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GARDENS

October
2009
Copenhagen
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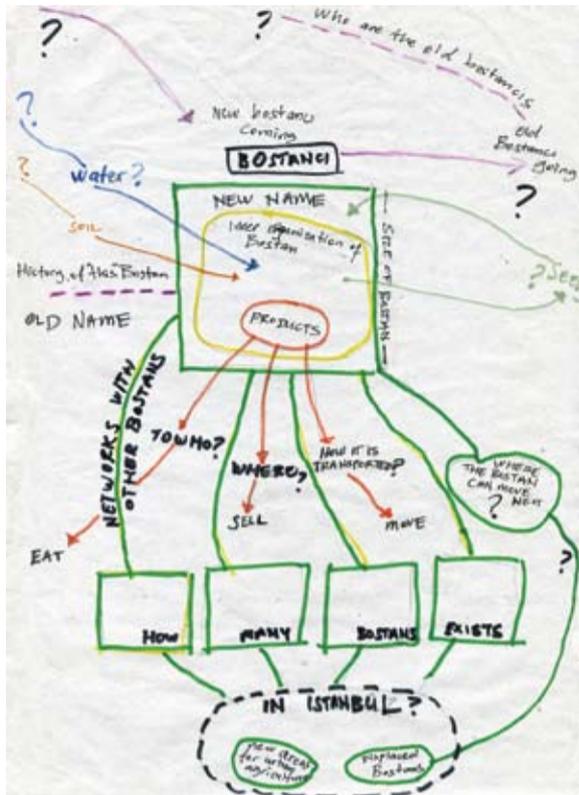
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Bostan network. Drawing by Özge Açikkol

Migrating Gardens

The collaboration between Nis Rømer and Oda Projesi will lead a way to look at the usage of city space from different perspectives, and point out micro-scale interventions, to revisit and revise the idea of land ownership.

This newspaper is to share the joint knowledge coming out of the Migrating Gardens project, through the articles around the concept of the *Bostan* in İstanbul, the situation in Denmark from the perspective of geography, history and NGOs, as well as the interviews with gardeners from İstanbul and Copenhagen, who have "their hands in the soil".

Oda Projesi & Nis Rømer

Green Migration

One of the strongest global trends in migration, has been the move from the countryside to urban areas. 2007 was the year when, for the first time, half of the world's population was estimated to live in cities. One of the reasons for this is that farming can no longer subsidize existence. In the coming years, the breakdown of ecosystem-dependent livelihoods is likely to become the premier driver of long-term migration, and continue for the next two to three decades.

Environmental migrants are persons or groups who, for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment, leave their homes, either temporarily or permanently, and move either within their own country or abroad.*

The close link between agriculture and migration and its contemporary implications, are in many ways

embedded in the image below. Cultivating the land is no longer possible or feasible, and farming tools instead have become the means to escape or salvage in the process of displacement.

EU countries export cheap and subsidized farming goods and is at the same time responsible for a major part of climate change. In return we see migrants escaping their dysfunctional living conditions and trying to enter Europe. The fact that the negative effects of climate change are mainly induced by the developed world, but suffered by those that can least afford it, is evident. The claim for environmental justice must be our response. Ecological sustainability and social justice should go hand in hand, and we must assume the responsibility for this to happen.

Nis Rømer

* Definition by the International Organization For Migration (IOM), Geneva.

UN information on refugees >>

The United Nations University predicts that 50 million people globally will be displaced by environmental crises by the year 2010. According to OSCE there could be as many as 200 million displaced worldwide by 2050. Meanwhile, for the first time ever, Red Cross research shows more people are now displaced by environmental disasters than by war. www.towardsrecognition.org/who-are-environmental-migrants

Yedikule Lettuce

The famous Yedikule lettuce is around 7 or 8 kilos. There's no pesticides, no factory, it just grows with the strength of the soil. Five people together can't finish one lettuce. It's mouth watering. That's how delicious it is!



Annex no:4 Migrating Gardens

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The exhibition is supported by The Danish Arts Council Committee for International Visual Art Frederiksberg Kommune



Kunst & Bæredygtighed

FREDERIKSBERG KOMMUNE



It is a part of the project "Art and Sustainability" relating to the UN conference COP 15 in Copenhagen 2009.

Oda Projesi would like to remember "the gatherers: greening our urban sphere" exhibition in Yerba Buena Art Center in SF, USA, (October 2008) that inspired to work on *bostans*.

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and all the gardeners making the space, a place to live in.

The residency of Oda Projesi in Copenhagen is sponsored by the DIVA artist-in-residence program under the Danish Arts Council Committee for Visual Arts.

Events in Møstings Hus

Friday the 2nd of October
Opening of the Migrating Gardens exhibition

Saturday the 10th of October at 13.00
Field work; Biking through the informal green structures of Copenhagen with Oda Projesi, Nis Rømer.
Starting point; Christianshavns Torv

Thursday the 15th of October at 17.00
Please don't step on the green
A talk by the artist group Oda Projesi about their work and opening of Migrating Gardens II

Monday the 19th of October at 17.00
Climate change make people move
A talk about green migration and urban gardens

Previous Annex issues

Annex 1 published for the 50th Venice Biennale "The Structure of Survival" exhibition, 2003.

Annex 2 published for the 8th İstanbul Biennale "Poetic Justice", 2003.

Annex 3 published for the "Proje4L" project in Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, 2004.



Immigrants crossing the sea floating on inflated tractor tubes. Photo: Cihan News Agency

THE HOUSE THAT MOVED

Møstings Hus is in itself a remarkable story of migration in relation to the city. It was built in 1801 as a country house. At the time there were only scattered buildings in what is now the very center of Frederiksberg. The original site is just across from today's city hall on the corner of Smallegade and Falkoner Alle. When the house was built, the parish of Frederiksberg had 1172 inhabitants, in 1900 this number was around 60.000. In this time span, the city grew and effectively



swallowed up the country house. In 1959, the demand for the passage of more traffic and the growth of the city in general had made it necessary to take action. As the house was protected under class A, demolition was not a possibility. The

architect Finn Karlsson was asked to make a plan for the dismantling of the house. Everything was carefully photographed, important parts were carefully taken down, numbered and stored, later to be rebuilt. The new location, where the house stands today, was agreed upon in 1962. In 1977 the house was completed again and rebuilt after the drawings.

Today Møstings Hus' ground floor is converted into an exhibition space.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

The Ethics of In-Between Relationships

Mika Hannula

It is not a secret, but when you really think about it, it does come as a surprise. The surprise that everything and anything we do is about relationships. It is not so much what these relationships are or what they are not, but rather how they are. Here, the crucial point is that relationships are not given, or already existing structures, but rather a constant process of push and pull, give and take, trial and error.

Our way of existing-in-the-world is relational. It is not relative but relational to our location, our immediate surroundings and the social structures that we are attached to or shaped by. It is the relationships we create, nurture, or destroy with our parents and children as well as the relationships with our environment, be it the common technical devices we use everyday or the macro issues of climate change. All in all, it is about how we relate to our daily surroundings and situations.

Since everything is about relationships, it is not surprising that we tend to take these constructions and their current states as given. We hardly pay attention to them because they are so overwhelmingly present. However, our attention is awakened when we are confronted with examples that are either slightly or extremely out of the ordinary. We wake up when we see the "other"; the "other" that does not fit, the "other" that challenges our presuppositions of the particular relationship that is in question.

This wake up call can be effectively achieved through socially oriented and engaged contemporary art. This notion effectively describes the general practice of Oda Projesi, specifically their project with Nis Rømer. It is a tight match that does not solve anything, but serves as a new beginning. It is a shout to the top, a call to start thinking differently about the site and engaging with it in alternative ways.

The history of the specific site in question is well articulated in the accompanying texts in this publication. It shows us the basic approach of Oda Projesi. The project takes the site as its starting point then goes deeper into the subject. The starting point is the centuries old, but still the relevant phenomenon of *bostan* in Turkey. This phenomenon is once again, about relationships.

In this case, it is the plural relationships of who owns land, who uses it and the ambiguous areas in-between. To articulate it through sociology, it is the relationship between a structure and its inhabitants. Here, the former refers to the political, social, historical and economical ways a certain site is structured and organized while the latter refers to the ways in which the inhabitants access the site and use it in time.

It is a relationship that, on the one hand, holds the power to shape, and on the other, the powerlessness of the people trying to survive within the given structure. But hold on. Is it really that simple? Is it simply that the existing structures dominate and the ones who do not have access to it are incessantly dominated?

When we closely analyze the character and development of every relationship, this black and white model quickly loses its credibility. Evidently, we must consider a number of inter-twining relationships within the very site and situation. Looking at the current Istanbul cases, these are relationships between the city as the owner of a property and the recently migrated populations trying to grow vegetables, both for their own use and for selling, on a piece of land that is not yet planned or constructed on. It is the relationship between the city planning officers and the newcomers, a relationship between those who have all the power of decision-making and those who have ridiculously little of it.

Yet, no matter how imbalanced it is, it nevertheless is a relationship, and a productive one at that. It is the process by which a non-site is made into a site through semi-illegal actions by the ad hoc farming community. The temporary users have a short-term lease to use the land but can be evicted at any time. Thus, what kind of a relationship is it exactly?

Let us return to the notion of the site as a space "in-between". The site does not function outside the capitalist logic of market driven economy, but next to it. This is because it is not entirely planned nor fully controlled. It is in a grey area. But is it really functioning around it since it is not surviving on the romantic notion of a Robin Hood mentality? The inhabitants are making use of the land and they want to get something out of it,

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Photo: Oda Projesi, Yedikule, Istanbul, 2009

“Dr. Mahmud A. Al-Alim, an Egyptian economist and thinker, considers urban agriculture as “ruralisation of the city” and judges it as a negative trend. He comprehends semi-rural or semi-urban districts in Cairo as sources of pollution and even of crime.”

Jörg Gertel and Said Samir. "Cairo: Urban Agriculture And Visions For A "Modern" City", In: *Growing Cities, Growing Food: Urban Agriculture On The Policy Agenda*, Bakker, N. Et Al., 2001, P. 225.

DECEIVING THE CONSUMER ABOUT ORGANIC PRODUCE



Photo: Oda Projesi, Topkapı, Istanbul, 2009

As we continue deep into the walls of Yedikule we start talking to one of the garden owners Ahmet Öztürk, “I don’t sell to other vendors anymore, I can’t grow that much. Before I used to be able to because this here used to be all a garden” he says.

So what lies behind the current popularity of organic products? We wonder about this and ask the gardening expert Ahmet Bey:

Ahmet Bey, who turned his old garden into a greenhouse, complains about other vendors and markets buying his produce and putting it in their displays as organic. Some vendors and market owners put Ahmet Bey’s produce in the front display but actually sell the stuff they bought elsewhere as if they were the same produce. He adds: “But now my produce is only enough for the people that pass by here. Just two years ago we used to give to wholesales. We even used to sell at the farmer’s market. When I started planting, I lost part of my garden. I now have 1800 meters to grow. Before I used to have 4850 meters.” ■ *istanbul*

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Photo: Oda Projesi, Topkapı, İstanbul, 2009

sometimes in desperate attempts, other times not. But it is a relationship where desires, needs, demands and fears clash and collide.

I do not think the relationship could properly be called "parasitic". Nor does it have the character of a virus, be it a benign or a malignant one. One of the problems with the metaphors borrowed from the field of medicine is that they are rather closed up and deterministic. But the main problem is perspective. A parasite or a virus negotiates the relationship from the weaker side towards the stronger one. A seemingly fine position, but in reality it often leaves the opposing side off the hook.

But what happens if we turn this perspective around? What if we did like Diana Ross so wonderfully asked us to do in 1980? What if we let ourselves go upside down, all round, inside out?

When we do that, what we have is a dramatically different site and situation. We are no longer asking how does the other (the outsider, the weaker one, the newcomer) fit into the main frame of the structure. Instead, we are asking how does the structure (the organization and its representatives that have the decision power) act and react towards to other, the new and the different.

The situation then evolves into the ethics of being in a relationship. An ethics that takes seriously the lop-sided balance of the relationship between those who have power and those who do not. This is a theory of ethics that Ian Angus (2000) labelled as the maxim of *After You*, in which he claims that it is the responsibility of the stronger side to let the weaker in and that it is the stronger side that must show tolerance, flexibility and openness.

In this version of an ethical relationship, the other (no matter what form it comes in) is not assimilated or

integrated. It is allowed in and accepted as it is. It is the process of cherishing the grey zone - that zone which cannot be controlled or determined for either side of the relationship. It is then a relationship where the stronger one realizes how much it, in fact, benefits from the weaker one that is using all its wit and resourcefulness for means of survival.

A realization that turns into an admiration for those small gestures that make our everyday worth while (see Hannula 2006). A realization that is built upon a self-understanding and self-esteem of the structure that it is strong enough to allow internal critique and some significant stirs from within while enjoying the idea of treating the other as a guest; a guest that comes to dinner without an announcement but is treated nonetheless with great respect.

It is a sign of the times (respect for the other that cherishes the difference and does not strive towards sameness) that is terribly horribly missing. A sentiment that the philosopher Hannah Arendt so well articulated in a specific circumstance. It was something she said in a speech when being awarded with the Emerson-Thoreau medal from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1969. A sentence she (quoted in Markell, 2003) uttered at the beginning of the talk, and which is certainly worthy to cite here in full: "And if it is good to be recognized, it is better to be welcomed, precisely because this is something we can neither earn nor deserve."

Angus, Ian, *(Dis)figurations, Discourse/Critique/Ethics*, Verso 2000.
Hannula, Mika, *The Politics of Small Gestures, Chances and Challenges for Contemporary Art*, art-ist İstanbul 2006.
Markell, Patchen, *Bound by Recognition*, Princeton University Press 2003.
Ross, Diana, *diana*, Motown 1980.

Mika Hannula is prof. in artistic research, University of Gothenburg.

AIRPORT IN THE MIDDLE OF A BOSTAN



Billboard for the construction of the new airstrips

The *bostans* in the biggest airport of İstanbul are under danger of being demolished. Because of the increasing number of flights, there is not enough space for the airstrips. Since the constructions started, the *bostans* have been getting smaller and none of the gardeners working in the area know about their future. 20 families who moved to İstanbul from Kastamonu after the 80s are making their living out there and they are all each other's relatives. Before the 80s, it was the Thessalonians who were gardening in the area.

The reasons invented by the municipalities to demolish the *bostans* are increasing while the need for sustainable horticulture is urgent in the cities. One other reason that the old wall *bostans* are disappearing is that once the walls are renovated, the municipality will try to demolish the planted fields to replace them with recreation parks in order to create more touristic areas. ■ **istanbul**



Learning from Elmas Akyol

Kreuzberg, Berlin / 16 July 2009



Elmas Akyol's garden with her neighbor used to lay in the no man's land of the Berlin wall. It is now one of the frequented spots. It is a lush green island next to St. Thomas Church. →

Oda Projesi: Could you talk a little about yourself?

Esma Akyol: My next door neighbor, the old man, is from Yozgat, and I'm from Trabzon. We used to live in the same building right there. One day he said to me "Let's turn this place into a garden". I said why not? He dug that side I dug this one and we made a garden here. We've been here longer than twenty years. He is still on that side and this is our border. That side is his, this is mine and that over there is our little shed. The Ost wall (The East Wall = The Berlin Wall) used to be by the wire there, we couldn't pass from that side to this.

This here used to be a dirty place, a dump, they used

to repair cars here and no car could pass from here to the other side because of the Berlin wall. There was no exit. People would repair their cars and dump all the garbage on this side, it used to be like a kind of a park here. That side was Ost and here was West, that's how they called it. With the old man we dug the ground here, cleaned up all the trash and made it into a nice place, no one ever said anything to us so we continue to do the same. 20 years ago there was no garden here. It was a dump, it's right at the bottom of the wall, what else could it be? It couldn't be anything else. Before the wall came down we fixed this place up many times. I used to grow vegetables here, then they

took the wall down and my vegetables were left lying out in the middle. A woman came from the other side and said "oh no!"... she hugged me, we have pictures... "your vegetables are out in the middle now, they will steal them, break them". When the wall was there they weren't out in the open, they were on this side of the wall. But when the wall came down all my vegetables were left there like that, so we put soil there and built it.

OP: So what was the first thing you grew here?

EA: Whatever we used to grow back at home, corn, sunflower, red cabbage... you can take pictures of the trees and fruits. I planted

these about five or six years ago. Fruit grows fast. There was only this old tree here when we built this place. They don't say anything about the tree either. This place belongs neither to this side, nor to that. If it belonged to one side they wouldn't let us keep it, they would take it. It's in the middle of the border. This tree, they don't even take care of it. The municipality always cuts and takes care of the other trees, but this one, nobody cares about...

You see how it's dried up? The other day a part of it broke in the wind, it's going to break and fall on our heads. I've been in Germany for 35 years and this tree has been the same the whole time.

When I came here I was 23 years old. I came in 1973. I got married at age 20 and three years later I came here. I came on the sixth month of 1973. My husband came one year earlier to start working. Then a year later he came back to get us. I have a daughter and now my daughter's

made tea, we had brought some things from home, we made the table, people stopped by, it's fun here, people pass by and end up sitting at the table. We've had fruit here, fifty thousand people have eaten from this garden. People see this place from outside and want

EA: I came straight here from my village, we never even got to know our town. I grew up in the village, and then came here. We learned about the garden from our parents. Before we came to Germany this is what we used to do back in the village. We were gardeners.

OP: Do you use fertilizers or pesticides?

EA: We bought two truckloads of manure, we buy from the villages, from the cows, there are farms here. We filled up the truck and came and dumped the manure here. We never use pesticides, you know that



daughter is here too. I have 7 grandkids. All of the children were born here, they work here. My first child came here when she was one year old.

OP: How did you meet the old man?

EA: We used to live in the same building, he was the haushalt (superintendent) of the building. He was responsible for the cleaning, here they call that haushalt. We were neighbors. Then we started to dig here together.

OP: What do you grow here now?

EA: This is pumpkin, they call it pumpkin, you know those round pumpkins... this is sunflower, these are beans, that over there is corn, red cabbage, turnip, which they call chard, then there are tomatoes, what else... onions....

OP: So what do you call it here? A bostan or a garden?

EA: We call it garden. Back at home we call it field, a big field. But when you build a little space like this we call it garden. You can grow everything you need in that garden, your spring onions, everything...

OP: So do you work at the moment? Or do you just take care of the garden?

EA: I work, I work four hours a day, then I come and take care of the garden. In fact, last weekend we came here to have breakfast. I told my husband, come on, let's go have breakfast in the garden. We came, we have a stove inside, we

something, we pick the fruits and give them. For the people that come to sit down we pick the fruit with our hands and give them. We don't sell, we just grow for our own, it's only enough for us, we're a big family, what is to sell here anyway? Five ten cobs of corn, I'm going to cut them when they're done, the kids can boil and eat them. I give the red cabbage to the neighbors... we're crowded too. We even have a baby chair here, if kids come and get tired running around, we put them in the chair.

OP: How did you come to think about doing such a thing here? In other words, was it a little out of necessity?

EA: We grew up with this, we used to make a living out of this back in Turkey. We have a lot of land there. I have 6 acres of land in Bursa, a two story house on top of it, that land used to be an olive grove but we left all that to the people there to come here.

The garden didn't come out of a necessity. Who would need this? It's just for pleasure, we come here, sit down, the kids pick fruit from the trees, we're giving them an interest. The kids that were born here wouldn't know about picking from the tree. It's surprising for them to see it too. They come here and see, otherwise my kids don't know corn or cabbage or pumpkin. I plant here and say "look that's a potato", when they see it they learn it.

OP: Did you come straight here from your hometown?

OP: Is there a vegetable that you grow here that you can't find anywhere else?

EA: In Germany there is no red cabbage. There are a lot of corn fields, but they don't know cabbage, they ask what is this? I grow the seeds here. It'll continue until the beginning of the summer, then in the summer it'll grow, this is the seed. Some of them we grow just to give seeds. You plant red cabbage on the twelfth month. I can give you too. We ordered the seeds from Turkey. Every year we take a vacation to go pick up the seeds and bring here. Put these in your bag.

OP: How do you get water here?

EA: I get the water from that building across the street. It is the church's residence. We get it with this long cord. We draw it from their bathroom, and then we pay the amount on the water meter.

I planted this too, I ate the nectarine and put the seed in a pot. It turned into a sprout, so I brought it here and planted it. This is apricot, these are sprouts, I'm going to plant them next year in the beginning of summer. These are apples, grapes... You know what they call these? Çağla (unripe almond)... Its seed just hardened. There's also a sour cherry tree there, it gives a small fruit but gives plentiful. The one up there is cherry. Cabbage grows until the beginning of the summer, then we pick it and new ones will grow. This is pepper, that's an olive tree, that's a flower, this a tomato... You took a photo of the cucumber right?

thing they call bio, that you can buy at kauf (market), they sell it there, very expensive.

OP: If you wanted to make a garden again, in Berlin or somewhere else, where would you want to have it?

EA: I would want it to be somewhere close to here again, I wouldn't want to go far from here. There are gardens here for rent for 100 liras, but nothing close to here. Look here, taste the fruits from my garden!

OP: Do you like to cook?

EA: I love to fill the house with food. Red cabbage sarma, red cabbage dish, its soup, corn bread, bean pickle, I make everything you can think of. I love red cabbage and bean pickle the most. When I make it the children love it too.

OP: Thank you.



Photos by Oda Projesi



Tips from a Bostancı



Time of plantation

When my father planted something, he would calculate it from a past date. Let's say today is the 27th, right? May 27. He wouldn't calculate that date, he'd calculate May 5 or 6. He used to go backwards. We couldn't figure it out then, but of course now we know why. He'd calculate on the past date. [Calculation according to the Hegira calendar.]



Way of planting

Say we're going to plant tomatoes. My father would say "leave it, you can't do it". I'd take it out and plant it again. I remember taking out tomatoes three times. I'd plant it, and it would be facing upwards and he'd say "no it's not right again... you have to plant it diagonally". One branch has to go this way, the other that way "it will wrap itself around" he'd say... "they'll support each other". I'd ask him "dad, why are you planting this way?" He'd say "son, this will support that and that will support this"... He knew subtleties like this.



How do you plant bitter melon?

"Did you plant bitter melon, son?" my deceased father would ask. "Yes I did father" I'd say. "When did you plant it?", "yesterday father." "Son! how much time is left to hidirellez (a religious festival)?" You have to plant it on the eve of Hidirellez. I'd say "10 days left to Hidirellez," "then take it out, that won't work" he'd say.



How to plant calabash?

You have to grow the seed in a special place first and then plant it. It has to be very good soil, nicely picked and sorted in a pot, you then take it out and plant it. You have to prepare a place for it with special attention. It has to be very good soil, a little mixed. You put your pesticide in. In order for bugs not to harm it you plant it with pesticides. There are calabashes that grow 2 meters long.



Watercress, dill, parsley, lettuce...

A very sensitive product. It grows in 21 days. The soil where it's planted has to be sorted nicely with a fork, spread around, crushed, watered, then fed animal fertilizer. It needs to be tied after 21 days. If you wait for 25 or 26 days, the watercress will come out bad, it's very sensitive. Dill is the same. Parsley grows in 60 days. Lettuce also grows in 60 days. Of course you have to water it on time.



Digging a Well

We built a well in 86. We pumped water from twenty-two meters deep, we dug all the way down with our hands, not even with a machine. We kept digging, every meter we dug we put a cast, waited one-day for it to dry, and then dug the next meter. We dug like that for 22 meters and found the water. We put a machine to pump the water.



Running Water

If your garden is flat, with all your strength you release the water, let the water spill into the channel, the water spreads by itself and enters between the produce, at times there are places it doesn't reach. You can't run a mill with carried water. You make a pool, when the pool fills you open the valve and go around with the water spilling, but the pool will keep on filling.



Producing Seeds

One kilo of lettuce is enough for me for a whole season. What do I do? I get 20 lettuces from that. But only one root, a seedling. I plant in twenty places, and then leave it to grow by itself. It becomes a seed. Keeps growing and growing until it gets huge. Then we dry it, we lay it on a cloth, and take out the seeds. We use the seeds for the following year.

Bostancı (tr): vegetable gardener in the bostan.

by Ahmet Öztürk, 46 years old, Yedikule, İstanbul

Chasing Calves in İstanbul

The City, its Walls and Orchards

Dr. Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir

The land-walls around the Byzantine city of Constantinople, modern day İstanbul, are known to have protected the city from its enemies for centuries. What is not common knowledge is the role they have played in providing sustenance to the city, in antiquity and in modern times.

The fortifications around the ancient Byzantine capital were built during the reign of Emperor Theodosius as a response to the urban growth of the city, which had started extending beyond the first series of walls built in the fourth century AD by Constantine the Great, the founder of Constantinople. Theodosian fortifications were erected in AD 423 and went through a massive repair in AD 447 after a series of earthquakes inflicted serious damages to the walls. The original circuit of city walls included the land-walls running between the Marmara Sea and the Golden Horn in a three kilometer-long strip that joined the fortifications along the seashore encircling the peninsula of the ancient Constantinople. The Theodosian walls were in fact built to defend the city against destructive attacks. The fortification system was constructed with two sturdy walls running parallel to each other and regularly spaced towers in between while among these intimidating defensive structures the entrances to the city were facilitated through monumental gates. On the exterior perimeter of the walls, there was a deep moat. This moat, as I argue below, seems to have played the lead role in providing vegetables for the capital throughout centuries.

The larger part of these mighty fortifications is still standing, and is amongst the most spectacular sights for a modern day tourist. As you pass through one of its gates entering into the ancient city, you might catch a glimpse of a thin strip of emerald-green vegetable orchards along these monumental walls. During a short study visit to İstanbul in 1996 I was struck by the beauty of these orchards. The stunning contrast between the fresh-greenery of the orchards and the cement and glass masses of the modern city that encircled and dwarfed the Byzantine walls, to me, was striking. What brought me to the orchards that fall was my decision to conduct an ethno-archaeological field research as part of a graduate-seminar I was taking on the urban history of Byzantine Constantinople. My goal was to have a better understanding of the history as well as the current

utilization of these vegetable-gardens.

The Turkish term commonly used for this type of orchards is *bostan*, which literally indicates areas of agricultural production of vegetables (cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots etc.), legumes and herbs (lettuce, parsley, mint, arugula etc.), excluding orchards of fruit-bearing trees and fields of grains. *Bostans* are normally fairly small plots of lands, usually around four to five acres, and are tended by relatively few individuals, usually no more than the members of a single family. By this definition, *bostans* are not suitable for large-scale production of vegetables, but serve as small family-enterprises. They are, however, distinguished from individual gardens in which people grow plants for their own consumption. The term *bostan* specifically denotes small-scale agricultural production with a commercial purpose. The related Turkish word *bostancı* refers to the occupation of the individual who takes care of these vegetable orchards. The motifs of *bostan* and *bostancı* are so deeply embedded in Turkish daily culture that the vivid image of a *bostancı* chasing a calf eating cabbages out of a *bostan* is featured in one of the most beloved Turkish nursery rhymes: "*Kov bostancı danayı, yemesin lahanayı*" [*Bostancı! Shoo the calf away, don't let it eat the cabbage*].

My fieldwork included a long walk along the Theodosian walls, documenting the location of each *bostan* on route, noting the types of plants grown in the land, the implements and architectural features that aid agricultural production, and conducting interviews with the owners of these *bostans*. I was



Screenshot from GoogleEarth showing old city walls and the green belt of bostans Topkapı-Yedikule, İstanbul.

hoping to find why this area in particular was chosen for such an agricultural activity and whether I could find some evidence of the continuity in the *bostan* tradition in this thin-strip of greenery running beside the ancient land-walls.

On a brisk November day, I started my stroll at the Tekfur Sarayı on the north, which is the ruins of a Byzantine Palatial structure built near the corner where the land-walls used to conjoin the defenses along the Golden Horn, and walked south. My journey ended at the Golden Gate, the famed entrance to the city during the Byzantine Era. The Golden Gate marked the major southern gateway to Constantinople along the route by the Marmara Sea.

In 1996 the majority of the *bostans* were located between the Mevlevihane Kapı (Mevlevihane Gate) and the Belgrad Kapı (Belgrade Gate), on a strip of land approximately one kilometer in length, in the southern half of the land-walls. The *bostans* occupied the space between the modern road and the ancient walls, towards the west of the fortifications, and some of them extended into the narrow strip of land between the two walls. This strip of land is the property of the municipality. The municipality defined and rented the garden-plots to those who were capable of tending to the land. Perhaps because there is no private ownership, and therefore, no need for imposing barriers marking the land, it is often hard to delineate the borders between each *bostan*. It is hard to give an exact number of the *bostans* along the land-walls, but each *bostan* seemed to have some architectural features, such as a little hut for storing agricultural implements or water-wells, and a count of these features suggested an estimation of around 20 units along the route.

In the month of November, the orchards were full of beets, carrots, cabbages, lettuce, radish, turnips, and onions. The owners of the plots told me about their annual planting cycles and what vegetables would be available for consumption throughout the year. There was an interesting overlap in those accounts with the Byzantine sources. One source in particular, *Geoponika*, which was thought to have been compiled in AD 944-59, gives us an interesting insight into the food production and consumption patterns of ancient Byzantium.¹ For our purposes, it is important to highlight that silver beet, carrot, red and white cabbage, cress, lettuce, leek, radish, turnip, and onion were planted both in ancient times and in 1996, following almost the exact yearly cycles. Garlic, sweet basil, parsley, mint, rocket salad, spinach, tomato, green pepper, cucumber and aubergine were added to the plates of modern İstanbulites much later in history, and were being planted in 1996. It is noted that some of these plants, native to the Americas, had not yet made their journey to the Old World by the time *Geoponika* was composed. We should also remember that the Byzantine



"Most of the *bostan* owners have built small architectural features such as tool-sheds or huts to provide shade."



"Most of the vegetable-gardens are located in a thin-strip of land between the ancient land-walls and the modern road."

capital did not have the agricultural conditions to support its population in antiquity and basic foodstuffs like grain to sustain the city were imported via sea trade. As Koder argues, the fresh vegetable production reported in the *Geoponika* would have significantly supplemented the diet of the ancient inhabitants of the city.²

Evidently, it is possible to suggest that similar patterns of agricultural production were taking place in İstanbul for about a millennium. But how far into the past can we trace this *bostan* tradition along the walls of the city? It is hard to argue for a continuous vegetable plantation in this region, however, one can trace evidence that hints at the use of this land for agricultural production at different historical times. The earliest suggestion that this area was used for agriculture comes from the time of Emperor Theodosius. In the Theodosian Edict, there is a faint reference allowing farmers to store agricultural tools inside the towers of the walls. While it is not indicated where exactly these farmers were planting, or what sorts of plants, one can assume that since they were storing their implements in the walls, they must have been working in the immediate vicinity. A crusader passing through İstanbul, Odon de Deuif, an attendant of Young Louis in the second Crusade in mid twelfth century, briefly described the orchards around the walls of the city and noted that they were watered by the water carried to the area by underground channels.³ In 1778, Dominique Sestini, an Italian priest who attempted to copy one of the inscriptions built into the land-walls, complained how his task was cut short by the *bostancis* who chased him away from their orchards.⁴ This person stepping over their produce apparently bothered the *bostancis*. This 18th century incident clearly indicates the presence of *bostans* in that very region.

One question, however, still remains unanswered: why was this particular piece of land chosen for horticultural production for centuries? The answer could be found in the original layout of the land-walls. In a city where water has always been a scarce commodity, it is not very easy to find a suitable location for horticulture; an activity that requires regular watering. Most of the *bostans* had their own water-wells in the vicinity of the walls, supplying the *bostancis* with ample water for their purposes. Although I never asked how deep they had to dig to reach underground water, it was quite clear that the system they had organized was working adequately for their purposes. But what do the walls have to do with this? One of the elder *bostancis* was telling me of his childhood memories. He said he could remember "water coming from the bottom of the walls" and added, "whoever built these walls had thought of this water." We have no indication that supplying water for agricultural activity was a priority for Theodosius or his architects. It may have never even occurred to them that this area would one day become

an important land for supplying the capital with fresh vegetables. Yet, the structure itself may have provided the necessary architectural features for the collection of water underground. Although there is no archaeological data to understand whether or not the moat was paved in any particular way, it still may have provided the necessary conditions for facilitating the accumulation of water. And in a peninsula where such underground water collection had been done through elaborate man-made cisterns since antiquity, this unintended consequence of a defensive structure may have worked for the advantage of the farmers planting the land.

Some of these *bostans* are still in existence. They continue their daily business within the limits of this Byzantine defensive monument. In a metropolis like İstanbul in the early third millennium AD, where urban growth takes over any available land, these ancient walls offer a thin, green area for agricultural growth, something that the city had always been short of. Even in 1996, the *bostancis* I interviewed expressed their concerns that they would be expelled from their plots in the near future. A significant number of them possibly have already left their *bostans*. Yet some other *bostancis* will still sow their seeds, tend their vegetables and legumes, and continue chasing calves (or unsuspecting scholars) out of their *bostans*, as their predecessors have done for centuries.

1 Bech, H. (ed.) *Geoponika* (Leipzig, 1895).

2 Koder, J. *Gemüse in Byzanz: die Versorgung Konstantinopels mit Frischgemüse im Lichte der Geoponika*. (Vienna, 1993).

3 Ebersolt, J. *Bizans İstanbulu ve Doğu Seyyahları* (İstanbul, 1996).

4 *op. cit.*

Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir is the director of Science and Technology Museum and lecturer in the Graduate Program in Architectural History, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

Dudullu Tomato

It keeps on growing by itself!
Giant tomato with a mature
taste. From Mustafa and
Havva Cebir's rich garden
to your plate!



Çavuşbaşı
Düzkeşane region
Beykoz - İstanbul

SOIL

A story by a *Bostancı*, Ahmet Öztürk

Once I made the mistake of bringing soil here from outside. I poured it up there. Why did I do that? Let me explain. I was in a little bit of trouble. Six, seven years ago there was a children's playground there. Kids would come and play with such joy it was amazing. Then they tore down the playground, destroyed it and just left a flat land. Two or three years later, excuse me for saying, drunks started frequenting the place. At the end of the day, I have my kids, my family here. I would tell them not to drink here but then that created problems of course. They would get mad at me and break bottles. I couldn't cope with them. Then I thought, what would happen if I poured some soil here, planted some trees and turned it into a garden? I went and told a couple of people. I found a nice soil. I came with two trucks and poured all this soil for two days on Saturday and Sunday. I evened it all out nicely.

Then I started to plant trees. Right away on Monday thirty municipality authorities appeared at my door. "How dare you pour this soil? Do you know the fine you'll have to pay?" "Quick" they said, "Come to the municipality". I was not even scared, I was completely calm. "Ok" I said "I'll come". "You," he said "why did you pour soil there?" I said "brother, here's the deal. This place has been a dump for so many years. Do you know what I've been dealing with there for the past 6 years?" "So what" he said. "How dare you put that soil there?" I said "What's your point?" "How many trucks did you pour there?" he asked. I said "ten trucks", "No" he said, "there's more than 10 trucks there." The fine for one truckload of soil is six million and seven hundred thousand lira. "So..." I said to him "I have to pay you two billion five hundred million lira". Then I said "give me ten lira now because I don't have money to get back". He started laughing. It turns out he used to buy tomatoes from me. "You know, we're also hard workers" he said. The chief is saying this, imagine. "We are obligated to write a statement" he said.

"Where are you going to send this statement to?" I asked him. "To the governor's office". I said "Write to the prime minister if you like." I wasn't stressed out about it. "Write to the prime minister and say 'this man poured soil here and is planting trees'" I said. Let's see his response. He wrote to the governor, and the governor wrote to the National Estate, authorities from the National Estate came here to look at the place. They said: "Ahmet, we wrote a sure you take care of our land. Until you leave this place, you are welcome to stay here".

At the end of the day, I put a nice soil there. I started to grow produce there. I planted thirty pine trees. Not to mention one tree costs 100 liras. I planted Cypress trees, cheery, mulberry, pear trees. Would it be better to leave it as it was? Now I get produce from here, watercress, turnip, tomato, lettuce, parsley, sorrel, red cabbage, chard. Otherwise it would be a hang out for alcoholics and druggies. Families would be scared to walk through there.

Now they are thanking me. But what did they say to me once? "We want those men to stay there, we don't want them to come to the city." I was shocked. "Let them live by the castle there, don't let them come into the city" he said. "In fact, you should help with this, give a hand at the sports club. You can't give them some food? A cup of soup?" The stuff they come up with I can't believe sometimes.

Right now I grow lettuce there. They came and took pictures and said to the chief: "chief, it's great here". Part of the land belongs to the foundation and the other to the government. But there is a lot of demand for this place. They even make me offers but I turn them down. For the memory of my father and grandfather I will stay here as long as I can.

The flight from the lost countryside

Kjeld Hansen

Since 1950, Denmark has become one of the most extreme farming countries in the world, where an increasingly smaller part of the population own a constantly growing share of the land. Parts of the country are being de-populated as a consequence of a development that resembles a medieval feudal society.

What do you call a country where less than half percent of the population own more than 63 percent of the land? No, not "banana republic". The correct answer is: Denmark.

Yes, we are talking about a lovely country where a few thousand people now own a majority of the land.

To add insult to injury, this small group of landowners receives public support in the order of eight billion DKK a year. Each landowner receives on average 250,000 DKK annually. The money is paid without counter-claim. This money enables the Danish farmer to break the developing country peasant to pieces in competition.

The Rotten Banana

In just 50 years Denmark has become the world's most extreme agricultural country. No other nation has such a large percentage of its area under the plow, and with such a small proportion of the population employed in primary agriculture. People continue to flee from rural areas to the cities. Disturbingly, the "rotten banana" is the name we use to refer to the geographic area in Denmark, where daily life is plagued by the closure of stores and schools as well as empty houses. The average age is high, jobs are few, and young people only want a one-way ticket out of town.

Roughly speaking, the "rotten banana" is the loser of Denmark. It extends from North Jutland down to South Jutland, from where it spreads east across the South Funen, Ærø and Langeland to Lolland-Falster. It is highly alarming that the "banana" now covers more than half of the country. The only thing that is plentiful in the "rotten banana" is farmland, pigs, all the empty houses and farm buildings: 30 million square meters of redundant buildings. This corresponds to a ten-meter wide belt of buildings from the Limfjord and all the way to the German border.

Gigantic debt percentage

In 2003 agriculture's total debt was 195 billion DKK. This year it passed 320 billion. Danish agriculture is simply a bad business. The strategy of a debt percentage around 80 percent is extreme, even in the context of the EU, where the Danish debt is more than twice as large as the average of other countries.

How do landowners get by when they don't earn money? They have built an impressive mortgage-carousel where the price of farmland has gone up by 285% in the last decade, without a rise in production to match this in any way. Now the price bubble is threatening to burst. Food economy experts are awaiting a possible avalanche of foreclosures and losses in the size of billions for the banks.

The downturn continues

Back in 1950 more than 200.000 families lived off their own agriculture. Today, the number is reduced to 12.000 full-time farms. The forecast from Danish Agriculture says that in 2015 there will be just 9.100 full time farmers left. Is this a good thing?

Agriculture's contribution to Danish economy is shrinking. The agriculture and food industry's gross income is expected to fall from 4,8% in 2000 to 4,4% in 2010. Similarly, employment is down by about 1 percent annually. In 2010 only 108.000 full-time staff will be employed in both primary agriculture and the food industry. A sizable share of employment will vanish abroad for good. Already today, every 4th farm worker is a foreigner, especially from Ukraine and the Baltic states.

For countries outside the EU it is virtually impossible to compete with Danish farmers as they never compete on



Screenshot from GoogleMaps

equal terms. Exported goods have lots of EU grants tied to their tail. Highly subsidized products such as powdered milk, sugar, chicken, pork etc. have repeatedly ruined farmers in countries poorer than the European Union.

Return to medieval times

Yet, the few Danish landowners have their own ministry and their own laws, which gives them a monopoly on most of Danish soil. Until six years ago Venstre, the ruling party had the following lines in its political program:

"Private property is the cornerstone of a free society. Private property is the main guarantee for both economic and political freedom. When property is divided among many private owners, no one has individual power to control others. Liberals therefore desire a proliferation of private property".

The liberals have changed their view and now willingly accept a medieval ownership structure where a few people's monopoly on the land has once again risen.

Despite the misery in the countryside, no effective measures are made to change conditions. The landscape is emptied out of people, opportunities, resources and jobs like a thrown away banana peel. Mono culture and the stench of pig manure now dominate the landscape and many of those left behind are either unemployed, on social benefits or are pensioners, while schools, shops and libraries in the area continue to close. The youth? It has since long fled to the cities.

So we got the pork for cheap but the collective price was sky-high. For every generation it ought to be our obligation to pass the country on in a better and more beautiful condition than we got it - we are nowhere near that.

Kjeld Hansen is an author and journalist.

THE GREENERY THAT GREW OUT OF THE GARBAGE DUMP



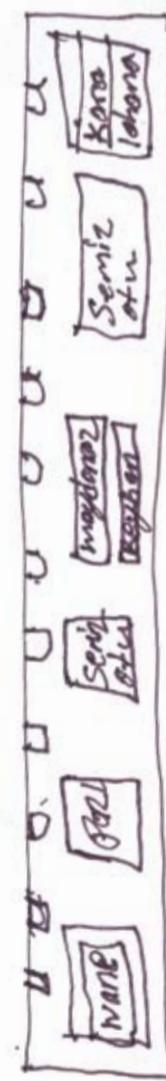
Photo: Oda Projesi, Topkapı, İstanbul, 2009

Annex Team spoke with Mehmet Şengül (born in Kastamonu, Cide, 1974) who made himself a *bostan* on the bottom of the city walls, that could be taken away from him at any time since it's the property of the Municipality, but Mehmet Şengül continues to live happily amidst the greenery and the produce he grows. He explained how he constructed it.

"Before, this place used to be a dump, with rubble all over the place... It was like the Halkalı dump. We paid to put soil here. From that shed over there until here it was all pebbles. There was one part especially,

everything you could imagine, including a pull out bed was dumped there. I swear I'm still cleaning for the past three-four years all by myself. God is my witness, and I wouldn't hide this from you, I've struggled with this place by myself because of my financial situation, if I had hired someone else I would've been in debt. Because I didn't have any money, I preferred this place, it doesn't have any costs, the garden's already made. The municipality police came and said 'keep this place clean and we'll help you out'. Thanks to them they never helped. He came with a shovel, 'This is a historical place, I can't do anything here; I can't bring the shovel up to the castle, if I break the wall, I'll be in trouble'. If they had gone up to the castle, it would be just like here. Even though I don't make any money, when I compare this place's old situation to its current condition, it is very nice.

They could demolish this place tomorrow if they wanted; but my conscience is clear, at least I know I did everything by myself and did it well. I used to work in shipping, used to be a driver. I used to work for 8 or 12 hours. Here, I work 24 hours and don't even earn half the money I used to earn, but I'm happy. When you get tired of the heat, you come and sit in the shade. You rest. You start late, and end late, nobody can say anything to you. I chose this path." ■ *istanbul*



Drawing of his bostan by Mehmet Şengül with the dispersal of the produces.

Talk at the Garden Club Trekanten (The Triangle)

Copenhagen / 25 May 2008



The Garden club Trekanten had existed for 30 years when last year the users had their lease for the plot suspended by the city. One year ago I visited the garden to do an interview with one of the gardeners, Astrid, about her garden.

The city council led by major Ritt Bjerregaard made an election promise to build affordable housing, since the housing bubble had made it too expensive for ordinary people to get housing in the city. Thus, a housing block was planned at the site of the gardening club. Then the project failed; the still to be built houses could not be sold, and therefore, not built. Before this, all the gardeners abandoned

their gardens, and currently the plot is deserted and in decay. This year I went back to document the garden today. We were discussing the recording device before starting the interview and Astrid said that her wireless phone had exactly enough reach to cover the garden, making her able to call and take calls from her home phone whilst in the garden. In this way it was almost an extension of her home.

Astrid: *I have an apartment just behind the small parking lot here, when I am standing in my balcony I can see the garden.*

Nis Rømer: So you can see if it needs to be weeded?

A: *Yes, its practical because I am not as mobile as I used to be - I had a stroke and since then I get dizzy. So now I have a walking aid on wheels -you can sit on it so it's kind of a mobile bench- I do a lot of walking with it.*

NR: Please tell me a bit about yourself.

A: *I was born in Tingsted, Falster. I was raised in the countryside of Lolland by a forest guard who was my foster parent because my mom died when I was 10.*

NR: For how long have you had the garden?

A: *Since the beginning; 30 years, its a long time. Back then I also had my husband, who planted the potatoes. He did the things I didn't like to do. Weeding I would take out all the vegetables by mistake. I also like to weed and make it look nice.*

NR: What are you growing?

A: *Beetroot and strawberries and potatoes, and then I am thinking about having flowers over there where the tomatoes used to be. Radish next to the parsley and lovage. Lovage is great for food, soups and the like, I got it from my son. Further down there is rhubarb - I already made rhubarb dessert twice. My eldest son should have some of them when the garden closes down.*

NR: What is actually going to happen to the plants afterwards?

A: *One of my sons will have all the tulips, roses and other things. He has a garden at Kongelundsvej, the others will have the flowers.*

NR: And here you have potatoes?

A: *Yes, and peas but then I was thinking not to sow anymore since we have to give up the garden this year.*

NR: How much does the garden yield, is it enough for you?

A: *Yes, easily but my son and I don't eat that much anyway; he comes by to eat everyday, but he is also on his own... Here is Hortensia*

and Fluks; they are bought from that guy from Holland. We got a catalog every year in the garden club and chose different things from there. ...The Rose is a "Superstar," the flower is pink...

NR: Roses have fantastic names, I've got to take a photo... Can I take a photo of you too?

A: *No my head is full of curlers*

NR: But you can't see them

A: *No but I have a headscarf on for that reason*

NR: Ahh come on I'll take a photo while you are looking away

A: *OK if I am looking away... I have just taken a shower. Actually its nonsense before going into the garden but anyway...*

NR: What is the greatest success amongst all the things you grow?

A: *Actually all of it; my kids love beans and beetroot but they want them preserved, hahablack currant, gooseberry, more roses.....*

NR: How much time do you spend in your garden?

A: *I come here everyday, and come back in the evening to water when the sun is away*

NR: How large is your garden?

A: *Well it's especially big, actually a bit too big for me, 150m2. Kind of too much for a pensioner of 78 years. I want to be fresh but that rotten stroke has set me back. This year I tend the garden a little less, so it looks so so. We don't cut the hedges anymore because we have to give it up. It is going to be sad standing in the balcony and looking down at the garden after that. It is not only for us who garden, many people also use it for barbecuing. Also a lot of immigrants have gardens here, they grow in different ways - I offer help sometimes but they have their own ways.the roses are really beautiful. My neighbor doesn't want me to cut them since they look so good from the apartment.*

NR: Thanks for the interview!

A: *Thank you - if you want you can have some rhubarb, or if you'd like some lovage just let me know.*

Photos by Nis Rømer



A sign for the planned housing was put up. A graffiti on top said "Not welcome" The signs have now been taken down.



The gardens seen from a far while still in function



The garden of Astrid in May 2008

Paths are now growing over, many plants have been removed and the gardens are now untended and growing over.



Plants, weeds grow up to several meters height creating a wilderness of the gardens.



Some of the roses are left behind adding an exotic mix to the flora.

“ (...) [the urban agriculture] apparently is not a priority in urban planning policies and programmes [in Dakar]. Small producers are most affected by this, as they realise that the lands they occupy may be recovered by the government at any time for a public purpose. ”

A. Mbaye and P. Moustier. "Market-oriented urban agricultural production in Dakar", In: *Growing Cities, Growing Food: Urban Agriculture on the Policy Agenda*, Bakker, N. et al., 2001, p. 247.

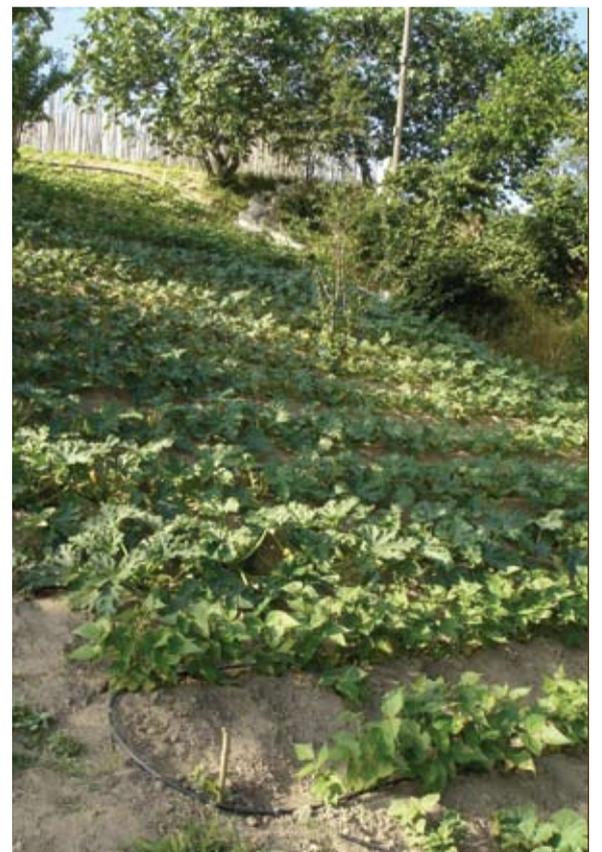


Black Sea Techniques



"Whatever we plant here, it grows, so we've planted every type of produce here. From pepper to eggplant, cucumber, tomato, okra, zucchini. We grow as much pumpkin as we can. You don't designate a special place in the field for it, you just plant it in the empty corners of the field. For example, beans are planted at the bottom part on the outside of the garden, that's where it grows, grows where the garden ends. We grow squash; the kind you fry or make dolma with. Also there's zucchini, which we call *arabiko*. You have to plant cabbage in the winter so you make a separate garden for that. Summer garden has water, cabbage doesn't grow in water. In spring you have to make a separate cabbage garden. When it starts to get its color, it has to be picked and sold before the winter. After that you don't plant again. Cabbage in the winter is planted in the midst of the peppers and the beans. We don't make corn separately. You know there are those that just have cornfields, we don't do that. They pick the corn and plant sunflowers, then pick those and plant wheat, they pretend to get two-three cycles of products in a season. We do all three at once; corn, eggplant and cabbage in the same field in one season. Let's call that a Black Sea discovery. I think it's because of the intelligence of its people. Why? There is little soil in the Black Sea, but you still have to get all the produce, so how are you going to do that? You plant all the produce together. You can't find this system in other regions."

by Mihrimah Konak, 40 years old, Çavuşbaşı, İstanbul



THE DANISH GOVERNMENT'S ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION POLICY [2001 - CURRENT]

2001

After the elections The Liberal and Conservative parties form government with support from the populist Danish People's Party lead by Pia Kjaersgaard. Together with the liberals they lead a nationalistic election campaign directed against foreigners and Muslims in particular.

2002

A series of laws are passed to stop immigration and limit the incoming number of asylum seekers, to make it the strictest legislation in Europe. Among these are: "The 24 year rule" demanding that foreigners and Danish people have to be 24 years old to get residency permit through marriage.

In addition, asylum seekers had to promise "allegiance and loyalty to Denmark and the Danish society", they had to pass a citizenship test with questions about Danish culture, history and social structure.

2003

Danish Parliament declares war on Iraq, marking what is called an "activist foreign policy".

2004

During the first ten months, the Immigration Administration had only given asylum to 167 persons, down from 2,500 persons in 2002.

2005

The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance issues a harsh critique of the Danish policies stating that the policies and statements by politicians have led to a rise in xenophobia. The government ignores this critique.

Asylum procedures are tightened; now UN quota asylum seekers are admitted on the basis of their qualifications and resources, thus leaving out the weakest refugees.

2006

The director of the Immigration Administration resigns over a corruption scandal and bad management. One report states that there were celebrations in the administration upon getting rid of especially difficult asylum seekers. To revise its image the agency is renamed: Danish Immigration Service.

2008

An EU court ruling overturns central parts of the immigration policy stating that it is contrary to the free mobility of the work force. In order to avoid a situation in which the court's decision undermines the strict Danish legislation, the government makes an agreement with the Danish People's Party. This includes additional control, increased demands on documentation, demands that immigrants must be employed to be able to get married, amongst other additional requirements.

The "Ombudsman" states that the Ministry of Integration has broken the law by withholding information on the legal rights of citizens regarding immigration.

The United Nations criticizes Denmark for only accepting the "best" of the UN's quota refugees and says Denmark is in conflict with the asylum idea. "It is a direct discrimination of the most vulnerable refugees", states the head of the UN's resettlement program, Vincent Cochetel.

2009

Despite warnings by the UN, Denmark starts sending back Iraqi refugees against their will. The Brorson Church in Nørrebro Denmark becomes a temporary sanctuary. On the 13th of August, the police enters the church, arrests and detains the men, who are later joined by the women and children, currently all pending forced repatriation.

Compiled by Nis Rømer and Lotte Rømer Grove from news and internet sources.

Harvesting the past for a sustainable future: reviving İstanbul's *bostans*

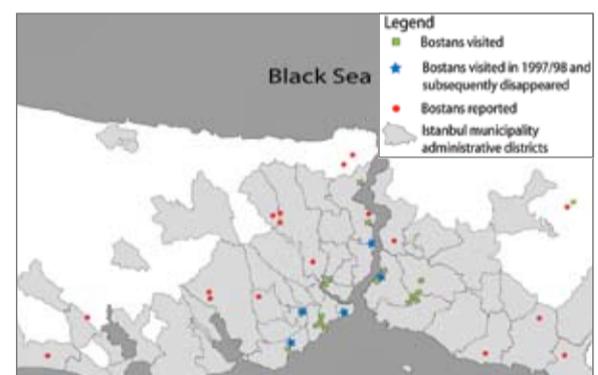
Paul J. Kaldjian

Even as urban agriculture is being rediscovered in the core cities of the world, İstanbul's traditional market gardens, known as *bostans* continue to be intensively, skillfully, and sustainably farmed to maximize harvests through the clever and efficient manipulation of space, season, and resources. Until very recently, this agricultural production was integrated into the city's food and commercial networks in such a way that *bostans* were a characteristic feature of İstanbul's landscape. They still can be*.

At least since late Byzantine times and throughout the Ottoman era, *bostans* satisfied the vegetable needs of İstanbul. After his conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Fatih Sultan Mehmed resettled 30000 peasants in villages now part of İstanbul to provide it with food. Evliya Çelebi, the 17th century Ottoman chronicler from the courts of Süleyman the Magnificent, records 4395 gardens within İstanbul's jurisdiction and Eremya Çelebi Kömürcüyan (1637-1695) described vegetable production as widespread throughout the city and a part of the daily life of most neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods were renowned for their produce - Arnavutköy was known for its fragrant strawberries and the Çengelköy cucumber was described by one traditional seed supplier as being like lokum (Turkish delight).

At the end of the 19th century, over 100 clusters of *bostans* were recorded within the old city, with reports of more than 1200 vegetable gardens on both the European and Asian sides of İstanbul. There was little decline in vegetable production between İstanbul's Byzantine and Republican periods. Only since the start of İstanbul's rapid growth in the 1950's have İstanbul's *bostans* been disappearing, eliminated by the processes of urban

growth and pushed to the margins of urban space and society. Only fragments of a vast network remain, about 1000 gardens totaling perhaps 10 hectares, perhaps 5-10% of what it had once been. Some are remnants of *bostans* that have been producing for centuries, though others near İstanbul's expanding edge, on its derelict lands, or in urban protected zones have been brought into production in the last 50 years. Otherwise, their verdant contribution to İstanbul life has largely been paved under for public and private uses, the land taken for car parks and car washes, apartment blocks, government projects and facilities, sports fields and play parks, flower nurseries, or, even, used for waste disposal. *Bostans* and their gardeners are powerless in the intense competition for metropolitan space. In the economic calculus of urban land rent, the back-breaking, risk-laden and politically insignificant work of producing and selling vegetables pales in comparison to revenues from a multi-story apartment block. But urban land use is not only about profit. The perception that *bostans* are marginal, inefficient or unhygienic reflects common myths that face urban agriculture all around the world. Respected traditional practices are often pushed toward the economic, social, and even legal margins. Since the beginning of the Turkish Republic, urban development and industrialization in a European fashion have been the priority and goal. In İstanbul, Western style economic institutions -supermarkets, for example- are praised in the media as modern and efficient urban ideals. In contrast, traditional institutions like gardening and outdoor markets are often portrayed as dirty, unpredictable, and backwards, even a ruralization of the urban. Yet, people familiar with *bostans* appreciate their contribution to İstanbul's landscape. "The work of the *bostancis* is holy

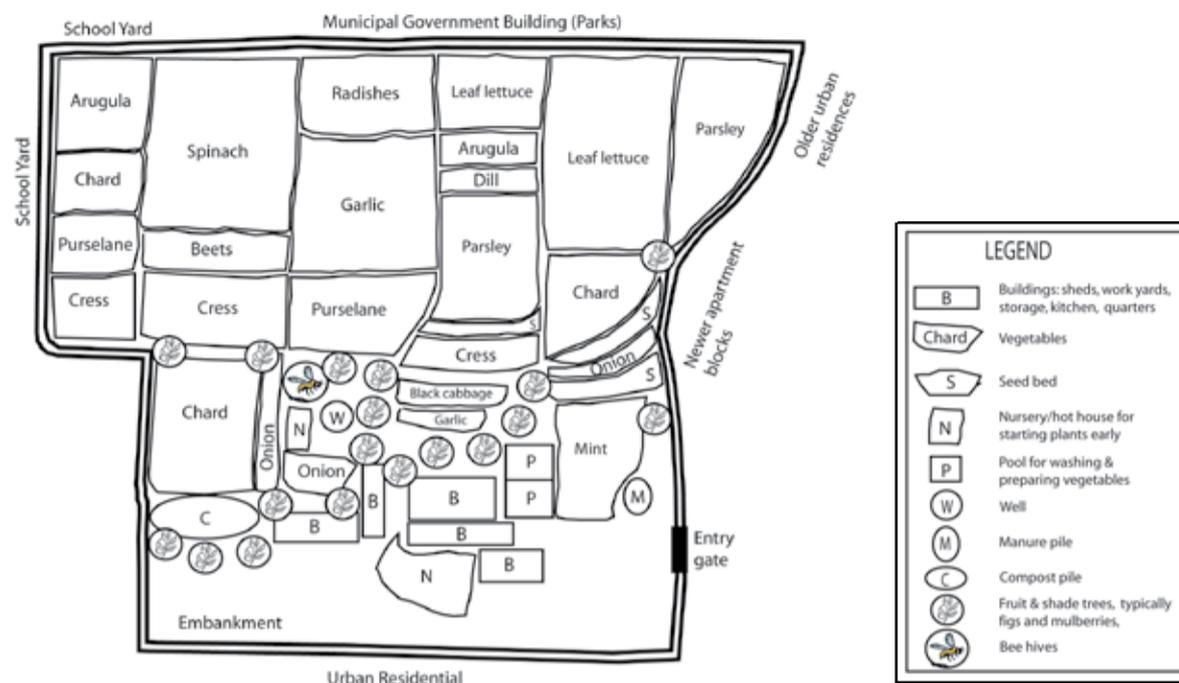


"Distribution of İstanbul bostans at the beginning of the 21st century, based on fieldwork by the author. Locations are representative but many additional gardens can still be found."

work. Like animals of the earth, we all have our duties in creation," explained one *bostan* neighbor.

Moreover, migrants are part of a long and honorable gardening tradition. The early masters of vegetable production were the Greeks and Armenians. Over the centuries, Bulgarians, and eventually Albanians, inherited the skills, opportunities and gardens. After World War II, from among the waves of Anatolian migrants to İstanbul, people from Cide in the Black Sea coastal province of Kastamonu began working as hired hands in the *bostans*, eventually becoming the master gardeners themselves. So, despite a common perception that urban agriculture in İstanbul is a practice brought by migrants from the village, today's second and third generation of gardeners from Cide maintain a long İstanbul tradition.

If evaluated in terms of their food contribution to İstanbul's 12-15 million people, and compared to what is produced in the global, agro-industrial marketplace, production from İstanbul's remaining *bostans* seems quite insignificant. At the local level, however, İstanbul's *bostans* contribute significantly to household and neighborhood needs. They generate high value crops, where fresh vegetables are a culturally and nutritiously important component of the diet. As sources of income and fresh produce, they represent valuable jobs and



Conceptualization of typical historical Istanbul *bostan* at the beginning of the 21st century, based on an actual 7.5 dönüm [1 dönüm is about a quarter of an acre] *bostan* still in Istanbul's Fatih District. Missing from the representation are now edges, irregular spaces and intercropping of lettuce, beans, corn and tomatoes (sketch by author).

important food sources. Within their neighborhoods, their presence increases access to fresh produce, as *bostancis* tend to sell their produce at lower costs to local friends and neighbors, give to the needy, and provide vegetables wholesale to neighborhood vendors. Some *bostancis* with access to affluent customers also receive a premium for fresh, high quality produce.

Since the 1980s, urban agriculture has received sustained attention from social scientists interested in urban food security, informal economies, urban sustainability and as a driver of urban economic development. Recent examinations of alternative food networks in the world's economic core highlight the benefits of local production and short food supply chains for their environmental, community-building, economic and cultural benefits. From Milwaukee to Helsinki, urban agriculture is on the rise.

Clearly, *bostan* production is sustainable production. For many centuries, on the same lands, Istanbul's *bostancis* relied on natural fertilizers to sustain healthy, productive soils and produce high quality vegetables. With the removal of livestock from the city, pressure to rely upon chemical fertilizers has increased. In addition to the expense, *bostancis* and their customers insist that the quality of produce is worse with chemical fertilizers. For these reasons, most *bostancis* prefer to make arrangements with dairies and farms in the vicinity around Istanbul to buy truck loads of manure. In a related manner, *bostancis* are concerned over the widespread prevalence of hybrid and genetically modified seeds. Compounding the expense, such seeds preclude the opportunity to preserve seeds from one season for the next.

Despite the pace and magnitude of Istanbul's growth, urban agriculture continues, rooted in its culture and

history. The *bostan* agroecosystem is a repository of local knowledge that could provide the catalyst for future or renewed programs of urban agriculture. As their long history in Istanbul bears witness, and as every remaining *bostan* demonstrates, *bostancis* have been productive, exemplary, and committed land managers. When given the opportunity for secure tenure to land, they will confidently innovate and make capital investments to improve production. Beyond enhancing competitiveness, certainty may also reduce unsightliness by increasing the willingness of *bostancis* to invest in the upkeep of their *bostans*.

Istanbul's *bostans* exemplify the remarkable set of agricultural, environmental and social benefits that skilled land managers can generate in a harsh, resource-poor urban setting, with benefits that extend to neighborhoods, communities and, ultimately, the entire city. Thus, the livelihood goals of urban agriculturalists are combined with other, broadly embraced, social and environmental goals. 21st century *bostancis* are conscientious land managers in a broad sense. Throughout the city, they support households, sustain land, protect communities, serve the poor, enhance historical settings, maintain traditions, beautify landscapes, and performing civic services - all in addition to feeding people. The incentive to work hard to perform these multiple functions is the permission to cultivate the land. In this way, and since many of the lands on which *bostans* are found have been designated as green zones or protected from development, the city and community reap multiple benefits at no cost. As a beautiful respite from the concrete and cacophony that is contemporary Istanbul, *bostans* could be an ideal way of keeping, protecting, and expanding Istanbul's parks and green belts and corridors, combining productive with aesthetic landscapes and ecological zones.

Throughout the city, *bostancis* have beautified numerous hectares of land and serve as something like park rangers. With their constant presence and fruitful actions, they effectively patrol and monitor their areas, keeping out unwelcome and illegal activities, which can include garbage dumping, unpermitted construction, and criminal activity. For example, tidy, well-tended *bostans* provide a photographic foreground and ensure an unimpeded view of the 1600 year old walls that are so much a part of Istanbul's identity. Similarly, a *bostan* protects and enhances the Piyale Paşa Mosque, built by Süleyman the Magnificent's famous architect Sinan.

The *bostan* agroecosystem is a store of agroecological knowledge that has developed over centuries and now serves as a model for urban agriculture. Though the long tradition of *bostan* market garden production seems to have a bleak future in the face of the combined forces of urban development, modernization and globalization, the disappearance of Istanbul's *bostans* is not inevitable. Also, these historic gardens should not be treated as quaint relics from a romanticized past. Rather, they can be used to renew derelict urban spaces, preserve green spaces, maintain cultural identity, feed people and support livelihoods - the contributions of Istanbul's *bostans* must be considered potential models for a sustainable Istanbul. Recognizing this, governmental recognition and support is an important first step. Given their myriad and demonstrated benefits, *bostans* can be encouraged among policies and programs of long term and widespread social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

Toward filling such urban needs, an urban agriculture based on Istanbul's long tradition of *bostan* market gardening presents numerous opportunities for urban life and health, for local neighborhood community development and for keeping the city safe, clean and green. Istanbul has the potential to be a leader and example in an internationally recognized and valued movement. In 2005, Istanbul signed the United Nations Environment Programme's Urban Environmental Accords. In this Green Cities Declaration, there are a series of actions each signatory city is encouraged to implement. Istanbul's *bostans* are uniquely suited to support many of these. In contrast to many other cities around the world where urban agricultural movements are being reinvented, Istanbul retains a tradition and culture from which it can draw to face the demands facing contemporary cities and their citizens. For a society sometimes conflicted over its Ottoman history - tensions between glorious empire and non-European premodernity - *bostans* demonstrate that this very history can contribute highly-valued urban benefits. Istanbul's *bostans* are a living link to its past that have the potential to make meaningful contributions to its future.

* For citations of sources and a more extensive discussion of Istanbul's *bostan* gardens, see Paul Kaldjian's article "Istanbul's Bostans: A Millennium of Market Gardens," published in *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 3, July 2004, pages 284-304

Paul J. Kaldjian is an associate professor of geography in the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire, USA.

A Day's Work in the Bostan



"A day's work in the *bostan* changes depending on the day. There could be hoeing one day. When you have to plant, which you have to do in the cool of the evening, if you plant it in the middle of the day, it'll die right away. You have to plant it in the cool so that it doesn't die. You'll never see anyone in the field at noon here, because the hot weather is exhausting. But when it's time to pick, doesn't matter if it's hot or cold, you just have to pick it. Planting and picking are two different

things. With planting, you do it in the cool of the night or early morning. At noon, you go home and take care of the house. But when it's time to pick, you have a deadline. They go to the farmers market on Saturday, so they have to pick the produce on Friday or Thursday. Then you can't complain about the heat and say, "let me have a break". Before we got married, at the time we were making this into a garden, this land here that you see until those trees over there, all used to belong to us. Then they sold it. This whole property here was all peppers, beans... When I got married in 1992 there were 20 thousand poles of beans here! I'm not even counting the beans. Then we didn't have this, "ok today is Sunday or Wednesday, let me rest today." We used to pick beans everyday. We were in the field every day. I spent 23 years here. I grew up in Çavuşbaşı, on these lands. We worked as shepherds, took care of cows. There were pine groves and meadows. We would take the cows to eat grass. When my sister got married, we took over her duties in the garden with my brother and mother."

by Mihrimah Konak, 40 years old, Çavuşbaşı, İstanbul

Şaban's Bostan

Number one in gardening, a master gardener. He gets the best produce. He plants something and walks off, he doesn't even look back. He's like a balance, that's how much of a master he is.



UNDERCOVER TREES ON THE MINT FIELD



Photo: Oda Projesi, Büyükçekmece, İstanbul, 2009

ISKİ (the water company of İstanbul) will soon rearrange the areas around Büyükçekmece Lake as recreational parks. That is the reason for their planting trees in the middle of the mint field. Until they start the construction, the field is allowed to stay there. But one can see the very strange combination of small trees and the mint. Once the trees grow, the mint will remain in shadow and farming will be impossible.

The *bostancı* who owns this field inherited his profession from his family. His father used to be a gardener in Küçükçekmece. ■ **istanbul**

“My garden here and the garden in the city are obviously not the same. There were no gardens in Kadıköy in the old times, even now there is only a few. In Bostancı, where there are skyscrapers now, there used to be gardens everywhere all the way to İzmit. Then there was Üsküdar... But when you mentioned Beykoz product, everyone's eyes would open up in the market. Everything from Beykoz, the beans... The only thing was we didn't have tomatoes. At that time tomatoes here used to be sour. We'd buy the seeds from the tomatoes in Dudullu, plant here, but when it grows here the taste is sour. Yet it's a nice taste... The vegetables, air and water in Beykoz are very good. We use drinking water for the field. Not from the tap. Not even from the pool, when we use the pool's water it's only because we are really in need. Beykoz has a reputation. Go to Kasımpaşa on the European side and they will ask "Are these beans from Beykoz?" Same with cabbage, they wouldn't buy products from Samsun or Adapazarı. Even in the field the difference of the cabbage is visible. You can't find a cabbage that tastes like this elsewhere.”

Little pieces of knowledge from Mustafa Bey and Havva Hanım about the Beykoz produce

We struggled and dug

Nuriye Karadeniz / March 2009, Arnavutköy



Mine is a little garden in the midst of pebbles. But it's not a suitable place for the winter. I am a Bulgarian immigrant. We worked a lot here, not just one kind of work: we did factory work, we did gardening and housework.

I did gardening for 10 years. Back at home we used to work in the field. While we were growing up, everybody used to have gardens. There was no farmers market like here. I come from Tikenlik village in Burgaz. When I was growing up, our garden was very big. We grew everything on our own, we grew corn, pepper, tomatoes, cucumbers, whatever we needed. Nowadays you go buy those things from the farmers market, right? I went from gardening to factory work. We had to come here in 1990. The things we've seen and been through. Shocking things... We understand very well what Palestine is going through right now.

I never worked in other gardens here. My soil is hardly soil... We are used to it from back home, if we don't work in the garden we can't sleep. We have to grow. I do it together with my husband. He studied gardening in Bulgaria. In the school they teach everything, even things like vaccinations... Here we are superintendents of a building, we grow stuff in the garden of that building. It's not our own garden. You could hardly call this place a garden, it looks nice only because we work so hard on it. You may ask "what have you done here that it is creating so much stir?" Now, the winter has passed. If I had good soil, the broad beans would've grown up to my knee right now. As far as I know, there are many immigrants from our region that work in the farms here. Farming comes naturally to us. We came to İstanbul because of the kids, it was time for them

to start school. There were schools in the villages... The kids have grown up and moved away. Now we are comfortable here. We have a house in Silivri Kavaklı. It's not such a big garden but we have about 300 square meters. We built a house of 100 square meters. We have a little space just to grow a few things. If someone said today, "go live there" I could do it (she laughs). They gave a loan for us Bulgarians, I am paying it. I have seven years left. That's why I'm struggling, of course it'd be easier if there was only one person to feed.

The garden makes me happier than anything else. I love to work in the garden. My husband likes it even more. I love it, but it gets difficult with my asthma. My husband doesn't stop for a minute when we go to our village house. He always finds some garden to work on. We can't do the gardening there when we're here. If you don't water it, it doesn't grow. For good soil, you have to turn the soil over all nicely before the cold weather comes. When the turned over soil gets frozen, it becomes ideal. Then you plant on that soil and get nice produce. Of course you have to be careful about watering it. You have to be careful not to do it daily. It shouldn't grow too much weed. You know those wild weeds, you have to keep on picking them out, and cleaning the field. If you don't pay too much attention, those weeds will take over. Fertilizer is the first phase of the work. For example I never used artificial fertilizers in Bulgaria. We used to have

animals. We always used animal, chicken manure. We had sheep; sheep manure, large animal manure. First, we would dump the big pieces of manure, in time this would mature and become a good fertilizer. Then in the autumn we'd collect it and spread it all around. After spreading it we'd turn the soil over. Then the soil would freeze. When it freezes it gets a flour-like consistency. It's really nice. You don't even need artificial fertilizers. Let's say I plant pepper, I wait one week or ten days for it to settle down. Then I put chicken manure on it. But not too much. I put lightly and dig, then two three days later I water, I don't splash too much water, just a little. Here I find some bird manure (she laughs) if you look for it you'll find it! Otherwise we don't put fertilizers here, we never did. Since the produce we buy has hormones, we should at least make our own produce without. We're a little uneasy when we're eating what we buy from outside. The only time we eat good is when we go to the village and the neighbors give us. We all moved together, everybody knows each other.

At home (Bulgaria) you just eat what you grow, if you don't have it, you don't eat it. Whoever had some extra would give it out to people. There were no things like selling, or making money. We also used to give seeds to each other. Say you have celery seeds and I have lettuce; you'd give me yours and I'd give you mine, everything went around like that. We used to be so close, you wouldn't even believe our relationship. For example, if someone was constructing a new house; it's your friend, your neighbor. Nobody would just sit there, they'd go and help if they were not busy. They'd build the house quickly. When they were constructing the roof of the house, nobody would go out to the garden that day; they'd say "so and so is putting the roof up today" and they wouldn't work that day. Whatever is needed, hoes, shovels... When we came here things were very different. We were very estranged. You buy everything. But we got used to it. We are four families that know each other in İstanbul (families that immigrated from Bulgaria). We'll always see each other. With one of the families, our grandmothers are sisters, with the other it's

a very close relative of my husbands. We don't feel the need for anyone else.

When I am making pickled cucumbers I put some mustard and vinegar in it. I don't know what you call it here, is it cucumber herb? I pick the herbs from the street. You know things like, what you call, fennel... We used to have it in Bulgaria too. We'd put it inside the cucumber, when we came here we found the same herbs. All those herbs, stinging nettle, patience dock are in that empty land up there. Now they are not there but when the weather gets hot, they'll grow there.

Before we came here (the hills of Arnavutköy, Bosphorus, İstanbul) we used to have a place in the hills of Bebek. There were a lot of trees there. My husband vaccinated them quite a lot. Just when the trees grew and started giving fruit, they came and dug out the trees. They took fully-grown trees and put them in their own garden. We didn't even get to see them. Oh, what a nice garden we had in Bebek... We used to have two big cucumbers. They dug them out. How I cried at the time... We don't need a big place, a space for two or three trees is enough. It wasn't so big, but the soil was very good. Our current garden's soil was burned. The person before us had thrown out pieces of glass, petroleum waste, all his trash. We cleaned the place one by one with our own hands. We struggled and dug. How much soil, how much fertilizer we carried there. Then people from surrounding buildings came and said what a difference. Ours is burned soil, no matter how much effort you put into it, it is never that good. Back home our soil was yellow too, but it was fruitful. No matter how much you pick it, it still gets black. Knowing gardening means growing your produce for your own needs. We started from a little seed and turned it into a field. We did everything.

If you make your garden with love and care it'll come out nice. They have to know you like them. Just like how you care for a flower. They understand just like flowers. All day long you have to tend to them, I wonder if they're good, let's see how they're doing, do they need water, etc... but all with love.

Interview & Photo by Oda Projesi

Why *bostans* are necessary

Yılmaz Korkmaz

Urban agriculture, is an agricultural process which contains the activities of raising plants and animals in and around the city, including the production, distribution and sales of basic necessities (such as compost, seeds, etc) in order to generate income and obtain essential fresh foods (vegetables, milk, eggs, poultry, herbs, flowers, plants, etc.) Urban agriculture is not just a temporary phenomenon brought into the city by those migrating from rural areas. On the contrary, it is an integral part of the urban ecological and economic system that uses the characteristic resources of the city (natural waste, waste water, unusable property). Urban agriculture is a tool of urban sustainability; it creates green areas, generates income and supports social integration as well as providing healthy food products to the city.

It is known that around the world, 800 million people work in urban agriculture. In addition, 15% of the world's food necessities is provided by urban agriculture and it creates 15.000 new jobs every year. Urban agriculture, widely used in the world's least developed countries, as well as countries with problems of food safety, is not used sufficiently and consciously in Turkey and countries in the surrounding area (www.cityfarmer.org, www.ruaf.org)

Istanbul has been developing its own version of urban agriculture through the *bostan* culture, which has been around for more than a thousand years. These *bostans* continued their function with little change until the second half of the 1900s. The strong wave of industrialization and immigration led to a massive increase of rental prices and prepared the end of the thousand year-old gardens. After this, the *bostancis* had to go after properties that

were problematic in terms of legal standing and public development projects. At the moment in Istanbul, there are around a thousand *bostancis* that are growing vegetables and fruits in spaces of 1 to 2.5 acres of land.

Because of their long history, a culture of *bostans* was born. You can see that a lot of neighborhoods and regions in Istanbul the usage of the word *bostan* is still prevalent. In addition, the fame of products, such as the Çengelköy cucumber and Yedikule lettuce, have made them the preference of farmers and consumers even in rural areas outside the city.

When we look at the broad advantages of urban agriculture;

- The producer can sell directly to the consumer thereby avoiding the commission chain of distributor-wholesaler-vendor; this gives the consumer the opportunity of getting daily fresh foods at a cheap price and generates more profit for the producer.
- It creates jobs, therefore helping unemployment; while a number of families can work full time in a land of 1.5 acres, during the harvest of the so-called "for profit" produce sold in bunches such as parsley, arugula, and dill, lots of daily work opportunities arise for poor women that live in the area.
- For the city that has turned into a pile of concrete and cars, *bostans* are like an oasis. With their organized and green appearance, not only do they provide an aesthetically pleasing sight but they also prevent the land from turning into a dumpster.
- *Bostans* make rational use of the unutilized sources of the city. Currently most of the *bostans* in Istanbul



Photo by Oda Projesi, *bostan* pool near Ayamama Creek, Istanbul, 2009

occupy spaces that are otherwise unused because they are "problematic to use in other ways" (in terms of legal standing and public development projects, risky in geological terms, i.e. around the airport, etc) In addition, nothing that grows in the *bostan* is ever thrown away. Excess produce or bad produce is given to the poor, plant waste is used to feed animals or used as fertilizers in the garden.

When we look at the points above, we can see that with matters such as the safety of the food in *bostans*, employment, environment and the rational usage of urban resources, urban agriculture provides a lot of the principles for sustainable development. Still, the single reason for the disappearance of *bostans* in Istanbul is the rental prices. Until today the development and settlement plans of Istanbul have been constructed around the framework of transportation and industrialization and have ignored natural resources and green areas. At this point, Istanbul can no longer carry this load. The increasing loss of *bostans* and the decline of green areas in and around the city, is not only a loss of a historical and cultural heritage but also the loss of the city's future.

Yılmaz Korkmaz is the chairman of Volunteers of Social Development Association, Istanbul.

HORSE

A story by a *Bostancı*, Ahmet Öztürk

In the old times it was difficult to dig soil. Today I couldn't even carry those forks they used. The fork was so big that they would call it "the black fork". It is twice the size of the fork that I use now, thick and big. It would take about fifteen days for one person to turn over this land. Now I can plow this place in one hour because I have a hoe. It also breaks up the soil. In the past they would hire around ten men or use horses and cattle to plow the land. But I do know about horses. The horses would run pulling the forks to turn over the land. It was torture for the animal of course. The animal would get very tired. They would dig out the land first and then go back to the beginning and do it all over again to distribute the fertilizer. So they would need about ten days just to dig. Imagine, in 21 days you get your first crop. It takes time. It used to be very hard, lots of effort given, villagers would migrate into the city to look for a job and end up either farming somewhere or working as a porter. In the past, they would water the land with horses. They would make a pool and fill the pool with water, when it was full they would let the water run and walk around the land. The poor horse would go around the land with the water all day long. As if that was not enough for the poor animal, at two thirty the horse would go carrying all the produce to the market so that it was before five o'clock in the morning. They would load baskets on the poor tired horse. They were called çatma, they would load ten çatmas in the carriage, take them to the market at two thirty and get their money on the weekend. That's if they could get their money! Believe me, horses were a lot more expensive back then. It was like a Mercedes, of course there were no cars at the time. I lived through all of this. My father suffered a lot. My grandfather lived at a time of clogs. Imagine what they went through, wearing clogs... There were no shoes at the time.

“As any visitor to Kenya's capital can see, farming activities are everywhere, not only in the outskirts but also in the heart of the city. Along roadsides, in the middle of roundabouts, along and between railway lines, in parks, along rivers, under power lines, in short, in all kinds of open public spaces, crops are cultivated and animals like cattle, goats and sheep roam around. What most visitors do not see is that there is even more farming, notably in backyards in the residential areas.”

D. Foeken and A. Mboganie Mwangi. "Increasing food security through urban farming in Nairobi". In: *Growing Cities, Growing Food: Urban Agriculture on the Policy Agenda*, Bakker, N. et al., 2001, p. 303.

“The labour is provided mainly by women [in Nairobi]. For instance, in 80-85% of the farming households in Korogocho and Pumwani/Eastleigh, the women were responsible for the farming activities (Mwangi 1995). Cultivation practices are usually very simple: the panga (sturdy bush knife) and jembe (hoe) are about the only tools used. The use of "modern inputs" is quite limited.”

op. cit., p. 309.

Fruit as a Calendar

"You plant fruit around the bostan, you don't only get fruit but also shade. You relieve your stress as you watch them. When you pick a cherry from the tree, it reminds you when the fruit will be ready. If you work in the garden and there is no fruit, you don't know when the produce will be ready... Yes, fruit for us, is a calendar. In a couple of days the figs will be ready. Now there are figs on the trees. These fruits are for pleasure, even though I sell outside, when people pass by here and see the fruit, they have to eat it, they can't pick of course. If they don't get to eat, my soul doesn't rest. Back in the village, sometimes there would be no fruit in our garden, but there would be in the neighbor's and we'd pick from the neighbor's tree, it's been like that since my childhood. People pass by here and see the fruit, 'oh what nice looking mulberries', of course they want to taste it, and I feel bad if they don't. When they pick from the tree and eat, I feel happy. When the figs are done, you climb the castle and easily pick from the tree. If a kid comes and eats a fig, I get happy. I get pleasure from the tree that I planted."

by Mehmet Şengül, 35 years old, Topkapı, Istanbul

Çavuşbaşı Beans

When you say beans, Çavuşbaşı has a special place; all the vendors know. They don't buy beans from any other place, they wait for the Çavuşbaşı beans to arrive. The effort in the Çavuşbaşı gardens becomes the delight of your palate.



Urban Agriculture Project of İstanbul

Gürpınar, İstanbul / 15 August 2009



Photo from the archives of the urban agriculture project, 2004.

Haydar Balcı (34 years old) and Rukiye Balcı (53 years old) participated in the year-long project Urban Agriculture initiated by the UYD (Accessible Life Association) in 2004. The UYD project was about 25 women farming with organic methods in a land given by the Gürpınar Municipality. According to the project manager Yılmaz Korkmaz, urban agriculture would not only make İstanbul greener but could also be an effective tool to fight poverty. →

Oda Projesi: Could you talk a little about yourself?

Rukiye Balcı: Now you're recording and saying "We're always the ones talking. Now let's hear what you have to say" am I right? My name is Rukiye Balcı. We're from Divriği, Sivas, from Doğanlıköy. My son went to school and became an agricultural engineer. If I had understood well what an agricultural engineer was when he first explained to me, I wouldn't have wanted him to study that.

Haydar Balcı: In 2003 we came to İstanbul, looked for a house, and bought a place in Avcılar. With my teacher Yılmaz's help we set up our work here between 2004 and 2005. We worked here for two years, the first year it was the urban agriculture project, the second year we continued by ourselves here while at the same time doing the organic and sustainable farming techniques in the Büyükçekmece basin. Of course later on when the project finished, all our friends scattered around to different places. We stayed here, and assumed ownership of the place. My mother came too, we worked together for two years. She put in more effort than me into this place. Later on I started focusing more on school, to tell you the truth I got a little tired. So my mother said "ok I'm going to take care

of it then". Now we have a worker and my father is helping too. We are making this part green. We are trying to grow produce that is close to natural produce because it's healthier.

There are places which are designated by the municipality to turn into green areas. They make parks, gardens, places where people could go and have fun or just relax. These are the municipality's service areas. You know, because they have social responsibility projects. Actually they need gardens instead of these empty parks. Both serving for vegetable production and as a place where they could have a cup of tea or a nice fresh breakfast in the morning, they need to make places where people can socialize, they could make better use of these places... Kids could come, there used to be ducks, animals but we couldn't take care of everything here, so they just disappeared. It's a great thing especially for kids; where do tomatoes grow? On the tree, or the ground, underneath the ground? Imagine just picking it from the garden, cutting it and bringing it to the table, these kinds of places are necessary for a city to have.

OP: You came to İstanbul with a big project. What were you doing in Divriği? Were you doing agriculture there?

RB: All my life I've done farming. Not in a big farm like this of course. What did we plant? We would mostly plant wheat and grain.

HB: She would grow whatever the other villagers used to grow, of course she also used to grow for her own consumption as she was far away from town. She has more practical knowledge than most gardeners. She's been doing this for a long time, she was farming in the village and when we moved to the city she continued farming, she knows what's involved very well.

OP: Do you give your produce anywhere else besides the farmers' market?

RB: We used to give to the markets in periods when we produced a lot.

OP: Is this enough to support your life?

HB: We have my father's retirement, let's say it helps to get this place going.

RB: We're able to manage this place out of emotional engagement rather than a material one.

OP: In the urban agriculture project there were 25 women. Besides them how many people were in the team that executed the project?

HB: There was a project coordinator, our friend Yılmaz. I was the agricultural engineer, then there was a farmer. He now works here on salary. Then there was a friend that took care of the administrative part. In other words, four people, plus the 25 women and the teachers that came from outside to give lessons. This lasted one year. The second year a lot of them had already left, we continued with the remaining people. Then in the later years they also quit. There were women living in the surrounding area. When we need labor force we call them in. They come to work and get their food necessities from here. In return they take home whatever they want. They help for a couple of hours.

OP: What kinds of things did you do while building this place? What units does this work contain? Obviously you two are doing the work of many.

HB: In the beginning when we started building this place, a farmer from Gürpınar was cultivating here. When we asked the

municipality for a place they showed us this, we decided on this place and started cultivating the land, we paid the farmer, he left the place to us. We did the following: in order to prevent the rain from coming in and damaging the land we made a drainage channel, then we made a prefabricated shed for the needs of the people working in the field, like when they need food and drinks. We also built a shed in order to keep our machines like our hoe, etc. Then we thought about the winter and made two greenhouses for the periods when there were greenhouse classes. This was the beginning; first the land, then this prefabricated shed, then the machines and equipment: hoeing machine, fork, water pipes, etc. We needed money in the beginning, so this turned into a project and the European Union supported it too.

Talking about what this work contains, firstly it's the location, the land; to be able to continue in the winter, a greenhouse; the materials used in production, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides; of course you need to go to İstanbul to get these. You have to find the closest animal farm and buy the fertilizer, then you need to make good connections; from the knife you use in harvesting to the rope you will use in tying the arugula, parsley and dill, you need to know very well the places you can buy these. You need a person to do this. For example, the person who cultivates the soil is a separate person. Then there's the preparation of the soil. When we go onto the field you'll see, there are these things we call pans for detecting inclinations on the land. With forks... We also do sloping, so that when we water the land the water doesn't just run off the field, there's watering, maintenance, cleaning, hoeing, applying pesticides, those processes. After the produce has grown you go into the phase of harvesting, that is a separate work. Let's say someone wants a thousand bundles of parsley, it is not possible for one person to cut all of that. In one day one woman could cut 300 to 400 given that there aren't so many weeds in the field. This means one woman will be cutting a whole day. Then there's the washing of all the produce. You put all of it in a pool, wash it, run off all the dirt and soil. Then you pack it in cases and make them

ready. If you're going to sell it yourself, you take it to the farmers market. You prepare the place and sell until the night, then you bring all the empty cases back home. This is not the work of a few people. We try to do all this just the two of us.

OP: Do you call this place a bostan or a garden? How big is it?

HB: It's bigger than a bostan. The property is about two and a half acres but we can only use about one and a half acres. Part of it is left outside. When you look towards the airport by the Ayamama River, this place is a lot bigger than over there, it's 4, 5 or 6 acres. The ones by Yedikule are smaller, at most 1 acre. I got a degree in garden plants so we call it gardening, bostan sounds to me like an old expression. Bostan is for those who grow melon, watermelon, these kinds of things. Tomatoes, eggplants...

OP: Do you have any connection to the organic market?

HB: No, you need a certificate for that, we applied for it too but never followed up because it's uncertain how long we will stay here. The process is at least one or two years and certification companies come often for auditing. This place was assigned for three years. Because we don't know what will happen after that we didn't follow up. But even if you take it to the farmers market, people don't care, they don't say "oh, that's organic". They don't say "let's pay 10 instead of 5". Also because its appearance is not that great, you can't compete with the others. For instance a red cabbage grown

without pesticides has holes because of the soil ticks, when the plant is small the ticks start to eat it. When you don't use pesticides you have holes. Then the customer comes and says "I want it without holes!"

In the beginning we started with organic farming, then it turned into conventional. We started using artificial fertilizers because it's so much more economic, it's impossible to farm using animal fertilizers all the time.

OP: Don't you think the term organic is a little bit ambiguous? What is organic in your opinion?

HB: Organic agriculture is the type of farming that does not intervene on produce growth with chemical fertilizers or pesticides but relies on completely herbal and natural resources. It is nature friendly and does not kill living beings. It only tries to repel them through natural ways. You use some herbal mixtures or other living things to struggle with them, you still let them live but you also fulfill your needs. It's like a shared life.

OP: Where would you like to make a garden in İstanbul? Let's say they'll give you any place you like.

RB: I would like to do it in front of my house in Avcılar. There, you have both the nature and the city. If I were a little more younger and healthier I would've liked to have a farm, have workers on the farm, would like to sell to the farmers market. If you asked me what I would choose for my life I'd say agriculture. It's very difficult but I love it.

OP: Thanks.

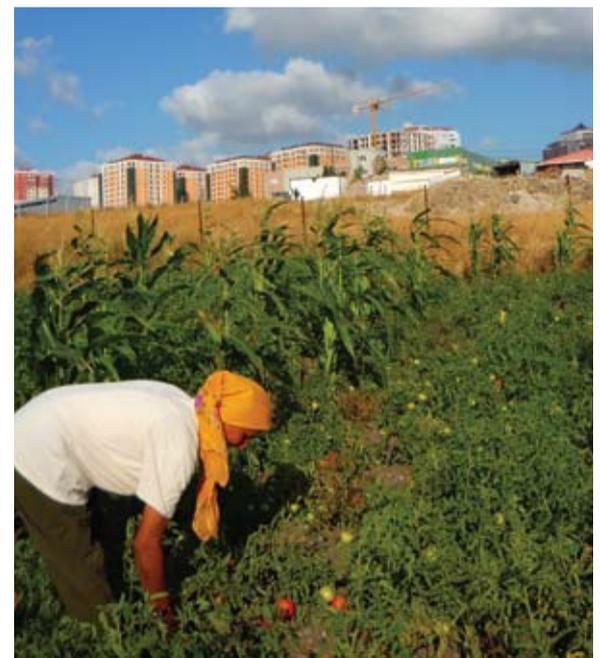


Photo by Oda Projesi, Rukiye Balcı, Gürpınar, 2009

Creating a social space with urban farming

The Garden at Blågårdsgade, Nørrebro, Copenhagen

A plot of land in the central part of Nørrebro was the hot spot in the fight for citizens' right to the city in the 80's. Today it serves as an urban garden and a social gathering spot. →



Pia showing her premium sized cucumbers.

Ordinary people who would like to grow some vegetables or flowers or have a place to socialize.

NR: Does the garden have a name?

PL: It was originally the garden-union Blågården, but we renamed it into just The Garden.

NR: Can you talk about how the garden works?

potatoes, and a chili plant. But people have squash, leek, herbs all sorts of things. The Chinese of course have their special things.

NR: What is the ideal garden size for you?

PL: What I have! I couldn't control any bigger.

NR: Do you have any guidelines for what to grow?

and chicken manure. We have a watering post in the corner, we try and use as little as possible because its communal water for the block that everyone pays for. Some really want to water a lot, the Chinese think its a rice field - but that's their thing and we have told them to save water. Then there is a big barrel collecting rainwater from the roof of the block. That saves a lot of water.

We also have been left in relative peace when the riots took place around the Youth House last year. They came in here and took whatever they could to burn, but they didn't damage our gardens. But they did take wood and furniture, birdhouses to make fires in the street. But apart from that, the garden wasn't disturbed or damaged by people. But the people in the block next to it also take care and



The garden is also a social gathering point.



One of the gardens, this one is probably the Chinese one.

Nis Rømer: How did you get the garden?

Pia Lisewsky: I got it when I moved here, I came here, brought some friends and they asked if I wanted a garden so I said yes.

NR: How is it organized? Do you have to be a member?

PL: You have to sign up at the housing office, then you can get it if something becomes available. But you have to live in the housing complex around here, it has around 800 apartments. It costs 150Dkr a year to have a garden.

NR: For how long have you had the garden?

PL: I have had it for 15 years now.

NR: And how did you learn to grow?

PL: I asked the others and learned by trial and error.

NR: How old is the whole garden?

PL: It is built on top of Byggeren* a building playground. There was a lot of trouble then. It was the time of the BZ movement (squatters). The garden as such is around 20 years old I guess. In the beginning when we were digging we found a lot of leftovers in the soil from the city and from Byggeren.

NR: Who are the people that share the garden here?

PL: Many are the same as when the garden started.

PL: There are 15 gardens here. My garden is 7 by 1.5 meters. We have done the most ourselves, built a small fence around and so on. There is a similar garden on the other side of the daycare, but it is not at all the same, it doesn't work and they want to be a part of our garden. It is mainly immigrants and they don't have the surplus energy to make it work, they are not so organized or active as in this garden. There is money for soil and small building projects but you have to put in the work yourself.

NR: What kind of produce do you have?

PL: This year there are tomatoes, onions, prize cucumbers, a bit of

PL: No I'd say we grow anything on a trial and error basis - it has to be fun. If it doesn't work, well then we just try something new the next time.

NR: What is your favorite produce?

PL: This year I am especially fond of the tomatoes, mine are great this year. They are also the hardest to grow. The year before none of the tomatoes were any good. Everyone had a zillion tomatoes but they all went black.

NR: Where does your soil and fertilizer come from?

PL: It has to be ecological, but we can use a little fertilizer as long as it's organic. We get some horse

NR: How do you use the produce?

PL: We eat it of course, but then we also swap a lot - we all have something different. If we have a communal barbecue we walk around and pick vegetables, or if someone needs a bouquet of flowers you ask around and get permission to pick them.

NR: Do you have any problems in relation to the city council or other authorities in relation to having the garden?

PL: Not really, it might be that they want to build a communal house on the plot next to us and then we would possibly have to move but then we would definitely squat the place - haha!

keep an eye out. Sometimes homeless people sleep here at night but that is all right as long as they don't destroy anything.

NR: Nobody comes and eats the fruits and vegetables?

PL: Not really and if they did it wouldn't be a problem, as long as they are gentle.

Photos by Nis Rømer

* "Byggeren" was a building playground that was central in the citizens' fight for the right against politicians and urban planners deciding over their neighborhoods. During massive street fights it was demolished in 1980. The events were an important starting point for the Squatters Movement (BZerne).

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Çavuşbaşı
Düzkeşane region
Beykoz - İstanbul



“Ninety-six percent (75 out of 78) of public elementary schools in Cagayan de Oro maintain a school garden. This activity is pursued by pupils as part of the school curriculum and supervised by principals and teachers.”

G. E. Potutan, W. H. Schnitzler, J. M. Arnado, L. G. Janubas and R. J. Holmer. "Urban agriculture in Cagayan de Oro: a favourable response of city government and NGOs". In: *Growing Cities, Growing Food: Urban Agriculture on the Policy Agenda*, Bakker, N. et al., 2001, p. 419

DEER

A story by a *Bostancı*, Mustafa Cebir

Deer and gazelles sometimes come to the garden and eat. One day a deer had come and eaten from the garden, but when I looked I saw trails of sheep, the neighbor has sheep, but if they had come into the garden they wouldn't have left anything behind. I was thinking; this animal that came in ate only a little, then I figured out that it was a deer. It ate the beans, the ones that had grown big.

I got really annoyed and said "I'm going to shoot this animal." One day I was riding the tractor, all of a sudden I see a stupid face looking at me from the woods, I had my gun there, I was just about to shoot it and it was looking into my eyes and I said "Ok fine, I forgive you, go". It went running off. It never came back after that.

A NEW GARDEN IN MØSTINGS HUS



Photo by Nane Skiødt

Urban regeneration projects has been fastly occupying the city of İstanbul in the last years and it has also been a big threat concerning climate change. *Bostancı* Mehmet Ekerbiçer from İstanbul, who has been gardening for the last 30 years near the old city walls and who inherited the *bostan* from his great grandfather, was kicked out in February 2009 from his garden by a private company that will built a swimming pool on the site. He later found a possibility to continue with this tradition, this time not in İstanbul but in Copenhagen.

To improve the possibilities for civil society in developing countries, create awareness on climate change in their own country and participate in the

UN climate negotiations, the Danish Government supports a targeted program, implemented by Danish NGOs and their international partners. The Danish government approved *bostan* as a very important tradition of İstanbul, one of its partner cities, and decided to support this act. So Ekerbiçer was one of the *bostancı*s supported. After he was kicked out from his place, until he was given a new garden in İstanbul he was invited to Copenhagen to the garden of Møstings Hus to spend the whole year there. He continued with his tradition and treated the garden as a *bostan* where a miracle of disorder around the Møstings Hus occurred. The *bostan* has now various types of vegetables that previously did not exist in Copenhagen and the *bostan* has grown in an unexpected way. ■ **copenhagen**



“Havana has 26 agricultural store consultancies (*tiendas agrícolas*). Their role is to guarantee the technical and material viability of urban agriculture. The shops are found in urban areas and provide seed, seedlings, tree saplings, bio-fertilisers, bio-pesticides, soil conditioners and tools such as hoes, machetes, etc.”

M. Gonzalez Novo and C. Murphy. "Urban agriculture in the city of Havana: a popular response to a crisis", In: *Growing Cities, Growing Food: Urban Agriculture on the Policy Agenda*, Bakker, N. et al., 2001, p. 341

CREATE YOUR OWN GARDEN



A Day in *Bostan*



“When you start gardening, it’s addictive, the same way cigarettes are. Your neighbor wakes up early, you wake up early, you see him working in his garden, you want to work on yours. That’s all I’ve seen. Watch what the neighbor is doing, waking up early, what is he doing in the morning, tying watercress, if you have watercress you tie it too, if not you sit in the shade like this. Let’s say you wake up early in the morning, at noon there’ll be areas to flatten, you’ll then wait for it to dry, it then becomes *maşula*, *maşula* is a term from the Albanians, it’s actually a *karık* (a flat land). It’s also called a pan. You plant them, water them, you spread out the *maşula*, you level it. Like putting make-up or polishing up. The last thing you do is check the leaves, see if there are holes, if there are, you put pesticides. You put the pesticide between noon and evening, depending on its affection. Sometimes bugs come and eat the stuff out of season, so you put pesticides. What is a woman’s work in the home, does it ever end? It doesn’t. She wipes the windows, cleans the kitchen, cooks, washes dishes... There was a garden in Maltepe, he used to grow parsely, and I would envy him. I used to get the urge to carry the farmer on my back.”

by Mehmet Şengül, 35 years old, Topkapı, İstanbul



Photo by Annexpress

MINT SMELL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY

In a month’s time, a *bostancı*, who prefers to stay anonymous, has built a mint garden right in the middle of Taksim. He states that he wanted to clean and purify the dirty city center. He adds that before this was an area, he was afraid to go with his family so he wanted to turn it into a “piece of heaven”. “Mint is a versatile, useful, perennial herb plant that grows well under many soil and weather conditions. My mother used to say “you can’t kill mint”, stated the *bostancı*.

The municipality authorities have not yet made a statement about the future of this illegal garden.

■ **istanbul**