Community Gardening for Refugees:
Organizing Volunteer Support in Hildesheim (Germany)

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Structure

- General information
- Background information on Hildesheim
- Community Garden Nordstadt in Hildesheim
- Occupation and social health with the focus on gardening
- Possibilities for implementation
- Reflection of the project group
General information

• Aim of the concept: to act like an interface between the mentioned community garden and refugees in Hildesheim interested in gardening

• primarily written for volunteers
General information

- how can refugees be integrated into the garden?
- which occupational opportunities does the community garden offer and how can social contacts be established for the refugees?
- format of the concept: a booklet clearly structured into various sections (33 pages)
General information

- the community garden and the volunteer networks will distribute the booklet
- information is given about the current situation, laws and asylum procedures
- it explains the connection between occupation, social health and gardeners
- important contacts and web pages are listed, so that the concept can be implemented immediately
Background information

- Europe → increasing number of refugees
- Hildesheim → 102,584 citizens
- 1,400 refugees living in Hildesheim

- Common problems in country of refuge:
  - language issues
  - new rules
  - different laws
  - health
  - fears
  - negative consequences for health

- occupational deprivation, occupational inequality

(Asyl e.V. & Caritas in Niedersachen, 2014 & DVE, 2009, p.11)
Background information

Housing Situation for refugees in Hildesheim

- three big refugee shelters
  - the first for refugees allocated to the city → 190 people
  - the second shelter opened in 2014 → 150
  - the third shelter opened in early October 2015 → 500
- current housing concept for refugees in Hildesheim → moving into decentralized housing after three months in the shelter
- currently 260 refugees live in their own flats
- situation of refugees → many people and high fluctuation in the shelters
- decentralized accommodation → support integration, but refugees are more difficult to reach

(Asyl e.V. & Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen, 2014)
Background information

Social networks in Hildesheim

- **Asyl e.V.** → advise on legal issues & asylum application
- **neighbourhood help associations** → organized by the church
- **Flux** → support by leisure activities & help with clothing donations
- **Pangea** → run by students, support in daily activities

→ benefit from our concept
Community garden

- initiated by another student group, who presented their work at the ENOTHE meeting in York in 2013
- located in Hildesheim Nordstadt, which is a district with a low socioeconomic status
- the garden is approximately 400 to 500 square meters
- two raised garden beds and several round-scale garden beds
- the garden can be used to run diverse workshops

Pictures: Volunteer association „city blooming e.V.“
Occupation and social health with the focus on gardening

• The different problems of refugees can negatively influence their health

• Findings from research into horticulture would suggest that gardening may be a beneficial occupation for refugees

• More research is required

(Bishop & Purcell, 2013, Liebig 2014)
Occupation and social health with the focus on gardening

Benefits of gardening activities:

• Facilitate the development of social networks and friendship
• Opportunity to learn and share ideas
• Promote an intercultural and peaceful communication
• Improve the participants’ language-skills

(Bishop & Purcell, 2013, p. 246-266 & Nosetti, 2009, p.5-6)
Occupation and social health with the focus on gardening

Benefits of gardening activities:

• Promote a sense of connectedness

• Promote participation and integration

• Relate to the resources of refugees

(Nosetti, 2009, Baier 2013)
Occupation and social health with the focus on gardening

Benefits of gardening activities:

- Is reminiscent of home → can grow crops that are native to their home country
- An activity they engage in for enjoyment or relaxation
- Offer a structure of the day, a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy

(Nosetti, 2009, p. 5-6 & Bishop & Purcell, 2013, p. 266)
Occupation and social health with the focus on gardening

Benefits of gardening activities:

• Can forget about their problems and can switch off their minds
• Can provide a buffer to stressors
• Important for refugees to be able to take care of themselves

→ Horticulture can be viewed as a purposeful and goal-orientated activity for refugees with a positive impact on their social health

## Possibilities for the implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation with only volunteers</th>
<th>Implementation as a concept supported by OTs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ no funding required</td>
<td>- funding required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ huge willingness to help in various organisations and individuals in Hildesheim</td>
<td>+ huge willingness to help in various organisations and individuals in Hildesheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ integration of people who suffer from occupational deprivation</td>
<td>+ integration of people who suffer from occupational deprivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ the integration process can be supported</td>
<td>+ the integration process can be supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>- specialized therapeutic knowledge is missing in the voluntary work</td>
<td>+ Occupational therapists can use their specialist knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>→ focus on occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>→ integration of the environmental context</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>→ empathetic relationship building</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>→ knowledge about psychiatric symptoms and traumata</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ volunteers do not need extensive specific training</td>
<td>+ volunteers could be trained by occupational therapists (see above) and work more effectively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possibilities for implementation

• **Financing:** There are various possibilities to obtain financial support for an OT-run implementation, which we described in detail in our concept.

→ The implementation guided by OTs would be the optimal support of the refugees – but funding needs to be secured for it.

(Han-Broich, 2015, p. 1-3; Liebig, 2014, p. 31-33).
Reflection of the group

-Positive experiences-
  • exchange with many people
  • theoretical basis for working with refugees in the garden
  • concept can be adapted and used in different settings
  • visiting other intercultural gardens → positive effect of gardening
  • personal contact with refugees → need for projects

-Challenges-
  • different expectations by people → expected practical work
  • difficult to work out the organisational basis → the community garden is still evolving
Sources

- Asyl e.V. http://www.asyl-ev.de/. Zugriff am 23.08.2015.
Sources

Thank you for your attention!

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