

Die Masterarbeit untersucht die Bedeutung von „urbanen Gemeinschaftsgärten“ für eine nachhaltige und soziale Stadtteilentwicklung. Dabei werden drei unterschiedliche Fallstudien in der Region FrankfurtRheinMain betrachtet – der „Frankfurter Garten“ im Frankfurter Stadtteil Ostend, die „Internationalen Gärten“ in Darmstadt-Kranichstein und der „Saisongarten“ in Dreieich-Götzenhain. Im Ergebnis zeigt sich, dass in allen drei Projekten ein deutlicher Mehrwert an ökologischem, ökonomischem und sozialem Kapital zu verzeichnen ist und die urbanen Gemeinschaftsgärten einen Gewinn nicht nur für ihre individuellen Nutzer, sondern auch die Gemeinschaft und die Stadtgesellschaft insgesamt darstellen.

Urban Community Gardening as a Social Movement for More Sustainable Neighborhoods A Case Study of the Frankfurt Rhine-Main Region, Germany

During the last several decades public awareness of urban gardening, as a practice for greener and more productive cities, has raised significantly. Against the background of growing urbanization and its serious impact on the shape of a city, urban gardening presents an important contribution to city nature that improves ecology and human health, and in this way links urban populations and environmental responsibility more closely. As a result, urban gardening practice becomes a useful instrument for sustainable urban development that aims to meet local needs and to protect the environment for future generations.

However, along with mass representation of the sustainability concept, urban gardening began to be considered as a successful model for inclusion of different urban communities into a movement as an intentional social organization, which focuses on achieving common goals in community development. This means that gardening within a community implies predominantly new social initiatives for various positive changes in city neighborhoods and promotion of sustainable community development within mutual cooperation of collective empowerment and governmental support. Therefore, modern understanding of urban community gardening as a social movement requires broad comprehension of its manifestations, because otherwise the precise definition limits creativity of communal actions.

The research that was undertaken in the thesis focused on urban community gardening as a social initiative and democratic phenomenon in city neighborhoods and their self-organization. The work aimed to provide deeper understanding of this social movement and its impacts in local neighborhoods and community development based on a case study of the Frankfurt Rhine-Main, which actively promotes urban gardening at public and governmental levels. The core-guiding research question was:

Are urban community gardens in the Frankfurt Rhine-Main Region an expression of citizen participation in sustainable community development or the result of some other imperatives?

The study has shown that the Frankfurt Rhine-Main Region has a broad variation of urban community gardens, where each project arises as a response to the particular opportunities, needs, and missions of communities or organizations. It has allowed to present the types of gardening that are relevant for the research in case of manifestation of social movement, which must include social initiatives in case of project implementation.



Urban Community Garden Project: Ginnheimer Kirchplatzgärten in Frankfurt am Main (Source: Author, 2014).

The following three gardens, which represent different organizational structures and all together have approximately equal area sizes and number of gardeners, were chosen as samples of investigation:

Frankfurter Garten in Frankfurt am Main
Internationale Gärten Kranichstein in Darmstadt
Saisongarten – Dreieich-Götzenhain in Dreieich

The analysis of the projects was based on the concept of sustainable community development (the model of community capital increase), which originates from the increasing of four capitals through urban community gardening practice:

Economic capital

- Food industries
- Employment and income
- Greater productivity,
- Investments and entrepreneurial options
- Financial community incentives

Social capital

- Strengthening of networks
- Stimulation of community ownership sense
- Integration between different social groups
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Ecological capital

- Environmental management
- Environmental knowledge
- Greening of the urban environment
- Increasing of biodiversity

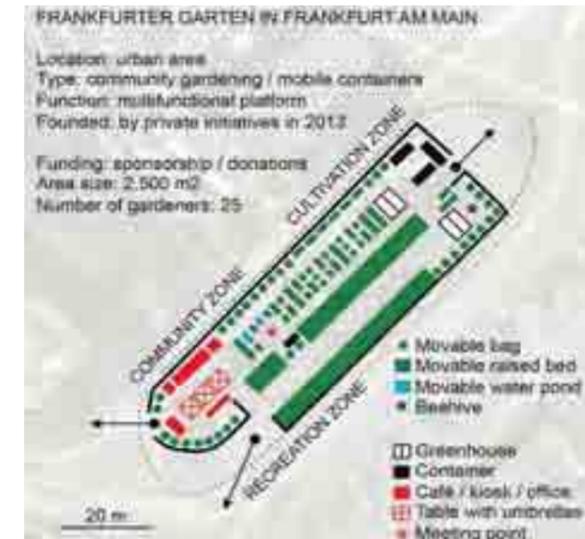
Human capital

- Education
- Skills practicing
- Contribution to health

The data were collected through a literature review, primary and secondary, semi-structured interviews with founders and gardeners, direct observations, and passive participation in the projects' activities.

Finally, the analysis of urban community gardening projects of the Frankfurt Rhine-Main Region has shown that all three projects contribute to a simultaneous increase of all components of sustainable community development. But the level of contribution varies due to different contexts. The study has concluded that the three chosen urban community gardens appear to be not only an expression of citizen participation in sustainable community development, but also a manifestation of personal and social needs. In all investigated samples, urban community gardens have had a positive impact on sustainable development regardless the primordial initiatives and interests of the creators of the projects.

Thus, the study has confirmed that urban community gardening presents a multifunctional tool, which provides a variety of benefits for individuals, communities, and society as a whole.



Sample 1 (Source: Author, 2014).



Sample 2 (Source: Author, 2014).



Sample 3 (Source: Author, 2014).