



# Hyphen 45

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux  
association sans but lucratif | spring 2010



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# Welcome to Birmingham

## Presentation of the allotment gardens in Great-Britain

**Geoff Stokes †**, secretary general of the English allotment garden federation



**Geoff STOKES**

The provision of land for growing food by the poor has been in existence in the United Kingdom for several hundred years, but the origins of allotments as we think of them today really began around 1750 as a result of the enclosing of common land. These enclosures were stipulated by Acts of Parliament which passed the land into the ownership of one large landowner.

The Inclosure Acts also deprived the landless poor of the ability to gather food and fuel or graze their animals on the common land and resulted in many of them moving to the new industrial towns and cities where they became labourers in the industrial revolution.

In 1782, the Guardians of the Poor were allowed to enclose up to 4 ha of waste land near the 'poor house' for the purpose of cultivating it for the benefit of the poor, and a further Act of Parliament allowed the Parish wardens to let up to 8 ha to individuals.

During the 1800s further Acts were passed which allowed additional land to be provided for use by the poor, but it was not until 1887 that a law was

passed requiring local authorities to provide allotments where a demand for them was known to exist, but only where provision could not be obtained privately.

In 1908 an Act was passed which finally made local councils responsible for making adequate provision of allotments for the labouring poor.

The importance of allotments became appreciated at the outbreak of war in 1914. The United Kingdom has always been a major importer of food which would be disrupted by hostilities and a huge effort was made to increase home production by the allocation of more land for that purpose.

After hostilities ended there was still a demand for allotments and legislation was enacted in 1922 which introduced the 'allotment garden' and limited provision to plots not exceeding 1000 sq metres. This legislation also finally removed any reference to the "labouring poor". Since 1922 the standard allotment garden size is 250 sq metres.

During WW II the need to provide more home grown food became

again a necessity, and the number of allotment plots rose from 800,000 to 1,500,000.

After hostilities ended, the demand for allotments gradually declined and by 1997 just 300,000 remained. A national allotment survey at that time also showed that 45,000 plots were vacant which resulted in many applications to dispose of unused allotment land.

This situation remained until approximately three years ago when there was a marked increase in demand for plots.

This resurgence in interest has resulted for many reasons. The public is now more health conscious, having been encouraged by Government to take more exercise and eat more fruit and vegetables. As our allotment gardens are still used mainly for the production of vegetables and fruit they fit in very well with these initiatives. They provide sustained healthy exercise in the fresh air, and the crops grown provide access to fresh fruit and vegetables.

In addition to health, many people

are also concerned at the distance food travels to reach the UK and the carbon footprint this causes. There are also concerns at the amount of chemicals used in commercial food production, and additives used to prolong shelf life, enhance flavour or make food look more attractive.

There is also a view that demand for allotments will increase even more as the “credit crunch” takes effect.

This resurgence in interest has resulted in an additional 100,000+ people applying for allotments and being placed on waiting lists, but this increase in demand has brought with it new problems. In some cases, people will be on the lists for between 3 and 10 years if additional land is not made available. In some parts of London the estimate is over 40 years. Having seen the disposal of allotment land over a number of years, local authorities are reluctant to obtain new land, and increased housing developments over recent years have removed much of the suitable land particularly in urban areas.

A recent report by the Agricultural Ministry advises that by 2050 there will be insufficient land available to feed the population of the World. This has highlighted the need to look

at increasing food production not only in the rest of the world but also the UK. At a time of higher density housing, allotments provide a valuable resource for people to grow more of their own food.

Radio and television have joined the “grow your own” frenzy and there have been a number of books written on allotment gardening, all encouraging people to start growing food. Celebrity chefs are also using more fresh ingredients and less frozen or tinned produce.

The National Federation has called on Government to strengthen the current legislation and encourage local authorities to make additional provision. They are supported in this by many other organisations, and a group representing Local Authorities has also published a document demanding that more land is made available both from public and private sources and have suggested that land awaiting development should also be considered for use for allotment gardens on a short term basis.

The National Trust, British Waterways and other land owners have taken the initiative in making spare land available for use as allotment gardens. This will shortly be followed by two

major garden centres chains. There have also been farmers considering turning some of their land over to allotment gardens as they can see a better financial return than for growing agricultural crops. Even the Arch bishop of Canterbury is encouraging growing your own to help reduce food miles.

The potential of allotment gardens to help local councils and other organisations to achieve their objectives on everything from health and well being to biodiversity to community cohesion is now widely recognised. It has a unique role in bringing all sections of the community together in all three aspects of well being – social, economic and environmental.

Allotment gardens have a vital role to play in connecting people to the process of food production, enabling them to grow fresh, cheap food, while reducing food miles, packaging and waste.

Delegates attending the Study Session in Birmingham 2010 will discuss the requirements for a beneficial future of allotments in Great Britain and Europe to ensure they remain available for future generations to enjoy.

# Activity report 2009

The executive board is pleased to submit the activity report of the year 2009 to you.

## 1) Internal affairs.

Since the last statutory meeting the executive board has met on March 15th, September 6th, November 28th and 29th 2009 as well as on March 12th, 2010.

The executive board has continued to discuss how we can better present our movement to the public and to our members.

In this context it has analyzed the results of the lobbying made at the European level after the international congress in Cracow and the results of the meeting with Mme Jutta HAUG, member of the European Parliament, organised by the German federation.

The conclusion reached is that there is no department in the European Union that is directly responsible for allotment gardens and that financial support can only be requested at the local level.

After the elections of the European Parliament new initiatives may be started by the Luxemburg member of Parliament Claude TURMES or the German member Jutta HAUG or others. We must then do everything possible to help these initiatives succeed.

The executive board has considered creating a new information brochure for the Office and has prepared the necessary documents. After the decision of the general assembly to carry out this project, the executive board has taken at its November meeting the first measures to work out a

concept for the common part of the brochure and the part concerning the presentation of the federations.

On the proposal of the German federation, the preparatory work has been done in order to celebrate again the European Day of the Garden together in 2010 and to organize an event with a public relations effect. This ceremony will take place in Bremen in June 2010. Together with the German federation and the federation from Bremen the Office will plant a lime-tree near the town hall.

The executive board has proposed to the general assembly that the research done by the German federation concerning the biodiversity in the allotment gardens should continue on a European level. The Austrian federation has decided to carry out the same survey and to design a form that can be used by all. A comparison of the results in Austria and Germany will be interesting. The Swedish federation plans to carry out a survey at a certain number of chosen sites.

The French and English federations have carried out a survey concerning the production in an allotment garden and the money that can be saved if an allotment gardener does not need to buy his vegetables in a supermarket. The English project has as its topic the food security. The French project aims at updating the Belgian survey made in 1998 on the possible savings. The French project was financially supported by the Office. Both surveys will be put at the disposal of the Office.

The idea to look for innovative projects put forward during the study session in Copenhagen has been

taken up by the German federation. It has been adapted on European level by a project proposed by the Dutch federation. The executive board has discussed this project and will make, after the principle decision of the general assembly, concrete proposals on how to carry it out to the general assembly in March 2010. Some innovative projects will be presented during the study session in Birmingham.

## 2) International seminar.

This year the international seminar took place in Ghent (Belgium) from September 6th to September 9th. The subjects discussed were: "How can allotment gardeners become ambassadors for the protection of environment?" and "The allotment gardens of the future".

During this seminar the discussions in the workshops have been organised according to new guidelines worked out by the executive board during its March meeting. The guidelines were as follows:

- The lecturer is not allowed to lead the workshop. The person leading a workshop should always select someone to write down the important points raised by the participants in order to guarantee that the report in the plenary session will reflect the discussions.
- In order to optimize the discussions, the person leading the workshops should work out different conclusions, which have to be discussed again in the workshop before their presentation in the plenary session.

The results of this working method have been analysed in November. The executive board was of the opin-

ion that the new guidelines are a step in the right direction. They however decided to make only a final evaluation after the study session in Birmingham.

These guidelines will be presented for comment to the general assembly in March 2010. Besides some very interesting lectures and some thematic discussions of great value the delegates could visit the pleasant allotment garden site in Sint-Amandsberg, the historic town of Ghent and the European Parliament. In this way the delegates were able to get a better knowledge of the everyday life of the allotment gardeners in Flanders and become more acquainted with the functioning of the European Union, the rules of which affect us all directly. We have however to find a way in which allotment gardeners could be taken into consideration on a European level.

During the seminar the diploma for ecological gardening was awarded to the French association of Craon and the Swedish federation of Västerviks. On June 14th this diploma was awarded to the German association of "Hinterer Bocksberg" in Suhl.

Our Belgian friends must be warmly thanked once more for this successful seminar.

### 3) Co-operation with the federations.

H. BONNAVAUD represented the International Office during the general assembly of the Swiss federation. He has promised the Office's support to help the Swiss federation to react against the closure of many allotment garden sites for building purposes. A motion of support has been signed in Ghent and has been forwarded to the Swiss federation to help it in its lobbying and in its discussions with the authorities.

M. WEIRICH represented the Office at the congress of the Luxembourg

federation as well as at the congress of the German federation with the subject: The allotment gardens in the town of 2020.

### 4) International organisations.

#### Council of Europe

The Office took part in the meetings organised for the NGOs.

The International Office has been invited to be member of the organization committee of the universal year of biodiversity. In this context it presented the results of the German survey.

At this occasion the INGOs of the Council of Europe will initiate a PR-event for the protection of the biodiversity within the Council of Europe in April 2010. The three other pillars (Committee of Ministers; Parliamentary Assembly; Congress for local and regional authorities) are invited to take part in this event. It should be both a public relations event and a study session.

The International Office has submitted a written document in order to take part in the European campaign: "Europe says no to poverty".

On basis of the existing documents and definitions the INGOs will first make a survey of the situations concerning precariousness, poverty and great poverty. All three situations can lead to the destruction of a person's identity.

One then has to find the means to help these persons to reconstruct themselves, to recover their dignity and their rights. We are concerned less with the necessary financial resources than the ways and means to reach this aim.

#### European Union

During a meeting on February 18th, 2009, Mrs. Jutta HAUG confirmed that institutions can no longer get per se a financial support. Only participation in fixed EU programmes is possible. Mrs. Jutta HAUG confirmed that no area exists in which the EU

is directly responsible for allotment gardeners.

On a local level the associations can however get financial support out of the regional or structural fund respectively from the European social fund by contacting their local authorities. For example integration projects within town development schemes can be financially supported.

Finally there remains the possibility of creating a network of Members at the European Parliament trying to defend the ideas of allotment gardeners on a European level and to try to integrate these ideas into the new financial programmes (for example LIFE) that will enter into force in 2014.

### 5) Contacts with the federations that are not member of the Office.

Contacts with the Japanese allotment gardeners continued. A written exchange of information took place.

The Japanese allotment gardeners have again visited Europe. Among others they visited some allotment gardens in Luxembourg.

Allotment gardeners from Milan and Dublin required information for creating an association and a federation. They intend to become afterwards member of the International Office.

### 6) Information given to interested persons.

This year the Office has continued to give information on allotment gardens to students writing dissertations and PhD studies. The secretary general has also given a certain number of telephone interviews and has given information to the written press and radio. Several prefaces for books on allotment gardens were written.

Luxemburg, November 2009

The executive board

# Decision protocol of the general assembly held in Luxemburg on March 12th and 13th, 2010

Were represented:

the federations of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great-Britain, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

Were absent:

the federations of Norway and Slovakia

1) The agenda is adopted with unanimity with 2 additional topics.

2) The reports of the general assembly held in Ghent are adopted with unanimity.

3) The activity report is adopted with unanimity.

4) It is acknowledged that the guidelines the executive board has worked out in order to guarantee a more efficient work in the workshops are a step in the right direction. These guidelines have to be applied once more in Birmingham before a final evaluation.

5) Due to the enormous workload and costs and in order to enable more federations to be able to organise an international meeting it is decided that in the future the documents no more have to be published in three languages. Instead the federation hosting a congress has to negotiate before the congress with the firm of the

translators that the translations can be recorded and used later. These recorded texts have to be put at the disposal of those federations who want to have them. The existing written texts, which are put at the disposal of the interpreters (in order to guarantee a better translation) should be given as well to the Office for publication on Internet.

6) The results of the French study concerning the revenue of an allotment garden will only be ready in May.

The Austrian federation will make a study on biodiversity in the allotment garden.

The results of the Dutch study on "allotment gardens and health" are not yet ready. Spectacularly results can however be expected.

7) The lay-out for the new Office Information brochure is ready. The model article will be put at the disposal of the federations. They are requested to write an article presenting their federation in accordance with this model before June 1st, 2010.

The number of characters and the order of the subjects dealt with in the model article have to be strictly observed. It is decided that one native speaker will proofread all the articles in order to guarantee

that the language is the same in all the articles.

The draft comparative scheme including the data of all the federations will be sent to the federations. They are requested to check and complete their national data and to return the form to the general secretariat before June 1st.

8) C. ZIJDEVELD presents once more his project concerning the survey of innovative projects. The procedure to collect these innovative projects is adopted with unanimity. The decision concerning their publication will follow later.

C. ZIJDEVELD gets the mission to write an article which will be sent to all the federations. Every federation should organise the survey according to its national particularities (i.e. sending of the article to all the associations or decision take by the national executive board if it has already the information on these projects.....)

9) The last information concerning the European Day of the Garden is presented. The last inscriptions are returned.

It is decided that during the celebration for the jubilee of the Bremen federation in the town hall M. WEIRICH will make an address and P. JACOBSEN will speak during the ceremony for

the European Day of the Garden.

During the celebration of the European Day of the Garden diplomas concerning an ecological gardening could be given to candidate associations.

If possible a declaration should be made concerning the subject of gen-manipulated products.

- 10) The program for Birmingham is discussed and adopted with unanimity.

The French federation will lecture on topic I concerning the lay-out of the allotment garden sites and the Danish federation will lecture on topic II on the allotment gardener of the future.

The Polish and Austrian federation will lead the workshops concerning subject number II (The allotment gardener of the future). The Swedish/English (?) and the Danish federation will lead the workshops concerning the subject I (The physical lay-out of the allotment gardens). The person leading a workshop should designate himself a secretary to help him.

The lectures should last 20 minutes.

After these two lectures four innovative projects should be presented. The French, Finnish, Dutch and German federation could i.e. present such innovative projects. A final decision concerning the presentation of these projects will only be taken in Bremen after the federations have started with the survey of these projects.

The presentation of each project should last 15 minutes. Afterwards the projects will be discussed.

- 11) It is decided with one negative vote and one abstention to acquire a new flag for the Office. The picture of the historic flag should be reproduced on one side. On the other side the logo of the Office should appear.
- 12) The next meeting places of the Office are confirmed and completed as follows: 2011: congress in Copenhagen, 2012: study session in Switzerland (Zurich), 2013: study session in Germany, 2014: congress in the Netherlands.

Following to a request of W. WOHATSCHEK it is decided with unanimity to organise the congress 2017 a year earlier i.e. in 2016 together with the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Austrian federation.

A. FRIEDRICH informs that the German federation is candidate to organise an international congress in 2021 because the German federation will celebrate its hundredth anniversary in 2021. This candidature is accepted with unanimity too.

Candidates for the study session 2015 should if possible tell the Office before Bremen that they are interested in hosting the event.

- 13) M. WEIRICH gives some explanations on the report concerning the cooperation with the international organisations. It has to be underlined that the allotment gardens have again been inserted in official documents of the Council of Europe.

- 14) The treasurer J. KIEFFER presents the financial report and gives the necessary explanation.

- 15) The auditors inform that they have found no mistake. They ask the delegates to adopt the financial report and to grant discharge to the executive board.

- 16) The general assembly adopts the financial report with unanimity and also with unanimity grants discharge to the executive board.

- 17) The draft budget for 2010 is adopted with unanimity after having been discussed.

- 18) The draft budget for the solidarity fund 2010 is adopted with unanimity.

- 19) It is acknowledged that there has been up to now no written demand to get the diploma for an ecological gardening. The delay is extended up to May 1st.

- 20) The contents for Hyphen no. 46 and 47 are fixed.

- 21) The national federations present their activities and problems and answer the numerous questions of the delegates.

- 22) The next general assembly will be held in Bremen on June 11th, 2010 followed by a general assembly in Birmingham on August 26th, 2010. The next statutory general assembly will be held in Luxemburg on March 11th and 12th, 2011 in the City Hotel.



## François ROLLAND has left us Oktober 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

Malou WEIRICH,  
secretary general of the International Office



**FRANÇOIS ROLLAND**

On October 23rd, 2009 François ROLLAND passed away after having suffered from a long and incurable illness.

François ROLLAND served the allotment garden movement for over 40 years in Caen and in France. His everlasting aim was to make the allotment garden idea progress. He worked to achieve that aim with tenacity and clear-sightedness, but without ever abandoning his cheerful manner, his courtesy and his good humour.

He was a man lead by principles, a man with philosophic and spiritual convictions and an extraordinary human warmth. Vice-President of the French federation he was equally appreciated by both French and European allotment gardeners.

In a moment characterised by a more difficult relationship between the French federation and the Office he was a calm and efficient mediator and intervened successfully for the benefit of our whole movement.

During the international congress in Cracow the Office awarded him with an honorary diploma.

Nobody could imagine at this moment that death should prevent him so soon from continuing to serve the cause of allotment gardening.

May his example guide us in future in Normandy, in France and in Europe. This will be the best way to honour the memory of our dear friend François ROLLAND.

## Geoff STOKES has left us March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

Malou WEIRICH,  
secretary general of the International Office



**Geoff STOKES**

With great sadness we received information of the sudden death of Geoff STOKES on March 1st, 2010.

In 1988, Geoff STOKES assumed the function of National Secretary. We all could see and appreciate the strength, the enthusiasm and stamina with which Geoff worked for the allotment garden movement.

His desire and strong will to contribute to the modernization of the movement, in order to guarantee its future success, merits both national and international recognition

Within the International Office Geoff STOKES explained the English situation to the other members and acquainted the English national members with the views and methodologies of their fellow allotment gardeners on the continent.

He was open-minded for allotment practices used in other countries,

even if not all of them were applicable in England.

It is significant that Geoff, as an engaged and totally convinced defender of the allotment garden movement, passed away during his job, just at the beginning of a conference on allotment gardens.

He was convinced that both the English allotment gardeners had to work hand in hand with the other national allotment gardeners and that the allotment gardens could only be saved and expanded within a strong international movement.

We all appreciated Geoff and will sadly miss him.

Our continuous work in England and in the Office to support the allotments will be the best way to honour Geoff's memory.

# Allotment gardens in the planning schemes in Poland

Eugeniusz Kondracki  
Grazyna Franke

In Poland, as in other European countries the local authorities develop urban planning schemes as a basis for urban development. These schemes are also the legal basis for the existence of the separate elements of this infrastructure in the future.

This is especially relevant to the allotment gardens, which are situated in towns.

The Polish allotment garden federation has had during the past 110 years of allotment gardens development in Poland the opportunity to check every year and in every town the interaction between new development and the existence of the allotment gardens under the rules of the urban planning schemes.

The international allotment garden congress in York in 2002 underlined the necessity of integrating the allotment gardens into urban planning schemes and considered this duty as one of the most important activities of the national allotment garden federations which make up the Office.

The problem of the integration of the allotment gardens into town planning schemes is also one of the most important objectives of the Polish allotment garden federation within the entire process of the development of allotment gardens in Poland. This objective is very difficult in Poland. Therefore each separate body of the



federation is dealing with this question in its area of competence, according to the statutes and the decisions of the Council of the Polish federation.

All these bodies include the Council of the Polish federation, the regional federations as well as the associations.

The enormous task results from the number of members of the federation. We count 4.971 allotment garden associations existing on 7.608 separate sites. The total area of the allotment

garden sites amounts to 43.574 hectares.

According to the law dated March 27th, 2003 on urban planning and constructions, all urban and communal planning schemes voted before January 1, 1995 have been declared invalid by December 31st, 2003. The consequence thereof is that now many communes have no local legal documents. For many years the local authorities have not been establishing urban planning schemes or they have only prepared a limited planning



scheme for part of the community area.

This situation has had an enormous influence on the allotment gardens and their development. In fact the rules of the urban planning schemes determine directly the future of allotment gardens and allotment gardeners.

Unfortunately some of the local authorities try to avoid mentioning allotment gardens in the analysis and then later in the urban planning schemes. This occurs even when allotment gardens were integrated within the old planning schemes. Instead of allotment gardens the local authorities are inserting industrial areas, buildings and roads etc. into their planning schemes. The consequence of such decisions is that the allotment gardens are threatened with closure and the allotment gardeners must quit their plots. This situation exists above all in the larger urban areas, where allotment garden sites are considered by the communes to be easy prey for investments to be realized. So for example in Warsaw 166 allotment garden sites out of 167 are not integrated into their urban planning schemes, in Cracow 84 out of 86 sites have been excluded and in Gdynia 11 out of 24 sites have not been integrated into

the urban planning schemes.

Therefore the Polish federation checks the situation of the allotment gardens in the urban planning schemes and takes all possible legal steps to succeed in integrating them in the new urban planning schemes.

The Polish federation has made a survey of the legal situation of the allotment gardens in April 2008 (It was an additional survey because during the last years one survey per year was carried out). It has been acknowledged that from the 4.843 sites checked only 3.132 with a total surface of 29.094 hectares were integrated in the urban planning schemes.

The federation is also very worried because 772 sites of a total surface of 5.098 hectares are not included in the existing town planning schemes. In many cases those allotment garden sites inserted in the old planning schemes have not been reintegrated in the new plans after 2003. The legal situation of allotment gardens gets even worse because 939 sites representing 8.066 hectares are situated in areas having no new urban planning scheme at all. Therefore the future of these allotment gardens is uncertain in the near future. It is therefore the

precise and difficult task of the federation to integrate all gardens into the urban planning schemes, when these are developed.

Today 64 % of those allotment garden sites which were checked are integrated into town planning schemes and more than 35 % are not integrated respectively are situated in areas where there exist no planning schemes at all. If the sites are integrated into town planning schemes, the legal situation of those allotment garden sites is generally better.

This situation arises from the unfavourable urban planning scheme conditions in some areas or is due to the fact that there is no study and/ or no planning scheme at all.

The procedure for the adoption of such an urban planning scheme by a local authority stipulates that the owners or the leaseholders should regularly check the proposals of the local authority. The legislation in fact has stipulated that the local authority has no longer an obligation to inform an individual owner or leaseholder on the proposals to change the classification of their land or the land they use. The local Council decides that a study will be prepared and by this decision the mayor, the executive body of the Council or the town president will prepare a study for the area administered by the council. The information that a study is being prepared is published in the local press or is announced. The public debate on this subject is organized on the demand, in the form by the council at that time and place fixed by the body preparing the document. This body has only the duty to inform the major institutions and division authorities. The owners and leaseholders of each individual plot of land (and this is true as well for the Polish allotment garden federation) need constantly to be aware of the subject and have to request details of the date that has been fixed for the debate. The request on its own is not a guarantee of success because the local Council is exclu-

sively allowed to either take into consideration or to reject these demands. There is no administrative or judicial

procedure to reverse or appeal the decision taken.

The prepared draft of the study is adopted by a vote. It can be consulted by the public and will be discussed in a public hearing. The study adopted by the local Council is the basis for the preparation of the planning scheme. This scheme will be adopted by the local Council in a procedure similar to the one followed for the adoption of the study. The planning scheme which is adopted by the Council will become a legal local document. Therefore the Polish allotment garden federation ensures already during the preparatory period that the position of the local allotment gardens are being adequately defended. The bodies of the federation co-operate with local authorities and planning offices in order that allotment gardens will be considered in the draft studies and plans. We have started to co-operate with the town and other local Councils because they are ultimately responsible for the final version of the local planning scheme. The Polish allotment garden Council helps and supports associations and regional federations directly in their fight to integrate allotment gardens in the plans. Therefore precise guidelines have been prepared by the executive board of the Council of the Polish allotment garden federation. This is nevertheless a difficult mission, because the federation is in every case dependent on the local situation and on their local authorities.



# Report on the procedure concerning the integration of the allotment gardens in the urban planning schemes in Switzerland

Walter Schaffner,  
president of the Swiss allotment garden federation

## Ownership of the allotment gardens

The sites either belong to the city, the communes or other organisations or cooperative societies.

## Urban planning

In Switzerland there aren't any allotment laws. There are Swiss laws on urban planning which define the different construction zones. Switzerland has 26 cantons and each one has its own town planning law with a special sectoral plan for its construction zones.

The following zones are defined in these laws:

Green zone A: including all parks and green spaces (protected zone)

Zone for residential areas: general zone for housings

Zone for official buildings: schools and administrative buildings

Zone for sport and leisure: including all sport facilities (but the situation isn't regulated in this way in all cantons)

## Laying-out of allotment garden sites

In many cases some allotment garden sites are not included in the

green zone A but in other zones and the ground on which they exist can be used for other purposes if it is deemed necessary.

The gardens are then either shut down forever or reconstructed on replacement land.

The City or the commune creates the site with its infrastructure (fence, main paths, water supply). The rest of the work has to be done by the association.

## Advantages:

If the allotment gardens are included in green zone A or in the zone for sport and leisure their future is highly protected. They can be endangered by a change to the urban plans (which needs a public consultation).

## Disadvantage:

Every canton has its own law on urban planning and applies it differently. A unique Swiss urban planning law applicable in all cantons would be most useful. All allotment garden sites should be included in a protected zone. Additionally laws governing and protecting Swiss allotment gardens should be adopted.



# Netherlands: Integration of allotments in its surroundings develops further.

Chris ZIJDEVELD, president of the Dutch allotment garden federation



It was realised several years ago that the security of allotment sites could be strengthened by getting closer relations with their local neighbourhoods.

Making the recreation/meeting building of the allotment sites available for activities of people that live nearby makes neighbours good friends.



They feel that the allotment sites are a valuable part of their neighbourhood as well.

Removing or opening gates and making the allotment sites open to the public for walking or jogging greatly adds to community building.

In our „common use programme“ many Dutch allotment sites have reinforced their position in the neighbourhood by doing those things.

But we went further.

In the town of Utrecht a new housing development was created around an allotment site. The original plans just removed this allotment site. But talks with the town planners made them aware of the potential of common use.

So the new development was planned around the allotment site and now it is an integral part of its neighbourhood.

Recently a new allotment site in the

same town (replacing an allotment that had to move on account of road building) was developed as an integral part of an area with new office buildings.

The symbiotic effects are even more positive than expected beforehand: Social safety, mutual benefits, use of parking spaces, lunchtime recreation. It is amazing how the two functions reinforce and complement each other.



Traditionally allotment gardeners see new building plans as a threat.

Our examples show that it can be the other way round. Existing allotments can reinforce new developments or allotments can be a promising part of new developments.

# Germany: Second Federal Assembly of Allotment Gardeners “The City’s allotment gardens in 2020”

Werner HEIDEMANN, member of BDG’s executive committee



**Took part in the discussion: from left to right Prof. Dr. Gerlinde KRAUSE, Dr.-Ing. André Christian WOLF, Dr. Malou WEIRICH, Ronald GLOMB, Dr. sc. Achim FRIEDRICH, Hartmuth RADEN, Verena GÖPPERT**  
**Photo: Thomas LEBIE**



**Dr. Sc. Achim FRIEDRICH, president of the German federation opened the 2nd allotment garden congress 2009**  
**Photo: Thomas LEBIE**

The dates of 4th and 5th June, selected for this congress in Potsdam, could not have been better chosen. Right in the middle of one of the deepest financial crises of recent decades, where man has become aware that the issue is not just the recession, the unemployment, or the fall in salaries and pensions, 250 allotment gardeners from towns and villages, politicians from local, regional and national levels, town planners, governing bodies of public gardens, media and culture experts have all

come together to discuss the future of allotment gardens in our country.

#### **Our involvement**

The Second Federal Congress of Allotment Gardeners was placed under the patronage of Wolfgang Tiefensee, Federal Minister who has allotment gardens within his remit. In his opening speech on the future of our towns, he thanked the allotment gardeners for “being involved in the town development and for providing on 50.000 hectares of land, services on behalf

of the authorities which the local councils would have been incapable of providing by themselves”. Dr Petra Roth, President of the Deutscher Städtetag (Standing Committee on German Municipalities) underlined in her opening statement the importance of collaboration between the BDG (Federation of Allotment Gardeners) and the Deutscher Städtetag, which are currently drawing up guidelines together for the development of allotment gardens in Germany. Petra Roth: “We hope to gain im-



portant information and suggestions which should allow us to preserve the tradition of allotment gardens, to ensure they continue well into the future and so to provide neighbourhoods with a better quality of life”.

**A large range of topics**

The two days of congress were centered around a group of thirteen short talks. The topics were extremely varied, from “The evolution of trends in urbanisation”, to “Urban vegetation and climate”, “Gardening in the 21st century (changing values)”, “Allotment gardens in Europe and North America” and the presentation of new types of social interaction for allotment gardeners.

**Our position**

In order to allow allotment garden associations to fulfil their potential as they should, some ground rules must be established. In this vein, Dr Sc Achim Friedrich, president of the BDG, suggested some main action areas for all members of the allotment garden movement:

- **Keeping the land for allotment gardens in the hands of the local authorities**

No selling of land for allotment gardens to private investors

- **Long-term preservation of land for allotment gardens with the help of development plans**

Allotment gardens form part of our cultural heritage, which must be protected and should in no circumstances be used for other purposes.

- **Preserving the social purposes of allotment gardens**

No connecting or development taxes for allotment gardens; communal taxes shouldn't feel like an additional rent.

- **Creating fair and creative partnerships**

Fair contracts between communi-

ties and allotment garden associations;

Integrate allotment garden associations into community networks; Set up advice bureaus for allotment gardens on local and regional level; Encourage and demand the creation of new partnerships, for example with schools, nursery schools and children's gardens.

- **Establishing development plans for allotment gardens – indispensable for the future of towns and villages**

Urban redevelopment, changing demographics, integration, climate change – to name but a few – mark the future of towns. Given that allotment gardens form an integral part of a town's society, they must be taken account of in long-term urban development.

- **Common development of guidelines for allotment gardens in Germany**

Guidelines in view of the preservation and development of allotment gardens must be established in cooperation with the major players, i.e. BDG, Deutscher Städtetag and Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund.

**Our perception of new trends**

“We can see new trends in the issues affecting gardening, leisure and the social area, and we discuss these topics in our federation and with the public” (extract from BDG's profile).

Thanks to the congress on “The City's allotment gardens in 2020”, the BDG is in the process of developing its profile, and it is a very good time to do so. In fact, in the current climate of social and economic crises, allotment gardens are, as a whole, likely to become even more important.



# Great-Britain: What is your plot worth?

Geoff Stokes †, secretary general of the English allotment garden federation

During 2007, comments were being made by various groups as to the value of allotments, particularly with regard to food security for the United Kingdom.

In addition, with a current high demand for allotments (waiting lists in excess of 100,000 people) other organisations are suggesting to Government that plot sizes should be reduced to allow more people access to growing and that increasing rents would help reduce waiting lists and surplus produce. Allotments were originally provided by legislation to enable to occupier to feed his family.

The UK has always been a major importer of fruit and vegetables, and between 1988 and 1993 approximately 55% of the fruit and vegetables consumed in the UK were domestically produced. By 2006, production fell to

33% with just 10% of fruit consumed being grown in the UK.

Horticulture accounts for just 3% of the UK's agricultural area and employs 95,166 people. The total production area for fruit and vegetables in the UK is 152,900 ha compared with 8347 ha used as allotment gardens. Horticulture is by nature specialised and divided into sectors according to the crops grown and the technologies used to produce them.

In comparison, allotment gardeners number approximately 300,000 most of whom grow a wide variety of produce. The potential contribution to horticulture in terms of the skills and expertise of allotment gardeners must not be underestimated.

Amateur vegetable growers and allotment gardeners also help to maintain

a wider range of vegetables and cultivars which might otherwise be lost because they would not be commercially viable. Commercial growers require varieties which all mature at the same time enabling a whole field to be cleared mechanically in one go, whereas allotment gardeners require varieties which mature over a longer period and can be planted closer together for hand picking.

As an example, we offer a seed scheme to our members, containing 41 varieties of potatoes, 25 varieties of tomatoes, 28 varieties of lettuce, 16 varieties of carrots, and 15 varieties of cauliflower, most of which are not available in the market place. Consequently, allotment gardeners are able to find varieties which suit their local climate and growing conditions.

A conference of interested organisa-

tions was arranged by the Organic Gardening movement to assess the contribution domestic production could make to UK food security.

At that meeting, a major organisation stated that food was grown on allotments but the amount was insignificant. The only information available relating to food produced on allotments came from a ministerial report in 1941 (war time production on allotments), and from a trial vegetable plot organised by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1975 both of which needed updating.

Preliminary calculations based on the figures from the ministerial report and trial plot estimated potential production at 650kg. This multiplied by the estimated 330,000 plots gives an estimated yield of 217,987 tonnes from the UK allotment gardens which might otherwise be imported, with the disadvantage of increased food miles and carbon emissions from transportation. Such production is equivalent to 116 x 40 tonne lorries transporting food around the country each week, each contributing 403 kg carbon per 270 mile journey. The cost in fuel used is estimated at £75,000 (87,000 euro)

With estimated costs of food rising significantly over the next decade it is believed that allotments could play a significant role in reducing transportation costs. A recent report by the UK Government states that by 2050 there will not be enough land available to feed the world, which emphasises the fact that we cannot afford to lose land allocated to allotment gardens and also that more land must be provided.

It was considered necessary to conduct a survey to show exactly how much could be grown on an allotment plot which would also indicate whether a smaller plot would be sufficient to make a meaningful contribution to the annual food needs of a family.

A sample pilot survey of members in different parts of the country was considered to be the quickest and most inexpensive to organise and process rather than organising a full scale scientific trial, and volunteers were sought to keep accurate records of production and expenditure over a 12 month period commencing 1st March 2008.

A total of 22 members agreed to take part in the survey, from Edinburgh in the North to Kent in the South and from Norfolk in the East to Manchester in the west. This enabled regional differences in weather and growing conditions to be taken into the equation.

We are still analysing the data, but will be able to look at the average

- production per standard 250 sq metre plot, to compare with commercial horticulture production
- most popular vegetables grown
- expenditure on seeds, plants equipment etc.
- Hours working the plot

In addition we will have some indication as to means of travel to the plot and distance from home.

As an additional benefit, we will be able to gain an indication as to the monetary value of the plot in terms of crop value and actual expenditure, plus an indication of the value of time spent on the plot in comparison with



the 'minimum' wage. It will also give an indication as to what can be considered as a reasonable rent taking all costs and time expended into consideration.

Depending on the outcome of the initial survey, we have the option of expanding the coverage should this be required at a future date and time.



## Sweden: Biodiversity in the allotment gardens

### The Swedish Federation of Allotment Gardeners

Lars Oscarson/ Solveig Sidblad

Two years ago we got a research report from Stockholm University about “Managing the Urban Green Spaces”. In one of the papers the scientists have compared management of three different green areas; allotments, cemeteries and city parks and their generation of ecosystem services. They showed a larger number and more species of bumble bees in allotments compared with the two other green areas.

#### Abstract:

“The generation of ecosystem services depends on both social and ecological features. Here we focus on management, its ecological consequences, and social drivers. Our

approach combined quantitative surveys of local species diversity and abundance of three functional groups of ecosystem service providers (pollinators, seed dispersers and insectivores) with qualitative studies of local management practices connected to these services and their underlying social mechanisms, i.e. institutions, local ecological knowledge, and a sense of place. It focused on the ecology of three types of green areas (allotment gardens, cemeteries and city parks) in the city of Stockholm, Sweden. These are superficially similar, but differ considerably in their management. Effects of the different practices could be seen in the three functional

groups, primarily as a higher abundance of pollinators in the informally managed allotment gardens and as differences in the composition of seed dispersers and insectivores. Thus, informal management, which is normally disregarded by planning authorities, is important for ecosystem services in the urban landscape. Furthermore, we suggest that informal management has an important secondary function: It may be crucial during periods of instability and change as it is argued to promote qualities with potential for adaptation. Allotment gardeners seem to be the most motivated managers, something that is reflected in their deeper knowledge and can be exp-



lained by a sense of place and management intuition. We propose that co-management would be one possible way to infuse the same positive qualities into all management and that improved information exchange between managers would be one further step towards ecologically functional urban landscapes."

There are also some surveys of examination papers from the Swedish Agriculture University, for example in the oldest allotment area in Sweden, Citadellet in Landskrona.

Our umbrella organization for amateur gardeners (FOR) cooperates with the Swedish programme for domestic biodiversity and they have done some surveys in allotment areas especially for finding old varieties

of fruits and berries.

The German survey (published in Hyphen no. 44) is very interesting and we plan to have a short summary of it in our magazine Kolonit-rädgården. But as the climatic conditions are quite different in Sweden from south to north the results are not readily comparable. Therefore we intend to apply for money to do a similar survey in different allotment areas in Sweden. The German study then will serve as a good example that we hope we can use in relevant parts.

This German survey is important too in our discussions with local authorities.

# Japan: Gardening life in Hagidai Allotment Garden

The activities organised throughout the year by the Chigusadai Gardening Club:

1) Each activity year of the Hagidai allotment garden site starts with the general meeting of the Chigusadai Gardening Club at the end of February.



ber's club.



3) At the end of June, the lavender flowers bloom, and women make



lavender scent sticks in the outdoor hut.



4) We hold the summer harvest competition on the first Sunday of July. A choir comes and sings some beautiful songs.



(Japanese noodles), and vegetables and spices grown in our garden. Some of our members are excellent cooks. Lunch time is a wonderful time for us. The delicious lunch fills us with energy.



2) In our allotment garden, there are 117 plots and we have 106 families. The size of each plot is 30m<sup>2</sup>. The garden is managed by the mem-

5) On hot summer days, we have lunch parties with cold somen

6) Sometimes, foreign guests visit our garden. Visitors from Sweden came to our allotment garden in October, 2006. They are members of the Södra Arstalunden Koloniträdgård in Stockholm.

7) The harvest festival is held on the last Sunday in November.



8) Mochi making festival. Mochi is a traditional bamboo food dish eaten on New Year's day in Japan.

Kadomatsu decoration for the entrance. It is made of pine and plum tree branches.

9) At the new year, we make and eat Nanakusagayu. It is the last



event of the year. Nanakusagayu is a rice porridge with the seven spring herbs added to it.

10) In Japan, allotment gardens are used all the year round. In winter we grow onions, leeks, field peas, Chinese cabbage, etc...

In the cold months of January and February, we turn the soil and prepare to sow and plant in March. We have a wonderful community at the Hagidai allotment garden. Though near downtown Chiba city, this is a place rich in nature and community spirit.



## National Meetings

### Germany

In 2010 the central German federation (BDG) organizes 7 seminars ( 3 days each) with approximately 50 participants participants coming from the national federations affiliated to the central federation on following subjects:

- Legal questions: Rent problems; and management of an allotment garden association
- Specific gardening matters: The technical adviser's mission and position in the federation ; and biological plant protection
- Society and social questions: Environment and education is environment education
- Public relations: Allotment gardens need the public and its support
- Environment protection/Health: Environment protection organisations unify their efforts (the green oasies are spaces to prevent the disappearance of species)

European Day of the Garden and Day of the Garden in Bremen on June 2010.  
Opening ceremony for the whole country

Organisation of the 22nd federal competition: The gardens in the urban planning

### Great-Britain

05.06.2010 Annual General Meeting

## Documentation

### Germany

Publications in 2009:

Brochure on the finances of an allotment garden association of public utility

Posters: 4 different subjects for the Day of the Garden

Weekly gardening advice by dpa

Monthly gardening advice on Internet

Monthly newsletter

The review: Der Fachberater no. 1 -4 /2009

Grüne Schriftenreihen no. 200 bis 205 on CD

### Luxembourg

Publications in 2009:

Magazine of the federation (9 x)

Pocket booklet 2010

Petition for the protection of the gardens

### Switzerland



Publications in 2009

Important things to know for the nutrition of plants (2009)

Accident prevention (2010)

### Information

#### Germany

Thanks to a continuous work with the press, the information given by radio and TV have changed in a positive way. There is now an increased interest

Allotment garden prize 2009 of the federation. 31 interesting projects have been submitted.

Survey of innovative projects by the central federation

#### Switzerland

Revision of the law on territorial planning in Switzerland (2010)



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# Appreciating and evaluating a living heritage

Lida BRANCHESI, Member of the Council of Europe Group of Specialists on European Heritage Classes and Education

**Hampton Court (Great-Britain)**

**.....All one has to do is to think about the relationship between nature and culture.**

In October 1999 the First National Conference on Landscape in Rome brought together all central and local governments, institutions, associations, research institutes and experts from the various sectors. This was an enormous project, prepared over many months, as witness the two volumes of proceedings and all the studies and catalogues published on this occasion. The backdrop was the draft European Landscape Convention, which was signed in Florence the following year.

This time I worked on preparing the “Landscape, communication, education and training” session and introduced one of the basic reports. The research rested on two fundamental principles: education is essential in order to develop awareness of landscape itself, and the typical characteristics of landscape are themselves a major resource for education. All one has to do is to think about the relationship between nature and culture and

between aesthetic and ethical values, about the role of feelings and memory, the space-time dynamic, etc. By analysing certain experiments in Italy and in Europe we had come to the conclusion that it is essential to develop landscape awareness and education, not only so that each citizen learns to take care of it but also because the “use” of landscapes in education may contribute to overall education and training at various levels.

Five years have passed; if we observe the situation in Italy today, comparing current data with those from research some years ago we can say that the European Landscape Convention is bearing fruit. “Landscape education and tourism”, “Landscape remembered and future landscape: watching, observing and planning”, “LAN – Landscape, Art, Nature”, etc. ; these are some of the titles of the numerous projects and training seminars conducted in recent years by local institutions, associations and schools. But

how important have the innovations brought in by the convention really been? With what aims? With what methodologies?

The Council of Europe’s long experience in heritage education, in the sense of “any trace of human activities in the natural environment” (Recommendation No. R (98) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning heritage education) leads me to highlight the principal characteristic of European landscapes, often described as a “marriage of nature and culture”, a relationship that encourages the development of awareness, of one’s own cultural identity, of the sense of belonging and at the same time the habit and aptitude for recognising and respecting diversity. In the landscape, nature and culture cohabit dynamically: this is a living heritage, continually developing, whose dynamism comes from aspects both natural and cultural, a process determined to a large extent by the individual or



**Landscape in Essex (Great-Britain)**  
**The typical characteristics of landscape are themselves a major resource for education .....**

the community. Landscape education cannot fail to involve each individual in the life and management of his/her territory and motivate him/her to assume social and civil responsibilities.

**A democratic vision of the landscape**

Above all I should like to stress certain particularly novel and significant aspects, introduced by the European Landscape Convention as “an area, as perceived by people”; a “democratic” vision that is not imposed from on high but for which the experience and point of view of each person matters, a place of life and individual and collective memory. The latest heritage teaching project launched by the Council of Europe, Europe from One Street to the Other, implemented by over 20 countries in the pilot phase, certainly has aspects of particular interest and effectiveness in heritage teaching, especially as regards the urban landscape.

The tool for teachers and pupils – translated into eight languages – is rich in ideas and suggestions. The progression begins by bringing out of the child’s personal experience, the idea of a street, the characters who frequent it and the fantasies that (s)he dreams up there, developing both his/her own recollections and imagination; this is the street of the memory, his/her own “landscape”. A start is made

on exploring the street only in the second phase, entailing learning to describe its atmosphere by day and by night according to the seasons: this is a phase in which one “observes, records and expresses an opinion”. But as young Europeans go to school, what landscape lies before them? A critical awareness develops little by little from the discoveries made: “The problems in your street” is the most obvious starting-point for stressing the relationship between heritage teaching and the forming of a European citizenship. The

child or adolescent has all the tools to hand for raising the problem of his/her street, organising questions on the changes to be made, initiating a proposal and involving him-/herself in management from small beginnings.

In the final phase the work extends to comparison with other streets, other schools, other countries and other landscapes; sometimes the children actually have the opportunity to see and visit other landscapes, like the little Belgians and Macedonians.

Our Institute has evaluated the project by analysing the process and the products and by using questionnaires and interviews to obtain the views of heads, teachers and pupils in various countries. The drawings by children to illustrate the question “What is Europe to you?” are surprising; Europe is often seen as a very beautiful landscape with the European flag, and where two children are shaking hands.



**Landscape in Corsica**  
**Education is essential in order to develop awareness of landscape itself**

# European Heritage Days, a tool for cross-border co-operation

Sylvie BERTI-ROSSI, Media and Culture Association

Maria Cristina RONC, Regional Museum of Archaeology

Michel KNEUBÜHLER, Rhône-Alps Regional Cultural Affairs

In 1991, as we know, the Council of Europe encouraged the organisation every September of “European Heritage Days (EHDs)”. Since then EHDs have become a regular event for millions of Europeans.

All the evidence stresses the quality of the encounter during these “days” with a particularly attentive and interested public seeking a better knowledge of the history of buildings, their artistic merit or the techniques employed to preserve them. The initiative obviously comes up to the high expectations of a portion of European society.

The organisers very quickly grasped what a tool the EHD might be. Who cannot see that today heritage has certainly become one of the preferred areas for cultural initiatives, but also a symbolic space in which many issues coexist – social, economic, and even, sometimes in a frighteningly ambiguous way, “issues of identity”? In these circumstances using the wonderful “lever” this event provides to promote

an open idea of heritage is a real responsibility for the organisers.

Today the EHDs are not merely an annual event, a short-lived “communication operation”; they can form part of a global strategy for those responsible for cultural policies. As a special occasion in public action on heritage, they are particularly suitable for focusing the efforts of several partners, or even bringing them together around a common project.

An illustration of this strategy is provided by the cross-border “Stories... of materials” operation in 1997-99 in the French-speaking area covered by the Rhône-Alps region (France), French-speaking Switzerland and the Val d’Aosta Autonomous Region (Italy). There are two points – apart from geographical proximity and the common language – that must be made at the outset of this operation:

- Firstly, as studies among the public show, most of those attending

EHDs to learn about heritage come as a family and live a short distance away;

- Secondly, in accordance with the wishes of the Council of Europe, the event is indeed held in the three countries in September, but on different dates, thus making it possible to organise cross-border exchanges.

## A three year programme

On the strength of these findings, the organisers devised a three-year programme for the years 1997 to 1999 entitled “Stories.....of materials”, which were:

- Intended for a young audience (ages 8-12) and more generally for families;
- French-speaking and cross-border: nine French departments (the eight in Rhône-Alps plus Jura in neighbouring Franche-Comté), four Suisse Romande cantons and the Val d’Aosta Autonomous Region (Italy);



**Stories.....of materials : Wood**



**Metal**



**Stone**

- Designed to reveal the heritage, not from a chronological or typological approach but on the basis of materials;
- Devised at the outset for three years: wood in 1997, stone and earth in 1998 and metal in 1999.

In addition, each year during the EHD this programme linked the co-ordinated organisation of local activities (between 60 and 120) to the widespread circulation (100 000 copies per year) of a special issue of the Guide du Moutard (Kids' Guide) entirely devoted to the material in question by way of examples taken from the entire area concerned.

In quantitative terms, the operation proved especially positive: the 270 or so events organised in three years were attended by nearly 200.000 visitors during the EHD; 280.000 copies of the three special issues of the Guide du Moutard were circulated in nearly a thousand different places; there were several hundred press articles on the operation in the three countries.

In terms of quality, the range of activities organised during these three operations speaks for itself of the richness and variety of the approaches. One thing is certain: the parties – cultural, professional, institutional – made great efforts to deal with the subject-matter at their level, and the public – young or not so young – responded enthusiastically to the proposed discoveries.

**The only drawbacks were:**

- The difficulty experienced everywhere in bringing the schools into this programme;
- The complexity of the procedures involved in seeking funding and in carrying out a cross-border programme;
- The uneven involvement of the various public authorities.

Thanks to the “Stories.....of materials” programme, tens of thousands of children and their families were able to have access to high-quality information on the heritage of the cross-border area concerned. However, the operation also gave rise to co-operation among heritage or cultural activities professionals from the three countries that continues to bear fruit, as the EHDs testify every year.



**The cooperation continues i.e. project between France and Switzerland concerning church windows**

Such a programme could never have seen the light of day without the EHD: the event did not confine itself to being a kind of annual rite, the great heritage festival extolled by the media; it was also the starting-point for a joint and continuing cultural effort involving parties of different kinds in many capacities from several countries bordering one another.

A word in conclusion: Yves LACOSTE could say: “The first use of geography is to make war”. With all those who are working throughout Europe to ensure that the knowledge of our common heritage helps us to make better preparation for the future we want to proclaim today that: “The first use of history and heritage is to make peace.....”.

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***Legal instruments will need to be amended and judicial thinking will have to evolve to enable the specific features of the human right to a healthy environment to be taken into account.***

# The human right to a healthy environment

Pierre-Marie DUPUY, Professor at Panthéon-Assas University

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted in June 1992 by the Heads of State and Government attending the Earth Summit opens the stating that « human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature”.

This proclamation at universal level of a human right to a healthy environment echoes the provisions of a similar vein set out in most national constitutions drawn up over the last 30 years, for instance in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Poland. In Hungary, the constitution was amended in 1989 to establish a specific link between environmental protection and the right

of all individual citizens to a healthy environment (Article 70/D). The enshrining of the right to a healthy environment derives from the fact that it combines the aspirations of society with the rights of the individual.

#### **No specific convention yet**

As demonstrated by the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights,



***For the time being, the protection of the human right to a healthy environment can only be sought through applications concerning other individual rights.***

in particular in the López Ostra and Guerra cases, appeals by individuals can help ensure the protection of the environment for entire communities. However, The European Convention on Human Rights, which reflects the era in which it was drafted, makes no direct and explicit reference to the human right to a healthy environment. For the time being, the protection of such a right can only be sought through applications concerning other individual rights, such as the provision prohibiting inhuman and degrading treatment or that protecting private and family life (see, for example, the case of Powell and Rayner v. The United Kingdom concerning noise levels in the vicinity of Heathrow airport). In other words, it

is only when a breach of the right to a healthy environment coincides with that of an individually protected right that applications of this kind have any prospect of success. For the time being, the only convention-like human rights protection instrument that explicitly recognises the human right to a healthy environment is the African Charter of Human Rights. At European level, there is talk from time to time of concluding an additional protocol or another specific instrument on the matter – a step that would, indeed, appear to be justified.

One way or another, it seems that existing legal instruments will need to be amended and judicial thinking will have to evolve to enable the specific

features of such a right to be taken into account. For instance, the sometimes very gradual or delayed nature of health-endangering damage to the environment suggests there is a need to allow – and this is still very difficult under positive law – the concept of “potential victims”, corresponding to the notion of potential damage or injury.

#### Development of case-law

In terms of international law in general, the ruling of the International Court of Justice in 1997 on the apparent reduction in the quality of the drinking water from the Danube water table again demonstrated that judicial opinion is progressing much less quickly than the health risks and threats linked to the degradation of the environment. Experience shows, however, that the development of international case-law could make a great contribution to clarifying points that are still not clear enough, in particular the question of the substance and holders (individuals or groups) of the right to bring proceedings in defence of the human right to a healthy environment. The work of non-governmental organisations could well prove decisive in this area, too, in the years ahead.

Within the Council of Europe, the various initiatives of the political organs and the dynamism of the European Court of Human Rights could play a large part in strengthening a common concept of the combined protection of the environment and human rights.



# Case-law of the European Convention on Human Rights

Antonio BULTRINI, Legal Secretary



***The new Human Rights Building, Strasbourg, France***

Neither a right to a protected environment nor a right to health is explicitly guaranteed in the European Convention on Human Rights. However, through its evolving case-law on the convention, the European Court of Human Rights has developed a fundamental right to a healthy environment from other rights explicitly laid down in the convention, in particular everyone's right to respect for private and family life and the home (article 8).

For example, in the *López Ostra v. Spain* case (judgement of 9 Decem-

ber 1994) regarding nuisance caused by a waste-treatment plant close to the applicant's home, the Court found that severe environmental pollution could affect people's well-being and prevent them from enjoying their homes in such a way as to harm private and family life. This principle doubly applies to nuisance potentially affecting the health of persons exposed to it, and here there is a positive obligation on the public authorities to take the necessary action against polluters in order to safeguard the rights laid down in Article 8 of the Convention.

In its judgement of 19 February 1998 in *Guerra and Others v. Italy*, the Court also inferred that the authorities have an obligation to provide persons affected, in this instance those living near a dangerous factory, with any information they had on the threat the factory posed for the local population. It is not impossible that one day the Court will decide that the right to life (Article 2 of the Convention) is breached in cases of extreme nuisance capable of inflicting serious damage on physical well-being or even causing death.



*All across Europe the rural environment is treasured for its beautiful diversity*

## The rural vernacular habitat, a heritage in our landscape

**Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI**, Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe

All across Europe, the rural environment as treasured for its beautiful diversity. Many European cherish the opportunity to spend time in a more natural and traditional setting in a particular region. Indeed, the rural world as a whole is a priceless part of our heritage, and the unique vernacular architecture of a region reflects and supports that region's own identity. Beyond its aesthetic value, it provides a unique and irreplaceable record of certain aspects of intangible heritage:

local responses to the conditions of everyday life, such as techniques and skills, and ways of organising social life.

In spite of its immense worth, rural vernacular heritage is threatened on several fronts. Worldwide economic, cultural and architectural homogenisation of the agricultural sector is in large measure responsible for developments in the rural habitat. Rather than repair buildings or remain faithful

to local tradition when building new ones, it is often more practical in the short-term to opt for modern, featureless buildings. Rural depopulation, itself in part a result of the homogenising industrialisation of agriculture, may leave buildings disused and perhaps abandoned to people who do not see or care about their inherent value.

Linked to both of these causes is perhaps the greatest threat: society's

general under-valuing of this form of heritage. It has long been the “poor relation” of the heritage sector, perhaps overlooked in favour of more splendid monuments or areas of outstanding beauty. For their part, local communities, while appreciative of their built heritage, may not recognise its full value because to them it is so familiar. This is an area in which the Council of Europe’s European landscape Convention leads the field in terms of heritage protection: it underlines the importance of appreciating and protecting the value of all types of landscape.

Indeed, the rural habitat is not a museum-piece. It is not fixed or static, a curiosity to be wrapped in cotton wool. In order to preserve this heritage, it must be fully integrated into the modern life of the community in such a way as to retain local practices and ways of life. Redundant buildings can be readapted and re-used, in particular to exploit the economic potential which can be derived from rural tourism.

Vernacular architecture, seldom involves isolated sites – it is therefore desirable to form networks of related sites which are then more able to mobilise support. This brings further benefits in that it provides opportunities to share expertise.



***It is often more practical in the short-term to opt for modern buildings.....***



***.....than rather repair buildings or remain faithful to local tradition when building new ones.***



*By definition the rural vernacular heritage is a humble and everyday heritage.*

## UNESCO – Rural vernacular architecture: an underrated and vulnerable heritage

Marielle RICHON, Communication, Education and Partnership Section

By definition, the rural vernacular heritage is a humble and everyday heritage, and this may be why it features so little on the World Heritage List. There is not much of the spectacular or monumental about it, and the top names of world architecture played no part in it, for it was the work of or-

dinary unknowns. Yet the simplicity of the materials used to build the rural vernacular heritage, and its structures and functions should not blind us to the ingenuity of those who invented the systems and procedures that enabled climate, topography and financial constraints to be taken into

account. And the achievements of many contemporary architects cannot rival the way in which it is integrated into the landscape.

What is more, this living heritage is as fragile as it is vulnerable. In both Europe and North America, an irre-

versible change occurred following the Industrial Revolution and the drift away from the land. This process is continuing apace, as these assets are being bought up by well-off city-dwellers trying to get back to nature.

Taking on a new function, the landscape undergoes far-reaching changes as the close, deep-rooted bond between agriculture and the buildings put up for it fades. A gradual process of gentrification of farmhouses, barns and even whole villages as a result of this influx from towns and cities brings about far-reaching structural changes and adversely affects the physical and functional integrity of these assets. Modern materials are used, as are processes unrelated to old-established practices. Glass wool is used instead of cob, and breeze blocks take the place of dry stone. This is as much due to the disappearance of traditional skills as to the sometimes prohibitive cost of traditional building techniques.

In spite of itself, this heritage sometimes, under pressure from the cities, becomes an urban heritage, the very existence of which is under threat because of its inappropriateness to present-day lifestyles or its use in a new context alien to its former one.

This heritage highlighted in 1994 by the Global Strategy, and which ICOMOS identified subsequently as one of those left off the World Heritage List (1), is now in danger. It is important for it to be inventoried, documented and explored so as to ascertain its characteristics, its value and how to preserve it. There is also a need for conservation techniques and practices to be developed which respect its integrity.

Heritage conservation is a selective process highly revealing of the priorities of the governments and communities where the memory of the past is concerned. The countries of Europe thus need to react to prevent the memory of the rural past from being irrevocably lost. Especially because some sites could be deemed to be



**Today taking on a new function, the landscape undergoes far-reaching changes.**

of exceptional universal value if they fall into a cultural landscape category and meet one of the criteria for the World Heritage List, such as criterion number v. in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2). Such a loss would be one for humankind as a whole. The features of Europe's rural vernacular heritage proliferated as various migratory movements took place towards emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil. Many assets in these countries bear witness to the skills that the immigrants brought with them and made use of in their relations with their new environment. The countries concerned, which have always been predominantly rural, have started to experience the same industrialization process and rural depopulation on a huge scale. There is therefore a great – and decisive – need for Europe to safeguard its rural vernacular heritage.

- 1) The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future, Paris, ICOMOS, 2005
- 2) Criterion v. « to be an outstanding

example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change ».

## ADDRESSES

<b>Austria</b>	Zentralverband der Kleingärtner und Siedler Österreichs	Getreidemarkt 11/10 A- 1060 WIEN	Tél. 0043/1-587 07 85 Fax. 0043/1-587 07 85 30 émail: zwwien@kleingaertner.at Internet. www.kleingaertner.at
<b>Belgium</b>	National Verbond van Volkstuinen vzw/Ligue Nationale du Coin de Terre et du Foyer - Jardins Populaires	c/o Serge Dockier rue des Crénées 49 B-4210Okppe	Tél. 0032/498 373 907 émail: serge.dockier@yahoo.fr
<b>Denmark</b>	Kolonihaveforbundet for Danmark	Frederikssundsvej 304 A DK - 2700 BRONSHOJ	Tél. 0045/3 828 8750 Fax. 0045/3 828 8350 émail: info@kolonihave.dk Internet: www.kolonihave.dk
<b>Finland</b>	Suomen Siirtolapuutarhaliitto ry	Pengerkatu 9 B 39 SF - 00530 HELSINKI	Tél. 00358/ 9-763 155 Fax. 00358/ 9-763 125 émail: sgarden@siirtolapuutarhaliitto.fi Internet: www.siirtolapuutarhaliitto.fi
<b>France</b>	Fédération Nationale des Jardins Familiaux et Collectifs	12, rue Félix Faure F - 75015 PARIS	Tél. 0033/ 1-45 40 40 45 Fax. 0033/ 1-45 40 78 90 émail: j.clement@jardins-familiaux.asso.fr
<b>Germany</b>	Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde e.V.	Platanenallee 37 D - 14050 BERLIN	Tél. 0049/30-30 20 71-40/41 Fax.0049/30-30 20 71 39 émail: bdg@kleingarten-bund.de Internet: kleingarten-bund.de
<b>Great-Britain</b>	The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd.	O'Dell House/Hunters Road GB - CORBY Northants NN17 5JE	Tél. 0044/ 1536 266 576 Fax. 0044/1536 264 509 émail: natsoc@nsalg.org.uk Internet: www.nsalg.org.uk
<b>Luxemburg</b>	Ligue Luxembourgeoise du Coin de Terre et du Foyer	97, rue de Bonnevoie L - 1260 Luxembourg	Tél. 00 352/ 48 01 99 Fax. 00 352/40 97 98 émail: liguectf@pt.lu Internet: www.cff.lu
<b>Norway</b>	Norsk Kolonihageforbund	Brugata 1 N - 0186 OSLO	Tél. 0047/22-11 00 90 Fax. 0047/22-11 00 91 émail: forbundet@kolonihager.no
<b>The Netherlands</b>	Algemeen Verbond van Volkstuinders Verenigen in Nederland	Vogelvlinderweg 50 NL - 3544 NJ UTRECHT	Tél. 0031/ 346 56 16 12 Fax. 0031/ 346 56 40 92 émail: info.avvn.nl Internet: www.avvn.nl
<b>Poland</b>	Polski Związek Działkowców	Ul. Towarowa 7a PL - 00839 WARSZAWA	Tél. 0048/ 22- 6 54 62 32 Fax. 0048 /22-6 20 61 12 émail: prezespzd@pzd.pl Internet: www.dzialkowiec.com.pl
<b>Slovakia</b>	Slovenský Zväz Záhradkárov Republikový Výbor	Havlickova 34 SK - 817 02 BRATISLAVA	Tél. 00421/ 2-20 70 71 76 Fax. 00421/2-20 70 71 77 émail: info@szz.eu.sk
<b>Sweden</b>	Koloniträdgårdsförbundet	Asögatan 149 S - 116 32 STOCKHOLM	Tél. 0046/ 8 556 930 80 Fax. 0046/ 8-640 38 98 émail: leif.thorin@koloni.org Internet: www.koloni.org
<b>Switzerland</b>	Schweizer Familiengärtnerverband	Sekretariat: z. H. von Walter SCHAFFNER Sturzeneggstr. 23 CH - 9015 ST.GALLEN	Tél. 0041/ 71-311 27 19 Fax. 0041/71 - 310 14 53 émail: waschaffner@bluewin.ch

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Address: 20, rue de Bragance, L - 1255 Luxemburg

The Office online: [www.jardins-familiaux.org](http://www.jardins-familiaux.org)

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