

Städtebauliche, ökologische und soziale Bedeutung des Kleingartenwesens

Forschungen

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Abstract

Subject-Matter, Objective and Method of the Study

Currently, there is a number of about 1.24 millions allotment gardens in Germany. Their urban development-related, ecological and social significance form the subject of a study with which the Institute for Town Planning and Social Research (Institut für Stadtplanung und Sozialforschung) Weeber+Partner was entrusted by the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Affairs (BMVBS), represented by the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR). The study is based on a study on allotment gardening of 1997 and shall in particular provide information on the issue how the demographic and social changes influence the area of allotment gardening and which strategic approaches for the future development of allotment gardening will result from this.

A survey among 5,000 allotment gardeners formed the centrepiece of the empirical study (44 % feedback). Besides, allotment gardeners' associations, the regional associations in the Federal Association of German Gardeners (Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde e.V. – BDG), municipalities as well as the relevant federal state ministries were interviewed about the current developments.

Allotment Gardening and Urban Development

Allotment garden estates shall contribute to provide built-up areas in towns with green areas and live them up and shall compensate users for their life in flats in multi-storey buildings. In the municipalities examined, they can be found both on the outskirts and in inner-city areas. However, the tendency to shift allotment garden estates to the outskirts continues.

About three quarter of the allotment garden areas are owned by the municipalities. 84 % of the allotment garden estates examined are accessible to the public. In the municipalities involved, a total of 15 % of allotment garden estates are registered as permanent allotment gardens in development plans (Dauerkleingärten in Bebauungsplänen).

Particularly in large cities, there is a continuing high demand for allotment gardens with a simultaneous competition of other kinds of

land use. In 36 % of the municipalities interviewed, allotment garden areas have been converted into building or traffic areas since 1997 (this concerns 1 % of all allotment gardens); for 45 % of the abandoned allotment gardens, replacement was created. About one third of the municipalities plan further conversions of allotment gardens.

However, in shrinking regions a declining demand and in part a vacancy of allotment gardens can be noted. In 8 % of the associations, more than 5 % of the gardens are not leased. In part, vacant gardens are used for social projects. To a low extent, individual gardens or allotment garden estates have already been abandoned due to the lack of demand.

Ecology and Allotment Gardening

As parts of urban green areas, allotment garden estates have an important compensating function in terms of climate, temperature and humidity. Especially in large cities, criteria of urban ecology have played an important role in the planning of allotment garden estates. During the past few years, 20 % of the municipalities have taken compensatory and replacement measures according to Art. 21 of the Federal Nature Conservation Act (Bundesnaturschutzgesetz – BNatSchG) in allotment garden estates.

In almost all associations, committees influence the natural and environmental awareness of allotment gardeners by means of their constitutions and garden rules. For 84 % of the associations, technical counselling, the significance of which has increased compared to 1997, plays an important role. And also ecological model allotment gardens have proven to be especially effective.

Allotment gardeners consider nature conservation and environmental protection in allotment gardens to be very important. In particular the use of rainwater and composting in one's own garden is a matter of course. Other requirements on gardening close to nature have not yet gained acceptance to the same extent; there are differences between younger and older allotment holders.

Social Significance and Demography

Allotment gardens fulfil important social functions for the allotment garden holders, but also for visitors. In particular for tenants in densely populated residential areas, they satisfy the need for staying and carrying on activities in nature. These possibilities shall be open to all persons even if they do not have much money or are not sufficiently mobile anymore. This social concern is legally guaranteed by a limitation of the rent and a high degree of protection against eviction.

The average amount of redemption for taking over an allotment garden has decreased since the last study and amounts to almost 1,900 euros. The costs of using an allotment garden – rent, membership dues, insurance premiums, local rates – however, have increased to an average of 276 euros per year.

In allotment gardening a change of generations has started that will further accelerate. The average age of allotment gardeners is almost 60 years. Only 21 % are younger than 50 years; in 1997, they still were 26 %. Children live in 20 % of the households of allotment gardeners. But in new leases, the share is 45 %.

Allotment gardens are also becoming more and more popular among persons with a migration background. According to the associations, about 10 % of the gardens are leased to migrants. Their share among the new leases of the past five years is 12 % already. The activity rate among allotment gardeners is about 33 % and has further decreased since the preceding examination. More than half of the lessees are pensioners, but also the unemployment rate is above the federal average.

Using an allotment garden also means to be part of a community – an association of allotment gardeners. That is a constituent part of organized allotment gardening in Germany and promotes the living together of people with common interests. Apart from the legal and contractual responsibility towards the owner of the ground, the associations are among other things responsible for comprehensive administrative functions, for controlling the compliance with legal regulations and garden rules, for organizing the joint work and joint events as well as technical counselling.

A comparably new quality in allotment gardening has resulted from activities of associa-

tions that do not only address their own members, but go far beyond that. Meanwhile, more than every second association maintains intensive contacts and sponsorship relations with social institutions. One quarter of all associations has especially close contracts with day nurseries, but also with schools and senior citizens' institutions.

Conclusions

In view of the existing competition of utilization, the safeguarding of allotment garden areas under planning law, in particular in inner-city areas and in locations close to residential estates, continues to be an important task. In regions with a growing rate of vacant gardens, concepts for a conversion and subsequent use of areas are required. Allotment garden development plans prove to be workable planning instruments in regions with a stable demand and with competing utilization as well as in regions with a declining demand.

Technical counselling oriented towards gardening close to nature has been successfully extended in the past few years and carried on at a high level. But efforts and differentiated forms and methods in order to reach all allotment gardeners will still be required.

The future of allotment gardening will depend on whether and how it will be managed to win new target groups, in particular families with children and migrants. In towns with a declining population, however, a decrease in the existing number of gardens is to be expected in the medium term.

Socially compatible costs will in the future continue to be an essential condition for facilitating access to an allotment garden also for persons with a low income.

By involving new members, for example persons with a migration background, and with the outward social commitment, the social function of associations of allotment gardeners is growing.