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COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens in European Cities (TU1201)

Short Term Scientific Mission Report

# Allotments in Oslo: Social relations, diets and wallets



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Esther Veen MSc.

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## Allotments in Oslo: Social relations, diets and wallets

STSM candidate: Esther Veen

Home institutes:

Applied Plant Research, part of Wageningen University and Research Centre

P.O. Box 430, 8200 AK Lelystad, the Netherlands

Rural Sociology Group, Wageningen University

Hollandseweg 1, 6706 KN Wageningen, the Netherlands

Host institutes:

Skog og landskap (Norwegian Forest and Landscape Institute)

Postboks 115, 1431 Ås, Norway

Fylkesmannen i Oslo og Akershus

Postboks 8111 Dep, 0032 OSLO, Norway

Supervisors:

Sebastian Eiter (Skog og landskap)

Ellen Marie Forsberg (Fylkesmannen i Oslo og Akershus)

COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe is chaired by:

Runrid Fox-Kaemper

Dipl.-Ing. Architect

Head of Research Group „Built Environment“

[runrid.fox-kaemper@ils-forschung.de](mailto:runrid.fox-kaemper@ils-forschung.de)

<http://www.ils-forschung.de>

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## Abstract

This report describes the findings of a Short Term Scientific Mission, part of the COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens (TU1201). Two allotments in Oslo were studied, using questionnaires (49 respondents) and semi-structured interviews (11 respondents).

The research shows that gardeners are found in all segments of Oslo's society, with various socio-economic backgrounds. These different gardeners show many similarities. They almost all feel healthier because of the garden, both physically and mentally. They share and exchange both knowledge and harvest, learning about new crops or growing techniques. They all chat to other gardeners, and get to know some of them. All gardeners give and receive help to/from others; people water each other's plots and give advice. Growing vegetables is inextricably linked to the allotment gardening experience. Although the degree to which people eat from their gardens varies – for some this may not be more than a few times a year, for others it is most of what they eat – for many respondents, having an allotment would not be the same without the vegetables. The same can be said for the social relations at the garden. The value of these relations, the extent to which gardeners make friends, and what part of people's social life is to be found at the garden all vary. But all gardeners meet and talk to others, rely on other gardeners for help and advice, and appreciate the fact that they are – at least to a certain extent – part of the allotment community. Besides these similarities there are also large differences between farmers, most notably in the degree to which they eat from their gardens as well as in the degree to which their social network depends on the garden.

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

This report describes the findings of a Short Time Scientific Mission that was conducted as part of the COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens in European Cities (TU1201), from the 18<sup>th</sup> of August until the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. The topic of this STSM was proposed by Ellen Marie Forsberg from Fylkesmannen i Oslo og Akershus (the Department of Agriculture at the County Governor of Oslo and Akershus) and Sebastian Eiter from Skog og landskap (the Norwegian Forest and Landscape Institute)<sup>1</sup>. For more information on COST Europe and COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens in European Cities (TU1201) see appendix A.

Allotments play an important role in urban design because they can be seen as a compensation for the lack of green space – and private gardens – in cities, especially in dense urban areas. The COST Action's Memorandum of Understanding (Cost Action TU1201 2012) argues that during the last twenty years urban residents have shown an increased interest in allotments. However, while waiting lists lengthen, competition from other types of land use is also increasing. This contradiction makes allotments a relevant issue to be studied.

This first chapter is the introduction to my research. It starts with the problem statement, leading to the research question. After that I shortly discuss what is known about the development of allotments in Oslo, as this is background information needed as a context for the research.

## Problem statement

The growing demand for allotment gardens in densely populated cities can be explained by an increasing concern about the safety and quality of food. Many people act upon these concerns by growing their own food, giving them access to healthy, fresh and locally produced vegetables and fruit. Especially for people who do not have a private garden, an allotment is therefore a valuable urban space. Allotments are associated with various social benefits, such as increasing intergenerational and ethnic integration but also better physical and mental health for practitioners (Cost Action TU1201 2012).

Oslo is currently one of Europe's fastest growing cities. The city encompasses farmland and has a distinct green infrastructure, but this is continually threatened by urbanization (Leivestad 2014). Oslo residents have been growing food for centuries. In the beginning of the nineteenth century so-called kitchen gardens were promoted by Norges Vel, the Royal Norwegian Society for Development. The upper classes grew a mix of vegetables and ornamental plants, which was a sign of prosperity. In the second part of that century gardening became more popular; gardening books were published and horticultural schools were opened. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century allotments were started - gardens where disadvantaged residents were given the opportunity to supplement their incomes by growing food. However, when food prices decreased as a result of agricultural industrialisation, kitchen gardens lost popularity - except during the wars when they were more necessary. But as in many other European cities, also in Oslo the last decades are characterized by an increased and renewed interest in 'real food', connections between farmers and consumers, and growing food in cities (Leisner 2014). It is illustrative that during my stay in Ås, the Oslo newspaper 'Aftenposten' featured an article on people from Oslo eating locally grown organic food and on the long waiting lists for food cooperatives and allotments (Jonsdottir 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> The question was proposed within the COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe (TD1106), but as it fitted better within the COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens, the STSM was conducted within that COST Action.

The County Governor of Oslo and Akershus recognizes the increased interest in locally grown urban food. It therefore wants to stimulate 'urban agriculture', an overarching term encompassing allotments<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, urban agriculture is one of the policy areas in its rural development programme. In January 2013 the county established a think tank on urban agriculture. The resulting report 'Urban agriculture – sustainable, visible and appreciated' (published in 2014) contains several recommendations to stimulate urban agriculture. The county especially values the potential synergies between urban agriculture and professional, peri-urban agriculture, as these are believed to complement each other (Leivestad 2014, Leisner 2014):

*"They are both part of the town's overall food supply system, and must be seen in context. Urban agriculture can contribute to raising awareness for professional farming among city dwellers. It reduces the distance between producer and consumer and creates a deeper understanding of food production and agriculture's unique qualities. A visible, diverse and inclusive urban agriculture helps raising consumer awareness, creating attitudinal changes and stimulating appropriate consumer habits. Peri-urban agriculture, on the other hand, is an indispensable source of knowledge and experience which players in the city depend on. The interaction between peri-urban and urban agriculture can result in new connections and valuable synergies, which help to pave the way for future sustainable and professional agriculture, regionally and nationally (County Governor of Oslo and Akershus 2014: 55, translated).*

The county thus sees a role for urban agriculture foremost in popularizing more traditional forms of agriculture; it facilitates an active and sustainable urban agriculture in the metropolitan region *as a means* to support the professional farming, directly and indirectly (County of Oslo and Akershus 2014). This role as a 'salesman for agriculture' explains why residents can (under certain conditions) apply for the county's rural development funds when they want to establish an urban agriculture initiative (Leivestad 2014).

Literature on urban agriculture initiatives such as community gardens and allotments lists several potential benefits of these forms of growing food in cities. These benefits can be divided under the headings of people, planet and profit and concern (policy) issues as broad as environment, food and health, recreation, education, added value, employment and participation and cohesion (Veen et al 2012). Despite the attention for urban agriculture's expected positive effects on mainstream agriculture as illustrated above, the county recognizes such benefits: *"Social relations, the establishment of meeting places, education, health, integration, entrepreneurship, food culture, biodiversity and conservation of soil and green space is a valuable aspect of urban agricultural activities and can often be a more important goal than the actual food production"* (Leisner 2014: 14). It argues that allotment gardens are social meeting places suitable for integration, especially because they attract a wide audience with various backgrounds (Leivestad 2014). In her Master's thesis Kavli (2013) also states that

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<sup>2</sup> The County Governor of Oslo and Akershus argues that 'urbant landbruk' (urban agriculture and forestry) is an unsatisfying term for what it is to entail, as it is unfitting for activities in for instance private gardens and school gardens. It sees the alternative urban gardening as too narrow. The county therefore prefers the term 'urbant jordbruk' (urban farming). Later in the report, however, 'urbant landbruk' is again used as an overall concept. The county defines urbant landbruk in a broad sense; it is characterized by a diversity of practitioners, products, venues and purposes, and includes school pupils, hobby gardeners, demonstration farms, private gardens, windowsills, rooftops, private activities, commercial activities and non-profit activities, production, consumption, processing, distribution and sales (Leisner 2014). Allotments are specifically mentioned as part of this definition (Leivestad 2014). The COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe, defines urban agriculture similarly wide. However, it distinguishes between urban food gardening and urban farming, according to the degree of commerciality. Allotments belong to 'urban food gardening' (<http://www.urbanagricultureeurope.la.rwth-aachen.de/wiki.html> -> WG1... -> Types of Urban Agriculture). In this present report I see urban agriculture as growing food in an urban context, which can be in allotments, but also in urban farms, community gardens, school gardens and roof gardens, both by professionals and local residents. Hence, I treat allotments as one particular form of urban agriculture. Perhaps the term urban food gardening, or urban farming for that matter, is more fitting, but urban agriculture is wider used and adopted.



allotments have been noticed as useful strategies for integration and cohesive neighbourhoods in Norway. She cites Ruud et al (2011) who argue that allotments are social and inclusive meeting spaces, leading to increased knowledge and understanding of neighbours with different ethnic backgrounds, and thereby an increased confidence in their community.

Notwithstanding this (policy) recognition for urban agriculture's social benefits, and the fact that Oslo's soil and climate are suitable for growing, the development of urban agriculture in Oslo is facing several difficulties. Heavy bureaucratic processes are combined with a lack of space, financial support and recognition, while most of the work is done by volunteers (Leivestad 2014). Zooming in on allotments specifically, the most pressing difficulties are zoning, urban development pressure on land and lack of organization. Allotments are zoned for different purposes and administered by several different agencies (Leivestad 2014); no public agency has overall responsibility for their future (Haavie 2001). Furthermore, Oslo's allotment gardens have not been taken into account in area planning and urban land use. During the last few years, a number of allotments have been downsized and several are under threat from new developments. Allotment gardening is not considered a recreational activity on par with other leisure activities (Haavie 2001). Also in other European cities allotments face challenges, as the Memorandum of Understanding (Cost Action TU1201 2012) states:

*"This is due to both transformations of European cities with changes in the social character of communities (ethnicity, population migration, age, gender, employment rate, etc.) in conjunction with the increasing importance of sustainable urban development. For instance due to growing population in cities and increasing land value, public authorities have to evaluate the pros and cons of more profitable land uses (housing, commercial, educational, etc.) against existing [allotment garden] areas."*

To recapitulate, the popularity of allotments increases, both in Oslo and in other European cities, as does the popularity of other forms of growing food in the city. Such urban food growing spaces are associated with various benefits, amongst which social benefits as social cohesion and integration, recognized by the county of Oslo and Akershus. Despite that, allotments in Oslo and other European cities face several challenges. An increased understanding of allotments is expected to help in their survival as it makes clear what their benefit and value to society is; although there are sporadic national results, allotments' exact relevance and potential for urban development is not clear. The COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens therefore aims to increase knowledge on the relevance of allotments, and their role in relation to future land use, from a European comparative perspective (Cost Action TU1201 2012). The COST Action aims to contribute to the understanding of allotments on four specific areas, of which sociology is one - besides urban development, ecology, and urban design. The Action will study and analyse the social aspects of allotments in order to investigate reasons and barriers that have impacts on allotment gardens from a social, cultural, identical and ethnological viewpoint, studying how societies use allotments as a means of social integration and community cohesion (Cost Action TU1201 2012).

## Research question

This study contributes to the COST Action Urban Allotments Gardens, with the aim to expand "the knowledge base in social integration by studying the relationships of different social, cultural and ethnic groups and their related gardening practices in allotments" (Cost Action TU1201 2012: 8). The main objective is to make an inventory of allotment gardens and their users in Oslo. More in particular, the research has the following research question:

*"What are gardeners' main reasons for having an allotment, how does the harvest influence their diets and wallets and to what extent do people develop relationships with other gardeners?"*

Besides its value for the COST Action, this research also contributes to my PhD research on the social and dietary effects of urban agriculture in the Netherlands, as it puts the results of that research into a broader perspective.

## The development of allotments in Oslo

In the nineteenth century large population growth and urbanization lead to poverty and food shortages, especially in cities. Allotment gardens were a reaction to these trends, creating space for the poorer part of the population to grow their own food (Kavli 2013). The first allotment in Norway was established in Oslo in 1907. Allotments were specifically meant for families living in small urban apartments, as a place to recreate and grow food (Leisner 2014). However, not only the poor working class residents were using them; middle class people have also always grown in allotments, mainly for recreational and leisure purposes (Acton 2012 in: Kavli 2013).

Before I continue, it is important to shortly discuss terminology. The Memorandum of Understanding defines allotments as *'small plots of urban land allocated by local authorities to households who are interested in producing their own vegetables'* (Cost Action TU1201: 5). Typically, allotments are divided into small plots that are farmed or gardened individually (Bellows 2004). In Norway there are two types of what is called allotments in English; 'kolonihager' on the one hand and 'parselhager' on the other hand. A Norwegian dictionary defines kolonihage as a *'collection of small garden plots, 150-300m<sup>2</sup>, outside the owner's domicile, usually on rented, most often municipal land. Those who rent the plots tend to put up small cabins'* (<https://snl.no/kolonihager>, translated). Kolonihager are run jointly by the tenants, and there is a shared responsibility for common areas and public buildings. Each parcel tenant operates his own plot, places his own cabin and looks after his own plants (<http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kolonihager>). Parselhager are similar, but people are not allowed to build sheds or cabins on them. While not taken up in the official definitions, there seems to be another distinction. I visited one kolonihage and saw that most plots consist of a grass field with chairs and a table. On some of them a small space was reserved for vegetables, sometimes in a wooden crate or box, but growing vegetables seemed a secondary motivation; creating a pleasant recreational garden seemed – as far as I could interpret from a short visit – the first. Therefore kolonihager seem comparable to what the Dutch call 'dwelling gardens' whereas parselhager seem comparable to the Dutch 'utility gardens'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, where in English we speak of allotments, in Norwegian both parselhager and kolonihager are included, even if they are two different things. This research is about parselhager only. However, allotments are mainly a European phenomenon. Kavli (2013) argues that allotments as a term is used in the British literature more than in the American literature, where researchers more often refer to community gardens. In my view, however, community gardens are a different phenomenon; they are often located more centrally in a neighbourhood, are often gardened only by people living in that neighbourhood, do mostly not have individual plots – people grow food communally – and most importantly, often focus more on social and community goals than on growing food. COST Action Urban Allotment Gardens (TU1201) also sees community gardens as another kind of urban garden (Cost Action TU1201 2012) as does COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe (TD1106).

It is not clear how many allotment complexes there are in Oslo today. Wikipedia speaks of 1,600 allotments on nine complexes (<http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kolonihager>), but this webpage refers to

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<sup>3</sup> In Dutch allotments is generally translated as *volkstuinten* – gardens for the people. *Volkstuinten*, however, also split into two types. They can either be *'nutstuinten'* - utility gardens, where people grow food and/or flowers - or *'verblijfstuinten'*. *Verblijfstuinten* loosely translates as 'dwelling gardens'; mostly they are used to sit outside, and for example have a barbeque. Usually these gardens have cabins on them; on some *verblijfstuinten* people are allowed to stay the night and some gardeners practically live on them in Summer. *Nutstuinten*, however, often also allow cabins. But unlike in Norway, where *parselhager* and *kolonihager* are two different things, both *nutstuinten* and *verblijfstuinten* can be referred to as *volkstuinten*.



kolonihager<sup>4</sup>. The website <http://www.parsellhager.no/> lists 26 allotments, of which seven are no longer in existence, one is about to be closed and one is partially threatened. The remaining complexes together host approximately 1,000 plots. The report 'Urban agriculture – sustainable, visible and appreciated' states that there are 1,600 plots (Leisner 2014: 11) but on another page speaks of 1,000 on 20 allotment gardens (Leivestad 2014: 44). Clearly, there is no consensus on the number of allotments. It is clear, however, that there are several allotment gardens throughout the city, together accounting for at least 1,000 allotments (a limited number compared to other European cities (Leisner 2014)). An average allotment plot is approximately 50m<sup>2</sup> (Leivestad 2014).

Three out of five Oslo residents live in apartment buildings (SBB Population and Housing Census 2011, in: Leivestad 2014) and most people have no access to a private garden. It may come as no surprise, therefore, that there are long waiting lists. While in 2010 waiting lists consisted of about 400 people, the total number of people on a list for an allotment has grown to about 1,000 today (Haavie, in Jonsdottir 2014). Considering a renewed interest in food and environment, it is expected that this list will lengthen in the near future (Leivestad 2014). Just how popular allotments are, is visible from the fact that when a new allotment was opened in 2012, there were 3,790 applicants for its 100 plots (Leisner 2014).

As Oslo has a long tradition of school gardens and one of my two case studies contains not only allotments but also school gardens, I briefly discuss school gardens here as well. The first school garden in Oslo was established in 1906, in order to educate children about plants, food and nature. During its heydays in the 1900s Oslo's school gardens had four year-round employees, a manager and 120 part-time teachers. In 1984, ninety percent of the schools had a school garden. However, in the last twenty years there has been a sharp decline in the number of school gardens – at least sixty percent of the former school gardens have been reallocated for construction purposes. In recent years, there is a renewed interest in school gardens. In its report 'Urban agriculture – sustainable, visible and appreciated', the county recognizes school gardens' value, the challenges they face and what can be done to revitalize them. The total area allocated to school gardens in Oslo is 93 hectares (Leivestad 2014, Leisner 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> The complexes on Wikipedia are all a member of NKHF, Norsk Kolonihageforbund.

## Methodology

### Case study design

The research methods of this STSM are similar to the ones I used in my PhD research in the Netherlands. There are two reasons for that; these methods have been tested and were fine-tuned, and it enables comparison of the two studies in the future. The research has a case study design. Case studies make it possible to study a phenomenon from different angles; on the one hand look for quantitative data by using questionnaires and on the other hand look for qualitative data by interviewing people and visiting gardens. In combination these two types of data provide a good overview of the cases and that way give insights in allotments in Oslo more broadly. Moreover, the use of case studies fits with the objectives of the COST Action, as it aims to develop 'a series of case studies within European cities where different aspects of [allotment gardens] will be examined through in-depth studies' (Cost Action TU1201 2012: 12). Because of the limited amount of time available for this research I chose to study two cases.

### Case selection

In the previous chapter I argued that it is unclear how many allotments there are in Oslo, but [www.parsellhager.no](http://www.parsellhager.no) gives a (perhaps partial) overview, shown in figure 1. The orange flowers are the complexes still in existence.

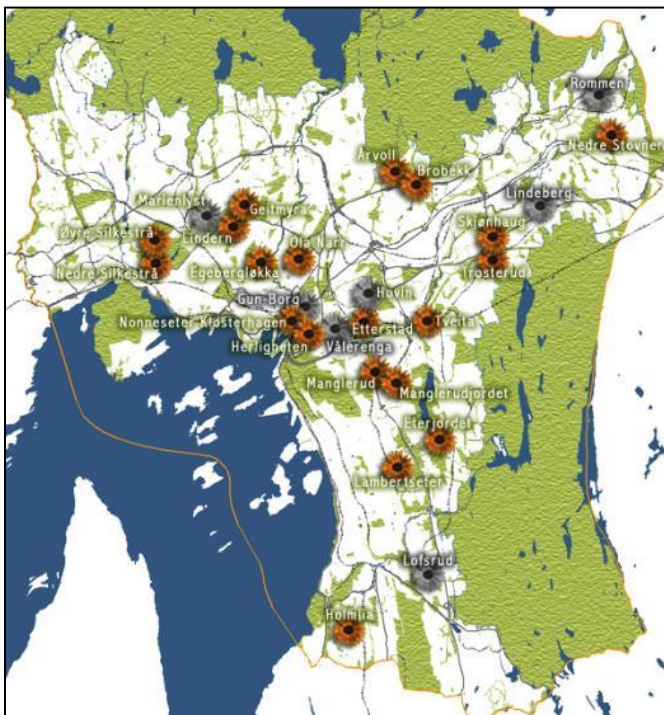


Figure 1: Allotment complexes in Oslo ([www.parsellhager.no](http://www.parsellhager.no))

As only two cases were studied, it was important to find two cases with divergent characteristics. The case study selection was done with the help of Ellen Marie Forsberg, in consultation with her colleagues. They have a good overview of the allotments in Oslo and the populations to which they cater. The two cases selected are Geitmyra Parsellhage (hereafter, Geitmyra) and Nedre Stovner Gård Parsellhage (hereafter, Nedre Stovner). Geitmyra is located in Sagene, a neighbourhood in the West of Oslo, and contains not only allotments but also school gardens. It is an old, well-developed allotment

and it is the biggest in Oslo. Leivestad (2014) mentions Geitmyra school gardens as a best practice example. Nedre Stovner is located in Stovner, a neighbourhood in the East of Oslo, much further from the city centre. Figure 2 shows the location of the two cases. But not only the distance to the city centre differs, also the demographics of the two neighbourhoods are different. Before going into that, however, I now first present general information on both gardens.



Figure 2: Location of Geitmyra and Nedre Stovner.

### Geitmyra Parsellhage

Geitmyra is located three to four kilometres from the city centre (see figure 3). It has been a school garden since 1909 and is considered the oldest still existing, the biggest and the most important school garden of Oslo. In 1989, however, the government fired all garden teachers. Although Geitmyra wasn't closed down completely, there was no longer money available to keep it running. Four years later, when new politicians came in power, funding was available for one school garden teacher; Tore Faller, who still runs the Geitmyra school garden today. When he started his work, the largest part of the Geitmyra land was not in use. This led to several problems: people were stealing from the garden (not just vegetables but also equipment) and destroying things. Faller developed two strategies to combat this. First, he had someone live on the premises. Second, he rented plots out for allotments; this way all the land was used and allotment gardeners are present in the evenings and the weekends, i.e. when nobody is visiting school gardens. This did not solve all vandalism problems, but it reduced them considerably. Geitmyra is fenced off and the gate is locked at night; gardeners have a key.

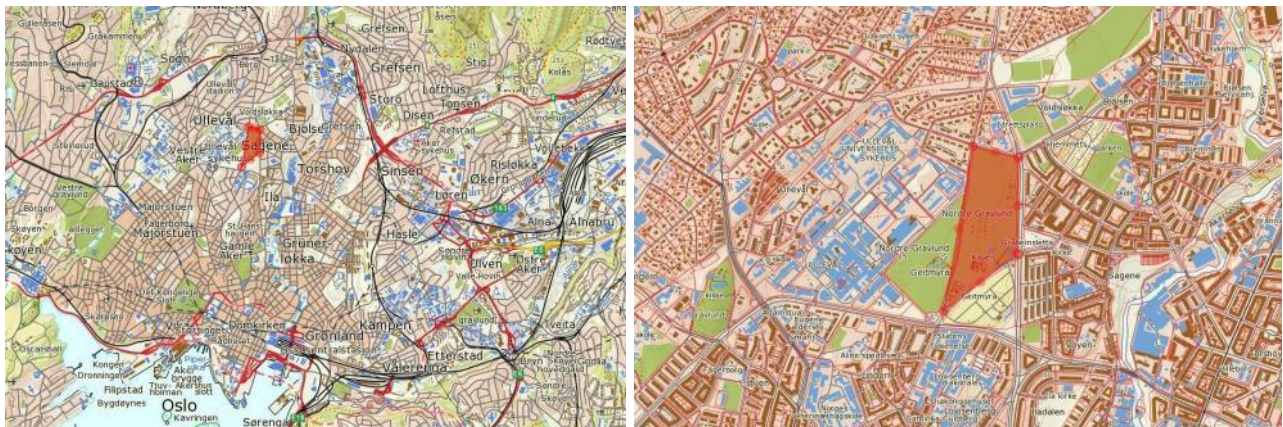


Figure 3: Geitmyra's location (made with <http://kilden.skogoglandskap.no/map/kilden/index.jsp>)



Currently, sixteen schools have their own plots at Geitmyra, as do nine kindergartens. Schools and kindergartens can visit the garden whenever they want, even if they do not have a plot. In addition, several organizations have a gardening plot, such as an ecological garden association, a group of people with mental problems, and the youth organization 4H (<http://www.4h.no/English/>). There are demonstration fields as well.



Figure 4: Some pictures of Geitmyra (Esther Veen / NFLI)

Approximately 130 individuals hire an allotment at Geitmyra. At the start there were more plots than people, but there has been a waiting list for fifteen years, which has grown particularly long during the last five years (over 400 people by May 2014). There are two types of allotments; allotments that are ploughed every autumn, and allotments that are not. The second type therefore allows for fruit trees, for example. Gardeners start out on a plot that is ploughed and may later be offered a non-ploughed plot. This second type is therefore perceived as a 'permanent plot'. The allotments are run by the allotment organization, started in 2006, of which every gardener is a member. Members pay about 600 NOK (€75) annual rent for their plot. There are tools to use communally. The total size of Geitmyra is 41.435m<sup>2</sup>, individual parcels are twenty to fifty m<sup>2</sup> (source: Tore Faller, pers. comm.; <http://www.parsellhager.no/>). Yearly the Geitmyra family day is organized, as is the Geitmyra festival. The Facebook page reads the following advertisement (translated):



Figure 5: The festival flyer (<https://www.facebook.com/events/856382051057537/?fref=ts>)

*“Farmers in to town festival 2014 is on! Finally it's time for the smallest, cutest and we dare say the best festival in Oslo! For the fourth consecutive year the gates of green, bountiful Geitmyra skolehage to celebrate all that is good, lovely and magical. In August 2010, the festival was held for the first time to maintain school gardens, and victory was! Now the festival has become tradition, and never without a summer. The flowers bursting, the music is languorous, hammocks and kiss bench is ready and the apples are almost ripe. Join going on a treasure hunt in the ecological paradise garden in the middle of the farthest regions saws! Among the happy adults and children will find a variety of art, literature and music. Hooray!”*

The program consists of various musical acts including an after party in the glass house, insect hotel workshops, yoga, recitation in a prayer room, readings, face-painting for children, apple juice pressing and a massage table (<https://www.facebook.com/events/856382051057537/?fref=ts>).

### *Nedre Stovner Gård parsellhage*

Nedre Stovner is located on the East side of Oslo, more than ten kilometres outside of its city centre. The allotment was established in 2008<sup>5</sup>, when there was ‘green belt funding’ available. It is located on a former school garden, which engaged residents revitalized by introducing the allotments. They also started a second allotment site, adjacent to the first one, on former farmland. Nedre Stovner therefore consists of two separate areas (see figure 6); part A, the old garden, and part B, the new garden. In total Nedre Stovner consists of 97 plots on 9,000m<sup>2</sup>. Plots in part A are 72m<sup>2</sup>, those in part B are 42m<sup>2</sup>. The annual cost of hiring a plot depends on its size; it is 8 NOK per square metre, meaning that plots in part A cost 576 NOK (€70) and those in part B cost 336 NOK (€40).

Each part of the garden has a common shed for tools, in which members have an individual shelf for personal belongings. Some gardeners have set up their own tent, under which they sit to rest or during rain. The garden is surrounded by a fence; however gates are usually unlocked. The garden has been run by an elected board since 2011 - before that time the garden was run by the municipal district administration (Norw.: ‘bydel’). Members work twice a year during common voluntary work days (Norw.: ‘dugnad’).

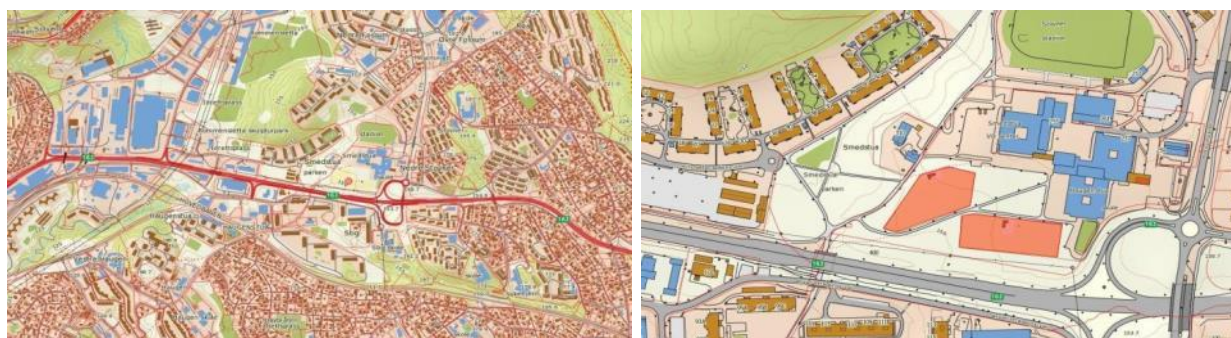


Figure 6: Nedre Stovner's location (made with <http://kilden.skogoglandskap.no/map/kilden/index.jsp>). The right picture shows the garden's part A on the right (a rectangle) and part B on the left (a diamond).

In 2012 there was no waiting list for Nedre Stovner, but currently there is a short list. Usually people first get an allotment in part B; they may transfer to part A later on. Gardeners at part A have often been at the allotment for much longer and garden more ‘professionally’ (they grow more food, have larger harvests and have more knowledge on gardening). In part A there are also more gardeners with

<sup>5</sup> Before that time the allotment was located somewhere else, but that was closed down.



tents, people who spend more time at their gardens, who keep their allotments for a longer period of time. There is a large ethnic diversity amongst the gardeners at Nedre Stovner, Norwegians are in the minority. This is in line with the population structure shown in table 1. However, the largest immigrant groups in the neighbourhood (people from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Somalia) are not necessarily the largest groups at the garden (many ethnicities are represented, amongst which Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran and Kurdistan<sup>6</sup>) (source: <http://www.parsellhager.no/>; Kavli 2013; Mari Strømsæther, pers. comm.).



Figure 7: Some pictures of Nedre Stovner (Esther Veen / NFLI)

### *Characteristics of population in Sagene and Stovner*

The location of a garden influences its developments and social structure, amongst others because of the neighbourhood demographics. This is why I give some background information on the neighbourhoods in which the two cases are situated.

Oslo is a moderately segregated city (Blom 2006 in: Kavli 2013). The East side of Oslo, where Nedre Stovner is located, is in general a poorer area than the West side, where Geitmyra is located. Kavli (2013) gives a useful overview of the differences between Oslo's neighbourhoods. She explains that Oslo is characterized by a clear division between the inner and outer city, and, within the outer city, between East and West. Houses in the outer West are relatively large and detached, while outer East and South are suburbs from the 1970s and 1980s; they mainly consist of large apartment buildings. Houses in the inner city are relatively small. Probably because of an increase in family size, non-western immigrants have, over the last few years, largely left the inner city for the Eastern districts - where apartments are larger. Hence, referring to Blom (2006) Kavli (2013) states that people with a non-western background mainly settle in the East of Oslo, whereas western immigrants and Norwegians

<sup>6</sup> Kurds come from different countries and are therefore not shown as one group in statistics.



are mostly found in the West. Oslo's immigrant population is thus to some extent concentrated in the Eastern part of Oslo. Within these areas there is large ethnic diversity.

The neighbourhood Stovner – the location of Nedre Stovner – is characterized by several large apartment buildings from the 1970s and 1980s. It is one of the most immigrant dense neighbourhoods in Oslo. Most of its immigrants have a non-western background; the largest groups are from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Somalia (see Table 1) (Kavli 2013). I do not have immigrant numbers for Sagene, the neighbourhood in which Geitmyra is located. I do know, however, that the density of immigrants is lower – Stovner is one of the three neighbourhoods with the highest proportions of immigrants (and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents). Nevertheless, immigrants also live in Sagene; Oslo is the Norwegian municipality with the largest population of immigrants (both in absolute and in relative terms) and all suburbs in Oslo are above the national average of fifteen per cent (<http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef>).

The above makes clear that the demographics of the neighbourhoods in which the two allotments are located are rather different. This adds to the usefulness of studying two case studies.

*Table 1: Immigrants in Oslo and Stovner. Source: SBB, in: Kavli 2013. Only groups that make up more than 2% of the population of Stovner are shown in the table. Immigrants are those that have two foreign-born parents. Non-western are those coming from Asia (including Turkey), Africa and South and Central America.*

	Oslo		Stovner	
	Immigrant population	% of population	Immigrant population	% of population
<b>Total population</b>	<b>189.401</b>	<b>30,4</b>	<b>15.232</b>	<b>49,5</b>
Western background	57.189	9,2	1.666	5,4
Non-western background	132.212	21,2	13.566	44,1
Polish	13.499	2,2	701	2,3
From north of the Sahara	7.853	1,3	615	2,0
Somalian	13.184	2,1	1.005	3,3
Turkish	6.258	1,0	707	2,3
Sri Lankan	7.307	1,2	1.600	5,2
Iraqi	7.533	1,2	665	2,2
Pakistani	22.415	3,6	3.870	12,6
Vietnamese	5.943	1,0	846	2,8

## Methods

I used two main research methods: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I used questionnaires to provide quantitative data, specifically on gardeners' characteristics, but also concerning their reasons for gardening, the influence of the harvest on their diets and wallets and the relationships with other gardeners. I used interviews to provide qualitative data, going deeper into people's reasons for gardening, the influence of the harvest and relationships with gardeners. Hence, the two methods complement each other.

The questionnaire was designed in English and translated into Norwegian. The questionnaire was the same for both gardens and it was available both on paper and online. Most interviews were in English; in two cases they were translated into Norwegian (in one instance parts of it were again translated

from Norwegian to Farsi<sup>7</sup>). Most interviews were recorded (in a few instances I felt that it was not appropriate to record them). They have not yet been transcribed but this is an option for the future. The questionnaire and the interview guide can be found in the appendices (B and C respectively). Finally, as both gardens were visited several times, observations were made as well. These visits give an insight into the physical appearance and functioning of the gardens.

When presenting the results, I compare them with or supplement them by earlier research on allotment gardeners, executed by Haavie (2001). She sent a questionnaire to all allotment holders in Oslo, receiving 442 completed questionnaires.

## Finding respondents

In order to find respondents, contact persons in both gardens were very important as link with the gardeners. In both cases gardeners received an email from these contact persons (Hilde Herrebrøden at Geitmyra and Mari Strømsæther at Nedre Stovner) with the request to fill out an online questionnaire. This resulted in 36 respondents from Geitmyra and six respondents from Nedre Stovner. The low response rate at Nedre Stovner is due to gardeners' limited use of e-mail. My contact person therefore distributed forty paper copies, leading to a total of eleven respondents.

Table 2: General information on interview respondents

	Age	Gender	Household composition	Education	Ethnicity	Years at allotment
Geitmyra						
#1	55-64	Female	Lives with partner and children	BSc degree	Norwegian	2-5 years
#2	35-45	Male	Lives with partner and children	MSc degree	Norwegian	2-5 years
#3	45-54	Male	Lives alone	High school	Norwegian	Less than one year
#4	55-64	Female	Lives with partner	BSc degree	Norwegian	6-10 years
#5	45-54	Male	Lives with partner and children	BSc degree	North American (11-15 years in Norway)	2-5 years
#6	Older than 65	Female	Lives alone	BSc degree	Norwegian	6-10 years
Nedre Stovner						
#7	45-54	Male	Lives with partner and children	High school	Afghan	2-5 years
#8	45-54	Male	Lives with partner and children	High school	Kurdish	More than 20 years
#9	35-44	Female	Lives with partner	Vocational education	Norwegian	2-5 years
#10	Unknown	Male	Unknown	Unknown	Kurdish	6-10 years
#11	Unknown	Male	Lives with partner and children	Unknown	Kurdish	6-10 years

<sup>7</sup> Farsi or Persian is the official language of Iran, Afghanistan and Tadjikistan and is also spoken in Uzbekistan (<http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perzisch>).

At Geitmyra interview respondents were found through the questionnaire – one of the questions was whether people were available for an interview. As more gardeners than needed gave a positive reply I selected respondents based on characteristics like age and number of years gardening, trying to find as wide a diversity as possible. At Nedre Stovner the technique of finding respondents through the questionnaire was unsuccessful. During a garden visit two people were helped to fill out the questionnaire. As this gave the opportunity to speak to them, these questionnaires were treated as interviews. I found other respondents through my contact person. I interviewed six respondents from Geitmyra and five from Nedre Stovner.

In addition, I had conversations with Tore Faller, head of the school gardens in Oslo and school garden teacher at Geitmyra in particular, Hilde Herrebrøden (the contact person for Geitmyra) and Siri Haavie, who studied allotments in Oslo before and maintains the website [www.parsellhager.no](http://www.parsellhager.no).

## Methodological reflections

During the reality of the fieldwork I realized that the original method design worked better for Geitmyra than for Nedre Stovner. Many gardeners at Geitmyra have internet access and an e-mail address. Sending a link to an online questionnaire therefore worked well; the response rate was almost 30%. Finding respondents through the questionnaire also proved to be a functioning strategy. I was aiming for six interviewees, which were easily found.

In Nedre Stovner, however, the situation was different. First of all, many of the gardeners do not have (regular) internet access or do not have an e-mail address. I therefore tried to find respondents by distributing paper questionnaires to the gardeners. However, I also realized that a questionnaire as such was not suitable for all gardeners. Some of them found the questions too difficult or too many, and not all of them speak enough Norwegian to understand all questions. Perhaps respondents are less familiar with this kind of research, making it a more challenging task to complete. Hence, a large part of the questionnaires were filled out incompletely, and others had ticked more than three options when a maximum of three was asked for. In two cases I helped respondents fill out the questionnaire. This strategy worked, but it is a different way of data collection than when people fill out a questionnaire by themselves; it allows for explanations of the question, for example. That was of course very useful considering the problems just sketched, but it also means that answers are interpreted by the one who asks the question, in this case not the main researcher but someone speaking Norwegian or even a translator, translating from another language into Norwegian.

A second problem concerned the interviews. Again, language was a problem; only people speaking English could be interviewed and many gardeners do not command English sufficiently. For this and other reasons, it was hard to find respondents. As stated, I treated two of the questionnaires that were filled out with respondents as interviews; these conversations made it possible to go a bit deeper into the questions or ask additional questions. They were not completely the same as the interviews at Geitmyra, however, and contained less questions. Two of the other three interviews at Nedre Stovner were also shorter and somewhat simplified.

These problems could perhaps have been solved by spending more time at Nedre Stovner. Getting to know people and having several informal conversations with them might have been a useful strategy to get more information. Moreover, knowing people might have made it easier to find respondents. However, the time constraints of this research made this method not feasible.

Besides the difficulties with the chosen research methods, another issue is that I have several reasons to believe that I did not get a broad overview of Geitmyra gardeners. Sagene, the neighbourhood in

which the garden is located, used to be a workers' neighbourhood, but is now experiencing gentrification. The average education level is rising sharply, as is the price of apartments. Hence, there are several 'groups' of people using the garden; Norwegians that have been living in the area for a long time, immigrants that are relatively new, and newcomers - mostly young families. Most of the respondents to the questionnaire belong to the last category (although they are not all young families, most of them are highly educated and Norwegian), as do all of my interviewees. This means that the sample largely ignores the immigrants, as well as the Norwegians that have been living in the area for a long time. Interestingly, it is especially the first of these groups - immigrants - that I managed to speak to at Nedre Stovner. Therefore I decided to combine the respondents from both gardens into one data set. Rather than comparing the gardens, it is more sensible to treat them as two very different places where I learned about allotments in Oslo; together, the respondents represent the width of allotment gardeners in Oslo.

# Findings

## Characteristics of gardeners

### *National background*

73% of the respondents (36 people) state to be Norwegian. Other nationalities are: 4 other European, 3 from the Middle East, 2 North Americans, 1 from Southeast Asia, 2 other Asians, and 1 other Nordic (Danish/Swedish/Finnish/Icelandic). Three people indicated to be Kurdish, 1 from Afghanistan, 1 from Poland and 1 from Turkey (please note that people could tick more than one national background). The percentage of Norwegian gardeners is higher in the Geitmyra sample than in the Nedre Stovner sample; 83% versus 46% respectively. Comparing this with Haavie's<sup>8</sup> results – who found that 13% of the women and almost 30% of the men come from a non-western cultural background, and that 25% of allotment holders are foreign citizens or naturalized Norwegian citizens – shows that the Geitmyra sample contains a relatively small group of immigrants whereas the Nedre Stovner sample contains a relatively large group of immigrants (most of the immigrants in our research have a non-western background). This is as was expected.

59% of respondents (29 people) have lived in Norway all their life. 24% have lived there for more than 15 years, 6% between 11 and 15 years and 8% between 6 and 10 years.

### *Age*

Most respondents are between 45 and 54 years old; a third is older than that, the rest is younger. These figures are comparable to those of Haavie, who found that two thirds of allotment holders are younger than 55; in my sample this is the exact same percentage.

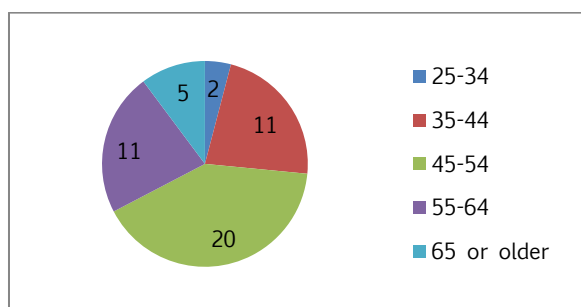


Figure 8: Age of respondents (n=49)

### *Gender*

Haavie found that 63% of allotment holders are women. In my sample this is even higher; 71% of the respondents is female.

### *Household composition*

Almost half of the respondents live with a spouse and children. Haavie found that 44% of gardeners have children under the age of 18. Of course these results are not fully comparable, but it doesn't suggest a contradiction. A quarter of the respondents live alone.

<sup>8</sup> In this chapter I often compare with earlier research on allotments in Oslo. The reference is in all cases Haavie (2001).

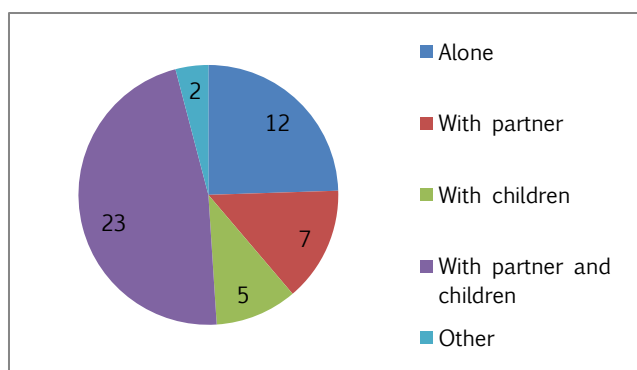


Figure 9: Household composition (n=49)

### Education

The respondents represent several educational levels, but most of them – two thirds - have a university education. Ten percent of respondents have primary education only. A small part of respondents has a high school diploma or has vocational education. Comparing the two gardens shows that there is a large difference between respondents from Geitmyra and those from Nedre Stovner. Where in Geitmyra most respondents have attended university (92%), the largest group of respondents at Nedre Stovner has been to primary school only; none of these respondents have a university degree.

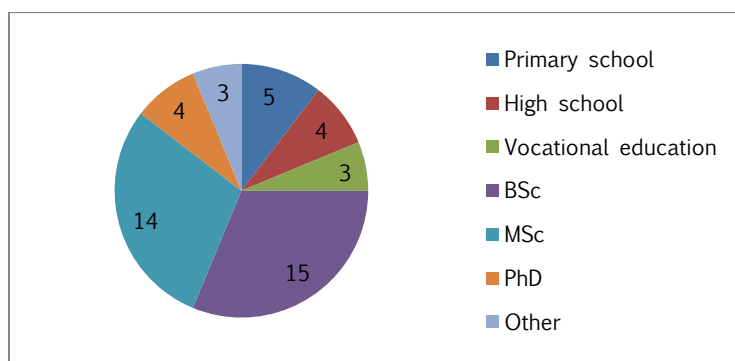


Figure 10: Educational level (n=48)

### Residence

Figure 11 shows where respondents live in relation to the gardens. Most members live spread around the allotment, mostly one to two kilometres away, although in some cases they live further out. Haavie found that 40% of the gardeners live less than 500 meters from their allotments while 70% live less than ten minutes away. As this is another type of data it is not possible to cannot compare precisely, but it makes clear that allotment gardeners in general live not much further than about ten minutes by bike from their plots.

Interviews with respondents make clear that distance is important. Most interviewees stated that if they would live further they would come less often, or that they would come more often if they lived closer:

*'If it was further I would probably come less often. Now I may think, it's a nice evening, why not go to the garden?' #1<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>9</sup> Quotes are not literal; interviews have not been transcribed. However, they reflect interviews as much as possible.



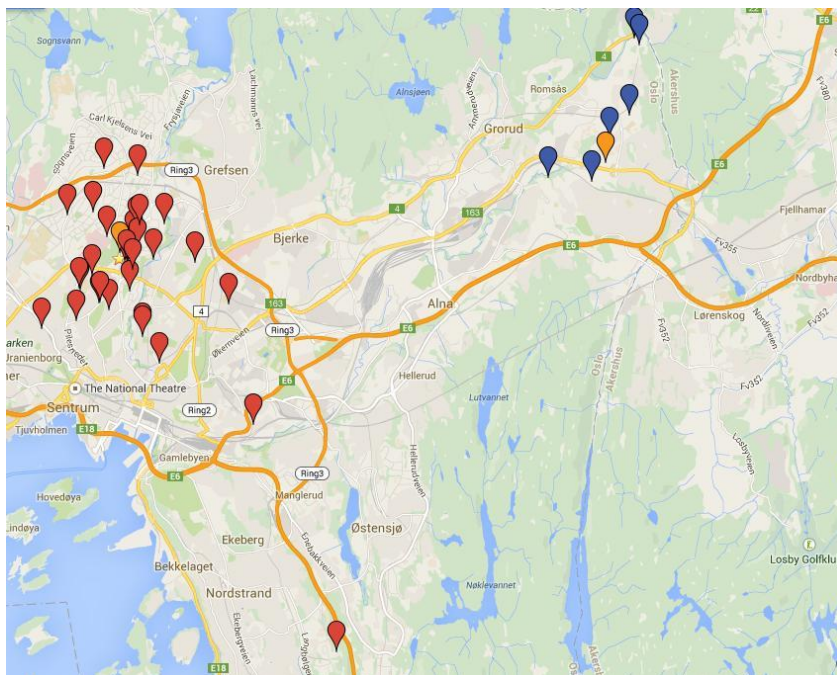


Figure 11: Respondents' residences (made with google maps. Red; Geitmyra respondents, blue; Nedre Stovner respondents, yellow; gardens).

## Involvement in the allotments

### Duration of involvement

The number of years that respondents have been gardening varies; about half of them have been involved for two to five years, but there are also gardeners that have started more recently, and gardeners that have been a member for longer. This is more or less comparable to Haavie's research, which states that 44% of respondents have had their allotment for less than four years.

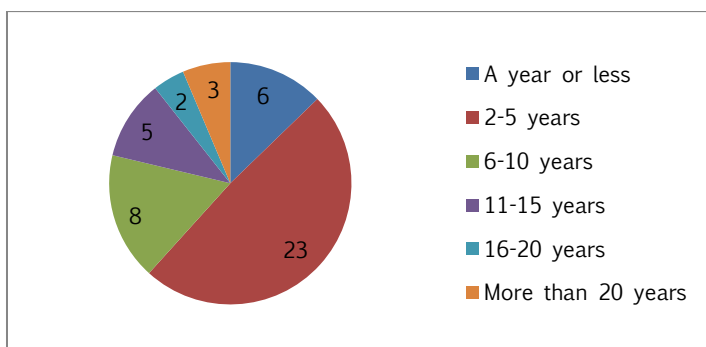


Figure 12: Number of years of involvement in the allotment (n=47)

### Frequency of visits

Respondents visit their allotments mostly in summer, generally several times a week. Haavie also found that most respondents (75%) visit their plot several times a week. Most respondents do not visit their plot in winter, or do this only limitedly. Nedre Stovner is actually closed in winter.

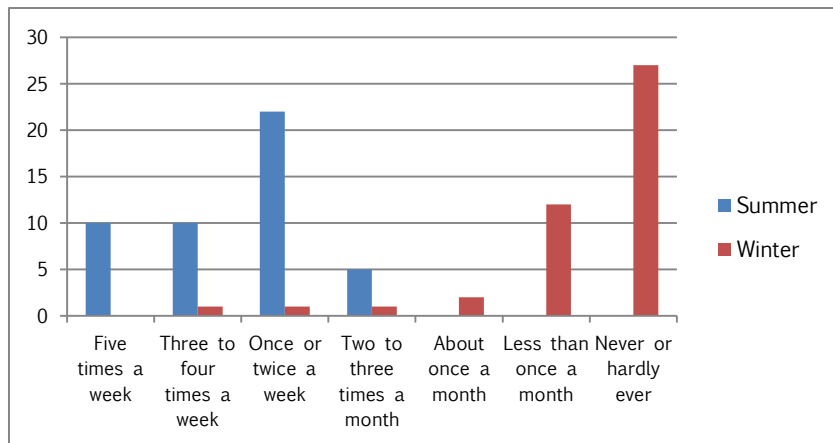


Figure 13: Number of times gardeners visit their allotments in summer (n=47) and in winter (n=44)

Haavie states that ‘old-age pensioners, disabled people and allotment-holders with a non-western cultural background’ spend most time on their allotments. This is in line with my findings; respondents of Nedre Stovner visit their plots much more often than those of Geitmyra. Whereas 64% of Nedre Stovner respondents indicate to visit the garden at least five times a week (in summer), this is only true for 8% of Geitmyra respondents. Most Geitmyra respondents visit the garden once or twice a week (57%); compared to only 18% of the Nedre Stovner respondents.

Interviews showed that the number of times people visit the allotment varies considerably. It depends on the season – what needs to be done – and other responsibilities people have:

*‘It depends on the things I need to do that week. Sometimes I come two or three times a week, sometimes once a week, sometimes I am away for two weeks. Sometimes I stay half an hour, sometimes four to five hours.’ #6*

*‘At the beginning of the season a few times a week. In May, June, up to five times a week. Sometimes even twice a day, but then not every day. In general almost every day, five out of seven days. But after my holidays I haven’t been yet.’ #5*

### Growing techniques

Most respondents do not use chemicals. None of them indicated that they use chemical weed agents or pesticides. A quarter of the respondents use chemical fertilizers. Compost is very popular, however; 68% of respondents use garden compost or composted manure, and 30% use green manure or mulch. 11% do not use any of the indicated methods. There is a difference between the two gardens, however. Only 8% of the Geitmyra respondents use mineral fertilizers, versus 73% of Nedre Stovner respondents. This is not surprising considering the fact that ‘chemicals’ are prohibited at Geitmyra. With compost it is the other way around; this is used by 83% of Geitmyra respondents versus 18% of Nedre Stovner respondents. Again, these findings are in line with Haavie’s results; she found that over 80% of gardeners compost their weeds or use weeds as mulch, while more than 60% use ecological methods and less than 7% use insecticides, fungicides or herbicides.

### Motivations

Respondents were asked to tick the three most important reasons for having a garden. Figure 14 shows that respondents ticked several reasons. The most important one is that they like gardening. Zooming in on people’s motivations shows that the Geitmyra respondents are somewhat more

interested in the hobby aspect of gardening whereas the Nedre Stovner respondents are more interested in the food aspect (vegetables), see figure 15. Moreover, Geitmyra respondents stated much more often that the garden is a nice place to go.

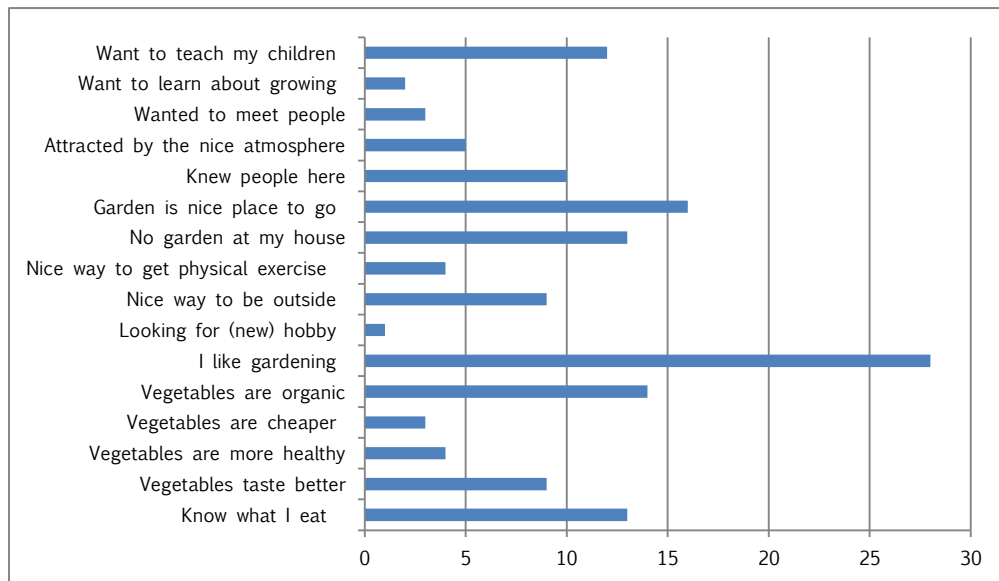


Figure 14: Motivations to have a garden (max. three allowed, n=47)

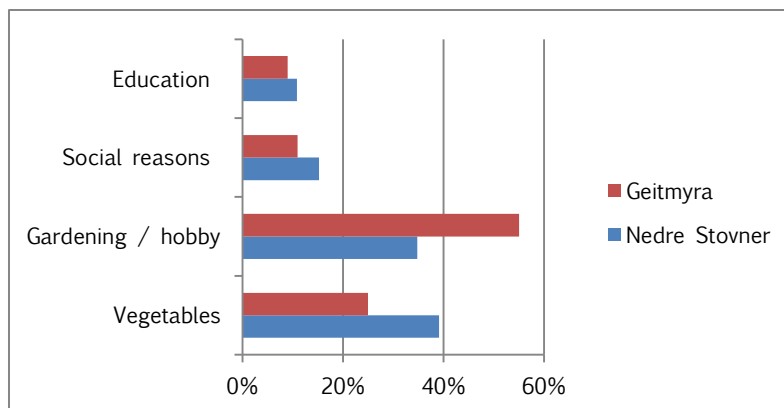


Figure 15: Motivations to have a garden (content of figure 14 categorized). [This figure was composed in the following way: I categorized the different answers that could be given - vegetables, gardening/hobby, social reasons and education. I then added up all the answers given in that category, split out for respondents from both gardens, and calculated what percentage of these answers were given in the respective categories (as respondents could give several answers, I could not work with the number of respondents)].

In the interviews I discussed the motivations for having a garden more thoroughly. It became clear that there is always a combination of motivations:

*'I retired, it was a nice area, I was looking for a new hobby, it was close to home and I liked vegetables.'* #6

People mentioned different interests and considerations, making it hard to draw any general conclusion. What is referred to often, however, is the joy of growing. Either people mention the pleasure of making things grow, or the pleasure of having your own vegetables:

*'I like flowers very much, and this allotment looks nice. It is nice to make something, to make something grow. It is nice to do something that is not necessary, but that I like to do.'* #4

*'Sustainability, to get back to nature. It is also therapeutic, to get down and dirty.'* #3

*'It is just for fun, and it gives the opportunity to eat more vegetables in summer. Also, it gives the opportunity to have fun with friends and to meet people.'* #10

This pleasure of growing your own vegetables is in line with what I found in the questionnaire; enjoying gardening as an activity is the most important reason to start a garden. This is to a certain extent in line with Haavie's results; she found that the most important reasons for taking up allotment gardening are non-material. One of these is indeed the pleasure of seeing things grow. Other non-material reasons Haavie mentioned were mental and physical well-being and social interaction. These last reasons were less often mentioned by my respondents, whereas they mentioned the material aspect of the vegetables as rather important as well.

## Social contacts

### *Quantity, history and quality*

I asked respondents how many other gardeners they know. None of the respondents stated that they don't know any other gardeners. Most respondents know 5 to 9 others, whereas most of them did not know any others - or only one or two - before they got their gardens. Interestingly, all gardeners who stated to know more than 25 people garden at Nedre Stovner, while these gardeners were underrepresented in the 10-14 and 15-25 groups.

Gardening thus leads to an increased number of contacts. Moreover, all respondents state that they chat with others when at the garden; just over half of them do that every time they are at there, the rest does that sometimes.

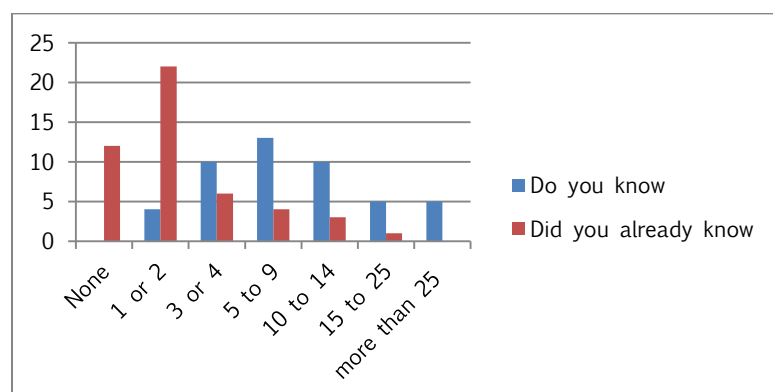


Figure 16: Number of fellow gardeners people know, and the number they knew before starting gardening (n=47 and n=48)

The interviews give more insight in the contacts. Most interviewees indicated that they got to know a number of people, and that some of these have become friends. For some respondents these contacts 'stay at the garden', they do not invite their gardening friends to their homes and do not invite them for occasions outside of the garden either (such as a shared meal). Most respondents did, however, get to know a few people at the garden which they now see outside of it as well. These relations are therefore not solely dependent on the garden anymore. Indeed, people indicate that even if they wouldn't have an allotment anymore, they would still maintain contact with such friends. Other respondents garden at the same allotment as friends they already had - or even share a plot with them, which several respondents do - so that the garden is a place which helps them maintain and

deepen these contacts. Again others have argued that they see people at the garden which they knew vaguely, and which they know better now because they have an added common topic and meeting place. Also, many respondents use the garden as a meeting place to get together with people without an allotment; for instance, they celebrate their birthdays at the garden or organise a picnic with friends. In that sense, the garden is an extension of their home. The following quotes illustrate some of these different types of contacts:

*'When I am on my own I am just working. But I share the allotment with a friend. When we are here together we also talk, have a coffee. Sometimes her children come with their children. Sometimes they all come, the children climb the trees, we all sit around.'* #4

*'I see the parents from my daughter's school here; I keep in touch with them through the garden. So the garden did not give me new contacts, but it helps sustain existing but not very strong contacts.'* #1

*'There is also a group that I say hi to on the street and would talk to when I would see them at the bus stop.'* #5

*'Sometimes we have a barbeque, drink a few beers, or drink tea. I also invite people who do not have an allotment.'* #10

*'The garden is a recreational space for us. We have the tent, so we can even sit here when it rains. We have no money to travel, so we stay here. We have friends on the allotment and we also invite friends that we know from outside.'* #8

All this shows that allotments offer an opportunity to meet new people who become acquaintances and sometimes get promoted to being friends, whereas they are also places that help people maintain and enjoy existing relationships. To better understand the value of such contacts, I asked respondents to tick statements on the social aspect of the garden that applied to them. The answers given differ between Geitmyra and Nedre Stovner, see figure 17.

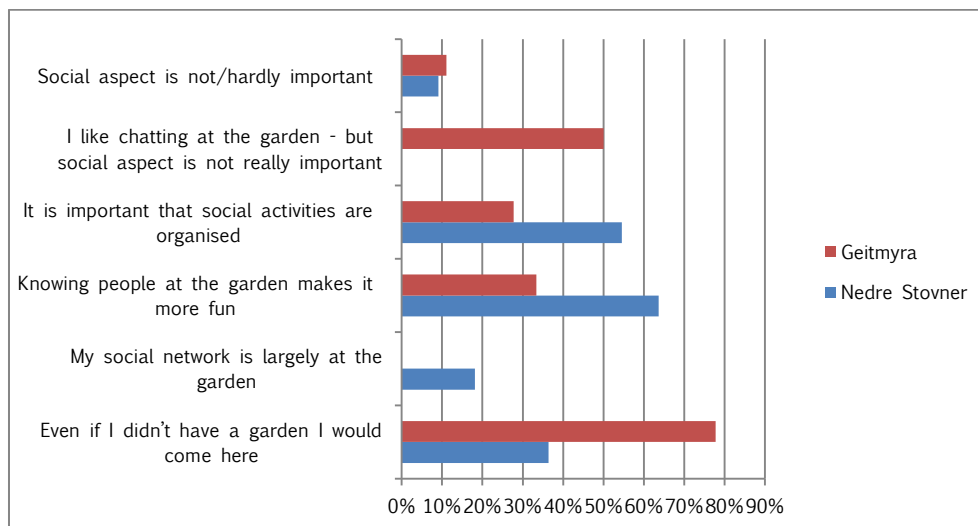


Figure 17: Which statements apply to you? Tick as many as you like (n=36 and n=11)

Many of Geitmyra's gardeners indicated that they would still visit the garden even if they wouldn't have an allotment anymore. However, although this question was intended to measure the strength of the social contacts at the garden, it most probably means that people like the garden as a place to visit, which is in line with the fact that many of them mentioned that as an important motivation to start

gardening, and with the fact that people use the garden as a place to invite friends. Moreover, 50% of Geitmyra's respondents stated that even though they enjoy chatting to others at the garden, this is not really important to them. This answer was ticked by none of the Nedre Stovner respondents. Two of the respondents from Nedre Stovner even stated that their social network is largely at the garden. The last quote in the list above is also from a Nedre Stovner gardener; for some people the allotment and its social contacts are very important. It seems, therefore, that the social aspect is more important for the type of respondents I met at Nedre Stovner than for the type of respondents I met at Geitmyra.

Maybe this is related to the fact that a large part of the relations at the gardens is rather superficial. I asked people to compare the garden contacts with contacts in a sports team or choir and people expressed that in such clubs or organisations contacts are much stronger. Another respondent, however, argued that the contacts at the garden are in a way stronger because one meets people's families, when they bring them to the garden to recreate. That some respondents define the contacts as superficial does not mean, however, that they are not important. First of all, some respondents expressed that it is nice to have superficial contacts:

*'People have small chats with each other, about the flowers, the vegetables, how to grow them. I got some leeks from someone, and gave some beans to someone else. You pick up ideas about what to grow. It is very important. It is a small holiday when I am here, different from anything else. I can talk to people I do not know so well, so I do not share everything, but there is always something to talk about.'* #4

But superficial contacts also help people feel at home at the garden, they create an atmosphere in which people enjoy coming.

*'I like to know a few people. It is nice to talk and exchange harvest. It is nice to be able to help each other. I feel being part of the community.'* #2

*'They give good advice, we learn together, they teach me. It is easier to come here. It means something to know someone. It is more inspiring. It is nice when there is someone here.'* #6

Clearly, there is much to say about relations at the gardens. For some people they are more important than for others, and even superficial contacts have their value. But it is important to keep in mind that besides positive contacts, whether strong or superficial, there may also be negative contacts. There are different groups present at the gardens, both at Geitmyra and at Nedre Stovner. Geitmyra is located in a gentrified area, where people with different backgrounds live. These backgrounds are reflected at the garden; they may not always mingle to the fullest and it may lead to frictions. In Nedre Stovner, different nationalities 'stick together', also because of language issues. Haavie (pers. comm.) explained that too many people from one ethnic background may also lead to tensions; gardens are thus not only about integration, but can also be about segregation. On the other hand, however, they may also lead to understanding and acceptance:

*'My mother isn't used to foreigners, but when she comes to the garden she notices that they are nice. I tell her, of course, they are people! But it works as anti-racism. And also the other way around; the foreigners see that not all Norwegians are racists.'* #9

*'It is not a big family. People sense the differences but they are like a society and they find ways to be together. Like in the city.'* #1

However, not everyone is looking for contacts. As already said, people also appreciate superficial contact. In addition, people sometimes also like to spend time with their families, not interacting, as the following quote nicely shows:

*'We exchange vegetables, help each other. With some of them I share a coffee. I am not there to make contacts. I don't try to socialise that much, I also realise that some people are there*



*to work. I feel that some people are more interested in the social part of it than others. I am not too much into the contacts either. So it is a bit of both; I am not too interested in the contacts, although I also enjoy them.’ #2*

Finally, an inseparable part of being a gardener in an allotment is mutual help. All interviewees argued that people help each other at the allotment. Often this is by watering each other’s allotments when people are away. But people also exchange vegetables, knowledge and seeds. This type of interaction is very valuable to people and is an illustration of the importance of contacts, even when these are not strong. Some relations at the garden therefore resemble contacts between neighbours; people wish each other a good morning and exchange some neighbourhood news, say something friendly about the new car, keep each other’s keys and empty the mailbox when the other is on holidays. I also asked people whether gardeners help each other outside of the garden, for instance with moving. This type of help did happen, but in general only if other gardeners were perceived as friends, hence if people have taken up a place in each other’s lives that goes further than the garden. Some gardeners discuss personal issues with others gardeners but all of them indicated that they would never borrow a substantial amount of money from another gardener.

## Food and wallets

### *Eating from the garden*

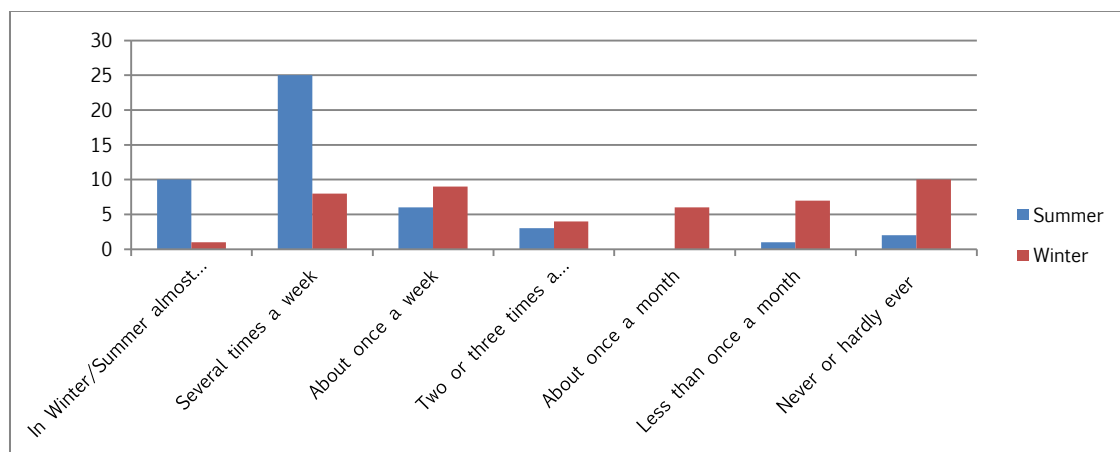


Figure 18: How often do you eat from the garden in summer (n=47) and in winter (n=45)?

Not surprisingly, respondents mainly eat from the garden in summer. In that season most of them eat several times a week from their garden. In winter, this is far less. Some interviewees freeze and dry their harvest to save it for consumption in winter:

*‘In winter I eat about three times a week from the garden. I deepfreeze and dry the vegetables.’ #7*

*‘I only have a small garden. In August and September I use what I grow, and I may sometimes ‘have to’ eat something because I have it in the garden.’ #2*

With respect to eating from the garden there is a difference between the Geitmyra and the Nedre Stovner respondents again, see table 3. More than half of the respondents from Nedre Stovner stated that almost all the vegetables they eat in summer come from the garden; for Geitmyra respondents this is only 9%. 60% of the Geitmyra respondents, however, eat several times a week from their garden, for Nedre Stovner respondents this is 33%. In winter, 36% of Nedre Stovner respondents eat from their garden at least several times a week; this is true for 15% of Geitmyra respondents. Three of

the Geitmyra respondents stated not to grow any vegetables at all; they only grow flowers, or devoted a large part of their garden to flowers. In that sense this research reflects Haavie's findings. She states that most gardeners grow vegetables and that flowers are also very popular, especially amongst women. For allotment holders with a non-western cultural background – many of the Nedre Stovner respondents - growing one's own food is much more important. In this group there are fewer flower growers, more people grow herbs and spices.

Table 3: How often do you eat from your garden in summer (n=35 and n=12) and in winter (n=34, n=11)?

	Summer		Winter	
	Geitmyra	Nedre Stovner	Geitmyra	Nedre Stovner
In Winter/Summer almost all the vegetables I eat come from my garden	9%	58%	0%	9%
Several times a week	60%	33%	15%	27%
About once a week	17%	0%	21%	18%
Two or three times a month	6%	8%	9%	9%
About once a month	15%	0%	15%	9%
Less than once a month	18%	0%	18%	9%
Never or hardly ever	24%	0%	24%	18%

This doesn't mean, however, that growing vegetables is not important for the Geitmyra respondents. When asked to what extent growing vegetables was a reason to start with the garden, most respondents from both gardens argued that it was, and that they wouldn't have a garden just to grow flowers for example. Some respondents specifically mentioned the fact that the vegetables they grow are more natural or tastier than the ones from the supermarket. For others it is the idea of 'making something from nothing', or experimenting with different crops. Others argued that growing vegetables was not essential, but nevertheless an important part of the allotment experience.

*'I have always been conscious about food, buying organic, and I like natural food. You appreciate your own food. It is different and it tastes different, but it is also the feeling that you have grown it from nothing.'* #9

*'It wasn't really, but on the other hand, I didn't want to grow only flowers. I wanted to grow something that I could eat. So it was important but not essential.'* #2

*'Growing vegetables was an important reason. I have an interest in vegetables and I like to experiment with growing.'* #1

*'I am not interested in flowers. I want utilitarian plants, something that I can use. Back in the USA it was easier to get a good harvest and the food aspect was more important. But my primary interest is scientific and artistic, that is more important than the nutritional aspect.'* #5

### *Influence on diet*

I asked respondents to what extent the garden influences their diets. Respondents stated that they eat more seasonal vegetables, different vegetables and more vegetables overall. Also, respondents stated to enjoy their food more.

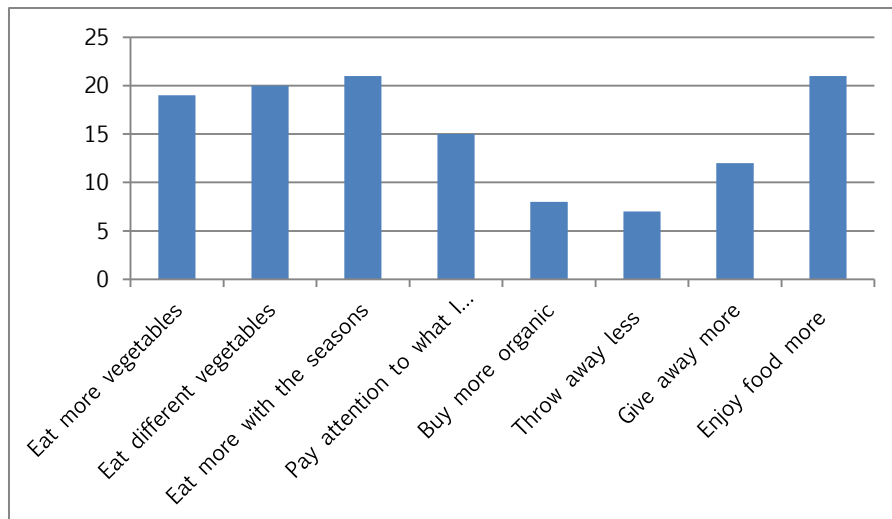


Figure 19: Since I have a garden, I... (n=46)

Exchange of knowledge and plants is very common in the gardens. Not only do gardeners learn from others how to grow specific crops, they also come across different varieties or learn about cooking methods. Moreover, immigrant gardeners often grow vegetables from their home country. This sometimes takes some experimentation, and gardeners also advice each other. They also teach Norwegian gardeners.

*'We exchange knowledge, for example with people from Turkey. We learn from each other. There were people from Somalia that bought a particular part of a plant from Afghan people. I wondered why, because I thought that you cannot eat that part, but they said you can.'* #10

Gardeners also explained that by growing their own vegetables they are more aware about what is in season, and also what it takes to grow a plant.

*'I am a bit more aware of what vegetables are available in what season. We were already into organic, but now maybe a bit more. I have more knowledge of what it takes to grow something, and I may therefore appreciate it more.'* #2

*'I have no extreme principles but it would just be silly to buy something from Australia when I can also grow it.'* #1

*'I know more about how it is grown, how long it takes and what vegetables need. Cheap tomatoes grow on nothing, and therefore they taste like nothing.'* #9

The gardens also influence the diets of family members. Especially children were said to more easily eat vegetables when they see them grow in the garden, although this is not always the case as the last quote shows.

*'My four-year-old son is excited about it. He eats the carrots when we take them out of the garden but he doesn't eat them when they are from the fridge.'* #5

*'My daughter likes the beans, but my son finds all the green stuff 'hippy shit.'* #1

Many respondents commented on the fact that the vegetables they grow are more natural than those one buys in the supermarket.

*'It is nice that the vegetables are not painted, as they are in the supermarket.'* #10

*'I don't have to use much fertilizer and the vegetables are fresh. When you buy vegetables in the store they are usually from the freezer.'* #8

### *Perceived health (and happiness)*

Gardeners were asked whether they feel more healthy because of the garden. Most respondents said that they do. Some of them mention the vegetables in this respect, but it is mostly about being outside and getting physical exercise. Such exercise in the open air is good for both physical and mental health. Or, as one respondent stated:

*'It doesn't make me healthier, but it makes me happier. #4*

I would also like to mention specifically that for some people the garden is therapeutic. Some gardeners have been through a lot (e.g. war); the garden helps them to clear their mind and get through the day. Gardening brings fresh air, sun, others to talk to, fresh vegetables, physical exercise, something to divert attention. Moreover, people also indicated to grow certain herbs for specific pains.

### *Wallets and gifts*

Only one of the questionnaire respondents in the sample stated that he sells vegetables. Selling seems to play a minor role in the gardens. The general feeling is, however, that it does happen. Almost all respondents stated that some people may sell harvest - but this is always hearsay, or based on the fact that an allotment is grown with one crop only. Some respondents stated that when they give harvest to others they sometimes receive a small amount in return, or that gardeners pay something to others who help them out with heavy work on the plot.

*'It happens. Some people have several allotments and they grow a lot of coriander.' #2*

*'I don't really sell any vegetables, but sometimes I give them to others and they may give me some money. I do not grow the vegetables in order to sell them.' #8*

While selling is relatively rare, it is more common that people give away part of their harvest and receive harvest from others. 96% of respondents indicated that they give vegetables to others. Gardeners give to family members and friends but also to other gardeners.

*'I exchange vegetables with a friend at the allotment. One of us may have too much cucumber, for example, and the other too much salad.' #8*

*'I got some leeks from someone, and gave some beans to others.' #4*

*'My lettuces are ready, they are seven weeks old and they should be enjoyed while young. Tomorrow I will sow more so I may have to give them away.' #3*

Respondents were asked to consider whether the vegetables they grow end up being cheaper or more expensive than the vegetables they would buy at the supermarket. A third of the respondents indicated that they do not know the answer to this question. Perhaps this is not important to gardeners. Indeed, Haavie found that only a few gardeners have weighted the harvest or calculated how much it is worth. Just under a quarter of respondents in my sample felt that the vegetables they grow are more expensive than in the supermarket, and just over a quarter finds them cheaper. Some interview respondents were sure that the garden costs them money, while others were sure to save. Interestingly, more than half (55%) of Nedre Stovner respondents sees the vegetables from the garden as cheaper than in the supermarket, and only 9% perceives them as more expensive.

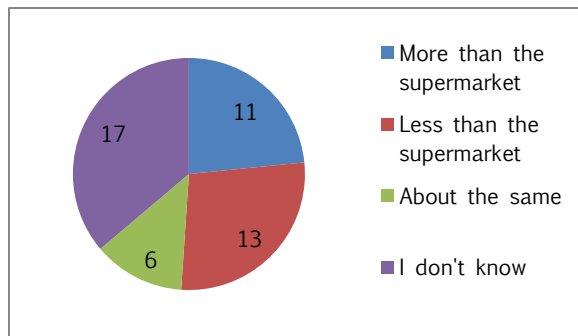


Figure 20: The vegetables I grow cost.... (n=47)

I have not calculated whether the vegetables in fact are cheaper or more expensive, and maybe this would be quite difficult to be done: Would one buy organic or not? Would one calculate working time, and if yes with what amount of salary? How much or how expensive equipment or fertiliser do people buy?

A final point to be made is that in both gardens people mentioned that harvest gets stolen.

## Discussion and conclusions

My research has shown that gardeners are found in many segments of Oslo's society; there are gardeners in gentrifying neighbourhoods, well-educated young families that want to spend time in a beautiful garden, teaching their children about food and sharing a coffee with friends. There are also gardeners who came to Norway as refugees, growing vegetables from back home while enjoying the fresh air and coming together with several families to drink tea or barbecue.

Despite of their differences, these gardeners show many similarities. They almost all feel healthier because of the garden, both physically and mentally. They share and exchange both knowledge and harvest, learn about new crops or growing techniques. They all chat to other gardeners, and get to know some of them. All gardeners give and receive help to/from others; people water each other's plots and give advice.

Growing vegetables is inextricably linked to the allotment gardening experience. Although the degree to which people eat from their gardens varies – for some this may not be more than a few times a year, for others it is most of what they eat – for many respondents having an allotment would not be the same without the vegetables.

The same can be said for the social relations at the garden. The value of these relations, the extent to which gardeners make friends, and what share of people's social life is to be found at the garden all vary. But all gardeners meet and talk to others, rely on other gardeners for help and advice, and appreciate the fact that they are – at least to a certain extent – part of the allotment community.

However, there are also some noticeable differences between the gardeners. I recognise two main groups. On the hand one there are the gardeners who use the garden mostly as a recreational space; the gardens function as extensions of the homes, as some sort of semi-private space. People celebrate their birthdays in the garden and invite friends to share a drink there. In that way the garden is a place to maintain and enjoy social contacts people already have – families and existing friendships. For most respondents in this group it is fine to share this recreational space with others, but only to a certain extent. They also want to experience the privacy of a home garden. These gardeners enjoy the new contacts they get, but a large part of their gardening contacts are interchangeable; it is nice to know people at the garden, to greet others and exchange help - but only a few others are regarded as friends. Most of these contacts do therefore not extend to the privacy of the home and would not be maintained if people would quit their allotment. The same goes for the harvest; respondents enjoy growing vegetables, but it is more about the activity of gardening than about its results. Vegetables grown are 'extras' to the meal rather than a large part of people's diets.

For another group of gardeners the situation is different. First of all, the vegetables play a larger role in the diets of these gardeners; a large part of what they eat has been grown on their allotment. Second, similar to the first group, the garden is where they meet their friends – many of them also gardeners – and invite their families, but they do this much more often; they are at the garden nearly every day, and most of their social life is at the gardens. Having an allotment is very important for them. In the words of one of the respondents:

*'For many people this is a nice place to be. The alternative for them is to stay home, sit there alone, and do nothing. Some people even come here when it rains, they just sit here and drink tea.' #10*

For this group the garden is thus also a recreational place, but the importance of this place is much larger, as their choice of recreational places is smaller.

For both groups it seems, however, that I can join Tore Faller and Siri Haavie, who argued that the focus of the garden is not on the vegetables but on the 'life project'. Gardening is a hobby, to some



more serious than to others. Nevertheless, the value of growing one's own vegetables should not be underestimated, as there is something magical to it, as illustrated by the words of one of my respondents:

*'I grew my own broccoli and the flavour and the quality was incredible. It was an aha experience. I knew this of course, but the experience was just incredible.'* #5

A final point concerns my sample, which is relatively small, especially that of Nedre Stovner. Therefore it is not possible to make strong quantitative statements. I use the data qualitatively, trying to cover the spectrum of Oslo allotment gardeners. Interestingly, while I have not covered the spectrum of gardeners present at the individual gardens, together the respondents from both gardens cover the spectrum of allotment gardeners in Oslo much better. Hence, although I only managed to find respondents from one group of gardeners at Geitmyra, the Nedre Stovner sample makes up for that loss. Probably, the differences between the gardens that I have sketched above would not have been so profound if I would have managed to cover the whole spectrum of gardeners on both individual gardens; the differences that I showed do not depend on the location of the garden, but on the respective type of gardener. However, the gardens reflect the neighbourhoods in which they are located and thus the distribution of these types of gardeners is dependent on the location of the gardens: there are more immigrants in the neighbourhood in which Nedre Stovner is located and there are more highly educated middle-class people around Geitmyra. This STSM only lasted for three weeks and so time was limited. Therefore I chose to make a distinction between the gardens rather than between the types of gardeners. The location of the garden was thus used as a proxy for the type of gardener. For further research it is advisable to more clearly distinguish between types of gardeners rather than making a distinction based on the garden's locations.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to state that while it is tempting to conclude that the differences I sketched between the two groups are those between Norwegians and immigrants, this is too rough a conclusion. While some of the points I made are indeed dependent on whether someone was born in another country or not – for instance, growing vegetables from one's home country – most of these points are not. Rather, the differences seem related to the extent to which people's lives are filled up with other obligations. People that spend several hours a day on an allotment are usually people out of work, and without a dense network of friends and family. These people may be relatively often immigrants, but that is not necessarily so, as illustrated by the following quote of an immigrant:

*'Some people – old people, pensioners – just need to get out. It is very good for them to spend time at the garden, also for their health. My parents-in-law are here every day, five to six hours. Some people don't have a job, and for them it is very important. For me it is less important because I have a job, and I walk in the forest. For others, also those who do not speak Norwegian, it is different.'* #11

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## Appendices

- A. COST Europe and COST TUI1201
- B. Questionnaire
- C. Interview guide

## Appendix A. COST Europe and COST TU1201

### About COST

COST is an intergovernmental framework for European Cooperation in Science and Technology, allowing the coordination of nationally-funded research on a European level. COST has a very specific mission and goal. It contributes to reducing the fragmentation in European research investments and opening the European Research Area to cooperation worldwide. As a precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research, COST plays a very important role in building a European Research Area (ERA). It anticipates and complements the activities of the EU Framework Programmes, constituting a “bridge” towards the scientific communities of emerging countries. It also increases the mobility of researchers across Europe and fosters the establishment of scientific excellence in the nine key domains:

- Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences
- Food and Agriculture
- Forests, their Products and Services
- Materials, Physics and Nanosciences
- Chemistry and Molecular Sciences and Technologies
- Earth System Science and Environmental Management
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Transport and Urban Development
- Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health

In addition, Trans-Domain Proposals allow for broad, multidisciplinary proposals to strike across the nine scientific domains ([http://www.cost.eu/about\\_cost](http://www.cost.eu/about_cost)).

### COST Action TU1201

The main objective of the COST Action TU1201 is to study urban Allotment Gardens and their relevance for urban sustainable development by creating a scientific platform. During the last 20 years, due to densification of urban areas and increasing loss of green infrastructure, both a revival of interest in Allotment Gardens and simultaneous competition of other kind of land use occurred. The multi-character and partly contradictory nature of the Allotment Gardens makes it a relevant issue to be studied within different European urban contexts. Through selected case studies and in-depth research (into the areas of policy and urban development, sociology, ecology, urban design), focus of the Action will be on both qualitative and quantitative studies to comprehend challenges and opportunities in areas of urban design, sociology, ecology and policy. The relevance and potential of AG for urban development so far has not been studied from a European perspective. The Action will contribute to a better understanding of framework conditions for policy actions in different European countries and emphasises to involve young researchers through well-organised networking practice (<http://www.urbanallotments.eu/case-studies.html>).

## Appendix B. Questionnaire

N.B. This is the text in English; it was translated to Norwegian. Moreover, the questionnaire text was adjusted to either Geitmyra or Nedre Stovner and to whether the questionnaire was online or on paper. Finally, the layout was done in such a way that a question would always fit on one page.

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Hello!

My name is Esther Veen, I am a PhD student from Wageningen University in the Netherlands. I study the social effects of urban gardens, such as neighbourhood gardens and allotments. I specifically look at the social contacts between gardeners, and their food patterns.

As part of my research I have the chance to visit Norway for a short research. Here in Oslo I will study two allotments. I will look at the same issues as what I was looking for in the Netherlands. That way I will be able to compare the results from allotments in the two countries.

I have designed a questionnaire as part of my research. I would like to invite you to fill out this questionnaire. The questions are about your involvement in the allotment, the contacts you have at the garden, and the harvest you get and what you do with that. Filling it out will take ten to fifteen minutes. You would help me a lot if you would take the time to do this!

**Email:** You can find the questionnaire here: [link](#)

**Paper:** You can return the questionnaire to xxx. She will make sure that I will receive it.

Thanks in advance!

Esther Veen

### A. First some general questions about your involvement in xxx

1. How long have you been gardening at xxx?
  - A year or less
  - 2 to 5 years
  - 6 to 10 years
  - 11 to 15 years
  - 16 to 20 years
  - More than 20 years
2. How often do you work in your garden in Summer?
  - Five times a week or more
  - Three to four times a week
  - Once or twice a week
  - Two or three times a month
  - About once a month
  - Less than once a month
  - Never or hardly ever
3. How often do you work in your garden in Winter?
  - Five times a week or more
  - Three to four times a week
  - Once or twice a week
  - Two or three times a month
  - About once a month
  - Less than once a month
  - Never or hardly ever
4. Why did you choose to start a garden? Please tick up to three answers
  - I want to grow my own vegetables because then I know what I eat

- I want to grow my own vegetables because then *the vegetables taste better*
- I want to grow my own vegetables because then *the vegetables are more healthy*
- I want to grow my own vegetables because then *the vegetables are cheaper*
- I want to grow my own vegetables because the vegetables are *organic*
- I like gardening
- I was looking for a (new) hobby
- It's a nice way to be outside
- It's a nice way to get physical exercise
- I do not have a garden at my house
- I knew some people at this garden
- I was attracted by the (expected) nice atmosphere
- I wanted to meet new people
- I want to learn about growing vegetables
- I want to teach my children about nature and how food grows
- The garden is a nice place to go
- Other, please specify...

**B. Now there are some questions about the contacts you have at the garden**

5. Do you chat with other gardeners?
  - Yes, (almost) always when I am there
  - Yes, sometimes
  - No, almost never
6. How many other gardeners at xxx do you know?
  - I do not know any other gardeners at xxx
  - 1 or 2 people
  - 3 or 4 people
  - 5 to 9 people
  - 10 to 14 people
  - 15 to 25 people
  - More than 25 people
7. How many of them did you know before getting your garden at xxx?
  - None of them
  - 1 or 2 people
  - 3 or 4 people
  - 5 to 9 people
  - 10 to 14 people
  - 15 to 25 people
  - More than 25 people
8. Which of the following statements are applicable to you / your situation? Multiple answers possible
  - Even if I didn't have a garden anymore, I would still like to come here
  - My social network is largely situated at xxx
  - Because I know people at the garden it is more fun to go there
  - I think it is important that social activities are being organised at the garden
  - I think that too many social activities are being organised at the garden
  - I like being able to chat to people at the garden - but the social aspect is not really important to me
  - The social aspect is not or hardly important to me

**C. The following questions are about the vegetables you eat from your garden**

9. How often do you eat vegetables from xxx in Winter?
  - In Winter almost all the vegetables I eat come from my garden
  - Several times a week
  - About once a week

- Two or three times a month
  - About once a month
  - Less than once a month
  - Never or hardly ever
10. How often do you eat vegetables from xxx in Summer?
- In summer almost all the vegetables I eat come from my garden
  - Several times a week
  - About once a week
  - Two or three times a month
  - About once a month
  - Less than once a month
  - Never or hardly ever
11. How often do you buy vegetables (for example in the supermarket, at the open market)?
- Almost never
  - I buy only a small part of the vegetables I eat
  - I only buy vegetables in Winter
  - I buy about half of the vegetables I eat
  - I buy the largest part of the vegetables I eat
12. Which of the statements below are applicable to you? Multiple answers possible  
*Since I have a garden ....*
- ...I started eating more vegetables
  - ...I started eating different vegetables
  - ...I started eating more with the seasons
  - ...I pay more attention to what I buy in the supermarket
  - ...I started buying more organic products
  - ...I throw away less food
  - ...I give away more food
  - ...I enjoy my food more
  - Other, please specify
13. Do you sell (parts of) your harvest?
- Yes, I often sell (part of) my harvest
  - Yes, I sometimes sell (part of) my harvest
  - No
14. If yes, where do you sell it? Multiple answers possible
- I sell to people I know
  - I sell at a market
  - I sell from home
  - Other, please specify
15. Do you give away (parts of) your harvest, for example to neighbours, friends or family?
- Yes, I often give away (part of) my harvest
  - Yes, I sometimes give away (part of) my harvest
  - No
16. Do you receive harvest from other gardeners at xxx?
- Yes, I often receive harvest
  - Yes, I sometimes receive harvest
  - No
17. If you take the costs of gardening into account, would you say that the vegetables you grow cost....
- ...more than in the supermarket (my own vegetables are more expensive)

- ...less than in the supermarket (my own vegetables are cheaper)
- ...about the same as in the supermarket
- Don't know

18. Which of the following growing techniques do you use? *Multiple answers possible*

- Chemical fertilizers
- Chemical pesticides
- Chemical insecticides
- None of them

**D. Finally I have some questions on your personal background**

19. I would like to know how the members of xxx are distributed over the city. That is why I would like to know where you live. Could you tell me the name of your street? I would like to point out that your answers are treated confidentially; I do not make a connection between the answers given and someone's address. Street name:

20. How old are you?

- 24 years or younger
- 25 – 34 years
- 35 – 44 years
- 45 – 54 years
- 55 – 64 years
- 65 years or older

21. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

22. What is the composition of your household?

- I live alone
- I live with my partner
- I live with (some of) my children
- I live with my partner and (some of) my children
- Other

23. What is your highest level of education?

- Grunnskole (primary school)
- Videregående skole, allmennfaglig (high school)
- 3-årig yrkesutdanning (vocational education)
- 3-årig høyskole eller universitetsutdanning BA eller Cand.Mag. (BSc)
- Universitetsutdanning, hovedfag eller mastergrad (MSc)
- Universitetsutdanning, doktorgrad (PhD)
- Other

24. How would you characterise your national background? *Multiple answers possible*

- Norwegian
- Danish / Swedish / Finnish / Islandish
- Other European
- South-East Asian
- Other Asian
- Australian
- South American
- North American
- North African
- Other African
- Middle Eastern
- Other, please specify



25. How many years have you been living in Norway?

- Less than a year
- 1 or 2 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- More than 15 years
- All my life

26. I am looking for some gardeners who are available for an individual face-to-face interview with me. The interview will be in English and will take between forty-five and sixty minutes. The questions will be similar to the questions in this questionnaire, but we will have time to discuss your opinions and your gardening in more detail. I will be in Norway from the 17<sup>th</sup> of August until the 5<sup>th</sup> of September.

If you agree to possibly be invited for an interview, please fill in your contact details.

Full name:

Phone number:

Email address:

27. Do you have any other comments?

Thanks a lot for filling in this questionnaire!

## Appendix C. Interview guide

### *Introduction*

- Introducing myself
- My research and the STSM in Oslo / Ås
- Use of the interview (+ confidentiality)

### *Involvement in the allotment*

I would like to know more about how you got involved in the allotment, why you wanted an allotment and whether you do any other activities here besides gardening.

- What was your main motivation to have a garden?
- How did you get involved in this particular allotment (for instance: did you know people here, or do you live close by)?
- How long have you been a member of the allotment?
- How often do you come here? And how long does a visit take? What does a visit usually look like? (E.g. do you go straight to your garden, do you only work or also take a rest and enjoy the garden...)
- To what extent is the location of this allotment important to you? Would you come more often if the garden was closer? Or less often if it was further away?
- What do you do at the allotment besides working in your garden? Any voluntary activities, like organising events? Or meeting people for a drink? Common maintenance tasks?
- Why do you join in other activities at the garden?
- What makes this particular allotment attractive for you? Compared to others? (e.g.: the beauty, the location, the social activities...)

### *Contacts*

I would now like to ask you some questions about the people you have met at the allotment, and the kind of relationships you have with them.

- How many people (ca.) have you met – did you get to know - since you are a member of the allotment?
- Did you know any people before you became a member? Are these still the people you speak to most?
- What are the contacts like at the garden? What kind of activities do you undertake together? For example having a chat, working together at set times, meetings, etc.
- Do you meet people outside of the allotment? At what types of occasions? Are these people that you have met here?
- How important is it to know people here, and to 'hang out' with them, to be able to speak to them?
- How important are the garden contacts in your life?
  - Would you call them your friends?
  - Do you invite them to your home as well? Or to (birthday) parties?
  - Do you undertake activities together outside the garden, such as going out for dinner, to the cinema, etc.?
  - Do you think you would stay in touch with people you met at the garden, even if you would no longer have a garden here yourself?
- To what extent would you say that the people at this allotment are similar to you? In what ways are they different/similar? (E.g. education, income, political preference, norms and values...)
- To what extent do people help each other at the allotment? For instance, when putting up a fence? How does this influence 'life at the allotment'?
- Are you a member of another organisation such as a choir or a sports club? Do you think that contacts at an allotment are different? In what way? Do you think there is anything specific about contacts at the garden?
- Do people help each other or work together outside the garden?

- In the last three months, did anyone you met at the allotment help you with small tasks at home, such as moving, moving furniture or small repairs?
- Have you ever discussed, or would you consider to discuss personal matters with people you met at the allotment?
- If you would have to borrow money, would you ask someone you met at the garden? If yes, can you specify the amount or the situation in which you would do so?
- In what ways have the networks of people that you met at the garden been of any help for you? For instance, did anyone help you find a job?

#### *Food and wallets*

I would also like to know some things about the influence of the garden on your diet, and whether you feel that the garden costs or saves you money.

- Do you think differently about food since you have a garden? How?
- Does the garden influence your meals? Do you eat differently? How?
- Do you feel that the garden influences your health? Is your diet more healthy?
- Do you try growing vegetables that you have not eaten before?
- Do other gardeners give you vegetables you don't know? Do you prepare them?
- What do your household members think about the vegetables you bring home? Does this influence what you grow?
- Does the garden influence how you shop (what is important to you when buying food)? Or where you shop?
- To what extent was growing vegetables a reason for getting your allotment?
- Do you give part of your harvest away to others? If yes, what and to whom? Do you receive harvest from others?
- Not any respondent stated to sell products from the garden. Do you feel that this does not happen at all?
- If you do not calculate time, would the garden save or cost money? (And if you would calculate time?)