

**Allotments: Extremely valuable – grossly underestimated – shockingly unknown**

On 26th January and 20th February you read an article presenting first the valuable contribution of the allotment gardeners to safeguard an important knowhow and then secondly their contribution for a healthy nature.

As appendix you find now an insight in a third subject: „The allotment gardeners and the society”, worked out by Chris ZIJDEVELD, President of the AVVN (the Dutch allotment garden federation) and former president of the International Office.

This subject describes the social function assumed by the members of the international allotment movement.

More subjects will follow.



extremely valuable - grossly underestimated - shockingly unknown

## SOCIETY:



Contrary to the misconception that allotment gardeners are a closed group more or less outside society, many allotments have projects towards or are in the middle of society and society actions.



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In many countries the origin of allotments found its motivation in circumstances in society. In Germany the name Schreber is connected to one of these early initiatives and in Leipzig an interesting museum – of course on an allotment – keeps the memory alive.



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A visit is strongly recommended to everybody who wants to know more about allotments and allotment gardening.



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In the Kleingärtenverein Himmelreich in Suhl ( Germany) an allotment has a close cooperation with a school for disabled children.



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In the allotment site Peltolan Sürtolapuutarha in Turku ( Finland) old weaving techniques are kept alive on an allotment.



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On the same allotment an old farm building is maintained and kept in shape as a living part of history.





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In Helsinki (Finland) the allotment site Vallila Siirtolapuutarha was built as a monumental expression. Not only some of the historical buildings are restored and kept in shape, but also the monumental layout is restored and kept as good as possible.





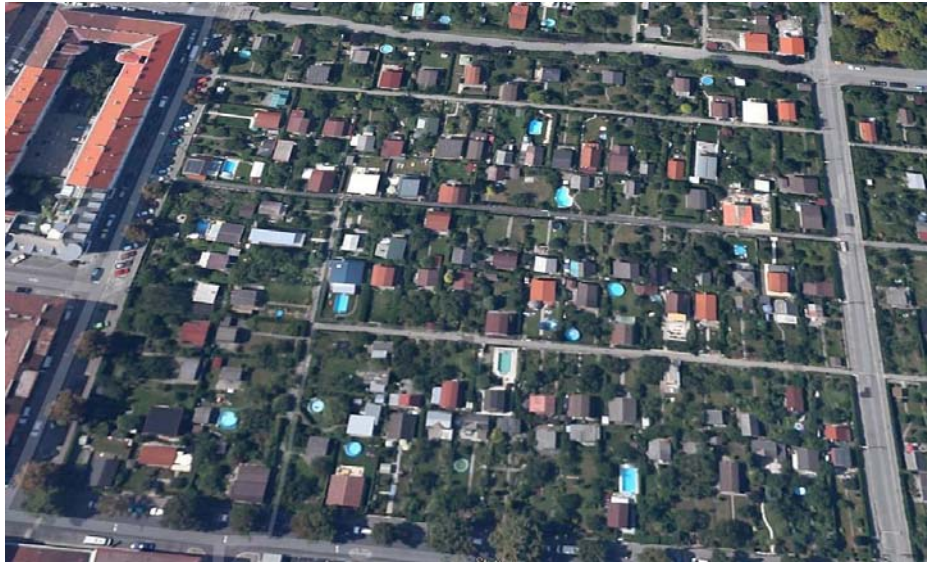
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Another example of an historic building on the same allotment.



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In Vienna a large allotment is so in the middle of downtown that nobody expects it there. It not only is a beloved green area, but the meeting room has as well developed into a pub and restaurant for the whole neighbourhood. The allotment is literally in the middle of society.



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Every time again it is a surprise to see such an enormous allotment site in the middle of a downtown block.



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As it happens many times an allotment in the Dutch town of Utrecht was threatened by a new development. The allotment gardeners resisted and the outcome was an agreement about the allotment becoming a meeting and green centre for the new development.





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Now in this allotment you find a board member who is just a neighbour and doesn't even have an allotment.



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Another allotment in the same town had to move because of the construction of a motorway. Together with the local authorities a creative new solution was designed: allotments and commercial buildings as a positive mix.



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Hopefully this mixture, where both functions reinforce each other, becomes an inspiring example in other cities and countries.





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In allotment Bronfair in Wales (UK) high raised beds make gardening available for disabled.



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If one looks more carefully the numbers on the high raised are readable for blind people as well.



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With some help in the beginning of the growing of a plant these people are able to have joy and satisfaction in being able to have an own garden.



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In Cold Barn Farm Allotments Wales ( UK) a vegetable garden gives encouragement and motivation to potential teenager school drop outs. They are allowed to garden if they have been attending all school hours. That works out very well.



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After some time the organisation discovered that many mothers of these children had no good cooking skills .So cooking courses were organised and it developed further.



In Ipswich the Maidenhall Allotments (UK) developed a project for keeping old species alive .It asks for accurate and precise work to keep seeds clean and it is also done with disabled people.





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On the same piece of land there is an excellent cooperation with the allotment and the community initiative. Interested people can start on a little piece of land to see if they really like gardening before they start on a much larger piece of land on the official allotment.





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Castle Hill Allotments in Ipswich ( UK ) gives nature lessons to school children and gained so support for having a meeting room.



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On the same allotment juvenile starting “vandals” do society service instead of going to prison and maintain rough areas on the allotment in a nature friendly way.



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In Falkenstein Auerbach ( Germany ) there is a project for the youngest children, where they come before they go to kindergarten. A grandmother and grandfather like couple give the children their first lessons in gardening in harmony with nature.



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It asks for patience and special skills to keep it organised. Before the children go to school they have there first certificate – in gardening.



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In the green classrooms in Germany, here in Markranstädt, children get serious lessons about gardening and nature.





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It is amazing how well informed these kids can be - even at young age



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This is the meeting building of the allotment Seilbahn in Leipzig ( Germany ) where they give enormous attention to a good relationship with the neighbourhood – they got diplomas from the municipality for their value to society.





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and don't misunderstand – it is a serious allotment with beautiful and well maintained gardens.



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The local allotment organisation in Hamburg ( Germany) observed that many times widowed ladies from couples that had been motivated gardeners for many years had difficulties in keeping a garden alone. The solution was the creation of a larger allotment garden where a group of ladies could garden together and have also social activities .



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and they keep on gardening!



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In Dijon the French organisation for allotment gardening works together with community initiatives and encourages these .It offers special gardens with high raised beds and with a special wheel chair facility for disabled people.  
disabled people can get a





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It works out very well in practice.



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In the same town and again in cooperation with the French organisation for allotment gardening another initiative shows another innovative solution – a rotating garden



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and of course it does not stand alone but in the middle of small plots for the neighbourhood.