3 "Promote sustainable urban development":

Focus on food production and connecting rural and urban areas; the creation of therapy farms is especially interesting.

Main target group: citizens

UP TO NATURE

Programme: CREATIVE EUROPE-CULTURE

Countries: AT, UK, FI, NO, SI

Reference: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/projects/ce-project-details/#project/513522-CU-1-2011-1-AT-CULTURE-VOL121>

UP TO NATURE was an interdisciplinary production festival for experimental theatre, dance, music, live art and performance art in Vienna (AT), Bristol (UK), Kuopio (FI) and Oslo (NO). The partners produced a series of five unplugged performance productions for the greens and woods of their cities. The coproduction partners brut Vienna, Inbetween Time Productions Bristol, Black Box Theatre Oslo and Anti Festival in Kuopio agreed to produce a festival in the recreation areas close to their cities. A minimum of five international artistic productions were co-commissioned and presented in all four places. All the artistic productions had been basically unfurnished with any theatre equipment, normally provided by venues such as light, sound or stage systems. The programme was an unplugged performance festival for the metropolitan audience in the greens outside the cities. The entire process of the production and presentation had been critically reflected on by theorists. The art reviews were published within the international publication scheme of MASKA Ljubljana (SI). European artists and companies were invited to produce unplugged performances dealing with issues of:

- ecology
- climate change
- natural resources & alternative energy
- social stability
- urban architectures
- agriculture & gardening
- flora & fauna

The festival ran during the warm months in 2012. Until now, no results for this project have been available.

Relevance for AgriGo4Cities in general: low

It was a festival in the recreation areas outside the four cities, showing international artist production – mainly drawing attention to important points of a sustainable urban development. Also there is no information about a final report.

Relevance for objective 1 “Integration of the participatory approach into the decision-making processes”:
Festival to engage citizens.

Relevance for objective 2 “Increase the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalised groups”:
none

Relevance for objective 3 “Promote sustainable urban development”:

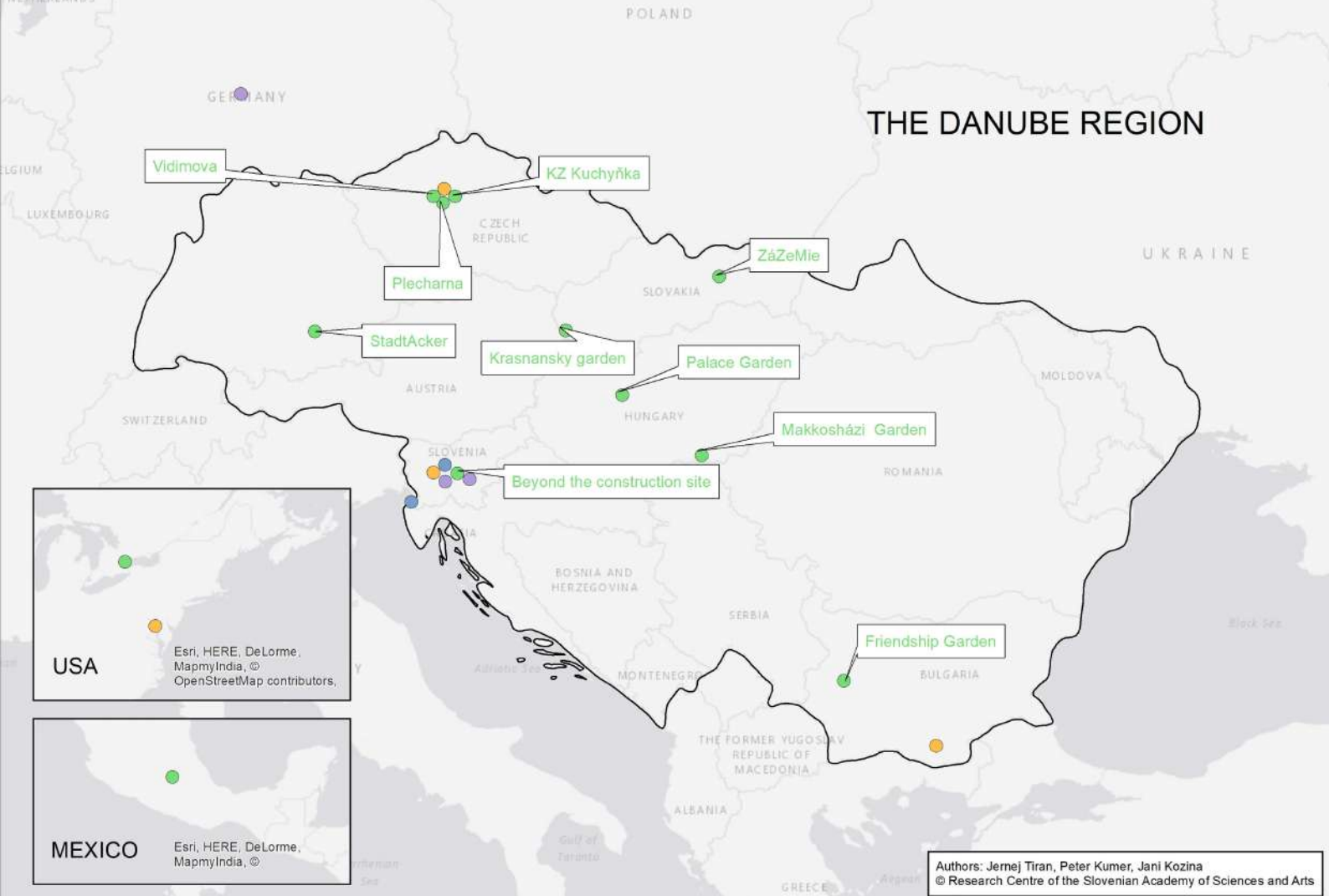
Festival providing education about: ecology, climate change, natural resources & alternative energy, social sustainability, urban architectures, agriculture & gardening, flora & fauna.

Main target group: citizens

**IV.
GOOD
PRACTICES OF
PARTICIPATORY
URBAN
AGRICULTURE**

SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES OF PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE

COMMUNITY GARDENS	COUNTRY	PAGE
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COMMUNITY GARDENS



Palace Garden / Palota-kert

Székesfehérvár
HUNGARY

Target groups:

- decision makers: local councillor
 - vulnerable groups: elderly people
 - other stakeholders: local NGOs
-

Contact:

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- coordinator of the garden and information in Hungarian: Edit Márton, +36 30/385 0487

The first community garden in Székesfehérvár was established in 2013 in a high-rise neighbourhood called Palotaváros (Palace city). The motivation of the initiators was to create a community space where local people who do not have the opportunity to own a garden can meet and do some gardening in a community. During the establishment, the Garden-friendly Association, whose members were the leaders of the process, received help from the area's city councillor and from a fellow environmentalist association. The whole planning and establishment process was carried out with the involvement of the local community and the future gardeners. Read on for their story about community gardening, their successes as well as challenges that they were faced with.

written by:
Máté Szalók,
Central Transdanubian Regional
Innovation Agency

photo above: Raised beds in the Palota-garden (image credit: Ferenc Máthé)



The builders of the garden (image credit: Ferenc Máthé)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The Garden-friendly Association of Székesfehérvár was established in 2009 as a Garden-friendly Club and became an association in 2012. Their idea about establishing a community garden in the Palotaváros, which is a high-rise neighbourhood in Székesfehérvár, arose in 2013. The members of the association met with the local councillor and because their ideas were similar, they started the joint project. They wanted to provide people from the neighbourhood the opportunity to produce fresh food by themselves and be part of a good community. Furthermore, they wanted to involve new land into urban agricultural producing that is suitable for this activity, but has been unused and because of this does not fit into the urban environment.

Both bottom-up and top-down methods were combined for the establishment of the Palota-kert. The members of the Garden-friendly and the Gaja Environmentalist Association, the future gardeners, other people from the neighbourhood and the local councillor

worked together to establish the garden. The local government of Székesfehérvár provided 1 million HUF (about EUR 3300 at the time) of non-refundable support from the Environmental Protection Fund for establishing the garden. Companies around the city also provided support: they donated their products and tools or offered discounts on them.

The participants had several meetings during the planning phase. The rules of the garden were defined during these meetings; they are based on the proposals of the participants, existing expert publications and the legislation. The involvement of these actors did not happen at the same time, as many of the future gardeners and new members of the association joined after they read the articles in the local media or observed the actual work in the garden. In order to build the garden, the participants organized workdays where 12–30 people participated. Besides the physical work, they also had small events during the construction, at which the participants got a chance to get to know each other better.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The future gardeners were involved in the initiative from the beginning: they participated in the planning and implementation of the garden, they were also involved in the maintenance. Because the garden was built in a high-rise neighbourhood, the main target group was the local community. Due to this, many elderly people joined the initiative and became gardeners in the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, elderly people from the Garden-friendly Association have been part of the life of the garden since the beginning, even though they do not own a plot.

The garden is open to everyone: for people who live in the high-rise neighbourhood, elderly people, families with small children. The participants pay special attention to building a community, because this kind of work creates bonds and friendships between the members of these groups, which then lead to intergenerational neighbourly harmony. For example, the elderly can take care of the small children, the younger members can help the elderly people and everyone likes to be a part of a healthy community.

The motivation of the gardeners and other participants was based on several factors. The gardeners wanted to spend their free time in a useful way, in a community; in addition, gardening itself and producing their own vegetables also played a significant role. The elderly members who do garden themselves joined because they wanted to be part of the community; they support the gardeners and attend the events in the garden. The city councillor of the area has also been involved since the birth of the idea. In addition, the involvement of the Gaja Environmentalist Association is a good indicator of the broad cooperation between different actors. This association is a significant actor in Székesfehérvár in environmental protection and raising awareness about environmental consciousness; its

members had already been known to the local councillor and the members of the Garden-friendly Association and they were invited to the process as an external support.

All the listed actors participated in establishing the garden. The members of the Garden-friendly Association were the coordinators of the process, but other actors also had a significant role. After assessing the needs, a local representative checked the possible location for the garden and allocated it for establishing a community garden. He also helped with the administrative aspect and organized a press conference about the establishment of the garden.

The Gaja Environmentalist Organization also provided support during the process of selecting the proper land and obtaining the necessary permits. First, an organization had to be established for operating the garden; it was named Community Garden Palotváros. This organization did not have legal personality, so the leadership of the Székesfehérvár Garden-friendly Association signed a contract with the Local Government of Székesfehérvár after it was approved by the city council.

During the garden establishing process, the members of the Gaja association participated in presenting former good practices, which provided important input and knowledge. The story of the Első Kis-Pesti Kert (The First Community Garden in Kispeszt) was presented to the local councillor, the residents and the employees of the Environment Office with the involvement of the local media.



The members of the local community built the garden together (image credit: Ferenc Máthé)

For the physical construction of the garden, a local representative obtained pallets that had been recycled for building raised beds. Building the garden itself was based on a joint cooperation and participation of the future gardeners and other members of the Garden-friendly Association, the local representative and the Gaja Environmentalist Association. They all performed physical work during the construction. Besides the hard work, they also organized the first community events (e.g. barbecuing) at the time, so they got the chance to get to know each other better.

The gardeners are responsible for their individual plots and for maintaining the garden, but they receive support from others. The members of the association who do not own a plot support the gardeners and attend events. The Gaja Environmentalist Association also helps with the maintenance. They assist in solving technical problems, support the composting process, help with the procurements and they also attend the events. The Garden-friendly Association organizes monthly workshops in another

community garden in Székesfehérvár, where the participants can learn about different methods and aspects of gardening. Furthermore, strong friendships have been formed among the gardeners and other members and because of that, they participate at events in Székesfehérvár, celebrate birthdays and go on trips together.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Palota-kert is not just a place for gardening, but it has become a vivid community place as well; events are organized in the garden regularly and non-gardeners are welcome as well. All of the interviewed actors mentioned the important role the community has had during the establishment and maintenance of the garden. The local decision-maker believes that the community garden was a true bottom-up initiative. He mentioned that the founders of the garden are really enthusiastic people, who strive really hard to realize their ideas, which are also good for the community. The garden is useful, because people who did not know each other before have had the opportunity to meet and organize a new micro-community, which is still working and continues to develop.

The representative of the Gaja Environmentalist Organization thinks that the best thing in being involved in the garden is that people can see the birth and the deepening of human relationships. It is really good to see that the community garden, the result of hard physical and organizational work,

functions well in the heart of the city. The municipality, the local people and the media appreciate the community garden and new people want to join the community. He thinks that the garden has proven to be sustainable and liveable even after the initial support that was used to establish the garden had ceased.

When talking about the future, it must be said that more communal features in the garden (e.g. stage in the garden, garden furnace and kitchen) are needed, as they would enable the community to organize even more events. These events could bring new people into the community, new dynamics and fresh ideas that could improve the attitude in the garden. Internal and external communication could be also improved: the garden would be even more effective if the communication was strengthened between the members of the community, so that any emerging issues could be solved in a more organized way; for example, they could organize more frequent meetings for the gardeners or establish a simple communication policy.

In addition, more coverage in the local media would be beneficial for the garden as well as for the gardening association. This could enhance the interest towards urban gardening and increase the numbers of visitors at the events in the garden. The maintenance of the technical elements is also important. The raised beds, tools and community areas have visibly deteriorated since the project launched.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

The interested stakeholders and future gardeners were involved in the entire process of establishing the garden. The members of the neighbourhood were addressed via press conference at the city hall and directly through personal relationships. The planning process began at a meeting, where the idea of a community garden was presented. After that, the leaders of the process met on the location of the garden regularly with those who wanted to be involved. In order to have a fast and effective way of communicating, an e-mail list was created, which proved to be quite useful.

For setting up the rules, the organizers used the founding document of the Városi Kertek Egyesület (Association of Urban Gardens), which is the Hungarian initiator organization for community gardens. These rules were tailored to the needs of the community. The gardeners, including the members of the vulnerable group (elderly people from the neighbourhood), feel that they are part of the society and they think that the local government considers their opinions. This could be because of the active involvement of the local representative and other members of the local government.

During the establishment and taking possession of the land, many legal questions emerged. To solve these issues, the city councillor of the district, the local government and the Environmental Office of the city provided support. The maintenance service of the city also

supported the participants: they provided tools and the employees of the company took part in the physical work, since many of the volunteers were women. When the water support of the garden was not solved, the maintenance service provided water. Besides these issues, the ignorance from some people has also been an obstacle for the community, because they might spread this attitude onto others. Many people from the local community remained passive towards the garden: according to the opinion of one interviewee, “they do not do anything besides just being at home and waiting for things to change instead of trying to create a small change themselves.”

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The future of the initiative is a very exciting question. It seems to be crucial to have 4–5 people with initiating skills and with enough free time who can manage the issues in the community. They can support the introverted members and incite them to take part in the community life. With such a strong leading core, the community can stay stable, even if some people leave and others join. The whole neighbourhood would profit from the garden, if other members of the local society besides the gardeners were involved in the community. In addition to the local residents, members of the local association of pensioners, students at the local primary school or associations for disabled people could join in the future. The involvement of people who are currently inactive can be achieved by disseminating the results and successes so far.

It seems the garden can be sustainable from the legal aspect as well, because the local government of the city believes in it and values a strong and lively community initiative.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Finding the right space is the first step towards successfully establishing a community garden. After deciding on the location, the preparatory work is crucial as well and the enthusiastic initiators should thoroughly analyse the entire process and make a solid plan. They should involve the interested stakeholders into this process and build on existing knowledge and good practices. In order to do this, they should build a good relationship with the local government, media and contact the members of operating gardens who can share their experience. They should start building a community, create a leader core from the local people in the earliest stage of the project and involve the future gardeners into the planning stage and physical labour during the construction of the garden. This process forms work bonds between the members, which strengthens the cohesion between the gardeners; this enables the members to solve problems and conflicts in an effective and positive way. This can potentially discourage new members from joining, but with suitable clear rules, a transparent decision-making process and measures, the integral operation of the garden can be ensured.



Community event in the garden (image credit: Ferenc Máthé)

Not being disappointed when facing obstacles is also important, as they are often an inescapable part of the process. Try to involve as many supporters as possible, because they can help each other and the project through hard times that might arise during the process because of personal, institutional or private life-related reasons.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The reasons why the participants joined were related to the community, a love of gardening and the environmental aspects. The city councillor of the area said that he has supported the initiative since the beginning. The social aspects were crucial points, but the creation of a green urban environment was also important to him. The main motivation of the Gaja association to get involved was their love of gardening. Reading a good book on the topic or listening to a presentation by an enthusiastic person with lots of experience and knowledge in the area could be also a good motivation,

as it was in the case of the lead consultant of the association. The interviewed representative of the elderly people joined because he likes gardening and being part of a good community. He said that gardening as a physical activity contributes to keeping his body in good physical condition and that observing, admiring the changes and seeing the achievements were good for his mental health.

However, although the garden seems to be a successful initiative, the main goals have not been completely achieved yet. Even though the community areas of the garden have been built, involving outsiders in the community has not been fully realized yet. This would be important for the garden in order to become a gathering place for the entire neighbourhood. With the cooperation of civic associations, the garden could be a place for events on raising awareness about a green and environmentally conscious lifestyle. Furthermore, these events could generate some income and/or donations for the garden, which would ensure its economic sustainability.



Reward of the hard gardening work (image credit: Ferenc Máthé)



Plechárna Community Centre

Prague
CZECH REPUBLIC

Target groups:

- decision makers:

Municipal District of Prague
14

- vulnerable groups: Citizens
of Prague 14: families with
children, single parents,
elderly, foreigners

- stakeholders: Plechárna
employees, visitors

Contact:

Kateřina Plevová,

katerina.plevova@praha14kulturni.cz, +420 777 783 662

Plechárna is a local community, leisure and cultural centre offering a wide range of activities. It is a meeting place and a zone for starting up activities that help the overall revival of the Prague 14 housing estate. The basic idea was to make the city for its people and improve the quality of their lives. An important part of Plechárna is a beautiful community garden, which is not just about growing vegetables and herbs. It has communal flowerbeds, rock gardens, a compost heap and, most importantly, friendly gardening mates.

written by:
Kateřina Janatová,
European Development
Agency



Plechárna (image credit: Kateřina Plevová)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The Plechárna community garden is a part of a community centre situated in the municipal district of Prague 14. It is located between the housing estate and the refurbished park with many paths for cycling or inline skating.

The building of the community centre was first a boiler house and later served as a car repair shop. Following the reconstruction of the nearby park in 2013, Plechárna was rebuilt into a Prague 14 community centre offering a broad range of activities, a leisure-time facility and a café.

The main purpose of developing the community garden within Plechárna was to create a calm place where citizens can meet each other and spend their free time. Gardening appeared to be a great tool on how to bring people together, develop and strengthen neighbourly relations. Moreover, children living in the housing estate can see how different plants and crops are grown. The basic idea was to make the city for its people and improve the quality of their lives.

Plechárna was established using a combination of the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The main initiators of the community centre were the mayor of the municipal district of Prague 14, Radek Vondra, and the director of the Prague 14 cultural contributory organization, David Kašpar; together, they created a new future for the previously abandoned space. However, the idea for establishing the community garden came from the citizens of Prague 14, who had been interested in this kind of a leisure activity. Establishing the garden was also a good opportunity for utilizing the empty place behind the building and creating a quiet zone in the area.

The community garden is a part of Plechárna, which is entrusted to the Prague 14 cultural centre. The rules concerning the functioning of the community garden such as annual membership fees, types of cultivation, tool rental, watering or workshops organization are determined by Prague 14. There are thirteen employees responsible for managing the community centre, including the community garden, and setting the rules. Prague 14 cultural centre is a formal contributory organization of Prague 14, whose main purpose is to promote culture as a tool for improving the quality of life of the citizens of Prague 14. Its scope of activities is to map the cultural and social environment of Prague 14, to develop a corresponding cultural infrastructure and to organize leisure, community, social and sport activities.

Nevertheless, an annual budget for the garden, which is also suggested by the employees of the organization, always has



Before and After (image credit: Kateřina Plevová)

to be confirmed by the municipal district of Prague 14.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The local residents have been involved in the planning and implementation of the garden from the very beginning. During the establishment of the garden, the future gardeners could participate in public meetings, at which most of the stakeholders including decision-makers met and had the opportunity to suggest different ideas or express their opinions. Currently, the community gardeners still voice their demands whenever they wish, personally or by email (e.g. what they need, what is not working, some of their new ideas etc.).

Furthermore, the community organizes an informal meeting of all the members and employees every month, where they discuss what is necessary and which workshops, barbecues etc. are planned.

This is a district with a lot of families with small children, single parents, and the elderly and many of them originate from foreign countries such as Russia, Vietnam or Mongolia. Some of them also come to the garden to work and socialize, so it can be said that the gardeners also include members of various vulnerable groups.

The decision-makers are in charge of the management of the community garden. It is overseen by Mrs. Kateřina Plevová and two of her colleagues. The garden is financially supported by the municipal district of Prague 14. Their role is to sustain, develop the community, and coordinate the running of the garden.

The community is open to everyone. The garden includes people living in the municipal district and a few people commuting from other districts. The gardeners' role is to maintain and improve the community garden and the space around it. Furthermore, the employees of the café grow herbs there. Other people including families with children, the elderly, and teenagers—not just those from Prague— come to the garden for public events and frequent workshops.

The primary reason why most of the people participate in the community garden is that they want to do gardening even on a small piece of land because they really enjoy it. The second reason is meeting other people. They want to be outdoors, spend time with their families and friends, and meet neighbours or new people, as well as develop a community.

Almost 80% of the people who have started gardening in Plechárna at the very beginning (in 2013) continue to participate. Some have stopped coming, mostly because they moved out or started gardening in other gardening colonies that are also situated in Prague 14. Nevertheless, any free plot of land is quickly occupied. The demand always exceeds the supply.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Plechárna is a good practice, because it welcomes all people regardless of age, nationality, gender or family status. The community garden brings people together, helps them understand each other and develops their gardening skills. Moreover, it improves local development and gives children a place where they can spend some of their free time, which is important, because Prague 14 currently has issues with an increasing number of youth gangs and violence.

So far, the garden is running well. On the other hand, there is always room for improvement. Most of the ideas come from the gardeners. They would like to have more covered sitting areas and more garden beds; however, that is not currently possible.

As for the community, it depends a lot on how much energy is put into sustaining it. There must always be a leader in charge of the community. If the community does not get enough energy, the garden grows, but the relationships do not. In this case, the leader is Mrs. Kateřina Plevová, who is responsible for both the garden and the community.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

All the interested stakeholders including the local residents, decision-makers, and representatives of the municipal district of Prague 14 and Prague 14 cultural centre have been involved in the entire process of establishing the garden since the beginning and their engagement still persists.

The members of the community garden are satisfied with the extent of their participation. They all know that they can always ask for something they need, so they respect the rules. So far, the community has not encountered serious problems or obstacles. Sometimes small disagreements happen between the gardeners and the decision-makers, but these are easy to solve. Everything depends on the budget available for the community garden. If the budget is too low to ensure the functioning of the garden, problems will appear. However, it can be assumed that the community's interest is to solve the problems, because the inner power of the community is strong and the relations between the members have already been created.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Nobody knows what the future brings. The community does not want to change anything. The problem is that the community centre as a contributory organization depends on the government of the municipal district of Prague 14. The current government likes the garden and therefore supports it. However, there will be elections in the autumn of 2018

and everything depends on who will be elected and how they will be inclined towards the garden. The fact is that Prague 14 has already invested a lot of money, time and energy in this community centre (including the community garden) to make it work. It seems unreasonable to cut the garden completely. Furthermore, the citizens would be dissatisfied and would express their disagreement.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Establishing a community garden means completing a lot of tasks, such as finding a suitable place, addressing the interested stakeholders, starting to create a community, or strengthening the relations with the local government. Nevertheless, this community garden considerably differs from other community gardens: it belongs to a contributory organization, so it is not necessary to deal with as many things as common community gardens, e.g. financing, lease of land or lack of knowledge regarding gardening.

Finally, it is simply amazing to have a community garden inside the city; therefore the most important advice for beginners is that everything is possible if you want it. In this case, the local community centre with the support of the municipal district organized public meetings with citizens of Prague 14 who wanted to join the community and were interested in gardening. The idea of a community garden as a part of the community centre came after a discussion with the centre representatives.

The community centre funded by Prague 14 provided a part of its land to create the garden. For the beginner, this is a very good way to establish a community garden. When the garden is a part of the community centre, potential gardeners can easily gain the land, the funds are provided by the municipal district and the community is already working here.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The greatest motivation of everyone involved is their love of gardening. Most of them have done it their entire lives and the idea of a community garden is perfect in many ways.

One of the reasons why the main representative also acting as the manager of the garden joined this community is that she can take care of the garden and the community as part of her work. This is possible because she is a part-time employee of the community centre. The added value is that she also has her own garden bed, where she can grow whatever she wants in her free time, which also helps her build friendly relationships with other gardeners.

Gardening contributes to personal satisfaction. Working in a garden calms people down. They can work with their own hands outside the office and not just sit behind a computer screen all day. Gardening is a relaxing activity that helps combat stress. Moreover, it is possible to see the results of one's work "here and now".



Miraculous Greenspace / ZáZeMie

Spišská Nová Ves
SLOVAKIA

Target groups:

- decision makers:
representatives of local
government
- vulnerable groups:
families, single mothers
with children
- other stakeholders:
volunteers

Contact:

FB: Zazracne zelene miesto
SNV

The ZáZeMie (Miraculous Greenspace) community garden is a good practice of cooperation of three NGOs, the local government and the public. It is situated near a river and apartment buildings. It is a favourite place especially for young people, families and mothers with children, because they have an opportunity to play in a natural playground. Founders of the garden organise a few community activities with an educational character: they work with natural materials like clay, wood etc. They would like to intensify gardening by planting some fruit trees and start environmental education for children by building ECO centres.

written by:
Lucia Vačoková and Eva Mihová,
ENVICORP Slovakia

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The story of the ZÁZeMie community garden began in the 1970s when the surrounding area was built up and the locals used the site as a natural swimming area up until the 1980s. The swimming area was closed, as it no longer met hygienic requirements. Despite this, the area continued to be frequented by dog owners and for walks around the banks of the Hornád River by different groups, such as kindergarteners, primary and secondary school students.

The community garden space is part of the Hornád River bank and is located inside the urban core of the neighbourhood, but has retained its natural character. The City of Spišská Nová Ves, which owns and manages the land, lacks the necessary funding to revitalise it. The land is classified in the city spatial plan as recreational land. The community garden covers a total area of 3000 m².

The ZÁZeMie community garden was created as a result of the Miraculous Greenspace (Slovak ZÁZeMie – Zázračné zelené miesto) project, which was supported by the Ekopolis Foundation's City Comfort (Slovak Pohoda za mestom) grant program in 2014. The entire project was driven by the enthusiasm of the representatives from three civic associations in the Spišská Nová Ves District: Dietka Mother's centre NGO, Barefoot NGO and Root NGO. All 3 collaboratively engaged in the Slovakia-wide Money Free Zone

(Zóna bez peňazí) project in 2013, where the idea of building a community garden first originated.

Negotiations with local authorities began once suitable locations were identified and the project itself was submitted in April 2014. The success of the submitted project was confirmed in April 2014 with the signature of a partnership agreement with the City of Spišská Nová Ves, which provided the three civic associations with the land on the bank of the Hornád River known as Vyšná Hať Flúder and the agreement was concluded for a minimum period of five years. Within the first four years of this "greenfield" project, the basis of the community garden was set up, including a natural playground for children, permaculture beds, a herb spiral and small architectural elements such as a sensory walkway, a clay climbing structure, a fruit orchard, a garden shed in a trailer and an informational board about the ZÁZeMie project. It was and continues to be a place for cultivating cultural produce and less known produce, herbs and spices, primarily in the name of informational and educational activities. The driving force behind the development of the concept of establishing the garden was teaching and the acquisition of cultivation skills, as well as the demonstration of cultivation techniques for educational and information purposes.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The rules for maintaining the garden were defined through a partnership declaration between the civic associations and the City of Spišská Nová Ves, in which

both parties committed to inform one another about the progress of the ZÁZeMie project and made the commitment to assist one another in the case of any changes. In this declaration, the associations committed to use the city's land under the terms of the community garden project. The declaration included the rules for communication and exchanging information, especially if the local government intended to use the land for any other purpose. The associations will use the space for an open-ended period of at least five years from the beginning of the project in 2014 (to ensure the sustainability of the supported project) and a notice period of one year has been mutually agreed upon. The use of the garden space is based on mutual respect.

The community garden's target group is the public. The garden has no fencing and is publicly accessible. The goal is to especially attract young people, families with children and primary and secondary school students. All current users already joined the community garden at the beginning: they helped build the garden and they still participate in workshops.

The local government was engaged in the preparatory phase of the project. It provided city-owned land for the construction of the garden for a minimum of five years under the conditions that it is used for the construction of the ZÁZeMie community garden and that the project initiators, the associations themselves, maintain the garden, continue to care for it and

inform the project owner, i.e. the city, of the progress of the project and any changes to it. The city government provided free removal of trash from the garden site and participated in clean-up brigades. Nowadays, the founders of the garden remove the trash by themselves.

Both parties signed a partnership agreement, in which these conditions were clearly defined. The Dietka Mother's centre NGO signed the agreement on behalf of the other associations, but the partnership agreement transferred to NGO Root at the end of 2017 due to the resignation of the statutory body of Dietka. This has not affected the garden, which continues to thrive.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Entrance to the garden is free for visitors and it provides services including access for dogs, the use of the children's playground, barrier-free access and the garden founders serve complimentary refreshments at events and clean-up brigades. Vulnerable groups that are actively participating and working in the garden are young mothers with their children.

The garden attracts the target groups in the following way:

- project preparation phase – a Facebook profile was created and active before the first project was submitted,
- flyers were created during the working on the project and were distributed at public events (Money Free Zone, Opening Day of the Hiking Season, Children's Day, Folk Craft Days + City Days)

- articles and reports were published in local media (regular, a free monthly publication distributed to all households called Informátor, TV Reduta, a local TV station, the websites of the participating civic organisations (www.dietka.sk, www.ozkoren.tym.sk, the project's Facebook profile and a blog at blog.sme.sk), all of which remain in use.

Operating the community garden brought its founder a new action team and the opportunity to teach and educate people in nature. The intensity of the beds management and their expansion as well as the involvement of volunteers could be improved. The Dietka NGO, which was involved in the construction and maintenance of the Zázemíe community garden until 2017, gained a great deal of experience in working with the community and the public. It managed to create an excellent action team of ten people, who managed the garden until the autumn of 2017, when the NGO Koreň took up the main initiative and the Dietka NGO is no longer a part of the garden.

The community garden has tremendous potential as a garden and as a natural playground for children, as a space for formal and informal meetings of different interest groups, a space for organising cultural events and workshops in the fields of gardening and natural construction and for promoting the use of the principles of permaculture.

Organising different community activities is among the basic tasks within the portfolio of the garden and the civic

associations that operate it. Events of an educational nature, such as the “working with oyster mushrooms”, the “come play with wood” workshops and the regular planting of trees are the most interesting and most well-attended. The spring and autumn clean-up brigades beautify the surrounding area and are traditionally associated with activities for families with children and the cooking of traditional goulash stew.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

The garden users feel satisfied with their role in using the garden and cooperating with the local government. They are happy that they have some space where their children can play or where they can meet each other.

What the local government has appreciated the most about the community garden is the initiative shown by the young people in the establishment of the garden and the improvements to the space, their drive and enthusiasm, which are critical to its operation. In general, the garden thrives with more people and volunteers and the favour of the local government.

It is critical to maintain the motivation of volunteers and leaders among the participating associations and the support and goodwill of the local government to keep the land as a community garden. Non-profit organisations took the lead on the city-owned land. A team of around ten active members of these associations engaged in the construction of the garden. The public was informed through



Planting trees in autumn (image credit: ENVICORP Slovakia)

organised workshops, meetings and events organised at the Zázemie community garden via the garden's Facebook profile. The garden has gained numerous fans and followers, and even more volunteers who have shared in its construction, even if in smaller numbers. Volunteers from Embraco Slovakia s.r.o., DM Drogerie and other volunteers who approached them through the Ekopolis Foundation's Our City (Naše mesto) Spišská Nová Ves project also helped build the community garden.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

As the founder says, in an ideal situation, the beds and cultivation would be expanded, the biodiversity of the cultivated crops would be increased, new elements would be added to the natural children's playground and collaboration with schools, kindergartens and conservation groups would be developed. The construction of an ecological centre, a self-sufficient structure made of natural materials and surrounded by a permaculture garden and an orchard for ecological education is the dream scenario.

Users would like to maintain the community garden and they would appreciate an expansion, but there has to be an interest from the public and the government. The positive message is that the government has given its approval to continue this community garden. Representatives of the Root NGO continue the vision of the Dietka NGO.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

For other founders of community gardens who are just getting started, the founders of this garden recommend tapping into the ample supply of active people and helpers, to combine forces with other active people, as this is absolutely crucial. Of course, it is also very important to have a good relationship with the local government, because it can be beneficial in many ways. The location of the community garden is very important as well – it should be near houses, because residents can come to the garden, but it is also good for it to be situated in a green, calm, quiet area where people can relax. To avoid vandalism, they recommend a garden fence.

Unfortunately, there are still many young people who would rather destroy than create. The use of funding available in the form of grants by various foundations is another good opportunity. There is also a possibility that changes will occur: for example, for family reasons when members simply no longer have time. The next major deficiencies can be the lack of communication with institutions in the city and the inability to retain and motivate volunteers.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The motivations of individual groups are different; for the founder of the garden, it is about engagement in volunteering, to show and teach people about permaculture, sustainability and building a community; for garden users, it is about a place to spend their free time, be outdoors, learn new things during workshops and clean-up brigades, a place where the children of the growers are shown a fun way to volunteer without structured pressure. For some gardeners, gardening is one of the most rewarding activities and a hobby offering the wonderful feeling of growing your own food and socialising in a natural environment. The main reason for the local government to participate in a community garden was the feeling that it can help to create a space where residents of the city can relax and do what they like.



Summer gathering (image credit: ENVICORP Slovakia)



Friendship Garden / Градина за дружба

Sofia
BULGARIA

Target groups:

- decision makers:
municipal officials
 - vulnerable groups: elderly
people
 - stakeholders: young
people; NGOs working with
vulnerable groups
-

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Sofia

In early 2017, a pioneer allotment garden was established in Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria. It is organized on municipal land and the municipality also provides water and security on the site. There are about 40 participants, including some representatives of the city's vulnerable groups, such as elderly people and an NGO working against poverty. There are jointly developed simple rules and many common initiatives. The ambition of the participants is to attract many new members and become an inspiration for other similar gardens in the city. Together with the local authorities, they also believe they can raise greater public awareness about UPA and even make positive changes in the legislation.

written by:
Simana Markovska,
Association of South-Western
Municipalities

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The initiator of this practice was a young Bulgarian, Nikola Bonchev, who went to university in Vienna. One of his fellow students there was researching the history of urban agriculture within the city walls and that was the first time Nikola heard the definition of UPA, back in 2011. Upon his return to Sofia, he started a small garden in his backyard and two seasons later came to the idea of a larger communal garden, where everyone would work together and then take part in the distribution of the produced goods. For two years, the model was tested on an unused municipal lot in another quarter of Sofia; they operated it with the 'silent consent' of the municipality, until it became clear that everybody wanted to take part in the work, but nobody showed up for the distribution of the produce; for this reason, it was distributed by the initiator to other people in need. In the beginning of 2017, they changed the model to an allotment garden.

At present, there are 24 allotments with about 40 participants, most of whom are individuals, but some collective members have started to appear as well. For instance, one of the four newcomers in 2018 is a social NGO called Food Not Bombs that works in support of poor people. About 80% of the individual participants are young people aged 25–35 and the other 20% are elderly people above 60. 90% of the participants have a university education or higher.

The small community has access to a ploughing machine, which is brought to the spot when needed; everyone brings their own seeding material, but the members help each other and there are also various organizations around Sofia offering free seeds. The land and water are used free of charge and there is even on site security, all provided by the municipality as the land owner.

Although the idea came from Nikola, he claims every decision about its development has been based on a bottom-up approach and agreed upon collectively by the participants. He believes there is a real need for such initiatives in every big city and that is felt by a growing number of people every day. The simple rules that guide the use of the garden were also developed collectively and approved by voting. The very idea of having rules came after a TV interview with Nikola, where he was asked by the host how they were going to cope with a growing civil interest.

And the interest is growing, especially thanks to the media coverage and the fact that even now, the Friendship Garden is the only such garden in Sofia. 85% of the members joined last year after a publication in the Capital Newspaper, which is widely known as the media dealing with the most serious topics nationally. In addition, the community organizes a lot of events for themselves and other people that help promote the garden.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The Friendship Garden is open to everyone who accepts the rules and wishes to become a part of a special family united by the idea of direct democracy, improvement of the system and legislation and, of course, dedicated to the common cause of food production. Nikola's original idea was to specifically address the poor people in the city who are in a much more vulnerable position than the poor in the countryside and that idea still stands. For the moment, however, the represented vulnerable groups are mostly the elderly and the city families with small children, groups with generally below-average income.

The municipality's role was providing the land for the garden via one of its public companies called Markets South; so far, it has not asked for any rent. It also provides onsite security by fencing the terrain and bringing guards. The role of the members from the vulnerable groups was and is to take equal part in every step of the garden's development, including making decisions about its future.

One representative of a vulnerable group (elderly people) participating in the Friendship Garden community is Slavcho Todorov. He joined the project last spring with great enthusiasm as he had been expecting the emergence of such an initiative for many years. His expectations were related mostly to the production of healthy food with his

own hands and his main role in the maintenance of the garden includes digging ditches for irrigation, but he performs other duties as well if the need arises.

Tsveti Ivanova is on the opposite of the age scale to Slavcho; she is one of the youngest (mid-20s) members of the Friendship Garden community. She heard about the garden at a Facebook event, where Nikola invited people to go and see what they had been doing. Now, she has been here for more than a year and is happy, because she likes to try new things.

The role of Tsveti in the garden is like everyone else's: to turn a piece of land that has never been processed into a piece of arable land. She started with the idea of growing strawberries as they are her favourite fruit. This year, she intends to expand the 'assortment' and thinks that working in the nature can energize a person in a way that nothing else can.

Ivan Velkov is the Deputy-Chairperson of the Municipal Council at Stolichna Municipality of the city of Sofia, where the Friendship Garden is located. He came across this good practice at the start of his mandate, when he had to review the Green Projects Municipal Programme meant to support various initiatives of citizens and organizations. He has been trying to support the cause in every way he can for more than 18 months now (March 2018).

In the summer of 2017, the activists of the organization Food Not Bombs (FNB) working against inequality and for social justice decided to look for new ways of involving vulnerable people in community



A hat full of city food (image credit: Nikola Bonchev)

life in addition to their traditional common cooking and sharing of food. They heard good things about the Friendship Garden from various sources, so they invited its representatives to the first Vegan Festival of Solidarity in Sofia (in December 2017) and thus started a constructive cooperation.

Activists of the FNB see their role in maintaining the garden in working equally with everybody else: digging, irrigating, logistical work and exchange of knowledge useful to all members. They expect to participate directly in the decision-making about the management of the garden, including the publicizing of support needs, the recruitment of volunteers etc.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Nikola believes this practice is good because it is a real bottom-up initiative and everything is made by the people and for the people. The members love the freedom to be able to do what they wish, provided no common rules are broken nor any of the other members disturbed. Improvement could come through better infrastructure and the signing of a proper contract with the Municipality, which

would guarantee the long-term use of the land by the members.

Slavcho thinks the practice is good, as it gives everyone who loves nature and agriculture, but lives in a city, the chance to hold a shovel instead of a TV remote control in their hands. Thus it brings together all sorts of different people. Same goes for Tsveti: she also sees the garden as an opportunity to teach our children where real food comes from. Slavcho sees a chance for improvement in technical issues, like for example securing running water all year round, as otherwise it is very difficult for everybody, while Tsveti thinks only the promotion needs to be improved.

From the point of view of a municipal official, Ivan believes that the Friendship Garden is a good practice, because it succeeds in spite of the not-very-friendly environment, which includes unfavourable legislation and limited administrative support. He thinks that the legislative base can be improved in the short term and that the inclusion of UPA and the Friendship Garden in particular in various municipal programmes could help the members and citizens in general. In the long term, he sees support in the form of fiscal stimuli for such practices, including tax reductions and similar.

In the opinion of Food Not Bombs, UPA should be a part of every self-respecting city. Its development helps the community come together and develop habits that are useful for the maintenance of the social and ecological balance. Improvement is related to the attitude of institutions, which should work more closely with the

active people willing to achieve something good. It is a general opinion that the Friendship Garden community has done miracles with a formerly abandoned and empty space, where life now thrives, people work with enthusiasm and it is all visible from the achieved results.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

As a representative of a vulnerable group participating in this practice, Slavcho sees no reason to feel unsatisfied with how he is being included in the community. First of all, they have a Facebook group where everyone can share and find information they believe would be useful and interesting for others and can easily communicate with the group. Secondly, decisions are taken by all the members together and everyone feels free to express any opinion they have. For Tsveti, good communication and mutual support have been of vital importance, as she admits to have been fully ignorant of agriculture when she started.

Another aspect is the involvement of the local municipality, where the whole community thinks that a more active approach will be of mutual benefit. Slavcho sees no other barriers in participating other than the long distance he has to travel twice a week between his home and the garden (more than 15 km by public transport). His wish is that more initiatives like that were available all around the city.

Standing at the other end of this public communication line, Ivan as a representative of local authorities also thinks that the ties should be intensified. He sees the Friendship Garden as an example of how UPA can bring real change to vulnerable groups, especially the young ones being part of a minority or another marginalized group or having some sort of special needs. Ivan also believes the garden is a wonderful place for elderly people, since it is a cross-point for communication, exchange of experience and knowledge, and – after all – friendship.

Ivan himself has not faced any obstacles in his work and contacts with the Friendship Garden; he is afraid that its members might lose motivation and enthusiasm as time goes by if the economic and social environment does not change gradually. He believes that those levels of active citizenship might be supported if other similar examples started to appear. Ivan is working actively at the level of the Municipal Council with the new management team of the Markets South municipal company to solve the problem with the long-term contract for the land; he hopes that the solution will be found soon.

The Food Not Bombs organization communicates in solidarity with people with mental disabilities, the homeless, elderly people with very low income, people with limited mobility. The members of the group communicate directly with people on the streets, sharing food and talk. To boost a participatory process, FNB uses the personal example,



Summer in the Friendship Garden (image credit: Dobrin Minkov)

the free conversation at every cooking event, the sharing of food, information brochures and posters, showing special movies and keeping personal contact with every individual.

FNB faces barriers every day, which are discussed at weekly meetings and solutions are found jointly. Examples of such barriers are the public opinion and attitude, the climatic conditions, the meeting sites, the danger of attracting people who actually do not share the values of the community and especially the fundamental principles of mutual support, non-discrimination etc. The organization finds the rules of the Friendship Garden just and fair, as they were approved by every participant using the principle of the horizontal structure.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The future, according to Nikola, is directly related to the signing of a long-term contract with the municipality for the use of the land. He also expects more members to join, as the garden can offer up to 10,000 sq. m., and now only 4,000 are used due to the lack of people who would like to garden. He hopes that the garden develops into a place where

everyone feels welcome at any time. Last but not least, he intends to offer more events with a social orientation.

Being a representative of the group of elderly people, Slavcho believes that a brighter future for the Friendship Garden can be secured only if local authorities take a more proactive approach, which might even include the securing of funds for development from various financing programmes. At the same time, as a young person, Tsveti thinks that more people will surely join, but it will be a slow process, as many prefer to take a walk in the park in their free time instead of digging for a small production.

Ivan from the Stolichna Municipality Council sees the future of this practice as a part of a larger-scale project for the development of the city as a real European capital, where sustainability, environmental issues and social inclusion are considered on a daily basis.

According to the FNB, after the number of such gardens increases and sustainability is reached, every citizen would be able to act locally in their own neighbourhood. In this way, citizens would carry greater responsibility for the prevention and eradication of social injustice and the unification of society in the name of good causes.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

To any beginner who wishes to start a similar good practice, Nikola would recommend to first talk to someone like the Friendship Garden members and then find friends and supporters, because there is a lot of hard work to be done. Nikola himself came to the municipal officers through a friend and colleague of his, but the first contact with public authorities could also be formal through the use of official channels. Ivan adds that the beginners should first and most of all arm themselves with patience and insistence. The FNB members' advice includes immediate action without second thought, perseverance and hard work in spite of all the difficulties, plus networking without the loss of independence or a compromise on the basic values.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Nikola believes that such initiatives are a way to show people that things can depend on them and not on someone who is too far or too busy with other things. To Slavcho, the garden brings aesthetic pleasure, the joy of producing something with his own hands, the chance to maintain a good physical shape and the energy he draws from interacting with the land.

In addition, there is the social aspect for him, meeting different people, learning from them and hoping that they learn from him, too. Tsveti defines her work in the garden as an “anti-stress therapy with added value” (her strawberries).

Ivan's personal motivation to get involved with this practice is related mostly to his desire to develop Bulgarian cities in a modern way and to provide urban Bulgarians with the opportunity to not lose their roots, which were primarily based on agriculture.

FNB's goals include educational elements and a healthy lifestyle by working with the land, but also constructive activities together with, instead of simply for, the people in a vulnerable position. They believe some of their goals have already been achieved by contacting and interacting with the Friendship Garden, but they are aware that such places will be more and more needed all over the city and that everybody needs to learn from others while pursuing their personal aims.



A space for all ages (image credit: Nikola Bonchev)



StadtAcker

Munich
GERMANY

Target groups:

- decision makers:

Municipality

- vulnerable groups: the whole international neighbourhood

- other stakeholders: the neighbourhood association Ackermannbogen e.V.

One of the most recent urban gardening projects in Munich, the StadtAcker, is part of a wider neighbourhood initiative in one of Munich's larger urban housing projects. It is open to different groups and follows the approach of a true community garden with communally cultivated beds. The project stems from a bottom-up initiative, but its formalisation allowed the municipality to get involved and provide financial and infrastructural support. After a year of operation, the first experiences are promising and the garden is perceived as a valuable and long-term feature of the neighbourhood.

written by:
Florian Lintzmeyer, ifuplan

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The planning process started in 2011 as part of the wider neighbourhood initiative Ackermannbogen e.V., located in the newly developed residential neighbourhood Ackermannbogen. Due to a lack of access to a suitable plot, the initiative organised decentralised gardening activities in the neighbourhood, some of them also mobile, to raise awareness for the idea of a local community garden.

The initiative for the garden came from the Ackermannbogen e.V. association, which, according to its charter, is dedicated to the promotion of local civic engagement for the public good and the establishment of local facilities that promote networking. Community gardening is an activity that neatly combines several of these objectives. In general, it was a bottom-up process, which is also illustrated by the fact that the initiative had to wait until 2017 to finally have been allocated a gardening plot on a lease-basis by the Municipality of Munich on municipal property. It required the coordination of individual residents through the exemplarily managed neighbourhood initiative and its respective thematic background in participation methods and processes.

The main goal was to establish an open space for learning and cooperation in the Ackermannbogen neighbourhood. Gardening is a low-threshold activity to bring people together in the neighbourhood. In the sense of

intercultural openness and inclusion, the gardening project is explicitly intended to address and involve residents.

The rules and usage conditions of the StadtAcker community garden were defined through speakers of the different gardening groups in close cooperation with the sponsoring organisation, the Ackermannbogen e.V. neighbourhood initiative, which is open for membership for an annual fee of EUR 50. Any necessary adaptation of the rules and conditions is always discussed and decided within this group. Furthermore, all rules have to be in line with the conditions set out by the land owner, the Municipality of Munich.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The main target group of the community are residents of the Ackermannbogen neighbourhood. Apart from them, the StadtAcker is open to anybody who is interested. As a socio-cultural neighbourhood initiative, groups that are experiencing specific difficulties with participating in an urban society, characterised by increasing polarisation and marginalisation, are particularly welcome.

In the initial stage (2011), the municipality together with the neighbourhood initiative carried out a scenario workshop, followed by a bidding competition for the establishment of the urban green area, where the garden was supposed to be located. In the course of the establishment of the garden, the municipality and city administration supported the StadtAcker initiative by providing the necessary

infrastructure (storage facility, well, fencing). After this intensive engagement on behalf of the city administration in the initial stage, its current involvement is limited to that of the land owner charging a limited rent. The Ackermannbogen association acts as contract partner for the lease arrangement and bears liability risks as the supporting organisation. Gardeners contribute their knowledge of different gardening practices and plant varieties. In the words of one representative, their expectation is to learn something new and to make friends in the neighbourhood. Working in the garden gives participants a lot of opportunities for small talk and is also a lot of fun for the gardeners' children.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The Ackermannbogen housing development is a flagship project for environmentally responsible and socially inclusive urban development of the City of Munich. Therefore, neighbourhood initiatives such as the Ackermannbogen e.V. association and socio-ecological projects such as the StadtAcker receive support from the City of Munich. The Department of Cultural Affairs contributes funding to the association for its services in promoting and coordinating neighbourhood activities. In short: in a counter-flow process, the neighbourhood initiative addresses basic principles of the overall urban development strategy of the City of Munich (Stadtentwicklungskonzept Perspektive München), which in turn allows the municipality to allocate land

and resources to the initiative.

The StadtAcker creates benefits for social cohesion, strengthens the residents' sense of belonging as well as brings people together through networking. The initiative is too small to create economic benefits or to draw tourists. However, as a good practice example of supra-local relevance, it is drawing the attention of expert groups in the field of urban and community gardening.

Users of the garden appreciate its openness, irrespective of whether one wants to garden or just relax and hang out. The garden is perceived as a meeting point in the neighbourhood where some activity is always going on.

The city administration is underlining the fact that the project has been proven to work and is well-received among residents. However, the existence of a contracting body is quintessential, otherwise the city would not lease the land.

Ways for improvement include even more diversity in the garden and more exchange between different user groups.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

According to the gardeners, participation is ensured on a broad basis in the form of members' meetings, different offers, formats and gardening groups and there is little need for improvements. The association follows the concept of "neighbourhood-oriented residential organising" (Quartierbezogene Bewohnerarbeit) of the City of Munich.

Every member of the StadtAcker initiative is invited to meetings and it is up to each individual to get involved. There have been no obstacles yet to participate in the garden.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

After the first gardening season in 2017, the initiators are positive that the StadtAcker works: not only in a gardening sense, but also as a platform for knowledge exchange and community. The gardeners are also convinced that the project is being appreciated throughout the neighbourhood; they expect that many more will join in the future and that the StadtAcker is here to stay. The city administration also emphasizes the long-term lease arrangement for the garden. As long as no problems arise, the garden use is secured for probably several decades.

The stakeholders are therefore truly optimistic that the StadtAcker community garden will continue to strengthen the neighbourhood on a permanent basis. The project is a constant learning process, so the StadtAcker can be imagined as an initiator and a platform for more social, ecological and cultural activities in the neighbourhood that cannot be exactly foreseen yet.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

The initiators underline the importance of creating an attractive vision that inspires others to involve crucial stakeholders, such as municipalities and

land owners as early as possible and to team up with people who are engaged and stick with the idea from the concept to the realisation.

Municipalities are crucial because they can provide assistance and resources to initiatives that cannot sustain their projects based solely on volunteering. Access to land, including the conditions in regard to lease arrangements and time-frame, is elementary for every gardening initiative, which makes land owners crucial stakeholders. The most important precondition for the city administration is a reliable contact; in this case the registered Ackermannbogen e.V. association. Without a contractual arrangement, the project would not have received support from the municipality.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

According to StadtAcker organizers, community gardens are an illustrative example that, for neighbourhoods to flourish, it takes people willing to cooperate and contribute beyond their individual interest for the common development of their residential surroundings. Community gardens can be an interface between local and personal engagement and the broader interest of strengthening the public interest and welfare on a city level.

For gardeners, the motivation was to grow something by themselves, to learn and to get to know other residents of the neighbourhood. Working in the garden is simply perceived as an enjoyable pastime.

Beyond that, it broadens horizons with respect to the source of food and organic agriculture. These issues need to be discussed more and community gardens such as the StadtAcker are one such place to start.



Art installation at the StadtAcker (image credit: ifuplan)



Community garden Vidimova / Komunitní zahrada Vidimova

Prague
CZECH REPUBLIC

Target groups:

- decision makers:
Municipality of Prague 11,
Municipality of Prague
(magistrát), NGO Kokoza
 - vulnerable groups: mothers
with children, people with
mental health problems
 - other stakeholders: families
and young couples, NGO
Kokoza and coordinators
-

Contact:
Anna Černá anicka@kokoza.cz

The Vidimova community garden is located in Prague 11 and is operated by the Kokoza non-governmental organization. This NGO is focused on community gardening and composting in Prague. The Vidimova garden unites about a hundred gardeners who are also community members. Each of them rents out a certain number of garden beds for one season, grows the plants, takes care of the common garden beds and organizes the community activities. The garden coordinator is Ms. Černá, who is in charge of all the joint activities. Apart from the gardeners from local neighbourhood community, there is also a group of permanent helpers. Those are people who are recovering from mental disorders. One of the goals is to reintegrate these people into society by engaging them in various workshops and activities.

written by:
Barbora Kvačková,
Municipality Prague 9

photo above: the whole premises of the garden (image credit: Anna Černá)



Kids working on the garden beds with strawberries
(image credit: Anna Černá)

The Vidimova community garden is located in Prague 11. It lies on the grounds of the Prague 11 town hall. It is in the middle of block housing estates, which is why most of the surface of the garden is solid.

Kokoza is a non-governmental organization focused on composting and gardening in cities in the Czech Republic. The Kokoza NGO founded the Vidimova garden in 2013 as their second community garden. Here, 45 families from the near surroundings grow plants on 50 garden beds. The Vidimova garden was supposed to be an illustration of how urban gardening and composting work. It is open for relaxation, sharing and meeting of neighbours, people from nearby and more distant surroundings.

Ms. Anna Černá has been the coordinator of the garden since 2016. She regularly meets with all the members of the community garden and introduces newcomers. Ms. Černá also organizes all the workshops and public events. She is the main intermediary between the members of the community garden and the Kokoza NGO and gets a monthly salary for managing the garden from Kokoza. She coordinates the common

works in the garden, e.g. cutting the grass or trimming the bushes.

The Kokoza NGO and the community of gardeners organize workshops, seminars and events in the garden, which are not necessarily connected with gardening and not only for members. In addition, there is a special event every spring when the garden opens its imaginary gates and everybody greets the start of the season. Similarly, they close the gates in autumn, saying farewell to the gardening season. Both events are complemented by an interesting programme for children. Everybody who likes urban gardening and green cities is more than welcome.

At Vidimova, all members work towards improving the garden: new plants are added each year. The community keeps improving the utility rooms as well. In 2016, Kokoza equipped the garden not only with new raised garden beds, but also with a new playground for kids (swing, sandpit, muddy kitchen). They also replenished the basic equipment used for maintenance (ladder, barrels for water, hosepipe, notice boards and drill).

There is a growing interest in bio-waste composting in Prague 11. That is why the coordinators had to expand the compost heap in 2017. From then on, there has been a special composting toilet in the garden. This means the garden is almost waste-free.

The Vidimova garden was originally designed as a garden for social integration. People experiencing mental disorders regularly participate in the

garden activities. Gardeners in the community are aware that some of Kokoza's employees are people who have overcome mental difficulties. They meet during work in the garden and people with mental problems are included into the community as equal members. Coordinators also invite people who have recovered from mental disorders to attend public events in the garden, so that they have the possibility to participate in everyday life. Afterwards, people from different social environments meet and exchange pie recipes or young plants.

The financial help for the development of the garden through special grants was provided by T-Mobile and the Prague 11 town hall.

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The Kokoza NGO needed a place where they could show and present community gardening, composting and outdoor workshops. They found an empty plot of land, signed a contract with the Prague 11 town hall and rented it as an outdoor base. This means the Vidimova community garden is an example of the bottom-up approach.

The establishment of the Vidimova garden was publicly promoted in "Klíč", the magazine of Prague 11 and in the nearby library. During the first year, nine gardeners were involved. They had to grow their plants in temporary bags, because they had no elevated garden beds yet. Within five years, the garden gained in popularity and has welcomed

45 families so far. This means that around a hundred people are currently involved in the gardening.

The rules of the garden for members are not written down, but are transmitted verbally. Ms. Černá oversees everyone complying with the rules. The rules are as follows: look after your kids; clean up after your kids; clean up after your dog; clean up after the campfire you make; clean up after your work in the garden; do not harvest anybody else's fruits (each member has their own garden bed, there are also common garden beds for herbs), conserve water, water each other's plants when necessary. These rules are not definite and the community is still developing them. The stakeholders of the Vidimova garden are families of the nearby surroundings, the elderly, young couples, mothers with children, employees of Kokoza, people who have experienced mental health problems and coordinators. The general idea is that the garden is open to everyone who wants to participate.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

This garden is dedicated mainly to families and mothers with children. Nonetheless, one social grant was granted to employ people who have experienced mental disorders, so they also participate. They are employed by the Kokoza NGO. The idea is to reintegrate them into society through the activities in the garden. There are currently five people with mental health problems working in the Vidimova community garden. They do not have their own garden beds, but work on the garden beds with the shared plants and help with the general

maintenance or construct the wooden garden beds.

As a representative of the decision-makers, we interviewed Ing. Helena Křovinová, who works at the Prague 11 Town hall in the office of the secretary. The municipality of Prague 11 gave Kokoza the space to use for a symbolic amount of money. The municipality provides the garden some small financial support. Due to the fact that the garden is situated right next to the town hall, the decision-makers demanded that Kokoza signed an agreement with certain conditions on using the garden. These conditions are as follows: Organizing events in the garden is not allowed on Mondays and Wednesdays (office hours). In addition, gardeners should not loiter in the immediate proximity of the windows. Also, the garden must be kept tidy.”

Families and mothers with children appreciate this garden, mainly because it represents a place where they have their piece of land to grow anything they want. It is up to them to make use of that entrusted land. Many pregnant women and mothers with children are very happy to have a place to relax and garden so close to their home. Mothers are also very pleased that the garden can keep developing according to their imagination.

As a benefit, mothers believe that the kids like to actively participate in gardening. Furthermore, families have a small source of good fruit and vegetables from their own garden bed and herbs from the common garden

beds. In the summer, during the hot days, they like to spend time in the garden under the cherry tree and the kids in the small children's pool. Since many of those mothers live close to the garden, going there is very handy. They can help each other on very short notice and bring supplies.

In order to learn more about one of the vulnerable groups (young mothers), we contacted Ms. Břízová. She is a young mother and a member of the Vidimova community garden.

Ms. Černá and Ms. Břízová are currently discussing how to make the garden even better. They are looking for places and new plants they want to grow. If necessary, Ms. Břízová can step in for Ms. Černá at some events, e.g. “Community Days”. She also informs any new interested people on how the garden works. Moreover, she helps Ms. Černá with the preparation and organization of the events and workshops. All of this proves that Ms. Břízová feels a part of the community and belongs to its most active members. In fact, she officially became a part of the coordinating group in 2018.

The participation of the decision-makers started after the Kokoza NGO contacted the Prague 11 municipality and expressed its interest in renting the grounds next to the town hall building. Authorities in the town hall agreed and from then on, they have acted only as the provider of the grounds. Despite their proximity, there is no deeper cooperation between the Kokoza NGO and the municipality authorities and they do not participate in the garden activities.



Gardens are a wonderful playground for kids
(image credit: Anna Černá)

As a representative of the stakeholders and also the vulnerable group (people who have recovered from a mental illness), Ondřej Rynda answered my questions. He is not only working for the Kokoza NGO as a member of the “Integration workshop” (working with people who have recovered from mental illness), but he has also co-founded another community garden – Kuchyňka.

He decided to participate in urban gardening in 2012, when he started thinking about establishing his own community garden. In the end, he joined the Kuchyňka community garden as well as Kokoza later on. His main motivation for the participation was growing food in a responsible way. Furthermore, he wanted to eat healthy, unfrozen fruit without using any chemical fertilizers or pesticides. At Kokoza, he is in charge of the integration workshop for people who have recovered from mental disorders.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The Vidimova community garden is a place where neighbours meet and spend

time together doing many different activities. The members of the garden perceive it as a place where they can gain a special kind of knowledge. This garden functions well, because the members have grown closer after some time and they have created a real community. People who met at the garden later became friends and also meet outside the garden now.

It is very important for people with mental health problems to get to know the place of integration and the people they will socialize with very well. Since they feel good and comfortable in the community, they can visit public events in the garden and be further integrated. Despite their mental difficulties, they sometimes even visit the events for the wider public.

Representatives of the vulnerable group think that the Vidimova community garden is a great option for anyone who wants to have their own garden at the block housing estates and also a place for spending time meaningfully. It is also very comfortable to have some basic facilities, like a kitchen and a toilet. The members from the housing estates perceive the Vidimova community garden as an ideal, partially private relaxing zone. It has brought the notion to some people who had been unfamiliar with gardening that it is necessary to care for plants and gives them opportunity to learn something new.

Ms. Černá would like to hand over more responsibilities for running the garden to other active members. This could unite the community and result in closer

relations among the community members. She also thinks that the financial situation should be more stable than it is now, because membership fees are not high enough to maintain the garden financially. In her opinion, it would be reasonable to look for other financial resources.

At Vidimova, there is enough basic gardening equipment in the garden, but it is quite worn out. Even though the gardeners buy the seeds and small plants at their own expense, the garden would need a better funding.

The decision-makers mostly care that the property is well maintained and clean. Some of the windows from the town hall face the garden, so if there is any type of clutter, it is very visible. In the summer, the noise from the garden can be occasionally distracting. As a result, the operator of the garden, the Kokoza NGO, faces constant uncertainty over the garden's existence.

The Vidimova garden could stabilize its position by involving employees from the town hall into the community, showing the good sides of the garden. If the town hall employees participate in the garden, this may prevent any unexpected termination of the land lease agreement.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

As the representative of a vulnerable group (young mothers), ms. Břízová is convinced that the participation process depends on the communication with the

garden coordinator. She evaluates the participatory system in the garden as very good, and also as evolving gradually.

At the beginning, Kokoza was inspired by the idea promoted by Green Doors. This non-governmental organization helps people with mental disorders on their way back to establishing a working routine. The point is to support people to overcome the crisis caused by the mental illness and encourage them to handle working load/strain.

The professional experience of working with people with mental disorders came from one of the founders of Kokoza, Lucie Matoušková Lankašová. She brought this know-how into Kokoza, as she had extensive experience with social work from her previous activities. She became the head of the integration workshop and she works as a specialized supervisor. Mr. Rynda works as an assistant and he is responsible for guiding the group in the garden during the work.

Kokoza uses the participative approach when organizing workshops, joint part-time jobs and garden parties. They use the Vidimova garden as a training working place. The events and public workshops are convenient for people with mental disorders to integrate into society without much pressure.

The garden users so far have not felt any barriers hindering their participation. Ms. Černá thinks the integration of people who have recovered from mental illness happens through working in the garden rather than through social events. In a

wider perspective she detects some barriers in the communication within the community. People are generally afraid to make the first move and introduce themselves after joining the garden. This problem emerged when several members entered the community at once.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The representatives and initiators of the garden see the future very realistically. They are afraid they will lose the land that belongs to the Prague 11 town hall. Decision-makers from the town hall confirm this as a justified fear. However, they also agree that the community in the garden has developed well and that they are happy that people are more interested in gardening. The future of the garden also depends on further steps of the Kokoza NGO, the official operator of the Vidimova community garden.

According to the community members, the number of people interested in urban gardening is constantly increasing. People are more interested in what they eat and like to spend their free time actively. The community members are convinced that the Vidimova community garden will grow and that it will be even more popular in the future. The decision-makers point out that the future of the garden will also depend on the new political representation after the municipality elections in October 2018. The gardeners add that the community that has developed through the years should grow closer and that the members should be more united.

The community should take over the initiative from Kokoza and organize more events and community meetings without incentives from the operator. People in the community should take over the responsibility of running the community garden.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

The organizers recommend the following “Ten Commandments of a Gardener”, presented by the Kokoza NGO. These are: 1. find the place, 2. find the people, 3. cooperate with them, 4. invite the neighbours, 5. no garden without a compost heap, 6. one tomato is not a failure, 7. educate yourself, 8. the first step is to be self-sufficient, 9. count it up, 10. inspire others. The main recommendation coming from the decision-makers is to avoid selecting an unsuitable space for the garden and find out in advance what are the intentions of the owner of the land in the future. The gardeners recommend establishing a coordination group within the community that will take care of the administration and organization of the community garden. They suggest that it is also practical to hire a coordinator who will get monthly salary. They share ms. Černá’s opinion and emphasize how important it is to find people who are as enthusiastic about the garden as they are.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

There were several reasons why Ms. Černá got involved in this good practice: not only meeting more people who have the same goals and desires, but it was also important for her as a mother to get the children involved in gardening. Kids help her in the garden and at the same time learn how natural cycles work, which is good for their personal development.

The reason why most members decided to join the community garden is that they do not have any space for gardening or relaxing at home. Almost all the members live in the block of flats surrounding the garden. The community members need to invest time and energy into some projects of their own. Most of the mothers at the Vidimova community consider gardening a part of their life and they cannot imagine life without it. They appreciate that kids can play around safely and they do not have to watch over them. The mums know that the kids are safe and they can focus on their gardening.

Ms. Křovinová as the decision-maker took charge of the communication with Kokoza when the garden was established. It became one of her responsibilities as an employee of the secretary's office. It seems that the main goal of the decision-makers in the case of the Vidimova garden is to improve the relationships and communication with the NGO.

For Mr. Rynda, the motivation to get involved in the Vidimova garden was mainly about food self-sufficiency and

improving the approach of the society towards the land.

The gardeners point out that achieving the goals for the garden is a long run thing, but the community is heading in the right direction.



Garden beds are true masterpieces
(image credit: Anna Černá)



Kuchyňka Garden / KZ Kuchyňka

Prague
CZECH REPUBLIC

Target groups:

- decision makers: Kateřina Janatová
 - vulnerable groups: low-income families, single mothers, elderly, students
 - other stakeholders: commuters, NGOs, KomPot, person in charge for the garden
-

Contact:
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KZ Kuchyňka is a community garden in the municipal district of Prague 8. Roughly 3000 m2 of land offers a unique microclimate and a flora of a former vineyard, orchard and a garden colony with wide terraces overlooking Prague. The garden was established by the merger of lands after the defunct garden colony that had been dilapidating for many years closed. Instead of this ramshackle garden colony, the willingness and support of the landowners and a group of enthusiasts in gardening created a beautiful outdoor area for leisure time activities. At the same time, the garden serves as a meeting place.

written by:
Kateřina Janatová,
European Development
Agency

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The community garden is situated on a slope in the territory of Prague 8 and is run by the KZ Kuchyňka association. In the past, a gardening colony stood on the location of today's garden. Most of the gardens were confiscated during the communist occupation and the nationalization process. After the fall of the communist regime, the gardens were once again returned to private ownership. However, the previous gardeners started getting older and their children did not want to take over from them. Therefore, the garden colony began gradually overgrowing and disappearing. As a result, a lot of homeless people and junkies began settling there. After that, they started destroying the lands, stealing and the area has been experiencing increasing disorder.

Fortunately, a woman, one of the landowners, came up with an idea of getting involved in a social project specified for marginalized groups that would allow them to work in the gardens in exchange for a wage. However, these people did not take the advantage of this opportunity and refused to work. Hence, the project was forced to finish prematurely.

Despite the fact that this attempt failed, the lady came up with another idea. She was inspired by a community association called KomPot (which means community food), also situated in Prague, and wanted to rebuild this unused space into a community garden for local residents.

Her inspiration was so strong that she decided to reach out to one of KomPot's founders, who supported her idea and helped her establish a civic association to join forces and start reconstructing the abandoned garden colony. The bottom-up approach was used in the case of the establishment of KZ Kuchyňka.

As for the financing, the landowner provided the initial investment. Currently, the community garden is funded by annual contributions of the community members. Moreover, it gained two grants from different NGOs. The rules concerning the functioning of the community garden are set by all members at the community's general meetings. However, there is also a coordination group that helps lead the entire community in the right direction.

The main reason why the community garden was established was the spacious unused space ideal for growing crops and plants. This was supported by local residents, who were interested in gardening and wanted a place where they could meet each other. Furthermore, there were a local mothers' club and forest kindergarten and the consequent idea was to connect the emerging community garden with these two organizations. The garden is beneficial to both people and nature, because the land is cultivated and not overgrown with bushes anymore.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

Citizens of the municipal district of Prague 8 were considered as the main target

group. Predominantly low-income families, single mothers, the elderly and students living in local dormitories were addressed. Members of the community garden also include commuters from other districts in Prague.

Among the interested stakeholders of the garden are members of the local community, the municipal district of Prague 8, two different NGOs that provided two grants to the garden and the KomPot non-profit association, which supported and helped Kuchyňka in the process of establishing the garden.

The engagement process of the local community members was very similar to the snowball effect. Landowners were addressing their neighbours and friends, who then started addressing others up to the point when the community could not accept any more members due to the limited space of the garden. Currently, the local community has approximately 30 members, which is optimal. Not everyone joined the local community at the same time, but it took less than two years for the community to reach this number. Another advantage is that anyone can be a member of the community, as there are no entry criteria. However, the space is truly limiting and therefore the community cannot accept new members at this time. Everything is decided together at general meetings once a month. Nevertheless, it is necessary to coordinate the five-member group. They are responsible for the financing, communication or coordination of the garden and are elected by the local community members in general meetings every two years. It means that the members of the coordination group are at

the same time the members of the local community.

The role of the local community is maintaining the community, improving relationships within the community and beyond and beautifying the garden. The most important factor is the main gardener living on the garden's parcel of land, who takes care of the garden every day. He is a part-time employee of the garden, employed by the KZ Kuchyňka association. The member's expectations were different and have been successfully fulfilled. The primary reason why most of the people participate in the community garden is that they want to garden, spend their leisure time outdoors, meet new people or just escape the city for nature.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

KZ Kuchyňka is a good practice example, since it offers the possibility to create tended nature and harvest its fruits. Not only community members, but also the general public can meaningfully spend their free time in Kuchyňka while attending various events, workshops and meetings especially focused on vegetable or fruit sowing, planting shrubs or building small wooden buildings. Kuchyňka is not limited to gardening, but aims to strengthen neighbourly and intergenerational relationships, provide entertainment and help people have access to local food.

The garden also provides the space for the forest kindergarten and the mothers' club, whose children can learn to garden and identify different crops, plants or



Community Garden on Slope
(image credit: Kateřina Janatová)

animals. Moreover, KZ Kuchyňka in cooperation with the Association of Local Food Initiatives provides schools or other groups the option of work-educational excursions to the garden, the bee house or to the orchard.

So far, the community garden has been running very well. Naturally, some improvements are needed, because the garden is still in the process of creation. A positive effect was the main gardener's move directly to the garden plot. He works there every day and oversees the garden as often as possible, especially during the summer months. Members do not have enough time to be in the garden daily, therefore, they visit the garden mainly on the weekends, which is not enough for its regular upkeep.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

The community members, decision-makers and representatives were involved in the entire process of the establishment of the garden and their engagement still persists. Everyone can attend the general meetings, where current matters are discussed and jointly decided. Members of the local community (low-

income families, single mothers, the elderly and students) who are not also members of the coordination group are satisfied with the extent of their participation. The extent is sufficient for them, because they consider the garden as a place for their leisure time, where they do not want to argue with anyone. Furthermore, all the members can always say when they need or want something.

So far, the community and the garden have not encountered any serious problems or obstacles. The only complication that occurs here is the lack of time for some community members, but it is partly solved by the daily work of the employed gardener.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

All the stakeholders included in this good practice see the future of the community garden very positively. They hope that the garden with its functioning community will be there for a long time and will continue to grow. The only concern is what is going to happen when the gardener moves out of the garden's parcel. Obviously, somebody will have to replace him because the community alone is not capable of taking care of it.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

A lot of things need to be arranged for establishing a community garden: finding a suitable place, addressing the interested stakeholders, creating the community and strengthening relations with the local government.

However, the most important thing is the functioning community with plenty of members. Without the community, a garden cannot bring different people together.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The greatest motivation of everyone involved is their love for gardening, which contributes to their personal satisfaction. Community gardening gives families and individuals without their own land the opportunity to produce food and is also a place for sharing knowledge and skills. It gives access to fresh, traditionally produced and nutritionally rich foods. Moreover, it provides a place to retreat from the noise and commotion of urban environments.

This community garden also offers opportunities for the employment, education, and entrepreneurship of a variety of people, including students, recent immigrants and homeless people. While vacant plots can be magnets for litter and criminal activity, community gardens are overseen and managed by gardeners, resulting in a cleaner space and more active local community.



Important part of the garden
(image credit: Kateřina Janatová)



Krasnansky garden / Krasňanský zelovoc

Bratislava
SLOVAKIA

Target groups:

- decision makers:
representatives of local
government
 - vulnerable groups:
mothers with children,
elderly people
 - other stakeholders:
residents of apartment
building nearby
-

Contact:

<http://www.krasnanskyzelovoc.sk/>

The Krasňanský zelovoc community garden is the first community garden in Bratislava. It was established in 2012 by the Ráčik NGO and is situated in a neighbourhood with apartment buildings. It has 27 individual plots where families with their children grow their own fruits and vegetables. Every year, the founders of the garden organise events, where users of the garden sell their homegrown produce.

written by:

**Lucia Vačoková and Eva Mihová,
ENVICORP Slovakia**



The final realization of community garden in 2013 (image credit: ENVICORP Slovakia)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The establishment of a community garden was initiated by the president of the Ráčik civic association, which operates a community centre in the Krasňany neighbourhood in the Rača borough of Bratislava. The community garden was established on an unused land near a former medical facility located on Hubeného Street, directly beneath the windows of the apartment buildings in the neighbourhood. The president of the association wanted to give residents from the local neighbourhood the ability to grow their own healthy fruits and vegetables near their own homes.

The SPP Foundation together with EkoFund announced the 2nd year of the SPPoločne programme in May 2012 and requested proposals from non-profit legal entities for projects to beautify their surroundings, revive traditions in the region and improve the quality of life for the local residents. The Ráčik family centre was one of the successful candidates and its Krasňanský zelovoc project received a total of EUR 8,070 in support.

Before work on the project began, the president of the Ráčik civic association published a notice of the plan to implement the community garden in Krasňany at the Ráčik community centre in plain sight to all its visitors. Other future gardeners were contacted via email and were provided with more details on the community garden project. The idea behind the project attracted so much interest that users signed up for all the garden plots before the garden was even constructed. Gardeners applied by stating their interest for the plot via e-mail. The founder of the garden made a list of the first 27 future gardeners.

He then organised a meeting, where they participated in planning the garden. The garden covers approx. 650 m² and has a total of 27 plots, where families can grow their fresh fruits and vegetables. They share tools, compost, crops, facilities etc. The raised beds measure 12 m² each and the growing bags around 3 m². The garden users grow fruits and vegetables in raised beds and growing bags, which is becoming an ever more popular trend. They are completely mobile, which means they can be moved when needed and can be tended without the gardeners having to bend over. A 50-year-old trailer was also brought to the site, which required a truck to transport it from a nearby town and was then moved into the current place in Rača with a tractor. The enthusiasts painted the trailer and made it much more attractive and now use it for tool storage. The garden space was also expanded to include a sitting area, composters and other small items.



A community garden provides space for disadvantaged groups
(image credit: ENVICORP Slovakia)

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The community garden project attracted primarily young families with children living in flats in the big city neighbourhood with a lack of their own space and an interest to grow more organic products than they could buy from retail chains. The founder's goal was to show the children living in the buildings around the garden that vegetables do not grow on supermarket shelves.

The local borough was receptive to the original project from the start after it was contacted by the president of Ráčik and leased the plot of land for five years in exchange for a symbolic lease payment. The local council supported the project from Bratislava's participatory budget with a total of EUR 2,615 to purchase building materials, tools and plants. In addition to growing their own crops, garden users participate in clean-up brigades for various purposes (typically in the spring and autumn) and share the workload of organising various events (the Gardens and Parks Open House event, "Krasňanský zelovoc hosts guests" and others), which gives them a sense

of belonging to a group. In this way, the garden brings together more and more people.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The Krasňanský zelovoc community garden is the first community garden in Bratislava. The garden's effects are social cohesion, local development and food self-sufficiency. The users are proud of special features like an ecological irrigation system. It includes a rainwater reservoir, which supplies approximately two weeks of the garden's watering needs (for periods of no rain).

During the construction process, the garden's founders took inspiration from Scandinavia and incorporated Hugelkultur beds into the garden, a permaculture process that embeds bulky (in this case wood) organic material into the ground with subsequent backfilling, a technique that helps retain moisture and generates radiant heat. This warmth has a positive effect on the plants that are planted around the mound and can help extend the crops' growing season, ensuring they ripen and mature fully.

The community was formed by organising some events. The official opening of the garden serving 27 families took place in May 2013. The celebratory opening had two phases, both an official and an unofficial ceremony. The unofficial opening of the community garden was held on the symbolic Labour Day on 1st May 2013. Numerous officials, including the mayor of Rača, representatives from the city hall and SPP, which provided funds to develop the garden, as well as the

media attended the official opening on 22nd May 2013.

During the official opening, gardeners showed off their first crop that was ready for harvesting, including radishes, onions and strawberries. The next phase of the garden saw an expansion to include a library with books available to anyone. The gardeners cooperated with a local council of the deputy of Bratislava and managed to install a box for the books. The library works on the principle “provide–borrow–give back”. The garden founder informs its supporters about available book titles on the Facebook page. The community garden users decided to improve their neighbourly relations apartment building complex immediately neighbouring the garden by cutting the grass and building a small front garden with a bird feeder.

Organising various events in the garden has strengthened public awareness in Rača about the community garden. The first event was a “restaurant day.” It was named “Krasňanský zelovoc hosts guests” and enticed guests with a variety of grilled foods using vegetables grown in the garden as side dishes. The success of this event with around 200 guests was followed by several other events seeking to offer visitors healthy, interesting and tasty food options. These events, along with clean-up brigades during every season except winter, are now scheduled on a regular basis.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

Representatives of the gardeners are satisfied with their involvement in the process. They think that local authorities help them with everything they need in connection with the community garden.

They also think the community garden connects the locals. Whether in shared clean-up brigades, at various events or meetings, it is wonderful to chat with someone about watering the garden or harvesting crops. In today’s busy world and in a city like Bratislava, people often feel that many are simply “going their own way” and do not take much interest in their surroundings or the people around them. The land users believe that their actions have gone a long way towards convincing disinterested people that they are bringing people together, not dividing them and that they are trying to build healthy, friendly and safe relations that extend beyond their community.

The local council supported the project from Bratislava’s participatory budget with a total of EUR 2,615 to purchase the building materials, tools and plants and rent the space for a symbolic fee. “I am very pleased that such a remarkable, successful and useful project has succeeded in Rača. I would like to thank its creators who showed tremendous determination to follow their dream step-by-step, so that we can have this opportunity to christen it today,” said



The Restaurant day named „Krasňanský zelovoc host guests“
(image credit: ENVICORP Slovakia)

the then mayor of Rača, who gifted five vines of the legendary Račianska frankovka grape variety to the founders of the project at the celebratory opening of the garden.

The Krasňanský zelovoc community garden has tremendous potential. In a matter of a few short years, its founders have convinced those around them of its importance and potential. This garden was the first community garden in Bratislava. Today, there are more such gardens in the city, but Krasňanský zelovoc remains a good example for establishing new gardens.

More positive news for its continuation is that the local government has extended the lease for the land of the community garden until 2022. Future development of the garden may deliver additional synergies with other community gardens and communities and stimulate the organisation of more events, which have become quite popular among neighbourhood residents.

Much time, energy and hard work have been invested over the past five years

since the establishment of the garden. Enthusiasm and personal engagement have been the key factors in the successful operation of the garden and they are certainly not lacking. It still holds true that anyone can succeed with a good idea, dedication and support and even contribute to the beauty of the world itself by improving the lives of the people and their surroundings.

It still holds true that anyone can succeed with a good idea, dedication and support and even contribute to the beauty of the world itself by improving the lives of the people and their surroundings.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

The space you choose to set up a community garden is not important. What is important is with whom you decide to set up the garden. Only cooperation with the “right” people can ensure success. It is not easy, because not everyone likes the idea about setting up a garden in the middle of an apartment building complex (especially if there is a problem with parking spaces). You must work hard and spend much time and energy to avoid mistakes. You must realise that you are not setting up a community garden only for yourself: you are just a small part of a large unit. Sometimes, something unexpected can happen. When information about the opening of the garden was disseminated, unknown vandals destroyed the garden’s first crop. Who did it and why remains a mystery to this day. Despite this negative experience, the founders were undeterred from their engagement

in the community garden. While some gardeners did leave the community, they were soon replaced by newcomers.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The community garden provides green space to families and single mothers with children from the nearby buildings. The project is the next in line of projects helping to make the city a bit cleaner, greener and more pleasant place to live. It combines civic engagement, local participation in decision-making in public matters and improvement of the environment. Bratislava supports similar civic activities via the city's participatory budget and local residents are encouraged to propose projects and get involved in the process of deciding where this portion of the city's finances are spent.

The operation of the garden has brought users social cohesion, local development and food self-sufficiency and the users learn how to be considerate to their neighbours, to nature and to themselves and have a meaningful way of spending their time and an opportunity to grow their own food. The word "community" itself indicates that the garden is being built and further developed by the community. Despite doubts in the garden expressed by some of the neighbourhood's residents (mostly people who don't like novelties and changes in their surroundings), the gardeners themselves were not discouraged. That is the true strength of a community. They did not shut themselves off; they rather opened

themselves up more to the public and publicly communicated their objectives and goals. In addition to tending to the garden beds, they began organising other events. During the development of the garden, everyone in the community learned that they all are peas in the same pod, a metaphor which is illustrated in the community garden's logo.



A cake given to the head of the NGO Ráčik at the opening ceremony (2013) (image credit: ENVICORP Slovakia)



Onkraj gradbišča / Beyond the construction site

Ljubljana
SLOVENIA

Target groups:

- decision makers: City of Ljubljana
 - vulnerable groups: none in particular, but welcoming the elderly, single mothers with children, precarious and low-skilled workers etc.
 - other stakeholders: local community, artists, researchers, NGOs, media
-

Contact:
obrat@obrat.org

Beyond the construction site garden is a community garden in the inner-city district of Ljubljana. In 2010, the Obrat cultural NGO set up a garden at the abandoned construction site in the framework of the Young Lions cultural festival. They made a deal with the City of Ljubljana for the temporary use of land. The discussion with the local residents revealed that they wanted to make a community garden. They cleaned the site, secured it, brought the soil and the material to make some beds, made the paths, and arranged a community area. Now, around 100 people take care for the 40 beds and engage in common actions, organize events, socialize and help each other.

written by:
Saša Poljak Istenič,
Research Centre of the Slovenian
Academy of Sciences and Arts

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

Onkraj gradbišča is a community garden in Tabor, a former industrial and working class neighbourhood in the inner-city district of Ljubljana, located between the town hall, the main railway, bus station and the University Medical Centre Ljubljana. Until 2009, the district had been under the pressure of property market development and experienced a loss of residential and social life as well as a degradation of public spaces, especially a lack of green areas and non-commercial public spaces. In May 2010, the Obrat cultural and artistic association asked Bunker, a prominent NGO specialized in the performance and organization of cultural events, to make setting up a garden at the abandoned construction site a part of the Mladi levi / Young Lions cultural festival. The main reason was that the members of the Obrat NGO were the residents of this neighbourhood and the brownfield really bothered and challenged them as artists; on the other hand, they also wanted to experiment with participation and community initiative in planning, architecture and urbanism. They made a deal with the City of Ljubljana for the temporary use of the land and started to involve people interested in doing something in their neighbourhood.

Obrat NGO organized several meetings with local residents to brainstorm ideas. They used different means to invite them: invitations in mailboxes, announcements in public spaces, social media and oral

transmission. After several discussions, it was crystallized that the residents wanted to have a green space for recreation and together with the NGO, so they decided to create a community garden. They cleaned up the site, secured it (as it was a construction site with deep pits), brought the material to make some plots and the soil to fill them, made the paths, and arranged a community place with a few beds, a sitting area, common compost heaps and a tool shed. Due to the interest of the neighbours, the site developed further with the consent of the city after the festival ended.

Obrat NGO set up three basic rules: 1. The site is a community place; 2. Each participant sets up their own bed; 3. The gardening must be organic, pesticides are not allowed. A few other rules (e.g. dogs on the leash, the attendance of common actions) were set up according to the experience of other community gardens across the globe and were then discussed and modified or even abandoned according to the participants' needs and wishes.

The community is changing; however, around 10% of the gardeners have been there since the beginning. People ask the gardeners or the Obrat NGO if there are free plots and they are put on a waiting list. The NGO sends them the rules in advance in order to let them know about the community aspect and they may join the community when somebody decides to leave. A few new members come every spring, so the community is rather fluid. The members connect and interact at common actions and there have not been

any major problems with the inclusion of newcomers.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The target group of the garden are the neighbourhood residents and the residents of the inner-city district of Ljubljana, but no particular vulnerable group. However, some gardeners can be classified as vulnerable, as they include the elderly, single mothers with children, precarious workers and low-skilled, low-educated and low-paid workers. Young families are the most prevalent; however, the space is distinctly intergenerational. The members use the garden to grow food and interact with other members. They co-decide on the rules, common actions and events in the garden, but are not directly involved in negotiations with municipality officials.

The members of the garden joined the practice in different phases and years. The interviewed member joined when the site had already been cleaned and the local residents were invited to participate again. She got an invitation in the mailbox and since she was a newcomer in the neighbourhood, she saw this as a good opportunity to get to know the local residents and interact with them. The garden was a space where she could receive the support of other gardeners through socializing and communicating. She liked that the gardeners are very heterogeneous and only feared that they would not be as tolerant as they seemed at first. Although there were some issues and disagreements among the members, the initiators successfully stepped in and

prevented them from escalating; the tolerance even gradually improved. Apart from that, she did not have any special expectations and only wanted to have a safe place for her child to explore nature and be free. The greatest benefit for her is that her life has been enriched, that she has additional interests she can immerse herself into and that she is not confined by four walls and constrained by working behind a computer. In a precarious situation and neoliberal conditions, she has set up new do-it-yourself goals—not directly connected to the garden, but life in general—and in her worst moments, the garden represented an anchor where she found refuge and took control over her plot of land, relaxed and socialized.

She never had a formal role, but was a mediator when discussions heated up. Currently, she is willing to be elected as one of the coordinators. She generally feels a part of the group, although not as much in cases when many members leave the garden and newcomers join in or when the community aspect is dominated by individualistic practices. However, common actions greatly help in building a sense of community and belonging, so the members have managed to function as a community so far.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The gardeners are encouraged to participate in the management of the public space and this motivates them to decide on the common issues. The garden does not target a specific vulnerable group, however, it includes vulnerable



Shed for common tools and equipment
(image credit: Saša Poljak Istenič)

persons in every way possible, as they are able to interact with non-vulnerable members on a regular basis and co-decide on the common issues as equal members. Although the annual contribution for covering common costs (soil, water, tools, wood etc.) is 20 €, the most economically weak members may pay only half or are even exempt from paying the fee.

The most important aspect of the garden for the vulnerable members is the possibility to grow food with no or relatively low costs. One representative recalled a time when her daughter and she had practically no funds, so they would go to the garden every day to see if any courgettes had grown yet. The garden gives its members “stability in life” (in a psychological sense); they can decide what to do there and have control over it. The most valued qualities of the garden are that it connects the community and opens the space up for use in line with the community’s desires; through this, it has transformed a sleeping settlement into a lively place.

The garden is functioning well, but would benefit greatly from an upgraded infrastructure, e.g. a water supply. On the other hand, some members want to open up the space even more and organize more social activities, such as cultural events or help for people in need, e.g. baby-sitting, help with carrying groceries or performing some tasks for people who are not able to do so due to health reasons or age.

In a way, the practice with its good example of participation and community involvement influences, i.e. softens, relatively stiff top-down municipal conditions for managing public spaces and proves that a bottom-up initiative and public participation can indeed render fruitful results. The city still does not have a systemic solution about how to let people use abandoned public spaces and achieve participation, but the first slow steps have been taken. It has given up its overly rigid rules applying to public spaces, e.g. for renting municipal gardens, it has arranged common spaces in some urban gardens and let the people decide how to deal with management of the common issues (e.g. choosing and paying for the manager or caring for it themselves), which was not possible in 2010 when the Beyond the construction site garden was established.

Additionally, the garden added to Ljubljana’s positive green image and was used as a good practice in the candidature for the European Green Capital award as well as for the city’s promotion. It is also a popular location for various artistic and environmental projects, initiatives, and events, it attracts

mass media coverage as well as the local community.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

The Obrat NGO knew that the biggest challenge would be to ensure the sustainability of the practice, so they communicated regularly with the gardeners on what they want and how to do it. For five years, they have tried to motivate the gardeners to manage the practice by themselves and finally succeeded in convincing them to establish a coordinating committee. It consists of 4 or 5 coordinators, elected annually by the garden members; however, they are still supported by the Obrat NGO. The coordinators oversee regular issues, e.g. ordering water or new soil, repairing the infrastructure, collecting membership fees, arranging meetings, communicating with new members etc. They need to react to a situation by communicating to the other members on what needs to be done, not do everything for them.

The initiators from Obrat call the first yearly meeting, help organize major events, observe how the garden is functioning—especially its community aspects—, communicate with the municipality and take care of all legal issues, as the gardeners do not want to register their own association.

The gardeners feel that they have all the opportunities to be involved in the decision-making and management of the garden; however, they are hindered by the lack of time and their modern way of life and busy work schedules. In 2018, the

common actions are specifically dedicated to helping physically weaker members, i.e. those who cannot repair the bed's frame or dig up the garden. This also positively affects the feeling of belonging to a community and participation. Additionally, the initiators continuously make an effort to open the garden outward towards the wider local community as much as possible.

The municipality officials occasionally get directly involved with the garden or gardeners when invited or asked (they attend events or conferences), but most of the time, they ensure that the practice is running smoothly only indirectly by issuing the permission for the temporary use of the land and by responding to any questions from the initiators.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The Obrat NGO and the gardeners are aware they are here temporarily, but refuse to leave, even if a different temporary practice were established. The gardeners encourage the initiators to keep the practice going or, in the worst case scenario, negotiate another space for the garden, although it is unlikely that all the members would care to move if that happened. The key for them is that the garden is close to their homes, so if that were not the case, they would likely give up gardening.

Both initiators and gardeners constantly ponder how to further develop the garden, although they admit it can be hard at times to even sustain the practice and be motivated to participate in the common issues.

They are considering opening up the space and removing the fence, but this is currently not possible without a major financing source due to the dangerous construction pit at the edge of the site. Some of them have also proposed abandoning the individual plots and transforming them into common beds, however, the majority of the people are not ready for that; they like having individual beds and the feeling that something belongs to them.

On the other hand, they want to use the practice to show the positive effects of common public spaces. They want to spread the participatory approach and raise awareness on its potential.

The municipality will support the practice until they find an investor for the construction site; however, due to the positive effects of the Beyond the construction site garden, they are now keener than ever to support such practices.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

There is no generic advice on how to establish a community garden, except to find a suitable land and agree on the conditions for its use with the owner. The organizers should keep a good balance, so that desires of individuals do not prevail; a community aspect must be the main principle. The key to a success is communication. The most important thing is to make the space inclusive; not be a dictator with defined rules, but discuss and communicate about the practice, preferably not via the internet

but in person, with tolerance and a desire to be inclusive. One needs to examine how the community functions and then support it. The second recommendation is to set up simple general rules. If the rules are too defined and detailed, predicting all the actions and sanctions, they narrow the space for negotiations and discussions and negatively affect community building.

The municipalities can benefit greatly by supporting such practices. If possible, the best thing would be to grant the initiative a space at no cost. Such gardens support the city's sustainable policies, add to its positive image and provide people with a place for recreation. They can also add to the people's (or city's) food self-supply.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The members of the Obrat NGO saw this garden as a step forward from their previous projects; they had explored community public spaces in other countries and in other forms and wanted to materialize one in their home environment. The construction site stuck out as a sore thumb in a relatively upscale neighbourhood and they wanted to experiment in practice if it could be transformed into a neat social place only with minor interventions.

The interviewed gardener gardens because she is fascinated that people in the past possessed this knowledge she does not today. She is particularly

satisfied when something grows from the soil; it is rewarding when one sows a seed in the soil and it bears fruit. She does it to relax and regards it as her anti-stress therapy. However, she is also keen on the community approach and advocates for the common actions. The gardeners who are economically deprived put more attention to growing food, while young families appreciate having a place where children can play and learn by doing.

The municipality supports the practice, because it adds to its green image. It sustains the formerly abandoned and degraded place as clean, green and tidy and revitalizes the neighbourhood.



Garden in autumn (image credit: Saša Poljak Istenič)



Makkosházi Community Garden and Recreation Centre / Makkosházi Közösségi Kert és Szabadidő Központ

Szeged
HUNGARY

Target groups:

- decision makers: local representatives
 - vulnerable groups: the elderly, people with disabilities
 - other stakeholders:
Environmental Management
non-profit organization
-

Contact:

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The Makkosházi community garden was built in Szeged in a high-rise neighbourhood. The first reason for establishing the garden was the local need for gardening possibilities. Then, the first activities were followed by many others, such as involving children in the life of the garden and creating additional space for recreational purposes. The Makkosházi garden is an example of a community garden, in which a local resident's idea was materialized by the local government, which unfortunately limits community participation in the decision-making process. The main target groups are: local citizens, focusing on the elderly, disabled people and students of a local school. Nevertheless, the main challenge is not building the garden, but building the community. Some critical issues still remain. The idea is to increase the number of social events to get closer to the heterogeneous target groups for a better cohabitation and cooperation in the garden.

written by:
Csaba Bende,
University of Szeged

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The establishment of the community garden was the idea of a middle-aged local lady, who has a large family. Her personal motivation was gardening; she wanted to have a place to plant vegetables somewhere near her flat. At first, she intended to rent an allotment garden, but she could not find one; later, she realized that starting her own gardening project would be beneficial for the entire community, since other people could join as well, which would strengthen the ties of locals. She communicated her idea to the local community and convinced them to establish a community garden.

Later on, she presented the idea of a community garden to a representative of the city district. He understood the significance of the garden and started to look for possible locations. After finding the right plot, he reviewed the spatial plan of the area. He offered his own budget to take the first steps in creating the garden, since the plot was the property of the local government. He also mobilized his personal network in the local government to find other possible supporters for the initiative.

There were various reasons for establishing the community garden: for example, providing locals the possibility to produce their own vegetables, involving children in the life of the garden and later to create a recreational space for the community. This local representative was the first supporter,

but several other actors joined the establishment and maintenance of the garden later. When the idea of the garden started to materialize, the Environmental Management non-profit organization joined and they have been present since the physical creation of the garden. Later on, as the garden was supplemented by a fitness area, various social groups appeared in the garden and became constant actors in the garden. These groups are mostly comprised of the youth, but occasional users from middle-aged groups and the elderly are present as well and their main motivation is the preservation of their physical health. After the garden began its second season, a local representative offered a plot for a local school. In the third season (2017), a local NGO helping people with various disabilities applied for a plot as well. To sum up: as the garden evolved, many different stakeholders—the local school, a civil organisation fostering the inclusion of people with disabilities—became active in it.

The municipality provided the plot, which used to be a brownfield site until it was turned into a garden. The municipality and the local representative secured the financial background for the soil change and ground works, the water access and the creation of composting site. The fencing was donated. The maintenance costs of the garden, mostly water usage, are covered by the municipality and the local representative.

There are no formal restrictions for the member gardeners. Since the garden is a publicly accessible recreational area, it is maintained by the Szeged Environmental



Part of the garden is also kids' playground
(image credit: Csaba Bende)

Management non-profit company, an organization linked to the local government responsible for the green spaces in the entire city. They do all the necessary maintenance works, as well as the seasonal cleaning and mowing. However, the gardeners are informally responsible for the tidiness and appearance of their own plots and of the garden as well. If anything goes wrong, they need to report it to the non-profit organization.

As explained, the idea of the garden came from the local community, but the realization of it would not have been possible without the local government. The creation of the garden was overseen by the government and the gardeners were not involved in the planning process. Thus, it clearly resembles top-down methods with a very limited participation of the actual users in the decision-making. Later, the local government became the patron of the initiative, while the creation and maintenance became the task of the Szeged Environmental Management NGO.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The main target group of the garden are the local residents, but some gardeners come from the neighbouring city districts as well. In the case of the Makkosháza community garden, there are three main vulnerable groups: elderly people, people with disabilities and the students of the local school. Due to the fact that most of the gardeners come from the local community, the gardeners' age structure represents the age structure of the large housing estates, thus it is mostly elderly people participating in gardening and we might consider them a vulnerable group. They mostly joined because of their desire to cultivate, produce their own fruits and vegetables, sometimes even because of economic considerations. Besides, they really want to spend more time in the community life. Although their motivations are complex and the community is the main motivation, recreation, cultivation and access to fresh chemical-free produce are also important. It is hard to create a hierarchy among the motivations.

They are obviously satisfied with the opportunity for gardening. But the community life is a problematic field; most of them keep in contact with each other and they are happy to meet other gardeners in the garden, but sometimes, these connections do not evolve in space and remain attached to the garden site and no strong connections appear. In addition, conflicts and the lack of social events make it difficult to have a real community life.

The students from the local school joined in the second season of the garden, when the local representative offered them a plot. Their main motivation is to use the garden for educational purposes. The garden was operating for the third year, when people with disabilities joined and took over a plot. They consider gardening to be a good way for integrating people with disabilities into society and it is also a great way for them to relax, as cultivating helps them feel better and gain some new experiences and skills. All the gardeners have accepted their presence in the garden. The vulnerable groups were not involved in establishing the community garden, but in the future, the NGO working with people with disabilities and the local school might have a more important role in the management of the garden.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The garden is a great place for residents to produce their own vegetables; there are also many people who use the site for exercising in the fitness park within the garden. The garden brings various groups of people together in one place and provides the possibility for improving local social cohesion. Thus, it is a great advantage of the garden that it functions as a multi-level community place; however, the high number of users and their various motivations and interests might make it difficult to address the needs of each group. Conflicts arise over the function and purpose of the garden. The gardeners

see the plot as a place for growing vegetables, but locals who enter only to use the fitness machines see it as a recreational place. The different visions of the plot necessarily create problems over how to develop it in the future, what are the main goals, who should be more and who less involved in the life of the garden and in the decision-making. As a former brownfield site, it was a great tool to improve the aesthetic value of the locality as well. The members of the largest vulnerable group, the elderly people, are very positive about the garden. They think it brings people together and contributes to their savings. They mostly feel pleased to spend time in the garden, as it is a recreational activity that brings them joy and satisfaction. However, they see the fitness park as a source of conflict. They do not like that sometimes people enter the garden to exercise and do not even say hello to them. Also, they have seen that some vegetables have disappeared and they accused those who use the machines in the fitness park of taking them. In the past, people with dogs would enter, but they later put up a sign that entering with animals is not allowed.

Despite that, the garden functions well, but there is always room for improvement. The location lacks a community space, although there are some benches and a fire pit. The shape of the plot works against the community building as well, since the garden is not compact and narrow, but long in shape. The lack of a central area makes it difficult to foster community building. Thus, a possible solution would be to create a central community area, where the gardeners could enjoy each other's company.



Garden plants are aligned next to a nicely maintained footpath
(image credit: Csaba Bende)

The elderly think that more social events would be necessary, since they do not really have socializing events. They seek the help of the local representative in organizing these events, but rarely organize anything on their own. In a few cases, they also mentioned that people have come down to the garden to barbecue, but only involved their own family and made food for themselves, without inviting other gardeners. Thus, they believe that there are problems with the attitude of some gardeners towards the community. Since they see the fitness park as a source of conflicts, they would rather have the fitness park outside the garden.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

The need for the garden was a bottom-up idea from the local community, but during the establishment, the local representative of the city district took the lead and he still remains an important person in the life of the garden. He is the contact person who organizes the life of the garden. If the gardeners experience problems or have

specific needs, they contact the local representative and he tries to solve these issues.

The elderly also mentioned that sometimes things could be better organized and managed. They believe having a full-time coordinator is necessary, because even though the local representative is quite helpful, he is too busy to listen and solve all the problems, so in a way, the garden exists on its own and no one really cares about it. The main barrier of the elderly to participate in the decision-making is that they always need to contact the representative first and things can be done only after he has considered every aspect of it. They have a limited chance to solve problems on their own and do not have enough autonomy in the garden. If there were a coordinator, the gardeners could relate their problems or ideas directly to them.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The older gardeners do think many things will change. The younger generation is not interested in gardening, so they will not come to the garden to grow vegetables, they might venture to the fitness park. They have ambiguous feelings towards the community: they think the gardeners are helpful and nice, but they do not really engage with each other. They are aware that further steps need to be taken to have a real community life in the garden. The representative believes that the garden community will be strengthened and the garden will become a living community space of the neighbourhood.

He sees the project as a good practice that might become a good example for other city districts and cities. He plans on opening the back fence of the garden to enable expansion. He thinks this will bring more people to the garden.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

The local representative thinks the most important thing is to have a location with access. Then, it is possible to go further and start thinking about how to create the garden. He says that the location matters, because then, people can monitor their garden, see who enters, but— they can also use it as their own backyard since it is close to their flats.

It is therefore clear that besides establishing a garden as a physical place, much emphasis should also be on building a community. Building the garden itself can be done in a quite a short time, but building a community takes longer. Community life can be enhanced by applying participatory methods during the implementation and the maintenance and by organizing events in the garden.

It is also important to note the opinion of the local resident who initiated the creation of the community garden and started to look for potential partners. She described some initial barriers. Even though the local representative of the city district ensured her he supported her idea, it took several years until the ground works started. This might be because community gardens were not well-known outside of Budapest and as a consequence, the creation of the garden faced various

difficulties. For example, the local government needed to create the legal background for a community garden as a land use type and lacked information on how to create a garden. However, since they have overcome these difficulties, the creation of any future gardens might be easier. To sum up, creating a garden in an area without any previous experience in the field might make the materialization process more challenging.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The local representative was delighted when the local residents came to him with their idea of the garden. He really liked that the idea came from them, the residents, and he thought that as a representative, he should support these kinds of ideas.

When joining, the primary motivation of the elderly people was the community; they wanted to get to know people and spend more time in community. However, it is also important for this group to have an activity that keeps them busy and they consider gardening a hobby. It also helps them increase their savings. It is really cheering up the elderly that they can spend time outside their flats with other locals in their age group. They consider gardening as equivalent to the community experience.

The students of the local school joined in the second season of the garden, mostly because of the educational possibilities in the garden. People with disabilities have been gardening since the third season;

their primary motivation was to improve their integration into society and they see gardening as a recreational activity.



Growing vegetables (image credit: Csaba Bende)



Huerto Tlateloco / Tlateloco garden

Mexico City
MEXICO

Target groups:

- decision makers: local government
 - vulnerable groups: disadvantaged people of the community, young people
 - other stakeholders: universities and NGOs (CULTIVA Ciudad civil association)
-

Contact:

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Huerto Tlateloco was created in Mexico City in 2012 thanks to the Cultiva Ciudad civil association. The following reasons gave birth to this unique garden: providing healthy food for the society, creating a comfortable and quality area for citizens that promotes social cohesion and fighting against climate change. The urban garden is also focused on the educational, ecological and ethical aspects. The first challenge was to clean the place of garbage and construction waste after the 1985 earthquake, but bit by bit, the garden has been set up and volunteers, above all elderly women, started to be involved and joined the team. Now, the garden is a great space where the community (nowadays a lot of young people as well) can engage in positive activities, learn about gardening, find inspiration and enjoy a quality green space.

written by:

Serena Cannavò,
**Central Transdanubian Regional
Innovation Agency**

photo above: Community garden connects people
(image credit: Tlateloco garden)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

Huerto Tlateloco is situated in Mexico City in the urban area of Nonoalco-Tlatelolco on Paseo de la Reforma (Reform Street). In 2012, the Cultivaciudad AC civil association obtained permission (they were invited by the delegation to continue a previous Vivero Urbano Reforma project) to start the Huerto Tlateloco (Tlateloco garden) project. The urban garden measures 1650 m² with more than 50 species of plants and it has been operating since 2012. It was built on an area that was occupied by the Oaxaca Tower, a big building demolished in 1990 due to the 1985 earthquake. This urban garden is a unique example in Mexico City, a model of urban sustainability that regenerated an abandoned plot of land in an urban centre. The protagonists of this community garden are Gabriela Vargas Romero, founder of Cultiva Ciudad, who has been working in urban agriculture since 2000, and Karina Schwartzman, who has been working in the urban garden since 2012.

Several reasons led this big community to create a garden. Gabriela's main reason was maternity. She started her own edible garden in her house and while looking out the window, she started to think: "How can I feed my daughter?" Her motivation was thus linked to healthy nutrition. She was inspired by agrarian urbanism, namely by the slogan "bring the rural to the urban". Karina, who is an architect, has been influenced by bioclimatic urbanism and wanted to create a comfortable and

quality area for citizens, a coexistence and social cohesion space and she wanted to fight the heat island, reduce temperature and increase moisture. As an architect, Karina realized she could help in the landscape gardening project through designing the spatial and aesthetic details.

In addition to their personal reasons, the initiators started this practice for many other motives, such as promoting its educational and demonstrative potential. Furthermore, they wanted to emphasize the meaning of food production and improve the people's knowledge about cycling nutrients. In other words, they thought that a community garden can change people's lives, foster a green space in the town for the co-existence of the community, promote smart environmental technology and encourage water filtration. They are also focused on educational, ecological and ethical aspects, e.g. reusing material for the construction, harvesting rainwater, dry bath, a hotel for bugs to help preserve the diverse species of insects currently endangered by agricultural practices, or the seed bank. These are some of the best examples of eco-technology.

Several field visits were made to see if the plot was a suitable area. These visits were carried out by Gabriela's friends, who specialize in sustainability issues and productive projects. Karina was involved in these visits as well; she joined to support Gabriella from the beginning in issues regarding the spatial design, bioconstruction, and planning. There were many challenges and the biggest was that half of the area was full of garbage and construction waste.



Garden means relaxation (image credit: Adam Wiseman)

The municipality thus supported the establishment of the garden with 120 trucks to remove the garbage and gravel and clean the place (the municipality helped move the soil, bricks, plants and other materials from Vivero Reforma to Tlateloco, where they built and established the first half of the garden productive beds with those materials).

The Reforma space that had lasted 3 years was conveniently concluding its cycle at the time, so everything from there was moved and half of the cultivation beds were set up with that material. In the past five years, the municipality has given them the space, water and electricity; it allows them to plan and execute workshops; at some events, the municipality helps by providing tables and other materials or with security for large events or when schools come to visit the garden. When the community garden is involved in other events, the municipality helps the community with workforce to move plants. It helped install the cisterns in the garden and fix the fence that was in a very poor state. Furthermore, in 2017, the community garden organized the first urban gardens gathering in Mexico City. Members of the municipality were invited to participate in a panel

to discuss the current situation, new laws and new opportunities in the city for urban gardening.

The design was a collaborative project that was carried out by Gabriela, Karina and their friends. Karina worked on the landscape and architectural issues. Some changes have been made over the years, but the initial idea is still the same. The people met as volunteers; there was no compensation for their time and work, as they have wanted to support the project from the beginning. Volunteers were then invited to support the internal team. The garden has been set up little by little. Regardless of the initiators, the urban garden would not have existed without the main pillar of the garden, namely the community itself. Although the initiative and the maintenance of the garden arose from Karina and Gabriela, aided by the group of the city and friends, the locals who joined the team really made this garden a bottom-up practice. The relationship with the government is based on a collaboration to gain permission and the government lends them the tables for the events and transports the pallets. It sometimes uses the space for agriculture workshops. The involvement of the community is most visible at the festivals focusing on sharing and cooperating, such as the Mother Earth Festival (Festival por la Madre Tierra). During these festivals, the community participates in free workshops, products markets, and children's constructive games.

The stakeholders did not join the garden at the same time. The government was the first stakeholder involved in the practice

and helped to provide the place and not long after, the volunteers joined the initiative individually.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The stakeholders involved in the project are the Cultiva Ciudad civil association, the International Renewable Resources Institute and the local community. The main target group of the garden is the Tlateloco local community itself. Many members of the community who participate in the garden are volunteers and some of them belong to disadvantaged groups. The gardening community is thus very diverse in terms of age, gender and social status. Elderly people represent more than 60% of the members and women represent more than 70%. The garden offers the residents of Tlatelolco and the inhabitants of the city a possibility to harvest the crops and a place to connect with the nature.

To the community, the garden is a place where they can engage in positive activities, learn about agroecology techniques, find inspiration and enjoy a quality green space. The garden is a “demonstrative and educational” space where the people are taught to produce healthy organic food and acquire healthy eating habits. Volunteers can take home vegetables for their own consumption, however, the community garden is not a source of production that would completely fulfil their nutritional needs. The garden is open to everyone. Recently, many young people have been expressing their wish to join the garden; the youngest member is 14 years old and very willing and helpful.

Ildefonso Guerrero Domínguez has been volunteering for two years and he said: “I joined the Tlatelolco garden because when I was walking home from school, I saw people working wearing hats because of the sun and I noticed that there were not many people, so I decided to go in and ask”. Furthermore, other interested people joined the practice as well, because the Tlateloco garden offers formal diploma courses for those interested in attaining a certificate in gardening.

The roles of the stakeholders are different. The municipality deals with infrastructure and security; it helps the community garden with security cameras. The volunteers’ role is to help and learn (even though not all the volunteers belong to vulnerable groups). María Osmara Camacho, who is a volunteer in the garden, said that urban gardening gives her peace, calmness and joy. She decided to join the initiative when her work absorbed her too much and she did not feel happy and motivated. She decided to explore gardening and help its users. She recognized the benefit, such as getting in touch with nature, which makes her feel alive. She is amazed when plants grow. Her main expectation is to learn every day and to see how the plants are developing and changing.

The International Renewable Resources Institute A.C. (IRRI Mexico) had its own reasons to join the practice. The mass production and the food in market chains are causing social destructions and emissions, which influence the environment in negative



Tlateloco garden from the top (image credit: Adam Wiseman)

ways; IRRI’s aim is to sustain the safety and sovereignty of food. Carlos Delgado from IRRI said that the civil association (IRRI) wants to develop technical skills for regenerative agriculture, establish good practices and provide courses, workshops, diploma courses in partnership with allied organisations. Creating technical skills is the cornerstone of IRRI, because people can adopt and reproduce the practices locally. All in all, the different stakeholders—even if sporting different ideas—seem to support each other with the aim of being a part of a group.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The Tlateloco garden is a good example of humans reconnecting with soil. Karina explained that they can connect with themselves and nature as well. She thinks that urban gardening provides them with healthy and local food and the garden also improves their quality of life through healthy physical activities and at the spiritual level. The practice is good because it affects the sense of the community, especially when everybody has the same purpose. Karina recognizes that the practice brings

social cohesion thanks to the “learning by doing” concept, to learn by using our hands and collective knowledge.

Nevertheless, fundraising and the visibility plan should be improved, as they are necessary for the livelihood of the garden. Volunteer María Osmara Camacho thinks that the secret for the practice’s success is gratitude. The first step is to realize that the work is visible and the result is for everyone, not just for individuals. She thinks that the practice is good, because gardeners are surrounded by people with the same interest, so sharing and cooperation help them to relax their mind and soul.

The stakeholders have different opinions on the improvement of the practice; the volunteers do not see anything substantial that would need changing, but want to expand the practice. IRRI claims that involving the government to empower the local and sustainable food market would be a good benefit for the entire community.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

María Osmara Camacho, who is the voice of the volunteers, said that she is quite satisfied with the inclusion in the practice. She never faced any barriers, because anyone can choose to participate and to help as a volunteer. The volunteering and participation is even more satisfactory with a good planning and monitoring plan; as was the case with the Tlateloco garden. She feels that the municipality does not give them enough attention, because the government is dedicated to other things.

IRRI works with indigenous communities and women in the peri-urban area of the city by addressing them through local and/or allied organizations to ensure a veritable and deep community involvement and facilitate the actions in this way. IRRI uses digital media, courses, workshops and diploma courses and sets up high-impact social projects as the tools for the participation process. However, the main barrier remains: how to empower people and to ensure the adoption of new practices. The association is thus working on the development of local agents of change who would be capable to promote the interventions.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The attitude to the future of the people involved is very positive and they have high hopes for the garden. Karina would like to involve more initiatives to strengthen the volunteering culture.

Furthermore, she would like to establish a stronger relationship with the government, namely to strengthen collaboration between the government and civil society. The representatives hope that the practice will be adopted by others. To achieve this goal, they intend to foster visits. In the last five years, the garden has been visited by more than 10,000 visitors and in the 2018, it received over 2,000 guests, 75% from Mexico City, 20% from other places in the country, and 5% from other countries. Karina thinks that the community must “wake up” to increase the garden’s visibility, so the urban garden and universities from the United States, Baja California and Guatemala work together to encourage the visits.

The visits come from universities, schools, kindergartens and companies from the field of social responsibility. Usually, an organization called “Milpazu” is involved in guiding children around the garden, while Karina guides students who come from universities and gives talks about sustainability, architecture, and urbanism topics. Also, the volunteers help receive groups as guides for many activities, such as separating seeds in the greenhouse.

The Tlateloco garden has already received visitors from Brazil, Cuba, Argentina, the United States, France and Germany. Some of them were very keen on learning about the garden. The majority wanted to learn how to grow your own food at home, how to manage this kind of project and what kind of ecotechnologies can be used. Some wanted to conduct a research at the bachelor’s and master’s level in different fields, such as sociology, biology or environmental sciences. Others wanted to volunteer and support the project.

Some of these visits relate to universities interested in developing gardens in their university space: for example, the Tlateloco community garden has helped UIA (Libero-American University) start their own garden. Some researchers are also interested in the urban garden; Karina is the coordinator of the research on climate change; furthermore, the representatives of the garden help students prepare their thesis projects in other fields such as sociology, ecology and art.



Community garden means smiling (image credit: Adam Wiseman)

In addition, several NGOs approached the garden with the purpose of linking their projects with the garden and strengthening initiatives, such as the sale of organic food, water management in cities and the construction of a replicable model for the operation of urban gardens. Ultimately, as argued by the interviewed volunteer, more and more people are becoming interested in joining the practice, because returning to one's roots contributes a lot to a quality and satisfactory living.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Karina suggests setting up a team of people with different qualities, knowledge, as well as with passion and ambitions. Expertise and know-how is important, but passion is crucial. Technicians, architects, gardeners, farmers, biologists, agronomists, sociologists, geographers, designers and artists can create the garden, but a strong and colourful community garden also needs passionate and willing volunteers from different backgrounds who are essential to avoiding marginalization and fostering social inclusion. In the case of the Tlateloco

garden, Karina's expertise and Gabriela's strong and maternity-driven motivation have generated a virtuous circle of social inclusion, knowledge, well-being and fun. The representative from IRRI thinks that having a robust impact measurement system would be useful to start creating a good practice. If the results, activities and impacts are clear, it is much more feasible to promote the intervention as a successful practice.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The community garden brings together people who have different motivations, but something in common: willingness and creativity. Karina's personal motivation was learning by doing; she wanted to materialize an idea of helping the community into practice. People call the Tlateloco garden an oasis or a temple and this is a huge satisfaction for her. Gabriella's motivation was healthy food and a healthy society, whereas Karina was more concerned with creating a healthy space. What unites them is the vision of a social change.

Volunteer María Osmara Camacho said that she joined the garden to acquire the knowledge and to support the practice; on the other hand, the garden is very close to her house and the place is calm and natural. She loves gardening and she said: "I do gardening because it gets me in touch with myself and with living beings that grow up bit by bit with their rhythm. For me, gardening is life, death, food, light, calmness and joy. Everyone supports each other and we make up a part of the whole.

Gardening has helped me to build a full and happy life.” Finally, the sense of belonging to a community seems to be the main reason for the practice, but promoting global and long-term sustainability are important features as well, as advocated by Estephania from IRRI.



Seeds for everybody (image credit: Tlateloco garden Team)



New Horizons Bosnian Garden

Toronto
CANADA

Target groups:

- decision makers: local government
 - vulnerable groups: refugees from Bosnia and ex-Yugoslavian republics
 - other stakeholders: /
-

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New Horizons Bosnian Garden is a community garden established in 2007 in Toronto's Tom Riley Park at Bloor/Islington by the members of the "Multicultural Association of Bosnian Seniors and their Friends". This association is organized as a non-profit organization that operates in the city of Toronto in Canada and is as such funded by the Social Development Canada Fund as a part of the New Horizons for Seniors Program. The establishment of this community garden was facilitated by cooperation of many partners and local authority representatives who made it possible for the association to open this community garden and provided them with an appropriate place for their garden.

written by:
Artan Coboviq and
Kaltrina Meqikukiq,
Municipality of Ulcinj

photo above: Gardening means hard work (image credit: Milka Manojlovic)



Sunny day means working on the garden plots
(image credit: Milka Manojlovic)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

Initially, Julia Huterer, an Immigrant Services Counselor, now named President of the Association, came up with the idea to create a non-profit organization of this kind for Bosnian immigrants, mostly seniors.

Consequently, the first informal meeting, held on November 2003, was successful due to the fact that everyone present showed interest and agreed that it would be beneficial to meet. All the attendants (over 20 people present) agreed to continue with this practice and just like that, the newly formed association started its activity with the aim to help its members share their experiences among each other and socialize, but mostly to help them in the process of integration into Canadian society.

The “Multicultural Association of Bosnian Seniors and their Friends” with its list of planned activities and several projects, including community gardening, was especially created in order to empower seniors by enriching

their lives and through this, significantly contributing to this community. By giving them a meaningful project (such as gardening) to work on, they were able to reduce their feeling of isolation by interacting with others. Every decision within the association was made based on a bottom-up approach, by collecting and considering the opinions of all its members and participants. Additionally, the general rules and regulations of maintaining the garden were developed collectively and according to the gardeners’ needs.

The members of this community garden are mostly seniors from Bosnia and Herzegovina and other parts of the former Yugoslavia who moved out of their countries during the war period, looking for a better life abroad.

However, the community welcomes any other new members who want to be part of the community regardless of their origin. In relation to this, four new families with different backgrounds (Polish, Portuguese, Ukrainian and Chilean) joined the group shortly after it opened and began diligently tending to their plots. Currently, the association numbers 140 members, who meet daily and take care of the garden and undertake other daily activities. From November to April, they meet at the COSTI Corvetti Education Centre (Immigrant Services) due to the inappropriate weather conditions; during the summer, from May to October, they hold their meetings in the community garden.

The community garden is an integral part of the Multicultural Association of Bosnian Seniors and their Friends. The general rules of maintaining the practice are

defined by the Governing Council of the Association, which is responsible for all the activities of the association, including the community garden. The Coalition of Gardeners and the Executive Garden Committee (EGC) have been set up to control the operation of the garden and attend scheduled meetings with the aim to improve the work in the garden and its appearance. The EGC presides over the Coalition of Gardeners. The EGC prepares annual garden plans, which are followed by the Coalition of Gardeners; it is also responsible for ensuring proper land distribution and overseeing the acceptance of new members. New members who wish to have a garden plot must sign up on the waiting list; priority is given to those who have been members of the Association for the longest period of time. Non-members of the Association can also have their own garden plot, if this is approved by the EGC and the Governing Council of the Association.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The main objective of the Association i.e. the community garden is to represent and help vulnerable and isolated seniors, who also represent the main target group. These seniors have limited knowledge of the English language and are experiencing cultural, emotional and financial hardships. Regardless of this, the New Horizons Community Garden is open to everyone who wants to become a part of the community, is willing to accept its general and maintaining rules and agrees to cultivate their individual plots as well as the common ones.

The municipality, in cooperation with other partners, has been the largest supporter in creating this magnificent garden and contributed greatly by providing the terrain for setting up the garden in Tom Riley Park via one of its public companies named 'City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department' and for providing free water supply. The establishment of this community garden would not be possible if it had not had the support of other partners and volunteers who put hundreds of work hours and intensive hard work into the community, such as: Social Development Canada for providing grants for seniors through the New Horizons for Seniors Program and for donating a considerable amount of money to the community garden project; COSTI Immigrant Services agency for supporting this initiative and helping immigrants from Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia to integrate into Canadian Society faster; and to agronomists Mr. Miodrag Zakonovic and Ms. Zora Ignjatovic who offered their expertise every step of the way in establishing this garden by providing relevant input and knowledge. The role of the community garden members mainly consists of their responsibility for organizing, maintaining and managing the garden, including making decisions on how they will build their success in the future.

Milka Manojlovic, a member of the Bosnian community, the representative of the vulnerable group and garden coordinator, has been a member of the community since the very beginning. She says that depending on the weather



Happy kids are an added value of the community garden
(image credit: Milka Manojlovic)

conditions in Toronto, they meet frequently from May to October, thus interacting with each other through gardening, participating in educational workshops and attending social gatherings. As a person with plenty of free time, she feels more fulfilled, more productive and more active in her everyday life. She visits the garden almost daily to look after her plants, to see if they need watering, but most importantly, to socialize with other gardeners, whom she now calls her friends. Among other things, she enjoys visiting the garden and admits it is a wonderful experience to see all the community members working together in harmony and for a good cause and most importantly, the fact that they are able to determine the future of their garden themselves. She finds their garden beautiful and she is very passionate about caring for it. She works on it with love, enthusiasm, commitment and carefulness. This garden feels like a second home to her, because she is able to chat, laugh and just relax with the other members, sharing their experiences and talents between each other and of course, doing what they love most: gardening.

Mr. Peter Milczyn (Ward 5 Councilor) in collaboration with the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department joined this practice in the very beginning, just when Julia came up with the idea of creating a garden of this type. In this way, the municipal land, where the garden is located today, was provided as well as the water supply. The city of Toronto has shown its readiness to support such initiatives, organized by the citizens and organizations and has kept up with it up to the present day.

A community garden coordinator, Mr. Solomon Boye, should also be mentioned for the efforts he put into establishing a new community garden in the City of Toronto. He provided his professional knowledge at every step of the way.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Based on the satisfaction of the garden members, the New Horizons Community Garden can be rated as very successful. The Bosnian seniors and their friends from different regions have turned empty plots into a flourishing garden in a short period of time. Passers-by admire the garden and find it wonderful to see all those seniors socialize, work together and be so passionate about what they are doing. Because of the garden and their sense of obligation, many of them feel that for the first time since immigrating to Canada, they actually belong here. Just by seeing them, you can tell they feel happy, proud, useful and valued. On the other hand, improvements are always welcome, which means that small investments, such as an appropriate stage in the garden for organizing various events would be very helpful in bringing

new people to the community and as a result, a new spirit, new ideas will increase the satisfaction level within the community.

Milka finds herself very satisfied when she does gardening. She can spend hours and hours taking care of her plants and not even realizing how time passes by. She intends to involve her grandchildren in her everyday activities and teach them about the importance and relevance of cultivating organic products. In terms of improvement, she also stands for a proper promotion and more coverage in the local media, which would be of great interest to the garden and Association.

From the point of view of the decision-makers, they find it very beneficial that formerly abandoned and empty spaces were transformed into thriving gardens where people can interact with each other, take part and feel more involved in decision making processes on community gardening. As for improving the municipality's attitude towards these matters, a lot has to be done, starting from the legislation and to several municipal programmes that should be included in local action plans and policy regulation.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

As a garden coordinator, Milka has been involved in all the stages of the establishment of this community garden. She says that the New Horizons community garden has been a remarkable success. This garden is highly rated among other gardens in Toronto and it has

become one of the main attractions in the neighbourhood and is also admired by the visitors and people passing by the Bloor subway line. She was part of the group that set up the general rules and regulations for the New Horizons Community Garden. Everyone's opinion and recommendation is taken into consideration when it comes to compiling the rules for maintenance of the garden.

Milka and other members also take part and contribute to organizing various events and meetings, such as the Organic Food Festival, Garden Day for Children and Seniors, picnics and workshops. During the June–September period, the members and their friends meet in their garden instead of their regular meetings at COSTI Corvetti Education Centre for educational workshops, socializing, having fun and enjoying BBQ.

The only barrier Milka mentioned is the involvement of the local authorities, pointing out that a better approach of the decision-makers to this matter would be very beneficial for these kinds of communities and the municipality as well. Decision-makers can push communities and the municipality to a close cooperation and to be partners in these kinds of activities. Their support is of the greatest interest to the community.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Considering all the benefits and satisfaction gardeners find in this community garden, the seniors have

already made plans for the future. They plan to create educational workshops on organic gardening or composting. Also, they intend to connect with other community gardens and to collaborate with neighbouring schools, seniors' groups and the community.

On the other hand, Milka is worried about the future of her garden, since the number of seniors participating is not growing and today's youth is not particularly interested in maintaining the garden, participating and being part of the community activities. In spite of this, Milka will not give up on her garden and the opportunity to improve this practice to be even better in the future. She has already convinced her children and grandchildren to come and visit her and her garden and see all the effort she has put into it.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

For any beginner who wishes to start setting up a community garden, the first and most important advice would be to establish a connection with the local authorities in order to get the needed support that is crucial for achieving the intended goals. This is because the local authorities are the main actors who will lead and give permission to use the space for your garden. Another important element is water supply, which must be provided at all costs. Another advice is to involve as many supporters as possible, so they can help you in the different stages of the process: financial, institutional and other aspects as well. It is very important to find a time and form of involvement for the

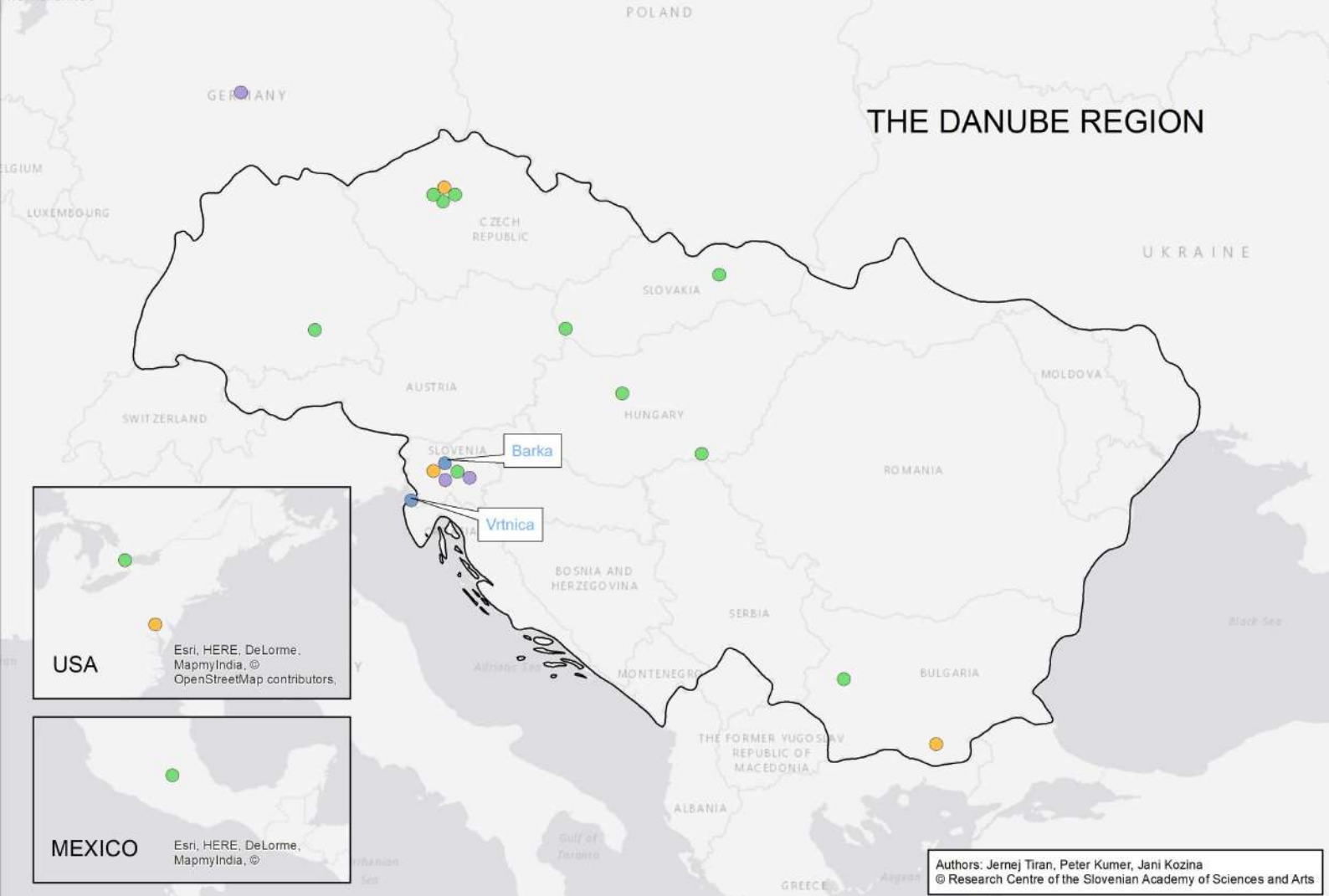
vulnerable groups. With their involvement, the role of the community garden will be completed and the supporters and staff will be more motivated. Involvement of the vulnerable groups from the beginning is the best option.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

All the members of the community enjoy not only gardening and looking after their plants and flowers, but also socializing, making new friends, sharing their abundant experiences, laughing with each other and spending time together. This is not only good for the community, but also for the surroundings, thus providing an aesthetic element to the city and serving a good cause. They now feel like they belong to this place, after moving from their country of origin.



The people behind the community garden
(image credit: Milka Manojslović)



THERAPEUTIC GARDENS



L'Arche / Barka

Medvode
SLOVENIA

Target groups:

- decision makers: Matjaž Jerala, president of Sora Field Association and Blaž Brešan, leader of L'Arche Slovenia
 - vulnerable groups: persons in care of L'Arche Slovenia – homeless adults with mental disabilities and locals, active in Sora Field Association
 - other stakeholders: different experts (permaculture, Montessori teachers, etc.)
-

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The Sora field (Sorško polje) spans across three municipalities, at the confluence of two Slovenian rivers, Selška and Poljanska Sora. It is a flat area between the densely urbanised Slovenian capital Ljubljana and the Alps, which is one of the important factors for intensive agriculture in Slovenia. Intensive farming and industry heavily influenced the area, resulting in decreased soil quality and other environmental issues. This is the main reason why locals from the area established the Sora Field Association (Društvo Sorško polje) in 2011. They gathered to gain education, achieve cooperation between different stakeholders and organise different events in order to make their local area more environmentally friendly again. In the years of their operation, they have already conducted numerous activities, including establishing an organic garden in cooperation with representatives of L'Arche International in Slovenia.

written by:
Nela Halilović,
Municipality of Velenje



By engaging new people and organising different activities (annual bonfire event at garden), you also achieve better promotion and more people learn about you, so it is easier to get help if needed (e.g. sponsors, volunteers) (image credit: Matjaž Jerala)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

President of the Sora Field Association and a local, Mr. Matjaž Jerala, and like-minded volunteers were the first to initiate the establishment of the association. Every activity since then has been a kind of spontaneous decision or decision that stemmed from the demands of the locals. After many successfully concluded activities, they established the first organic garden in the Praše settlement in the Municipality of Kranj with the main goal to produce vegetables, exchange seeds and educate the locals about sustainable food self-sufficiency.

They noticed the need for a community area where they could spend some time after working in the garden with volunteers and locals. They studied the possibilities and discovered the L'arche International (Skupnost Barka) area in front of their newly acquired sponsored community house in Zbilje. L'arche is an international association

empowering people with different disabilities to play a vital and active role in society. In Slovenia, they help homeless adults with mental disabilities. These two organisations started to cooperate because on the one hand, the Sora Field Association needed a new place for a garden and for other indoor activities, and on the other hand, L'Arche Slovenia are the owners of the land, which was not being used at the time and they wanted to enrich their regular programme for the persons in their care. They wanted to empower them through regular contacts with the locals.

Together, they defined the rules, agreed that the members of the Sora Field Association can use the house for community activities and that they will regularly take care of the garden. They planned activities together (educational, culinary and gardening workshops etc.), but later realised that the program was a bit too stressful for L'Arche's persons in care. They agreed that they can harvest a part of the products and that they will have their workshops in the morning hours in their house and use the garden. The members of the Sora Field Association therefore meet regularly in the afternoon time (after their day jobs), work in the garden during the season and use the L'arche house for community matters.

Only two members of the organisations have been involved in the whole activity of setting up the garden. At the beginning, shortly after the garden was opened, the Mayor of the Municipality of



Even though community garden is located in rural area, people can gain and exchange knowledge, which can be used for their own garden at home (image credit: Matjaž Jerala)

Medvode donated a few fruit trees and attended the symbolic planting ceremony. A permaculture teacher, Miss Jožica Fabjan, who is also a member of the Sora Field Association, led the planting action. Persons in care of L'Arche Slovenia and members of the Sora Field Association cooperated in the planting. They invited local musicians and organised a market for exchanging seeds and plants. However, this was the last time they collaborated with the municipality. The employees of the Municipality of Medvode are aware of the garden and morally support it, but they do not have any interest in joining their activities.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The representative of the Sora Field Association is addressing mainly locals who are members of the association to join the garden. As at the beginning, the aim of their operation was to bring nature back to their everyday life with different activities for everyone. The collaboration with the vulnerable group (grown-ups with mental disabilities) started because they were gifted the space for the garden from the L'Arche

Slovenia association, where the second community garden is now located (besides the one in Praše). The role of the representative is to organise as many activities as possible (mainly meant for locals in general) to fulfil their objectives. The role of the users is to maintain the garden and gain knowledge to transfer it to their own home practices, since the garden is located in a mostly rural municipality. Besides Medvode locals, inhabitants from neighbouring municipalities regularly attend all the garden activities. Persons in care of L'Arche Slovenia wanted to maintain the garden on a regular basis. As they were not able to do it alone, they tried to coordinate the schedule with Sora Field Association members who work in the garden mainly in the afternoon (after their regular jobs).

However, the persons in care of L'Arche are mainly available for such activities in the morning. Because of this, they are now only observers of the process and the Sora Field Association members allow them to harvest some of the produce in the garden. Nevertheless, members of both organisations still get together once or twice a year for some joint activities, – mostly for digging the garden or seeding. The expectations of the L'Arche Slovenia representatives of to connect their persons in care with locals more tightly have therefore not been completely fulfilled. Both organisations have plans for the future, with the aim to connect members of both organisations on more occasions with new activities that will be more suitable to the L'Arche persons in care.

The Sora Field Association fulfilled its expectations about the garden, as members now have a place where they can hold regular meetings and activities. The L'Arche Slovenia house is right next to the garden. A lot of the association's members who have their own garden by their house joined the association to gain new knowledge about modern gardening methods (e.g. permaculture), food self-subsistence and other sustainable practices and to share experiences with each other. They also like being part of a group, especially one who organises many different activities, so everyone can find something for themselves.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The organic community garden in Zbilje is a good practice, because it was established as an initiative from the locals. Volunteers from the Sora Field Association wanted to have better conditions for working in their organisation, so they sought out free local land where they could establish a second garden and they wanted to have a place for their indoor activities. They participated in the establishment and construction of the garden in collaboration with experts on sustainable development. The participatory bottom-up approach is an absolute must if one wants to develop a garden that will live on. They established a place where everyone feels welcome and can learn something new about sustainable living in their local environment. The benefits are numerous: local development, networking of different stakeholders,

food self-sufficiency, ecological development etc. The garden's location also benefits the L'Arche persons in care. Besides regular workshops in their house, the persons in care got a new opportunity to do gardening, which empowered them to a certain extent through occasional contacts with the wider society.

The volunteers of the Sora Field Association are trying to spread their passion for nature to the wider local environment with organising many diverse activities through a year that are not necessarily strictly connected to gardening. Different people come on different occasions, but the majority of activities are held in a house beside the garden. When seeing the garden, people get motivated to set up something in their own backyard or on their balcony. The association has encouraged numerous primary schools and kindergartens to make their own garden or to at least attend some workshops on gardening. Their aim is much wider than just maintaining the garden in Zbilje. The most visited yearly event is a bonfire party in May with many events throughout the day finishing with an evening bon fire and a musical programme with local musicians.

L'Arche Slovenia representatives think the garden was a good decision, because they gained something new in front of their house for workshops. They implemented the garden and gardening into their regular activities with persons in care and they can see some positive effects on them. Besides that, the view of

the empty space in front of the house was not very motivational; making a garden there was also a good idea from the aesthetical point of view. Persons in care of L'Arche are happy to have it and to harvest part of the produce that they usually use for some culinary workshops. They have gained new skills because of it, and have heard some lectures about seeding, planting and harvesting. They have also learned about the process of food production, since they were not aware before where the food they are eating comes from. They think that the decision to not having as much responsibility for the garden is okay, since it lets them carry out their own activities according to the principles set by L'Arche International. They just use it whenever their teachers think it is a good idea to do so. Both organisations have harmonised their expectations and capacity and no one has any restrictions for now. Some loose boundaries were set up in the process. They are trying to find a way for better collaboration based on what they have learned until now.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

L'Arche Slovenia persons in care follow a regular schedule of their activities. Usually, they have different workshops outside their base house in the mornings. Their participation in gardening together with the Sora Field Association members is limited because of their schedule and health. They are persons with mental health problems and no one wants to stress them with too many obligations. They and their

caretakers agree that their participation in the garden suits their condition. It could be improved if the Sora Field Association organised activities in the morning. Nevertheless, everyone agrees that they should still be careful in order not to put too much pressure on them. However, they do not think that this is an obstacle to participation.

They are satisfied with the way things are. During the participatory process of the planning, it is important to know the social group with whom you are working. The participatory method should be chosen based on their limitations. Members from the Sora Field Association are satisfied with their involvement in the entire process of setting up and maintaining the garden. They would like to receive more attention from the municipality, even though they do not mind being on their own, as they do not have any legal restrictions.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

In future, the Sora Field Association wants to improve their collaboration with persons in care in the L'Arche house. A more intense collaboration has not been realised because of the unsynchronized working hours. They have already talked about future actions that could bring more people to the garden in the morning hours. They will try to organize new activities for younger people, possibly children from schools and kindergartens or children who are in home day-care with their parents or grandparents. They want to do some workshops for kids to spend more time there. They are in contact with a Montessori teacher, who will provide

contents for those activities. They would like to build new beds/plots only for kids. They think that this would solve the L'Arche persons' problem of not having regular contacts with others.

Their only problem is that they cannot apply for any municipal funding, because their head office is registered in a different municipality, Kranj.

As stated at the beginning, their activities exceed municipal borders, since they operate on an area of three municipalities. In the Municipality of Medvode, where the garden is situated, the open calls for funding such projects only apply to organisations registered in Medvode. This is also the reason why they were glad to find synergy with L'Arche Slovenia on the location of garden and their house, which they use as their community facility for other activities.

Consequently, their members did not face any obstacles when taking care of the garden. On the other hand, the garden is not a priority for L'Arche Slovenia, which could apply for funding with the Municipality of Medvode, as they are registered in the municipality. It has not used this opportunity, despite the fact that the municipality has supported some other gardening projects.

The representatives of L'Arche Slovenia do not have their own plans for the future; they have entrusted the entire process to the Sora Field Association, since they already demonstrated their organizational skills in the past.

Beside the plans for the future of this garden, representatives from the Sora Field Association are considering upgrading their activities with some community green houses, which would improve the production of vegetables. They also want to improve communication in the whole area of their operation between those who want to challenge themselves with farming tasks and those who already have some infrastructure, space or perhaps animals and do not want to or cannot manage to farm.

The stakeholders from the municipality do not have any intention of cooperating with them in the future. They think that their work is good and do not want to disturb their activities.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

A beginner with the passion and wish to create a place like this is already half way there. They must insist on it, stick to the first idea and try to find as many people to collaborate as possible. It is easier to work in a group where everyone has their own skills and knowledge, so that the whole process can run faster. It is also important not to focus only on one activity (only gardening), but on many different activities that will keep engaging new people all the time. Naturally, the activities must be somehow connected to the main objective, from which everything had started, but having many people to work on it and expand the activities is also important. By engaging new people and organising different activities, you will

also achieve a better promotion and more people will learn about you, so it will be easier to get help when needed (e.g. sponsors, volunteers).

When working with persons with mental or any other disabilities, it is also especially important to be aware of their limitations. Choosing the participatory method should depend on their abilities and readiness to cooperate.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The motive of the president of the Sora Field Association for starting such a project was the same as for other activities in their association: they just want to work on activities that will help all the inhabitants to get closer to nature again and to encourage them to work in favour of sustainable local development. They realised at some point that intense farming and industrialisation has robbed their local environment and the Sora Field of its essentials, which raised the alarm to establish such an association.

The L'Arche Slovenia persons in care and their caretakers wanted to implement their work into the local environment, to show the locals what they were doing and to socialize with them more. Their motivation is simply to help their persons in care with any method and, according to their current experience, setting up the garden was a good idea.



After working on a garden, members of Association Sorško polje now say they can perform other activities in a community house (image credit: Matjaž Jerala)



Vrtnica / Rose

Bertoki
SLOVENIA

Target groups:

- decision makers: Karitas Institute Samaritan
 - vulnerable groups: People with alcohol addiction problems
 - other stakeholders: The housing community of Truške (Program Vrtnica / Rose)
-

Contact:
Karitas Institute Samaritan

VRTNICA (Slovenian word for rose) is a social rehabilitation programme for people with alcohol addiction problems that aims to regulate their lives, empower them to persist in their abstinence and reintegrate them into the social environment. The emphasis is on strengthening the user's willpower and helping to alleviate psychosocial distress. In addition to professionally managed activities in the therapeutic housing community, working activities and leisure activities are of great relevance to raising the quality of life in the community. The work and care for the community garden and the field fall into the scope of these activities. The 700 m² of cultivated land allows users to learn how to grow vegetables of different types, how to take basic care of the garden and the field and use the crops in everyday cooking.

written by:
Mario Benkoč,
PiNA - Association for Culture and Education

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The agricultural programme dates back to the beginning of the VRTNICA programme in 2007: it deals with the social rehabilitation of people with alcohol addiction problems, where agricultural activities are among the priority work activities. This is because of their positive effects that produce relaxation and calmness and contribute to the conditions for individual growth of the users.

When searching for the location of the therapeutic house, special attention was paid to the property, which had to have enough land and space for agricultural activities. At first, only a small garden for planting basic vegetables and herbs was established. Since gardeining is a part of the contents of the social rehabilitation programme, which is as such, a part of the official programme rules and obligations, a top-down approach was used.

The agricultural space was defined, the basic working tools and equipment provided and the seeds selected. With time, the agricultural activities were expanded and bottom-up initiatives and suggestions were included into the everyday practices. Today, potatoes, courgettes, pumpkins and beans are grown. If there is a surplus of these crops, they are used to feed the animals: two pigs, goats, rabbits, hens, ducks and ponies, which are part of the agricultural activities. The animals provide a stable source of manure that is used as fertilizer.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The Samaritan Karitas Institute acts as the decision-maker and stakeholder in the VRTNICA programme. When establishing a social rehabilitation programme, the agricultural programme was established simultaneously, since the principle of working with a selected vulnerable target group is based on the belief that work as an activity and contact with nature are an important factors in maintaining mental health and abstinence. There are two groups of users.

The first group are persons with addiction problems (alcohol and other substances) who want to overcome addiction through social rehabilitation and inclusion in the programme. They often experience complex psychosocial distress, face problems with addiction, do not have a proper social status or a good social network, they are homeless etc. The second group are already treated alcoholics (having completed hospital treatment), who need prolonged rehabilitation, since they had previously completed hospital treatment several times but, did not manage to maintain abstinence.

The therapeutic housing community includes up to 8 users, currently only men. One of the users said he got involved in gardening after entering the VRTNICA programme: "Since I got into the winter programme, I joined the works in the spring. In the winter, we cleaned the surroundings of the garden." The users, who are the selected vulnerable group,

like to participate in this form of preoccupation therapy, as they feel useful, they receive confirmation, and find contact with nature soothing: “I can relax here, because I work outside. I also enjoy being in contact with nature. I can easily handle my problems through the day if I get physically tired. In that way, I do not think about the need for alcohol.”

The selected land of the Samarijan Karitas Institute is rented, which reduces the role of the local decision-makers and the community. However, the latter is of great relevance, since only an interested community enables the successful integration of users into the social environment in which they live and support activities, such as the maintenance of the local environment and surrounding areas.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The Vrtnica programme is financed by the government (MDDSZ, FIHO), tenders of local communities covering the area and by Samarijan Karitas Institute’s own funds. As the gardening activities are part of the programme, they are categorized as costs of the programme. As the users change on yearly basis, the Samarijan Karitas Institute announces the purpose of the gardening at the beginning of every season along with the work methods, the timetable, tools, protective equipment, materials for work, types of plants that the users can cultivate (vegetables, berries, fruits, olives ...). In the meantime, the users can make a

variety of suggestions on what they would like to plant and grow, what they would like to do in regards to this community garden (this year, it was the desire for constructing a greenhouse). Some of the users have also various practical skills for the implementation (for example, how to fashion a fence or a protective net, how to raise seedlings, how to nurture olive trees ...). If possible, all of their suggestions are taken into account, since the entire crop will be used by their housing unit.

The employees of the programme use both the method of group work and the method of individual work. The project leader also offers education in the field of plant preservation and protection. All the achievements of the users (crops, knowledge ...) in the group and the individual level are published on the institute’s website and other media (articles about various contributions of the institute programmes). This gives the users additional drive to excel in their work.

The users of the agricultural programme consider it their own: “Everyone in the programme in Truške is part of the group. Our garden and field are a part of us. We try to maintain the garden, so that we can pick our crops. I look forward to doing that.” For the coordinators, the activities’ greatest contribution is that the users involved in the agriculture programme gain the knowledge, skills and empowerment to be later successfully reintegrated into the social environment.

The activities could be strengthened with further improvements, such as the increase of agricultural land

(more room for other types of vegetables), the installation of a greenhouse and better gardening tools and equipment.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

When integrating users into the programme, the Samarijan Karitas Institute makes sure the users are involved from the very beginning. At first, the users participate in creating an individualized social rehabilitation plan, in which the user's priority goals in the programme are jointly developed.

During this time, the user can express their willingness to work and participate in the garden as part of their rehabilitation. After that, the institute prepares a plan for achieving the rehabilitation plan goals (there are also other activities besides the community garden). During the programme cycle, the institute uses the questionnaire method to record the user's satisfaction, suggestions and remarks (at the time of entry, during the stay and on exit).

According to the policy, the users have the ability to write comments, suggestions and complaints about the programme and each user has the option to express their own wishes, share their knowledge and realize their individual needs.

Usually, the users find the Samarijan Karitas Institute themselves and apply as candidates to be included into the Vrtnica social welfare programme and consequently, the garden management as part of the rehabilitation.

The Samarijan Karitas Institute did not face any barriers, as the users are involved in their programme freely and they very much appreciate activities that come along, especially gardening, as it redirects their thoughts and helps them overcome their addiction. The institute faces some obstacles that are primarily of a financial nature, as they lack the funds to invest in the expansion of the project. For example, they want to arrange an orchard and an olive grove, but they do not have the means necessary for the initial investment.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Since the duration of the stay in the therapeutic community varies from nine months to a year for users, it would be pertinent to think about establishing a system that enables some kind of continuity, for example, arranging and maintaining a herb garden, crop rotation etc.

In the future, the Samarijan Karitas Institute wishes to continue with this practice, strengthen it further and take a more planned approach to its implementation. They would like to include these activities into the contents of their other programmes for the social inclusion of vulnerable people, because these activities allow users to acquire various practical knowledge, social experience and are able to activate themselves from a socially passive position into an active state. They gradually acquire the social and labour competences necessary to be included into the labour market. The institute projects that such a project could

upgrade its social programmes, thus gaining the possibility applying for financing through various EU tenders.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

The Samarijan Karitas Institute stresses the importance of suitable conditions for starting a gardening project in social programmes (land near the residential community), as well as financial resources for purchasing the equipment and materials, a project leader with the necessary knowledge and practice. The project must be perceived as part of the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and horticulture must be regarded as an opportunity to promote healthy eating, movement activities and personal user satisfaction. It is also very important to involve the target group in the planning phases and the implementation of the practice.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

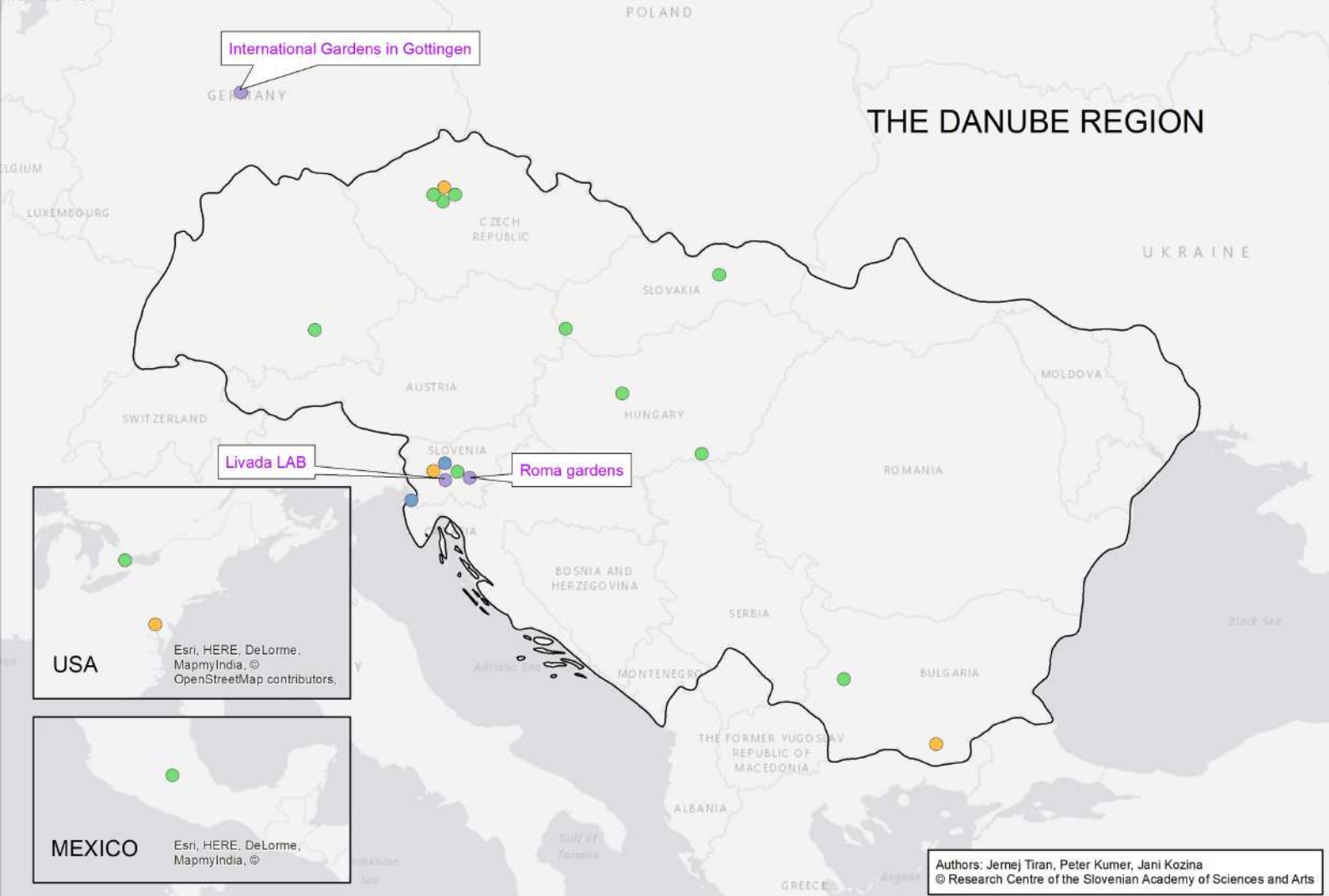
The main purpose of the Samarijan Karitas Institute's work is maintenance of abstinence and the social rehabilitation of their users. One way to achieve these goals is working therapy. The Vrtnica programme has done just that, it has included the community garden into their social welfare programme, which enables the users to work in the garden, fields and olive groves as part of their abstinence and social rehabilitation.

Since the main reason for joining this programme is social rehabilitation and overcoming addiction, involvement in the community garden is not the primary motivation for the users to be part of this programme, but they have recognized it as a good way to help them cope with their crisis and healing process.



Fruits of nature

(image credit: Archive Karitas Institute Samarijan)



SOCIAL GARDENS



LivadaLAB

Ljubljana
SLOVENIA

Target groups:

- decision makers: City of Ljubljana
 - vulnerable groups: young people who have ceased their secondary education and unemployed young people
 - other stakeholders: NGO Zavod BOB, Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, Department of Agronomy City of Ljubljana
-

Contact:

<http://www.zavod-bob.si/livada/>

LivadaLAB vegetable gardens started operating in 2014. They are located in the south-east of the densely populated area of the city of Ljubljana. The main initiators of the creation of the gardens in its present form were researchers from the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. The basic purpose of the gardens is the cultivation of healthy food in an urban environment and socializing. The gardens are intended primarily for young people who, through their involvement in the group, acquire new knowledge and skills for employment and self-employment.

written by:
Peter Repolusk,
Research Centre of the Slovenian
Academy of Sciences and Arts

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The gardens were established in the framework of the LivadaLAB project, which promotes organic food production and urban horticulture. The main objectives of the project are the development of urban green infrastructure, the development of social entrepreneurship, young people actively spending their free time, healthy lifestyles and developing skills on producing food in vegetable gardens.

LivadaLAB is one of the activities of the Zavod BOB NGO, an institution for education and cultural activities based in Ljubljana in Slovenia. The institutions' basic activities are the project learning of young adults, the development of autonomous employment skills, the organization of youth work, the development of cultural activities for the integration of the younger population, non-formal education and the development of a strategic partnership for promoting the employment and self-employment of young people. The most important vulnerable group with which the Zavod BOB is involved is young people who have ceased their secondary education.

The LivadaLAB project follows these contents in the field of urban gardening. The core of the operation are the gardens in the south-eastern part of the compact urban area of the Municipality of Ljubljana, in the Rudnik city quarter. The gardens belong to the type of allotment and educational gardens, the owner of

the land is the Municipality of Ljubljana.

The initiative for arranging the green areas at the site began in August 2014. The first initiator was the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, Department of Agronomy. After analysing the needs and wishes of the urban population and based on the City Urban Development Plan, they decided that the most suitable form would be gardens for food production. An analysis of the typology of gardening in Ljubljana has shown that young people are rarely involved in this activity. This has resulted in the cooperation with Zavod BOB, which actively performs youth street work. From the very beginning, the project was part of the international GREEN SURGE project (EU Consortium for Connecting People and Nature for Sustainable Cities).

The Municipality of Ljubljana, University and Zavod BOB were not the only partners to participate in the design of the project. The ideas of the future users—young people—were also included. In early 2014, the Learning Alliance LivadaLAB brought together thirty young professionals, students and unemployed young people (18–30 years) to develop, test and demonstrate an alternative citizen involvement approach to managing urban green areas in Ljubljana. In a two-year participatory planning process and using a project-based learning approach, the participants managed to substantially increase the

range of the ecosystem services on a test area of 6,000 m². On the professional side, the arranging of the gardens was set up in an interdisciplinary manner.

Various experts made up the expert team: agronomists, landscape architects, psychologists, sociologists, architects, foresters, biologists etc.

The LivadaLAB area is a multi-purpose area. In the early phases, small projects were carried out that were needed to establish the gardens: various types of high gardening beds, urban sports, pallet furniture, an adult playground and a biodiversity corner (a wetland meadow with the protected local flora). The gardens are an urban learning laboratory, where socializing and learning takes place. One of the development visions of the project is to create an outdoor centre for the youth.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The LivadaLAB project is based on the participatory approach. The methods and tools used are project learning, exploring, experimenting/testing and assessment. The experts' role is limited to providing know-how (including scientific knowledge) where and when needed in order to instil new knowledge. The vision of LivadaLAB is to create a base for a youth centre that is completely co-managed by young adults. Through this, an active platform for learning, dedication and engagement can be created in building an interdisciplinary working network.

In addition to young people and Zavod BOB, the project includes many stakeholders who help in the development of knowledge, organization and promotion of the project. The most intensively involved stakeholders in the LivadaLAB are the Municipality of Ljubljana and its Department of Environmental Protection as the owner of the land and the Department of Agronomy at the Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, which provides assistance from the mentors and students. The work also includes mentors and students in the fields of forestry, landscape architecture and architecture.

Professional and technical assistance is provided by stakeholders from small and medium-sized enterprises in the fields of forestry, urban greenery, construction and trade. The wider social aspect of the garden operations is supported by professional associations and institutes, such as the Slovenian Permaculture Society, institutions involved in fields of spatial policies and job creation, experts in the field of sustainable agriculture development and others. The LivadaLAB project also works with the Slovenian Philanthropy Association, which occasionally helps the young people with practical work in the gardens.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The LivadaLAB gardens are intended primarily for young people aged 15–30 who joined the group on their own initiative. The focus group consists out

of individuals who are looking for employment, and in some cases, also young people having difficulties in social integration. Working in the gardens strengthens their self-esteem, self-employment, enables learning about the cultivation of healthy food in urban environments and connects the young people with the wider community. Socializing is also an important aspect, since the participants meet regularly at weekly meetings. The central part of the gardens is dedicated to social and sports activities. In recent years, the work in the gardens has included many workshops, where young people learned about composting, cheese making, preparing a fireplace, making wooden furniture, beekeeping, and so on. The development and operation of the gardens also plays an important role in the development of the city's urban green infrastructure and urban policy.

The functioning of the gardens is not closed in a narrow and constant circle of participants; information about the content and the purpose of the operation is ongoing. Special information campaigns were held for the general public in May 2015 and May 2017. Information about the LivadaLAB gardens was also organized in a few city quarters of the Municipality of Ljubljana. They were also presented in the framework of local action groups that are engaged in the promotion of agriculture and rural areas in Slovenia.

A systematic campaign for spreading information on the gardens took place between April and November 2017, with a strong emphasis on the role of social

networks (Facebook and Instagram). From the beginning, the young users of the garden wanted to have various parallel and leisure activities in addition to the gardening. Future projects that are desired include the construction of a nomadic house, the cultivation of plants for useful materials and the sale of crops and products on public places. The young people want to attract as many new members as possible to work in the gardens or volunteers to organize events and activities.

Other residents of Ljubljana, especially children and their parents, also had suggestions for the enrichment of events on the green surface. In the future, educational and training workshops for children will be organised.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

Participation of different stakeholders is crucial in the development of gardens. It is important to balance between the management activities, professionalism, self-initiatives of participants, especially young people, and participation of the economy. Here, the role of young people's self-initiative is particularly expressed.

In order to attract the attention of young people and invite them to cooperate with their proposals, an invitation was published on social networks and information boards in LivadaLAB. The invitation was a short questionnaire, in which the target group expressed their knowledge on



Invitation to one of the activities (image credit: Gaja Repolusk)

the project and issues, their preferences for preferred activities and their attitude to green urban areas and urban gardening. Good practices from Slovenia and the world were presented to young people through social networks about public areas, sustainable practices, environmentally friendly food production and other activities related to urban gardening.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The green area is not just a garden for the cultivation of food, but it has a wider concept as well. It helps the participants gain new knowledge and exchange experience amongst themselves. It is actively included in the development of the city's green areas. On the other hand, the project of integrating young people into society and strengthening their capacity for employment and self-employment is continually ongoing. One of the key ambitions of LivadaLAB is to become an outdoor youth centre. An additional dimension of the gardens in Livada was integrating it into the European international GREEN SURGE, a research project in which experts from the Agronomy Department of the Biotechnical Faculty participated from the Slovenian side. Within the project, the

gardens in Livada were considered as one of the five European case studies – Urban Learning Labs. In this way, LivadaLAB was also promoted internationally, including publishing information in scientific publications.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

In order to establish similar projects, stressing the role of the municipality or other landowners is very important, since they can ensure the accessibility and infrastructure of the land and help develop urban green infrastructure in the city. Apart from the production of food, the project is also important because of the diversity and multifunctionality. A focus group of users must be included in formulating proposals about the content and forms of the gardens, from the very beginning. Setting precise rules for activities and behaviour is also needed. Experts and businesses should also be among the stakeholders, so that the quality can be maintained and new skills created.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Zavod BOB initiated the project with a desire to establish an outdoor classroom for young people who did not manage to finish school and to integrate them back into the school or work system.

The municipality administration joined the project due to the original idea of functionally using the green area network in the agglomeration of the

city. An important moment was also the effective cooperation with the institution that deals with the problems of integrating young people in the city and with a research institution that has a very clear concept of work for the project.

As a focus group, young people joined because of the socializing, their affection for activities related to nature and the opportunity to acquire new skills and skills that can help them find a job.



Way of cultivating tree seedlings
(image credit: Gaja Repolusk)



Roma gardens / Romski vrtovi

Trebnje
SLOVENIA

Target groups:

- decision makers:

Municipality of Trebnje

- vulnerable groups: Roma ethnic group (the inhabitants of the Vejar Settlement)

- other stakeholders: Centre for social work Trebnje - Day care center Kher šu beši

Contact:

Municipality of Trebnje

The Roma gardens in Trebnje are an example of the Roma ethnic group inclusion. Roma are still one of the most vulnerable groups in Slovenia. Initially, one hectare of arable land was planted with potatoes and harvested by the Roma. Today, Roma people rent the gardens where they produce a variety of vegetables. All the members of a few Roma families, including the youngest, are included in the work. One of the gardens is tended by children from the “Kher šu beši” day care centre, run by the Trebnje Center for Social Work. Educational assistance and other programs for children and adolescents from the settlement are provided in that garden. Seeds and gardening tools are provided by the “Preporod” Association for the Development of the Roma Minority and the municipality has built a fence around the land.

written by:
Mario Benkoč, PiNA -
Association for Culture and
Education

photo above: Roma kids engaged in gardening (image credit: Nataša Smolič)



Children are weeding the weeds (image credit: Nataša Smolič)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

For many years, the Municipality of Trebnje and the Trebnje Centre for Social Work have cooperated very closely and successfully regarding the development of new participatory approaches to socialize and include the Romani ethnic group. In the face of these efforts in 2014, the municipality adopted a Strategy with the propositions for solutions to the Romani question for the 2014–2020 period. The gardens and creating self-supply was part of the strategy. Pursuing these goals, the mayor of the municipality initiated establishing the gardens for the Roma ethnic group with the intention of teaching them to grow their own food and be self-sufficient, which would prevent the theft of field crops from other local farmers.

In the first season in 2015, the municipality (i.e. the Trebnje Public Communal Company) ploughed the field and planted the potatoes, so the Romani people saw the effects of this simple action. The action was coordinated together with the leader of the Romani

community, who is also a municipal counsellor. The result was potatoes for every family in the Vejar settlement. In the second year, the municipality put up a fence surrounding the field, divided it into smaller gardens (8 x 13 meters) and the interested families or individuals started to cultivate their own gardens.

At first, the rules for maintaining the practice were laid down by the mayor of the municipality, who is a regular visitor of the settlement and a good acquaintance of the inhabitants. Later, the coordination was taken over by the Kher Šu Beši day Centre, a social security program of the Trebnje Centre for Social Work, which helps to maintain the practice through educating, advising and connecting the Roma ethnic group with other stakeholders and with each other. With the exception of the main rules, which were set at the beginning of the project, Kher Šu Beši always makes an effort to involve the Roma ethnic group in creating the rules, often even letting them establish the rules by themselves.

Establishing the Roma gardens is a good example of both the bottom-up and top-down approach. Since the municipality is aware of the financial problems of the Roma and the problems regarding food supply and was in possession of a lot in the direct vicinity of the Vejar settlement, it came as a logical solution to turn it into a cultivated field. On the other hand, some of the inhabitants showed their interest in owning and cultivating their own gardens and communicated their wishes to the Municipal Roma Councillor Matija

Hočevar. As a result, everyone agreed and participated in the establishing the garden near the Vejar settlement.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The municipality and the mayor were the initiators of this project. Since the beginning, the municipality has functioned as the coordinator of the activities carried out by the inhabitants of Vejar: the Roma ethnic group, the Kher Šu Beši day care centre, the Trebnje Communal Company and the Preporod Romani Society. Their main target group are all the inhabitants of the Vejar settlement. They want to teach the parents how to provide food for their families and instil work habits in children. The municipality is the owner of the lot, it finances all the necessary equipment and activities so that the garden stays alive (the Communal Company tills the field, Kher Šu Beši works with the participants, etc.) and coordinates the work of all the involved stakeholders.

After the first season, when the “big potato field” was meant to be divided into smaller gardens for the Romani ethnic group, the municipality invited Kher Šu Beši to coordinate the establishment of allotment gardens. Kher Šu Beši went through the settlement to every family and invited them to apply for their own garden within the Roma garden. 23 families decided on a garden and one was reserved for Kher Šu Beši for educational assistance and other programs for children and adolescents from their day care centre. Thus, a large field was

divided into 24 gardens, each measuring a little over 100 square meters.

Currently, the role of Kher Šu Beši is to help the inhabitants with practical tips on working in the garden through practical demonstrations on when and how to sow, plant, prepare the soil (milling, ploughing, filling ...). They encourage the inhabitants to cultivate the garden and also present the financial aspect of gardening (for example, sowing 100 salads costs 1 euro, buying one salad in the store costs 1 euro). They present them with a healthy way of life, they have cooking workshops for children and parents with vegetables from the gardens where they cook healthy, vegetable dishes with them (soups, rice, sauces ...).

They also help to redistribute the uncultivated gardens to those families who do not have a garden yet and are interested in one. There have been 7 so far in 2018, so they are visiting families around the settlement to ask them if they intend on gardening this year, and if not, allocate the garden to another interested family. By doing this, they inform them that certain rules have been established to maintain the practice. It is also the practice to assign the gardens to those who took and cultivated them in the past and the gardeners can be assured that such a garden will remain in their lease. An unwritten rule is therefore that the garden plots are assigned to those who cultivate it. If some gardens plots are too large, the initiators encourage them to connect with other families and perhaps tend to one garden together to

make it more manageable, so some groups also share the garden plots. In some cases, they may not want their garden anymore, so they pass it on to someone who wants it; Kher Šu Beši lets them make the arrangement by themselves.

The inhabitants of the settlement are very happy that the municipality has heard their wishes for establishing the garden and that it is helping them maintain it. They feel that they are part of a group and they like community gardening. One participant said that he joined the gardens immediately when they invited him. He had had a smaller garden before, but now has more space and therefore more vegetables in the garden. Some of the gardeners are happy to share the crops with others, especially salads. Others are just happy to have their own crops; one Roma person said: "I hope I will have onions for the winter." Some interested elderly people wait until it is later in the day and go to the garden when there are not as many people there (one person is ill and is disturbed by noise). They are also satisfied with the social interactions in the group and have pleasant conversations in the garden. As they say: "We hang out."

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The municipality sees the gardens as beneficial for the social integration of the Romani group, because they learn about and see the benefits of gardening. The municipality thinks it is very encouraging that the inhabitants of Vejar took to the idea of having and cultivating their own gardens. On the other hand, the

municipality thinks there is still room for improvement, especially concerning the rest of the inhabitants of the municipality, who could be more involved in order to better understand the Romani culture and the people themselves. This could be a task for the near future.

Representatives of the Kher Šu Beši centre believe the gardens are very well accepted among the inhabitants. They say that the Roma people are people of nature and they just need a little push to start certain good practices (for example preparing fields, tools, seeds, encouragement, information ...). After the initial aid with the purchase of basic vegetables and tools, the inhabitants really started to regard the gardens as their own and they try hard to grow their own vegetables and to care of the arrangement of their gardens as well.

They buy seeds, seedlings and tools themselves or they rent and exchange amongst each other. If they have a surplus of vegetables, they give it to others. The garden has had a positive influence on their lives: for example, working in the garden allows them to relax (they have a lot of problems with nervous diseases, anxiety, headaches ...). It also encourages a more healthy diet (less meat, more vegetables, a variety of vegetables). The gardens in the settlement also provide a spot for a very strong social life, since they are a contact place where they socialize, learn from each other, exchange seeds and seedlings. Kher Šu Beši is very satisfied with the project, as they witness all its

directly positive aspects. They see a lot of mutual encouragement, socializing and setting a positive example (when someone cultivates the garden, others immediately follow and tend to their gardens).

The inhabitants of the settlement feel that the garden is good for everyone. They are glad that they can eat their own salad, cucumbers and other vegetables. They recognize them as healthier than those from the store that have been sprayed with pesticides. It is also cheaper for them and is always at hand. They like to be in the fresh air. They are also good observers: they discovered the lower gardens have more compact soil, as the water flows there when it rains. That soil then becomes harder to cultivate.

They also pointed out some difficulties or challenges they face and Kher Šu Beši helps them by advising how to solve them. For example, they expressed their desire for a tilling machine, so Kher Šu Beši directed them to a local farmer who is also tilling his field in the vicinity, so that they could discuss renting it from him and they were very grateful for the centre's help.

They also said that some crops were being destroyed by small animals, so Kher Šu Beši directed them to a town store where they consulted the shopkeeper on how to solve this with various preparations or poisons. One resident pointed out that he would like to have a tool shed in the garden, so she was encouraged to make her own. The garden has thus become quite a considerable part of their lives and impacts them very positively.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

Since the municipality and other stakeholders are committed to using new participatory approaches for the socialization and inclusion of the Romani ethnic group, they have adopted a gardening method precisely for this purpose. They initiated and were supported by the leader of the Romani community in executing a simple action: planting potatoes in the new field near the Vejar settlement.

After the positive response of the Romani inhabitants, the municipality, supported by the Kher Šu Beši day care centre, the Preporod Romani Society and the inhabitants, decided to continue with their vision and divided the field into smaller gardening plots and the interested families or individuals started to cultivate their own gardens. The general rules were laid down by the mayor of the municipality and later, when the coordination was passed on to Kher Šu Beši, they involved the inhabitants in the matter as well.

The Roma were glad the municipality had invited them to cooperate and were immediately in favour of it. Today, they are proud that the municipality has enabled them to cultivate the garden. The municipality did face some barriers. One of the problems encountered was the prejudice of the other inhabitants of the municipality, which dispersed quite quickly after they started working together.

The other problem are the thefts of the crop among the inhabitants of the settlement; the situation is better nowadays, but some thefts still occur every now and then. The Kher Šu Beši Day Centre works a lot with the socially vulnerable and excluded group of the Roma. They have been in daily contact with the inhabitants for several years now (since April 2009) and have been accepted there; the inhabitants even contact them if they have any difficulties or need information. While establishing the garden, all the settlement residents were personally invited to decide whether they want to have their own garden. In cases where Kher Šu Beši observed, for example, a fear of the unknown, they provided information, help and encouraged people to share the garden with others so that they would not feel “alone”.

The obstacles that Kher Šu Beši encountered in gardens are, in particular, that some families in the settlement chose not to have their own garden plot because of conflicts and misunderstandings with other inhabitants. Although the gardens have not been the subject of (larger) disputes so far, the centre is taking preventive measures by explaining the rules and conditions to the inhabitants. In one case, they helped a family by creating a garden in their backyard and provided them with information and encouragement. The other obstacle is the untreated gardens; for example, 7 of the 24 gardens were not cultivated last year and were overgrown by grass; this year, the centre representative have already visited the owners of these gardens to talk about whether they planned on gardening this

year, otherwise the plots will be passed on to others. There are no hard feelings if they do not want the plots, but if they do, they must promise to cultivate them this year. Kher Šu Beši also received information about an issue observed by the garden owners: somebody is stealing their crops at night. All in all, there are still some challenges they need to face, but there are more positive experiences and goodwill, which counts the most.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The future of the Roma garden is bright. Everyone involved is predicting that the garden has a great future. Kher Šu Beši predicts that all the inhabitants will have their own garden for cultivation, some on the common field and some in their yards. They see the gardens as an example of really good practice. The municipality agrees with the Trebnje Centre for Social Work and counts on their support for the project and cooperation. The municipality envisions that the Roma community will get used to self-sufficiency and that this will become second nature to future generations. In addition, the inhabitants welcome the idea and will be using the gardens as long as they can. One inhabitant said: “As long as I’m healthy, I’ll work in the garden. But if I am not able, my daughter will do the work.”

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Kher Šu Beši believes that a positive attitude and trust in the project is crucial and that a good project also

needs to nurture respect, trust and good contact with the Roma people. They are very resourceful, but they only need some initial stimulus and “material” and can then continue on their own. It is also advisable to be constantly available for questions. Because of some “abandoned” garden plots each year, they suggest that somebody (municipality or other stakeholders, organizer) oversees the gardens, has control of the situation and regularly regulates, controls or redistributes them among the other inhabitants; it is expected that some decline in gardening can happen.

The municipality as a representative and decision-maker agrees with the statement of Kher Šu Beši. They believe there is a need for mutual understanding, good cooperation and coordination of all the local actors who can each perform their tasks to develop good practices, such as the gardens for the Roma population. Patience is key, because the practices are not going to be accepted overnight: but we must be patient, persistent and try different approaches.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The personal motivation of the mayor of Trebnje is the gradual but certain integration of the Roma group into the wider society.

The Roma ethnic group members’ personal motivations are very different, but in the end, the message is the same: it is good for the body and soul and increases the quality of life. For example, they love spending time in the garden,

working together, growing their own food, teaching children, enabling them to experience gardening, picking fruits.

Kher Šu Beši sees growing vegetables in the garden and self-sufficiency as cheaper and healthier, both very important factors for the Roma, who are facing poverty and illness because of unhealthy and poor quality food. Working in the garden also relaxes them and given their problems with headaches and nervous diseases, riots, and conflicts, this form of relaxation is really beneficial to them. The main goal is that all (most) the inhabitants get their own garden, which is slowly, but steadily being realized.

A lot of effort, time and money have been invested in the gardens, not only by the municipality and other stakeholders such as Kher Šu Beši, but also by the Roma: this shows they have already “adopted” the garden as their own. This is an example of all the relations, connections, cooperation and positivity that can come to life in a garden.



Planting seeds of peppers and tomatoes
(image credit: Nataša Smolič)



International Gardens in Göttingen / Internationale Gärten e.V. Göttingen

Göttingen
GERMANY

Target groups:

- decision makers:
municipality
- vulnerable groups:
municipality
- other stakeholders:

Advisory Center for
Refugees; Internationale
Gärten Göttingen e.V.; other
interested groups such as
kindergartens

Contact:
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The International Gardens in Göttingen are the pioneer example in Germany for intercultural and inclusive garden projects. Originating from an initiative for Balkan war refugees in Göttingen, the initiative today coordinates five gardens across Göttingen with a specific focus on the inclusion of residents of various nationalities and background. Self-empowerment is an important feature of the gardening project, putting its members in the position to acquire new skills and competences through gardening work and associated activities. While struggling with administrative and coordination tasks, the International Gardens are overall a well-established initiative with numerous benefits including for its neighbourhoods and the city of Göttingen as a whole.

written by:
Florian Lintzmeyer,
ifuplan

photo above: refugees and other members doing garden work together in Geismar (image credit: Internationale Gärten Göttingen e.V.)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The idea to establish a garden started in 1995 in the Advisory Center for Refugees (Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge), a publicly supported organisation that provides legal advice to refugees. At that time, many refugees from the Balkan and Iran/Iraq wars arrived in Göttingen, among them women who used to have residential gardens they missed in the new environment. In their eyes, the existing women's' café was not sufficient, people wanted to be active and creative. So the gardening idea stemmed from the strong feeling of "We miss our gardens". Consequently, a self-organised initiative was formed under the leadership of Mr. Tassew Shimeles, comprising of refugees, migrants and German families.

After having searched for a suitable plot for three years and putting an announcement in the newspaper that refugees are looking for a place to garden, the owner of a vacant plot approached the initiative. She was not planning on developing the plot for at least 5 years, so she decided to grant the gardening group access to the plot. At the beginning, there was an extensive one-year planning process and debate among the members of the initiative on how the garden should look. There was a strong desire that the garden should be open to everybody, irrespective of origin. The initiators did not want to establish a conventional residential garden and the inclusion aspect was at the centre from the very

start. In order to be able to serve as a sponsoring organisation, the above-mentioned members of the initiative formed a registered association (Internationale Gärten Göttingen e.V.) quickly after the establishment of the first garden. Later, more gardens were established throughout the city.

The initiative did not come from an individual; it was a joint and bottom-up effort from an entire group of activists, the rest developed over time. At the beginning, the self-empowerment aspect was very strong and the garden association organized literacy courses for Kurds when they found out they were not able to read and write. Recently, the association adopted a more resource-oriented approach, guided by the consideration: What competences and skills are vested in their members that can be activated to pass them on to others? Through its diverse members, the garden initiative is able to offer translation services in all kinds of languages to local public institutions such as schools. In turn, this outreach also strengthens the group itself.

The rules were developed in the course of everyday experiences. At the beginning, the association tried not to set up too many rules. The dominant rule of the gardens, however, is that they are supposed to be politically neutral. This is highly relevant to avoiding conflicts, because many refugees are politically conscious and engaged. The gardens, however, should be a place to start over, to leave war

experiences, trauma and conflicts behind. With regard to the initial motivation, each initiator had and has their own motivation and interests and everybody draws their own benefit from the garden. For some, the garden is a meeting place to escape their isolation. For others, gardening and working with the land is an important aspect, as well as the idea of self-sufficiency and the connection between their origin and Germany and to cook and eat together.

At the beginning, the only stakeholders involved were the initiators and residents living next to the garden plots. In the meantime, the gardens have opened themselves up and everyone who becomes a member can actively collaborate: children, schools, transition town groups, other neighbourhood initiatives, the municipality, churches and kindergartens can join or organize activities. Besides these “obvious” stakeholders, there are less obvious, but nonetheless relevant ones such as universities, represented through various students who completed their masters’ thesis on the garden initiative.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The initial idea was to establish a place for refugees from areas of military conflicts where they can feel welcome and at home. But overall, there is not a single target group; the gardens are open to everybody. The garden initiative focuses on reciprocal integration, based on the conviction that integration can only succeed if it comes from both sides.

According to the garden initiative, it is important to keep in mind that refugees are not all alike, they are new in Germany, but they are also new to each other. The fact that more than 20 countries are represented in the International Gardens makes communication quite difficult, not only in terms of language, but also in a cultural sense. Therefore, the initiative takes care that all of their garden groups are composed of people representing various countries of origin. This mixture is considered crucial for promoting reciprocal communication and fostering understanding.

In the beginning, the garden initiative was very family-oriented, as family ties play a huge role in the specific cultural contexts. More recently, the initiative is trying to respond to the fact that many refugees are left to their own devices. Also, the initial focus on women-oriented activities has recently shifted towards more cultural and art activities.

The role of the municipality is that in the case of some of its recently added gardens, it grants the association and its members access to public property on the basis of a lease agreement.

It turned out, however, that a grassroots organization such as the International Gärten Göttingen cannot be established and maintained on its own. It needs assistance and an interface, a place or activity where refugees and the host society can

interact. For facilitating that, it requires local civic society partners such as the municipality or local politicians.

According to the concept of the gardening initiative, gardens need to make a contribution to society: not only to one's own family, but to society as a whole. The initiative stresses that the gardens and their members try to give something back to society, that they are engaged in the community, e.g. in the form of translation or mediation services. In the course of the recent migration crisis, the association drafted a concept on how the International Gardens can help refugees.

Now, its members are helping at migrant facilities as translators. At the same time, the association stresses that not all tasks associated with integration can be solely placed on voluntary institutions.

For users, the gardens have become a platform where Germans and foreigners come in contact with each other and share their material, skills and know-how. The gardens offer a multitude of opportunities to add specific activities such as an apiary.

The benefits for the gardeners are summed up in this statement: "It was an indirect and slow, but effortless process of integration into the German society through gardening, including the improvement of my knowledge of German." Besides individual plots, the gardens also feature common gardening projects/plots, initiated by one gardener, which are open to everybody. The idea is to focus on a different topic each year and to plant, harvest, cook and consume

together. Other joint activities include biweekly garden meetings in the associations premises, where members come together to cook, eat and discuss various topics related to gardening. These meetings and their discussions are also documented and communicated, so every member feels informed.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Self-empowerment is very important for the garden initiative. In the gardens, members learn the German language much faster than through language courses. This puts them in a better position on the labour market, which is a considerable economic benefit. People are becoming qualified through gardening projects, they have a chance to look beyond their own peer group and receive advice with regards to further education or neighbourhood activities.

This way, the International Gardens contribute to social cohesion and social peace, provide a place of belonging and foster neighbourhood relations. Fears articulated by the neighbouring residents turned out to be unsubstantiated. The garden members themselves are fascinated by how casual reciprocal understanding across national or cultural differences grows by working together in the gardens.

The initial inhibitions against people from other countries gradually disappear as gardeners realize that even if their fellow gardeners might have a different skin colour, religion or diet, they still have a lot in common.

In the eyes of a member, this is the beginning and the basis for international understanding. In the eyes of the initiator, identity and a sense of place is not something that just happens, it needs to be acquired. Children growing up in and around the gardens are proud; they grow up experiencing respect and appreciation.

In 2014, the International Gardens introduced beekeeping; today, their gardens feature 16 bee colonies maintained by members of the association, producing between 100 and 200 kg of honey each year. After a mandatory deduction for the operational costs of the association, the beekeepers are allowed to market the remaining share themselves. This constitutes an additional income for the beekeepers and the initiators would advise all gardening projects to equally consider these or other income-generating activities as a diversification strategy.

Options for improvements are seen in regard to funding and staff. While the gardens are at their core a voluntary activity, organizers report that a permanent staff of 1–2 people, e.g. financed by the municipality, would be highly welcome for the administrative and coordination tasks.

In order to make the gardens and their activities accessible to socially disadvantaged locals—migrants and refugees alike, the association needs to keep costs and expenses to an absolute minimum. The socially compatible membership fee of EUR 10 annually is not substantial enough to guarantee proper

funding. This often restricts the activities and compromises the objectives of the International Gardens.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

Overall, members of the garden have been satisfied with the participation process, which includes the decision-making process with members' meetings and the self-activation of each member and their ideas and competences based on the resource-oriented approach.

However, they point to the fact that the integrative and inclusive element of the garden strongly depends on the frequency of activities and contacts. Given the outlined financial restraints, it would be desirable to have additional funds to cover basic financing and to be able to offer additional activities for the gardening community members, most of whom come from socially disadvantaged groups.

Part of the participatory approach is also the need to arrive at consensual compromises between different interests of gardeners in the field of gardening practices (use of fertilizers, chemicals). These issues are being discussed among the members and put up for a vote among them.

The International Gardens reach out to new members and the public through various activities, including a close cooperation with the Municipal Council for Integration (Integrationsrat Göttingen), the Network Migration



Establishment of a new plot
(image credit: Internationale Gärten Göttingen e.V.)

(Netzwerk Migration) and local neighbourhood initiatives in the respective urban districts.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The initiator sees the older generation of gardeners being replaced by a new generation, so the sustainability in the sense of a long-term existence seems like it is being achieved. If the networking activities continue to grow, the organizers expect the garden will have a secure future. In the meantime, the International Gardens comprise of five gardens in different neighbourhoods in Göttingen, which are provided by different land owners (Municipal Department for Schools, Municipal Department of Public Properties, the Protestant Church) on a lease basis.

The association is trying to join forces with other small garden projects in Göttingen to establish a local network that supports each other, e.g. in administrative tasks (writing proposals, developing concepts).

A crucial point is whether the association will manage to allocate a staff position to take care of the administrative aspects. Currently, the association carries out the

“Taking root – refugees become neighbours” funding project. These projects, however, usually only cover the costs of the project staff and not that of the administrative overhead, which needs to be covered through the volunteers.

The representative of the gardening group hopes to see many more intercultural gardening projects in many other cities across Germany and abroad. Members of the International Gardens are willing to consult other projects about to their concept and framework and to invite those interested to Göttingen for a first-hand experience.

In the long run, the success of the gardening project depends on its ability to recruit younger people and families with young children and to take over responsibilities, e.g. as integrators of the garden community. In that respect, the members also see the need to invest more in publicity.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

The organizers stress that any specific advice depends on what each specific initiative wants to achieve. But there are some general rules that are helpful:

- Keep in mind which needs of other people you are addressing. You might often be supposing something that is not equally shared.
- Make sure your partners understand what you mean.
- Question stereotypes; they can make people literally “speechless”.

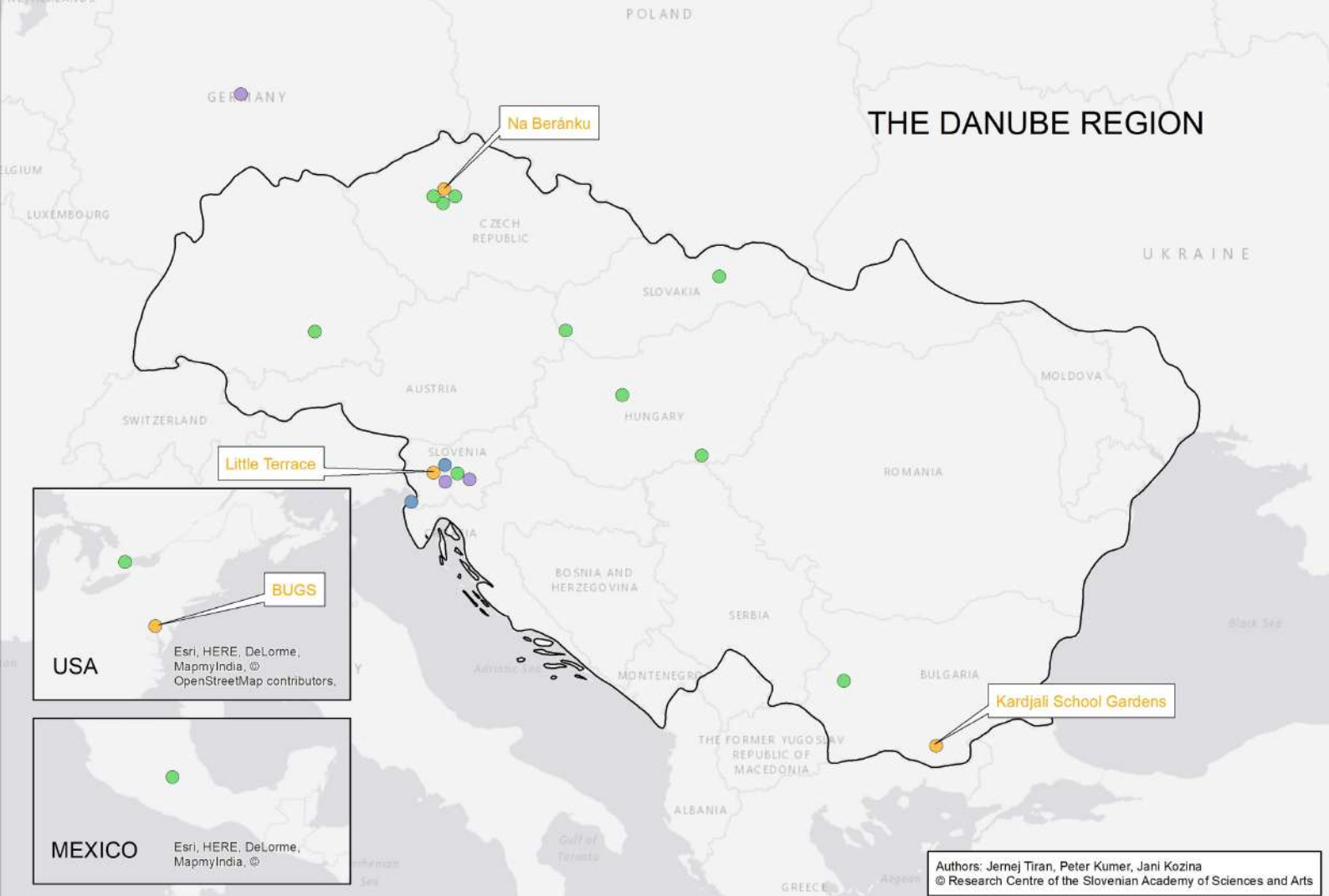
- Do not be quick to judge, let things happen.
- People have fears that must not be underestimated and these fears need to be considered and taken seriously.
- Consider any asymmetric preconditions for communication between individual groups in order to enable broad participation.
- Create spaces for participation.



Refugees and members plant a plot
(image credit: Internationale Gärten Göttingen e.V.)

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The motivation and engagement of one initiator is rooted in his personal experience as a migrant fleeing from an African state in the 1980s. He was welcomed and received full support in Germany, but is aware that not every refugee nowadays is having the same positive experience. Hence, his impulse was to give something back. In a way, his initiative and civic engagement in the association can be seen as a reaction to his experience in his home country, where political engagement was prohibited.



EDUCATIONAL GARDENS



Mala terasa / Little Terrace

Ljubljana
SLOVENIA

Target groups:

- decision makers: Anton Grosek, former principal, Darja Silan, initiator and biology teacher
 - vulnerable groups: grammar school students
 - other stakeholders: Luka Vidic and Sara Čok, landscape architects from Pazi!Park organization, Uroš Centa, carpenter, companies Semenarna, Unicommerce and Knauf Insulation
-

Contact:

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At the initiative of the practice, biology teacher Darja Silan, a diverse partnership was established: school leaders, teachers and students, landscape architects, donor companies and artisans joined to create a garden on the terrace of the Jože Plečnik High School, which is located in the city centre of Ljubljana. It took them 6 months from the first idea to when the seeds sprouted and the school garden flourished in all its diversity. The process of constructing the school garden included several creative working meetings to settle on a functional design. First, the common wishes were determined, and then the spatial and material conditions were examined. In the implementation phase, the garden was gradually realized through workshops where students played the central role.

written by:
Nela Halilović,
Municipality of Velenje

photo above: Gardening became much more than just planting, harvesting and maintaining its growth. It became the method for socialising, a life-long learning polygon and intergenerational cooperation between all the actors involved (image credit: Luka Vidic)



28 species of vegetables, 27 species of trees, shrubs and flowering plants and 17 different herbs, together more than 113 plants, have been planted on the surface of only 50 square metres
(image credit: Luka Vidic)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The small terrace in front of the biology classroom was not being used for any particular activity. It was divided from the classroom by a big window and the view of the empty terrace was not very pleasant. A few greening initiatives had been proposed in order to improve the site, but they all failed due to the sunny position of the terrace and mainly because of the lack of watering options during summer holidays.

The school is a part of the Eco-schools international programme. At one of the conferences that were organised within this programme, the school representatives learned about a Slovenian innovation called Urbanscape green cubes, which was presented by Knauf Insulation. Green cubes is a mineral material mixed in the soil, making it airy and improving the absorbance of water, so the garden needs less watering and provides better growing conditions for plants. By incorporating this solution into the design, the view from the biology classroom is now very different. It opens into a small school garden, which is also used as an outdoor classroom.

The students can observe and work in the garden the entire year, where they develop many different skills, not only those connected to gardening. On the other side, it is also a nice place for teachers to hold meetings or just relax there during recess.

The students were included in every stage of the planning and development of the garden; their involvement has consequently made them very devoted to its maintenance. The mentors supported them in every phase, providing guidance and advice. Parents were also informed about the new initiative at school. Other participants in developing the garden included the school principle, landscape architects from the Pazi!Park non-governmental organization and donors who not only offered support in terms of materials, but also with their expert advising. In the final phase of development and when the garden started to grow, there was also a lot of interest from the regional media.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

Anton Grosek, former principal of the high school, immediately approved the biology teacher's idea, especially because she planned to include the students in the process. They had been searching for solutions for some new green space for the students for years, since the school is located in the very centre of Ljubljana. When budgeting the annual financial plan, he included the estimated costs for a garden and ever

since, some money has been put aside for the maintenance costs; even the new principal has continued this practice. They have also adapted their annual working plan to include activities for garden maintenance. The principal excluded himself from some phases of the garden development, but stayed informed on all the following activities. He trusted the initiator, Miss Darja Silan, and the landscape architects to do their best to set up the school garden and involve the students in the activities.

The teacher collaborated with representatives from the Pazi!Park organization to gather knowledge and with a local company, Semenarna Ljubljana, which donated seeds, proposed the appropriate plants and provided the directions for further garden maintenance. The company Unicommerce equipped the team with gardening tools by the manufacturer Fiskars.

Landscape architects prepared the concept and action plan for constructing the garden and later collaborated in supporting role with the educating, physical work etc. They had to rethink their plans, since the high school building is protected as a national cultural heritage. It was designed by well-known Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik. For this reason, they had to consider the practical view of designing and take in account the additional load on the flat roof and make sure that the surrounding fence is high enough for public outdoor activities. By considering these facts, they allocated the garden

beds gradually by height, as well as taking into count other geographical features (seclusion, rainfall etc.). They used their knowledge and experience from other similar projects to carry out the workshops with the students, engaging them and guiding them through the work. Local carpenter Uroš Centa made and assembled the raised beds together with the students and Luka Vidic from Pazi!Park helped them make benches from recycled wooden elements.

The students seized the opportunity for a garden with its endless possibilities for work and socialization, gaining knowledge during the process of arranging a school garden, from the planning to the implementation and maintenance. Above all, the garden offered them the opportunity to form a genuine bond with the teachers in their different roles. The possibility to meet outside the classical concept of school work, roles and classrooms seems to be the most significant benefit of a school garden. Arranging a garden requires dedication, work and time from all the participants, which gives them a much needed sense of usefulness and meaning to the learning process.

SECRET INGREDIENT

School is said to be a preparation for life. It teaches us about the importance of knowledge, work, respect, and cooperation; about the ways of acquiring, developing, sharing and using knowledge. Extracurricular learning can be equally or even more important than formal learning. Developing the ability to discover new things, creating interpersonal relationships and exploring oneself and

one's attitude to the environment are at least as important as earning good grades. A school garden offers opportunities for free and easy learning, be it formal and informal. Learning and working for school is essential, but other activities and projects are more interesting to students. They are a matter of free choice, an area of informal learning and significant opportunities. A school roof garden makes it possible to carry out many activities in different subjects and projects, be they strictly or loosely organised. Arranging and maintaining the garden, choosing, growing and caring for plants in a roof garden: all this stimulates the development of practical skills and new knowledge, strengthens the student's persistence, the ability to cooperate and coordinate far beyond the classical school curriculum. An arranged garden is both a learning and social environment, a mirror of knowledge and skills and above all, a picture of a shared life and work between students and teachers. The informal nature and contents of a garden make it an ideal educational environment and we can sincerely say that each school would benefit from one nowadays.

The story of the school garden would not have been nearly as successful as it was if they had not gathered all the knowledge and sources from different stakeholders and stressed the importance of including students in the entire process. The collaboration created an exchange of knowledge and skills, so everyone profited in some way.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

The students were satisfied with their involvement, since they were creating a new place for themselves. According to the Little Terrace brochure, the students and mentors worked for more than 500 hours to set it up. The roof garden has become an outdoor classroom, but at the same time, it is much more than that; it is the place where you can grow your own vegetables and herbs, it is a place where you can socialize and relax and it is a place of intergenerational cooperation.

Landscape architects held workshops and educated the students, as the future garden users, on the most suitable methods for them. They trusted them to make the garden beds, pots, benches, table etc. The students were actively involved in all the activities surrounding the garden such as planting, harvesting and later also co-creating the programme (workshops and events on gardening and cooking with the harvested vegetables). The mentors were surprised about the students' work and their care for the garden as their own place they co-created. They did not face any obstacle in addressing them at any point. They are convinced that this is the result of the school leaders' support and involving different participants in the process.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

During the winter months, when the school garden is at rest, a group of students under the mentorship of Robert Jamnik and



Students with their teachers are developing an irrigation system for easier future maintenance of the garden (image credit: Luka Vidic)

Darja Silan plans improvements for the coming seasons. They combine their knowledge in the fields of computer science, electronics, biology, and physics. They created an automatic irrigation system that will ensure the successful growth of plants in the school garden. The students are showing a lot of interest and care about the future of the garden by collaborating in the development and production process of the irrigation system. Thanks to their ideas, the future of the garden is bright and even though they leave school every 4 years, they transfer their knowledge to younger students, so process will continue.

The successful project of renewing the small terrace at school also resulted in the motive to renew another, larger terrace on same building. The second terrace has been renewed into a park, a new green public space in the urban area of Ljubljana. It hosts different exhibitions and other events. It will also soon be open to the local community for organizing smaller events. The renovation of the second terrace again included the help of architects and

landscape architects from Pazi!Park, so they are keeping their multi- functional role in these kind of projects and will continue to do so in the future.

They are planning a cooperation with an urban beekeeper and are doing an in-depth research on urban beekeeping. They will prioritize using honey plant species, which will be more suitable for bees.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

One should always start with an idea, presented to as many stakeholders as possible who could help with the later implementation. The first step should always be supported by decision-makers (in the case of the rooftop garden at school that was a principle who was open and supportive during the entire process). An action plan made by experts who considered all the aspects and opinions and offered technical and aesthetic guidance made the implementation and maintenance process a lot easier. One of the main measures of sustainable planning is definitely to involve different experts in order to gain new knowledge and to include future users into the process as soon as possible.

As the users, students were automatically involved in the story of the garden, as they used it as an outdoor classroom. Everyone was welcome to co-create garden in all the further activities and it happened quite spontaneously.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The personal motives of the stakeholders are different, but pretty much have the same connotation. Everyone was passionate about their work and felt that something as small as this could grow to be very large.

The school employees wanted to utilize the empty terrace and implement a somewhat unconventional approach to their school curriculum. Representatives of Pazi!Park wanted to demonstrate their expertise in spatial planning and a few of them had actually been students at the school years ago, so they donated a bit of themselves to the school and the students who came years after them. Sponsors wanted to promote their knowledge and materials. Last but not least, the students somehow simply chose to go with the flow of what was happening with the desire to do and learn something new.

The think-a-like project team did their best to accomplish the common goal of creating an urban garden on the rooftop, which grew into an outdoor classroom, a new open space for students and a testing project for products that donor companies provided. Gardening as a teaching method became much more than just planting, harvesting and maintaining its growth. It became the method for socialising, life-long learning and intergenerational cooperation between all the actors involved.



The park sits on the roof of the high school with an overview on The Republic Square and the parliament (image credit: Luka Vidic)



Kardjali School Garden / Училищна градина в Кърджали

Kardjali
BULGARIA

Target groups:

- decision makers: municipal and district government
 - vulnerable groups: children of different ethnic origin
 - other stakeholders: neighbours; care centers for elderly people and children with special needs
-

Contact:

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The primary school of Kliment Ohridski in the town of Kardjali developed an organic garden in an abandoned part of its school yard. The initiative involved children from various ethnic groups: Bulgarian, Turkish and Roma; children in a vulnerable position and children with disabilities; elderly people and active neighbours and even experts from the local municipality and other institutions. The project has had a positive effect on all the participants who continue to maintain and improve the garden and who have been developing new joint initiatives ever since.

written by:
Simana Markovska,
Association of South-
Western Municipalities

photo above: A place for everyone (image credit: Sofia Kalinova)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The idea for this practice came from Djaner Sami Emin, an ecology graduate studying in the Netherlands and Sweden. According to him, more and more people have been moving to the town of Kardjali from the neighbouring villages in recent years and their opportunities to grow fruits and vegetables by themselves, as they had done for many years, have been quite limited. At the same time, the city youth is losing their connection to the land and agriculture. Djaner saw the solution to both problems in the establishment of an organic garden in the urban centre of Kardjali.

That idea was brought to Margarita Todorova, the director of Kliment Ohridski School at Djaner's old neighbourhood in Kardjali. She embraced the idea and shared it with her fellow teachers and some of the pupils. The entire enthusiastic team was formed and they decided to utilize an abandoned part of the school yard: the former land of a closed kindergarten that the municipality (owner of the land) could not maintain. The group of enthusiasts cleared the yard, repaired the fence and planted the first fruit trees and fruit bushes. Then, the neighbours from the surrounding houses joined in and the work accelerated.

Now, there are crates with seedlings, beds with spices and composters that can accumulate not only the school's biological waste, but also of the entire neighbourhood. The garden has a

system for drip irrigation that conserves water. Recycled materials were used to make tables and benches for the pupils and for neighbours who come to just sit and enjoy the pleasant atmosphere. There are no rules for maintaining the garden, but a schedule showing which class is in charge of taking care of it.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

According to the school director, Mrs. Todorova, the garden has always been intended mainly for the school children, considering the fact that the school includes children from three ethnic groups: Bulgarian, Turkish and Roma. In addition, they welcomed the participation of children with various disabilities from the nearby Nadezhda Care Center, who were very enthusiastic in helping with irrigation. Old people from the retirement home in the neighborhood also come to do some small tasks and sometimes to just sit and chat with the children. The initiative has gained a steady organizational and publicity support from the District Governor's Office.

Elif Erhan Hayrula is one of the pupils of Turkish origin at the school and also an active participant in the development of the garden. She and her fellow pupils joined the initiative at the very beginning, back in April 2015. They saw this as an opportunity to create a new place at the school for relaxation and at the same time for growing organic fruits, vegetables and herbs. They were all very enthusiastic and everybody was willing to take part in the creation of their own place, cleaning, planting and bringing seeds and

other materials from home every day. It came out even better than expected and now they have a terrific place to play outside, to just sit in the shade or taste delicious strawberries. The best part is that it belongs to all of them and they continue to maintain it together.

Anjela Vasileva, an expert from the Landscaping Department of the Municipality of Kardjali, is trying to support many civil initiatives in the town, though she is frequently limited by the lack of funds. She has assisted the process of establishing the organic garden at Kliment Ohridski School from the very beginning; she took part in all organizational work meetings, provided hazel trees and cypresses and attended the official opening. Now, her role is mostly representative, as the kids and neighbours are doing all the work by themselves.

Vildan Sefer is an expert in “Education, Culture and Youth Activities” at the District Governor’s Office and also a neighbour of the school who has supported the initiative from the very beginning in every way she could, e.g. by enhancing the initial organizational work meetings, making a connection with the Forestry to provide trees for planting or securing professional advice from one of her colleagues—expert in agriculture—who recommended how the children could manage with the shortage of light in one of the garden’s corners, brought in thuja seeds etc. Vildan also helped to secure publicity for the initiative, but she thinks the greatest role in this belongs to the Facebook Group of the Kardjali Organic Garden, which has over 400 members.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

The director of Kliment Ohridski School is very decisive about making the school a desirable place for the children. This school is part of a European network of schools promoting children’s health. They host many initiatives, e.g. the Non-Technology Room where children can draw and sculpt, get their hands dirty, play Monopoly etc. Margarita Todorova sees the organic garden as yet another opportunity to keep children in the school and make their lives interesting. They organize various events in the garden like Day of Flowers, Day of Milk and others. The garden cannot be expanded in the present location, but they intend to improve its appearance with more flowers and other decoration.

From the point of view of the pupils, Elif Hayrula thinks this project has been good, as they learned to take care of the garden, plants and the environment as a whole. They gained a lot of knowledge and it was fun at the same time. She says they are constantly improving the garden by planting new trees, re-arranging, installing bird-cages and other activities.

Anjela Vasileva from the municipality thinks this practice is good, as it is innovative and can be multiplied easily in other schools and other cities. At the same time, Vildan Sefer sees the garden as only the beginning, since after its establishment, both pupils and teachers have gained self-confidence; they have made a lot of presentations of this practice all over the country and have been developing further projects for the school ever since.



Work and art alike (image credit:Sofia Kalinova)

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

On behalf of all the pupils involved in the practice, Elif Hayrula has expressed her satisfaction with the process, especially with the fact that it is open to everyone; they distributed the land internally among the classes, so there is room for all the children. The fact that other people came to help, including neighbours and experts from the municipality and the district governor's office, was inspiring for the pupils.

The municipal expert, Anjela Vasileva, was happy that the garden could offer something to do to various groups of people: the school itself with different ethnic and minority groups, but also to the neighbouring centres for children with disabilities and elderly people. When the pupils and teachers started work on the abandoned yard, word quickly spread around the neighbourhood and it was good that everyone could take some part to the extent of their abilities.

The same notion is being shared by Vildan Sefer. She was fascinated by the way the children from the school were working together: Bulgarian, Turkish and Roma, children from the town and from the villages, even children deprived of parental care who used to run away from school before the garden's establishment. All the children were included through their teachers in every step of the process and there was personal attention paid to each of them. At the very beginning there were no rules; all the participants were learning as they went, but it was inspiring that support came from various places. For example, the municipality brought soil and fertilizers; the Youth Rotary Club made benches outside the garden, and so on. The only limitation came in the summer, as the children were on vacation; but then, the work was carried by the non-teaching staff, the neighbours and the children and elderly people from the two care centres.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The school is already expanding activities connected to the garden. Children received lessons in organic gardening, composting, nature protection and other environmental topics. As a next step, they organized a green classroom in the yard next to the garden, which is used actively when the weather allows it. They are sharing their experience and have plans to diversify the 'assortment' of the garden.

Elif Hayrula thinks that the garden can bring joy to the future classes at school as well. She wishes the place will be maintained after she leaves school, so that



A different schoolyard (image credit: Sofia Kalinova)

she can come back any time and enjoy it. Anjela Vasileva hopes the practice also inspires other schools and that more such gardens will develop around the municipality and the country. The neighbours are proud and happy that their school has the best yard in town, but also that they can observe how the initiative has affected the children and teachers, so that they are hungry for more work and future success.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Margarita Todorova's advice to beginners is to be persistent and dedicated and to remember this is all for the children or other target groups. Anjela Vasileva would add that nothing is impossible if the right people gather together. Vildan Sefer agrees and sums up that the people profiting are not just the pupils and teachers, but society as a whole.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The school director has been a teacher for more than 30 years and she has always searched for ways to make the life of the pupils at the school interesting; she has

always searched for something different and new. She believes that taking the teaching process out of the classroom and making it more practical should be a key element of education. She sees the organic garden exactly as such an initiative and she is very happy that now more and more children spend a lot of their time at school.

The children from all ethnic groups were happy they could do various things together and that the results of their work were visible and tangible. They say the feeling of being able to go to the garden and pick up a strawberry grown by yourself is like nothing else in the world.

The municipal expert is trying to support various public initiatives whenever she has the opportunity to do so. The Kliment Ohridski school garden is a model for Kardjali and something to boast about, not to mention that it is the future for urban environments.

The neighbours are delighted to have such a nice place in the vicinity, where everyone can sit, chat and even pick some herbs. Vildan Sefer was so happy to see how the work in the garden affected the entire school and neighbourhood. She wishes everyone could experience that feeling.



Na Beránku

Prague
CZECH REPUBLIC

Target groups:

- decision makers: Prague 12 municipality, Department of Environment at Prague Municipality, Public School Na Beránku, Montessori programme
- vulnerable groups: children from public middle school Na Beránku, Montessori programme and the neighbourhood, elderly
- other stakeholders: parents of children from the Montessori programme and the Public Middle school Na Beránku, teachers, representatives of NGO Montessori cesta and other NGO indirectly connected with the school garden

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The Na Beránku school garden is located in Prague 12 on the grounds of the Na Beránku public middle school. The garden is located between the school's playgrounds and a nature reserve and was officially founded by the Montessori cesta (track) NGO, which belongs to the Montessori programme at the Na Beránku Middle school. The garden was created mainly for the kids from the Montessori programme, who are also the designers, builders and users of it. One of the main purposes of the garden is to provide a "green classroom" for educational activities. Teachers from the Montessori programme, parents and other volunteers are also involved in the gardening activities. The garden is funded primarily by occasional grants at the municipality level. The initiator of the garden was Ms. Jana Neumajerová.

written by:
Barbora Kvačková,
Municipality Prague 9



Raised vegetable gardens, a result of the project Green oasis funded by Parnerství. In the background is the outdoor thatched classroom (image credit: Jana Neumajerová).

The Na Beránku school garden is located in Prague 12. It lies on the grounds of the Na Beránku public middle school in Praha 12 – Modřany. The school garden is located between the schools' playgrounds and a nature reserve.

Two educational programmes are situated within the school: the Montessori programme and the public middle school. The teachers and coordinators of the Montessori programme are trying to establish a collaboration between these two educational schemes; unfortunately, the communication is scarce from the public middle school side. Children of the public middle school and their parents are invited to the public events at the garden. This way, the cooperation is more likely to be established between both parental clubs than through the director's authorities.

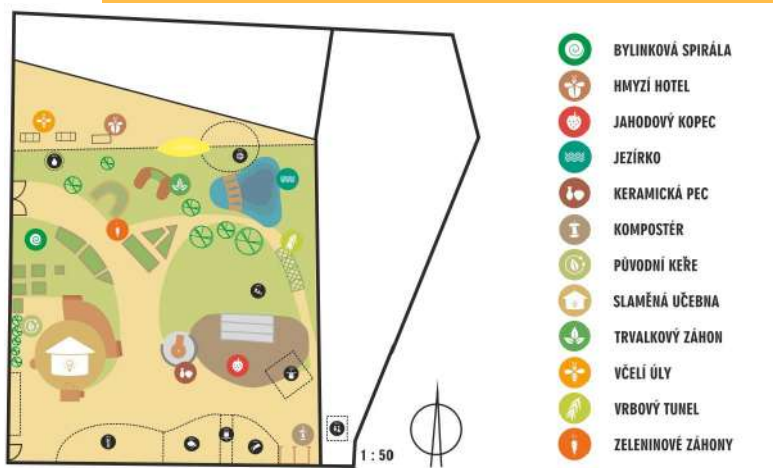
Ms. Jana Neumajerova has been the initiator of the garden from the beginning. She became a voluntary coordinator of the project and keeps in constant contact with the project and the people involved. She is present at the

beginning of each student project in the garden. The term "project" is used for particular small projects in the garden: building a small shed; digging a water pond; building a wicker-work tunnel; making the garden beds and more. She is also responsible for raising money for each of these projects. She applies for grants of the subsidy programs announced by the capital city town hall or the municipality Prague 12 town hall.

In order to gain a better knowledge of the field, Ms. Neumajerova as a coordinator contacted many initiatives and NGOs focused on urban gardening and education in nature:

- Agriculture Supporting Communities – Modřany
- The scout association – occasional help at the garden
- Nadace proměny – foundation organizing meetings focused on school gardens
- Chaloupy o.p.s. – NGO focused on using the garden as an educational tool

Ms. Neumajerova was soon joined by 2 parents and 3 teachers who wanted to help her, and created the club, which developed into the Montessori cesta (track) NGO. It was founded as a supporting NGO institution in order to gather people and finance in the garden. It was a co-organizer of an international "Children in Permaculture" conference, focused on community gardens, school gardens and urban gardening. The conference was organized as a final event of the three-year project Children in Permaculture, funded via Erasmus+.



Garden plan designed by 7th and 8th grade kids who were engaged in graphical workshops. They came up with different symbols for objects in the garden and prepared Czech and English text (image credit: Jana Neumajerová)

In the past, the Na Beránku school garden has welcomed the participants of this international conference more than once. The vulnerable group included in the garden activities are kids from the Montessori programme, who are also the designers, builders and users of this garden. The stakeholders of the garden also include parents working in the garden, teachers of the Montessori programme and a blogger, Tomáš Hajzler, who is focused on school gardens and alternative education.

The decision makers' role is assigned at multiple levels. Ms. Eva Tylová assumes the role of decision maker. She is a former employee of the Prague 12 municipality; in the past, she was very intensively involved in particular projects at the garden. She was the one who supported the origins of the garden. Another decision maker role is assumed by Ms. Veselíková, Deputy Director at the Na Beránku public middle school. This school is the official owner of the land where the garden is located; without their support, the garden could not exist. The teachers of the Montessori programme

are the direct decision-makers with a direct impact on the development of the garden and intensively communicate with the vulnerable group.

The entire garden has been designed and built by the kids from the Montessori programme together with help of the teachers, assistants and parents. One of the general ideas of this garden is to teach the kids while they build and work in the garden. Almost everything in the garden (garden beds, fence, small straw building, pond, herb spiral ...) is self-made and most of the material was donated. The Na Beránku school garden also serves as a place for workshops and public meetings. Garden parties, workshops for constructing the pond, autumn fairs and many more events are organized through the year. Despite that, the garden has been suffering from vandalism lately. It is not clear who is responsible for it and why. The fence around the garden is not thick and tall and can be easily broken. The vandalism might be a sort of envy expressed by the inhabitants from the block housing estates.

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The implementation of this project started in 2013. A part of the school land with the surface area of 2000 m² was set aside. The entire project was divided into 3 basic stages: the protection and preparation of the area, community planning and constructing the garden itself. A member of the Montessori cesta (track) NGO, Ms. Jana Neumajerová, took over the planning of the garden without



Kids constructing a bridge fence (image credit: Jana Neumajerová)

demanding any reward. During the planning stage, she would come to the school often and teach the kids about planning particular elements within the school garden in order to motivate them for gardening. She also organized many topical workshops for the wider public, led by professional instructors, mainly for parents and neighbours.

The garden was created for several reasons: one was the need for a basic or utility space for the secondary school with the Montessori programme. The kids from this programme wanted to spend more time outdoors and the teachers wanted to make that possible; the other is because the Montessori programme is partly based on outside classroom activities. Many particular skills that the kids are taught are connected with the activities in the garden. The purpose of the garden is thus to create an environment for kids not only to create, learn and relax, but also to use the results of their work for cooking and playing. One of the other reasons to develop this garden was to provide a special kind of education and a different environment for it.

The rules are set on different levels: the general ones by the school (e.g. entry to the garden only accompanied by an adult); special rules are also set for the day, defined during the morning session each day; and some rules are set for different projects in the garden.

The main stakeholders involved in this project are mainly the kids, their parents and the teachers. They have worked in the garden from the very beginning. Recently, they hired a garden assistant. However, the teachers, the parents and the kids change, as the kids leave the school and new ones enrol. Sometimes, other supporters or fans come to help. Neighbourhood residents come to the garden for public events. The school management follows what goes on and the children from the public middle school occasionally stop by.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The main target group are the kids from the Montessori programme from the 1st to the 9th grade. Ms. Neumajerova also considers the parents of kids in the programme together with neighbours to be a target group. Additionally, kids from nearby block housing estates belong to the vulnerable group. They usually come from lower class families and do not have any gardens or weekend houses to go to in their free time.

The kids' role is the most important in this garden. Most of the kids participate in this project, because they want to spend more time in nature; they like gardening or find the project interesting. Within the garden, smaller projects for groups of kids (e.g. arranging a pond, water circulation,

SECRET INGREDIENTS

building of straw house, herb spiral ...) take place. The kids in this programme are motivated by particular projects that they are in charge of from the beginning.

The kids participate within their school programme on all educational levels or in their free time. They cooperate in designing, building and maintaining the garden. When they leave the school, they know how to work in the garden. They expect many interesting projects to go on in the garden; however, some are disappointed because of their preformed ambitious goals. Most of them talk about their leading role in particular projects in the garden (e.g. building an oven, working on the pond, the herb spiral ...) and explain their ideas. They feel like they are a part of the group, because they have a common task.

As soon as the garden was established, the teachers and assistants of the Montessori programme started to cooperate. Parents participate in the garden activities and leave when their kids finish the programme. Some teachers help manage the project and focus on the garden within their lessons.

The municipality of Prague 12 helps to prevent the vandalism or provide a small financial support through the grants in the field of nature education. The town hall, however, does not show any proactivity in supporting the garden. The municipality officers sometimes derive know-how from this garden for others and recommend it as a good practice.

The garden is a place where kids can implement their ideas and creativity. It is a space formed according to their ideas, where they have the highest influence and impact. Kids like to go there because it has been built according to their wishes. Ms. Neumajerova is convinced that the garden is a place that bolsters the children's creativity. The garden provides a feeling of belonging, because the gardeners share a common goal. It also inspires other schools to implement similar projects at their schools and Ms. Neumajerova is gladly sharing the know-how.

Kids like the garden because they have built it on their own. They also enjoy the natural environment and have fun while working there with friends. They are particularly fond of "the idea of using an unused area for something good." The kids mainly mention new projects among the possible improvements they have in mind. Some would like to improve the already finished projects. Many of the kids mention the safety of the garden due to recent vandalism. Vandals set the first shed that was built on fire and damaged the new one, possibly with an aim to steal the tools. Some kids would like more utility space in the garden.

The participation of the pupils in the entire process of the designing, building and maintenance of the garden is what decision-makers like the most. Since this garden is dedicated mainly to kids and

their parents, decision makers often emphasize that the safety should be improved. This school garden is a success, because it serves as a green classroom and helps teachers to go through the curriculum using different projects in the garden. The participating parents are invited to organize several activities and events for kids at the garden. Unlike in the previous case, the events and activities organized by the parents are free time activities.

Nevertheless, the garden is not only there for the kids of the Montessori programme to use: some events in the garden are public, so the neighbours are invited into the garden. For them, it is a place to meet the community, take part in workshops and learn new gardening tricks.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

Most of the kids think they are involved as much as they want, though they would like to spend more time in the garden and be even more involved. All the pupils attend an introductory workshop, where they are tasked to define the priorities of the garden. They participate at joint events in the garden, co-organise the events and participate in them as well. They take part in workshops, where everybody has a chance to design the garden. Some weekend workshops are organized for the kids and parents and are open to the public as well. The aim of the weekend public workshops is also to decrease vandalism. As people get to know the garden and understand what kind of place it is, they might not try to destroy it.

The decision makers perceive the children as a vulnerable group of this good practice. Ideally, they would like to involve elderly people to participate in the garden as well. The kids can speak up through their teachers, who listen to their needs; the teachers can speak up through the Montessori cesta (track) NGO at the administration level. Ms. Neumajerova is the main contact and representative person.

Coordinators of the Na Beránku garden asked the Permakultura NGO to help them. Permakultura focuses on observing and using natural cycles, bonds and relations to design everything we need for life: effective and healthy food production, housing, energy producing systems and forming human communities. They provide books and workshops on the maintenance and principles of ecosystems. They also have experience in educating the kids.

However, some projects have been overwhelming and not well communicated to the kids. Sometimes, the children have shown reluctance to an activity. The teachers have also noticed that a lack of supervision could cause the disorganization of work or confusion about how to work in the garden. These issues were mostly successfully solved by teachers and parents by respecting the children's mood and avoiding assigning obligatory work in the garden.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

The two educational programmes (the Montessori programme and the public middle school) are situated in the same

building, which causes a long-term organizational problem. This is why the director of the public middle school is thinking about moving the Montessori programme into a separate building. The coordinators and stakeholders of the school garden thus expect that one day, they will have to move the Montessori programme away from the garden. Despite the fact that the garden cannot be moved, it will be preserved. The current gardeners think that the parents, kids and teachers from the public middle school will take over.

The kids working in the garden seem to positively evaluate the future. Although they know that they will have to abandon the garden one day, they are not worried about the future. They trust the kids from the public middle school to take care of it. Most of them agree that the garden will continue to develop successfully.

The decision makers expect a good and promising future for the garden, even an extension and improvement through several projects. All the other stakeholders are happy to help in the garden and are enthusiastic about the future.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Ms. Neumajerova advises beginners who wish to create such a garden to start with little steps. Start building a small community garden with people who will also use it afterwards. Let people

design the garden and be part of the process. The decision-makers' advice is to gather as much information as possible. They recommend interviewing as many professionals in the field as possible and setting suitable and clear goals for the garden. It is also important for everybody involved to see the point and purpose of the garden. The work in the garden should make sense to everybody.

In this case, the solid base for the financial resources comes from grants announced by the environmental department of capital city of Prague and from the environmental department of Municipality Prague 12. Additional contributions come from the parents. Smaller financial resources constitute money earned by children at school craft fairs, where they sell their products or food.

At the beginning, the Na Beránku public middle school also contributed a larger sum. Some private companies did not contribute money, but their services or materials.

The stakeholders' experience proves that if you follow the "gardening commandments", nothing can surprise you.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Ms. Neumajerova is an architect, but she has been interested in the food cycle, composting and gardening for a long time. Her own children are pupils in the Montessori programme and were the reason why she started this garden.

She says that she wants all the children to have a place where they can get important knowledge for life and education. She wanted to build a place where others can learn and have the ability to affect the place they live. Her goal is to inspire the children to garden and consequently convince their parents to try it.

Most kids have been curious about the project, it has caught their attention. Some were already familiar with gardening and they wanted to practice it in school and in their free time. Some were motivated by particular ideas that they wanted to implement. The children enjoy the time spent outside and want to learn in this way. They also want to have a place where they can spend time with their friends. The fun projects were also one of the things that attracted the kids.

Most of the decision makers, i.e. members of the department of environment of the city hall, are willing to support this kind of educational projects. The topic of urban gardening and projects in nature resonate with them. Decision-makers and important stakeholders agree that they have achieved the goal they wanted, i.e. to establish a nice and functioning garden that also serves as a green classroom. The garden is well managed and its longevity is self-evident.



Raised garden bed with aubergine and zucchini
(image credit: Jana Neumajerová)



Baltimore Urban Gardening with Students After School

Baltimore
USA

Target groups:

- decision makers: Living
Classrooms Foundation

- vulnerable groups:
elementary school pupils

- other stakeholders:

Ampersea restaurant, local
schools, Baltimore City

Contact:

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org

The BUGS (Baltimore Urban Gardening with Students After School) is an East Baltimore program for pupils from challenging backgrounds. The programme aims to equip pupils with knowledge, skills and confidence through gardening, cooking, arts and schooling activities. The program has already been running for 22 years. The gardening component has proven to be a successful non-traditional method for teaching. Kids learn how to read and do math, while they work in the garden. The programme coordinators are financed through the Living Classrooms Foundation and need to meet state education standards. Apart from the city and private funders, there are other stakeholders included in the program. Among them, Ampersea restaurant works closely with kids and gives them a place to grow vegetables and uses their produce in dishes they prepare for their guests.

written by:
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Research Centre of the
Slovenian Academy of Sciences
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photo above: Kids playing and learning while gardening
(image credit: <http://bugsprogram.blogspot.com>)

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

The BUGS (Baltimore Urban Gardening with Students After School) program aims to equip pupils residing in challenging communities of East Baltimore in the USA with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need for their present and future lives. The program's primary goal is to empower and inspire children to develop academically, creatively and socially. BUGS is comprised of 4 components: gardening, cooking, creative arts and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). 4 groups of 12 pupils from the local elementary school participate in BUGS. Every two weeks, the groups rotate between components. The gardening component includes food that is culturally, geographically and seasonally specific.

The program has already been running for 22 years. Initially, it was called the Frederick Douglass Program. Initiators prompted a call for actions to create more specific missions. Urban agriculture appeared to be a successful method for an educational program. It meant using non-traditional ways of teaching.

Over time, the urban agriculture aspect of the project grew and it now includes a farmers' market. At the annual farmers' market, a lot of produce is sold from the crops that the pupils grew themselves. During the farmers' market, pupils learn about customer service, cost of the products, writing receipts. They assume

the roles of a particular job and learn what it means to be an employee. They are able to grow items and sell them to customers. They are able to understand and apply math skills and social skills (how to handle customers). They must have a full understanding of what they are planting and selling. This is useful for their future.

The gardens were created for educational purposes: the kids learn how to read and do math while they work in the garden. They can basically plant everything: vegetables, herbs, tomatoes and other kinds of plants.

They have an outdoor garden with 7 raised beds and a greenhouse. The greenhouse is used in partnership with the local Ampersea restaurant. The greenhouse manager works in conjunction with the gardening educator.

The gardening educator needs to meet Maryland's common core education standards. He is financed through federal and local funding.

There are certain behavioral expectations of the pupils. The garden educators set their own rules. Shoes, gloves and protective gloves must be worn at all times. The volunteers who occasionally come to work with pupils in the garden have their own rules set by the foundation.

Not all the current stakeholders joined BUGS at the same time. The current BUGS after school program director joined the program at a later stage. BUGS has been a longstanding program of the Living



Breonna and Andrea outside picking tomatoes and summer squash on a hot summer day
(image credit: <http://bugsprogram.blogspot.com>)

Classrooms Foundation, but it was already in operation when Christine Truett became director of Education for Living Classrooms. The partnership with the Ampersea restaurant also started at a later stage.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON MATTERS

The BUGS target group are kids from 2nd to 5th grade between 7 to 11 years old. Pupils involved in BUGS have a passion for planting and growing vegetables and flowers. “I wanted to join BUGS because all the kids were talking about it and it sounded cool,” said a 5th grade student. “I wanted to join BUGS because my sister told me it was fun,” was another response from a 2nd grade student. Finally, a 3rd grade student told us he joined BUGS because he likes playing games and games are a big part of BUGS.

The pupils’ expectations were quite realistic and say the program is what they thought it would be. One student mentioned that he did not expect that pupils could be mean to the educator.

Once a year (in early December), they hold a fundraising event where attendee’s fees help fund their program. The municipality takes part through the Family League of Baltimore (the city is their larger funder), which provides money for BUGS. The Maryland State Department of Education provides federal funding. Funding is also provided by the Family League of Baltimore and the Ampersea restaurant.

Living Classrooms’ employee Algernon Campbell provides innovative experiential educational programs for youths who are being trained to be BUGS educators. Initially, there were many different schools that included BUGS into their pupils’ curriculum: Johnston Square Elementary School was one of them. Now, they work only with the Commodore John Rogers Elementary School, which has been part of the programme for the past 6 years.

The decision-maker, the Living Classrooms Foundation, has been part of the BUGS program since 2000. “BUGS has been a long-standing program of Living Classrooms. It was in operation when I became Director of Education,” said Christine Truett, Director of Education for Living Classrooms Foundation. She supervises the Director of BUGS and helps create the budget, manages the programme and writes applications for grants. She was not instrumental in helping establish the format for the BUGS programme, but helped ensure that BUGS works as a model for all other Living Classrooms’ experiential education programs.

Ampersea Restaurant is actively engaged in the programme. Ampersea includes kids to work in their greenhouse and provide produce for their guests. The pupils grow certain items for the restaurant and it uses them in their dishes. However, there is limited space in the greenhouse, so the amount of vegetables that goes to the restaurant is not very large.

SECRET INGREDIENTS

Mr. Algernon mentioned that BUGS allows pupils to understand where food comes from, because many kids think it comes from grocery stores. A wide range of food comes from the gardens and positively affects the pupils' diet. "Growing their own food allows pupils to eat cucumbers as they are," explained Mr. Algernon.

Mr. Algernon thinks BUGS could be improved with more money and space. They would like to broaden the scope of the program. He thinks they need more tools and more staff.

The kids are enjoying BUGS and are satisfied with the program. They are happy to be in BUGS. A 5th grade student told us that he likes BUGS: "I like that the teachers are nice. I like that learning is actually cool in BUGS. I like that they provide lunch." Other kids said they like the program, because it is fun and it includes games. The pupils are generally satisfied with the program, although some mentioned that they are missing a baking class or

even more time spent outside gardening. Ms. Christine from the Living Classrooms Foundation told us that BUGS is exemplary, because it excites and motivates young pupils and truly gives them the tools to succeed in the classroom. She thinks BUGS could benefit from additional funding that would allow a full-time staffing model.

PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS

Kids said that BUGS helps them to become better at things. A 2nd grade student said that being involved in BUGS helps him to do all his homework. "BUGS helped me to become a better cook and a more sincere person," said a 3rd grade student. The kids haven't faced any challenges in BUGS recently.

Representatives of Living Classrooms believe that pupils, especially those in need of extra guidance, organized in small groups in challenging settings, respond to real-world applications far more readily than they do in traditional classrooms. However, they think the biggest challenge is finding sustainable funding for the program. Living Classrooms is constantly seeking grants, donations and other funds to support the programme.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Mr Algernon sees the future of BUGS in its expansion. They want to serve middle schoolers or high school pupils. There is a greater reach that would also increase the staffing opportunities.

The kids are confident they can tell other friends about BUGS and about all the good things about it. Hopefully, this will make the program even more popular and more people will join. The Living Classrooms representative hopes that BUGS will continue to serve a wide array of Baltimore City pupils.

GUIDANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Algernon's advice to a beginner who wishes to start creating a practice similar to BUGS is to make sure that the pupils remain the priority and to focus on what you are doing. Truett's advice is to form a strong connection with the school and to have a firm understanding of the school's academic goals and strategies, to understand and connect with the pupils and their families and find sustainable funding.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

"My personal motivation to become part of BUGS was having a job. Initially, I needed a job and I believed in what BUGS does. I came in year 8 of BUGS' existence. I started as a dance educator and stayed there for about 5 years. I was a programme manager for 2 years. 5.5 years ago I was promoted to director," said Mr. Algernon.

A 5th grade student told us BUGS was the first program he was involved in. To him, gardening means helping the environment. He likes BUGS, because he gets to plant things and see the achievements. Gardening is also exciting to other pupils.

One student joined BUGS, because she likes garden flowers in particular.



Kids working like professionals at turning the soil and the compost
(image credit: <http://bugsprogram.blogspot.com>)

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