

### *UA in Ireland: A historical Trajectory*

There has been a phenomenal revival and growth of UA initiatives in Ireland in recent years, many of them urban. Dublin has witnessed both the revival of allotments, and the emergence and growth of community gardens in and around the city and its perimeter. Traditionally allotments in Ireland date back to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and owe their origins to the work of an American philanthropist based in London. The latter promoted workingmen's gardens in the city which inspired 'The Vacant Land Cultivation Society' to set up allotments in Dublin in 1910 as a means of subsistence for poor urban dwellers. In 1917, Dublin Corporation, by direction of 'The Local Government Board for Ireland', set up a Land Cultivation Committee to provide allotments as a war measure to help increase food supplies during WWI (Watson & Bell, 2012). The introduction of the Local Authorities (Allotment) Act (1926) highlighted the importance of allotments in the city. The act identified an allotment as "a piece of land intended to be cultivated by an individual for the production of vegetables, mainly for consumption by himself and his family'. It also included a clause which allowed local authorities to lease land to voluntary associations interested in the allotment movement. From this point onwards, the allotment movement was largely driven by voluntary workers in the United Irish Plottolders Union (who later became the Irish Allotment Holders Association), who set up branches throughout Dublin and its suburbs. The Allotment Act of 1926 was later replaced by 'The Acquisition of Land (Allotments) Amendment' 1934, which made provision to accommodate unemployed persons by supplying allotments at reduced or nominal rents. By 1934, 'The Town and Regional Planning Act' was adopted which noted that the provision may be made by local authorities to provide land for allotments. However by 1963, this was replaced by 'The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act', which made no mention of the provision of allotments. As Dublin city began to develop and grow from the 1960s onwards, it became increasingly difficult to secure land for allotments, and by the turn of the twenty-first century, allotments in Ireland virtually disappeared (sites once given for allotments were requisitioned for housing developments and other infrastructural programmes). As is the case in other reference regions, there is no national policy on UA. The prerogative is retained by local governments and each local municipality has discretion in terms of the resources and political commitment they are willing to devote to UA.

The revival of interest in allotments may be attributed to various factors including the current economic crisis and retrenchment of the welfare state, growing environmental awareness and concerns over the changes in food production and consumption practices in recent years. While allotments have a long historical connection with the city, community gardens are a more recent addition to the city's urban and suburban landscape, with over fifty community gardens currently located (and supported by local authorities and various voluntary bodies) across the city. As demand for UA provision increases, many local authorities are adopting strategic approaches that provide opportunities within greenbelts adjacent to built-up areas, and vacant sites initially zoned for development within the city.

### *Policies on UA in Dublin*

The Irish government recently published *Our Sustainable Future* ([www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)) which sets out the framework for advancing a sustainable and green agenda in Ireland over the coming

decades. The document is set against the backdrop of Ireland's difficult adjustment to recession complicated by banking and fiscal crises which necessitated the country having to avail of a programme of EU/IMF support. The Programme for Government 2011 and the EU/MF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland provide the blueprint for a return to fiscal stability and sustainable economic growth. The restoration of sound public finances remains the core priority in relation to economic planning. The strategy document addresses the issue of sustainable production and consumption. Ireland's Ecological Footprint has continued to grow and in the latest assessment Ireland had the tenth highest per person Footprint in the world (OECD, 2010). There is no reference to UA in this national level policy document.

Ireland is moving along the same trajectory as other jurisdictions where food systems are dominated by multinational corporations. For instance, the dairy, supermarket and alcoholic drinks sectors are dominated by a small number of large firms. At the same time, there is a growing awareness among policy makers that Ireland's 'green' image can be harnessed as a resource both to fuel growth in the agricultural production sector and in terms of food or 'gastro tourism'. A recent discussion document, *Food and the City* (DCC, 2011) notes that the Dublin City Council Development Plan, contains new supportive policies for the food sector mirroring a renewed focus on the sector at national and regional level and also a variety of private sector initiatives. DCC policies include the promotion of outdoor markets, the promotion of market streets, facilitation of ethnic food businesses on designated streets, facilitation of a City Markets project, promoting competition and innovation. The key focus however, lies in promoting growth and particularly expansion in employment in the sector with the goal of making Ireland as a whole and Dublin in particular the most efficient and highly innovative food and drink country in the world. The notion of sustainable development is implicit rather than explicit in this strategic of civic and national boosterism.

The Dublin Regional Authority is one of eight regional authorities within the country, with Dublin city comprising four administrative areas; Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Dublin South County Council and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown. Together they provide over one thousand allotments, and almost *fifty* community gardens in and around the city and its perimeter. (These however are supplemented by private provision mostly on the perimeter of the city). The Dublin City Development Plan (2011-2017) has come into effect at a particularly challenging time in Ireland, as austerity policies means that incomes have dropped significantly, unemployment is growing and funding for many established community projects has been cut back. The Dublin City Development Plan (2012-2017) sets out a programme of local area plans that focuses on regeneration, promoting economic growth, raising Dublin's profile and creating a more 'connected city'. It places a strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing open spaces for both biodiversity and recreational use within the city and its boundaries, highlighting their importance for the city's sustainability and attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit (Development Plan, 2012:84). The plan argues that as the city intensifies some recreational spaces come under increasing pressure. Therefore, it is important that coherent plans for future recreational spaces needed by citizens are developed and secured while creating a clean, green, well connected city. Under Section 6.4.3, '*Open Spaces*', it claims that open spaces require protection in order to meet the recreational needs and conservational needs of the city. Consequently, the city authorities are actively preparing a 'Dublin City Parks and Landscape Strategy' to guide this process. In creating a 'green city', the plan points to policies by Dublin City Council to support the provisions of allotments and community gardens. Section 6.4.3 makes provision for urban agriculture initiatives but this provision is highly circumscribed (see italics below):

“support the provision of community gardens/allotments/local markets/pocket parks *where feasible* and in particular as temporary uses on vacant land, under-utilised or derelict sites in the city” (GC16, p.91).

“support on a phased basis, the development of allotments *on appropriate sites* in the city” (GC018. p.91)

“provide allotments and community gardens *where appropriate*, as a regular feature of city council parks and public open spaces” (CG019. p.91)

“review existing publicly accessible open spaces with a view to increasing access for citizens during the plan period” (GC021. p.91)

Under Current legislation (The planning and Development Act, 2010), allotments are defined as “an area of land comprising not more than 1,000 square metres let or available for letting to and cultivation by one or more than one person who is a member of the local community and lives adjacent or near to the allotment, for the purpose of the production of vegetables or fruit mainly for consumption by the person or a member of his or her family”. The Act also allows local authorities to indicate in a Development Plan an intention to reserve land for use and cultivation as allotments, and for regulating, promoting, facilitating or controlling the provision of land for that use “. However, despite legislation and the recent Development Plan by the City Council to support the provision of community gardens & allotments on land for temporary use or as regular features of the urban and suburban landscape, only two councils (in the Greater Dublin area) actively promote allotments, with only one actively developing an allotment strategy to date.

In March 2012, Fingal County Council set out their allotment strategy in line with the County Development Plan, to develop and manage allotments in partnership with participants. This strategy also acknowledges the role UA contributes to well-being and sustainability and places a strong emphasis on promoting urban biodiversity across their sites. Providing over 600 plots located across three sites with plans for an additional 200 in the coming years, Fingal County Council endeavours to facilitate the provision of allotments. Their strategy is “[to improve] the quality and quantity of allotments in the Fingal area and to provide support for the development of allotments by identifying ways to give more people the opportunity to grow their own food and promoting other food growing initiatives” (2012:3). The Strategy outlines two main objectives which recognise the benefit of allotment habitats play in urban green corridors, bio-diversity but that their prime purpose is to grow food.

The Fingal strategy commits to

“ provide opportunities for food production through allotments or community gardens in new green infrastructure proposals *where appropriate*” (Section 2.0, G127, p.2) and,

“promote the provision of allotments within the rural areas of the County, especially within the Greenbelt, which have good access from the built-up and residential areas” (Section 2.0. GB04, p. 2)

Five broad policies outlined in their strategy aim toward ensuring that sufficient number of allotments are accessible to all within the Fingal area, ensuring good administration, providing high quality allotments, ensuring environmentally sustainable allotments and secure resources. In addition to local authority provision, Fingal also boasts many privately run allotments, however rent for these is substantially higher which may create barriers of entry for specific social classes residing in this region of the city.

Community Gardens are generally located within the central area of the city. Dublin City Council has been facilitating the development of community gardens, although the onus is on the community to approach the Council to seek help and support. The municipality tends to be reactive rather than proactive on the issue.

#### *Actors and Advocates of UA in Dublin*

While national and municipal policies are largely focused on the potential of green job development, little or no attention has been paid to the issue of green lifestyles and their potential role in contributing to transitions to a green economy. On the other hand, there has been a flourishing of civil society advocacy groups mobilising around alternative production systems, organic farming, food waste, health and well being, awareness-raising among the public and targeted educational programmes.

- Grow It Yourself
- Dublin Community Growers
- Urbanfarm.ie
- Sustainable Skerries
- Irish Seed savers
- Get Ireland Growing

#### *Key governance actors (Eldsjel/Champions)*

- Michael Fox, South Dublin Allotments Association
- Peadar Lynch, Dublin Community Growers
- Paddy O’Kearney, City Composting and urbanfarm.ie
- Kathy Burke O’Dea, Sitric Community Garden, Dublin

#### *Dual-approach that links both top-down and bottom up approaches to UA in Dublin.*

UA in Dublin is largely driven by civil society groups that mobilise to advocate with the municipality for access to land for cultivation. Demand far outstrips supply which has resulted in the development of private UA provision in and around the city. There are also some activist groups actively engaged in reclaiming lands for UA initiatives.

<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Sites</u>	<u>No of Plots</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Size of Plots</u>



**Plate 1. Map of Dublin Local Authority Areas.**

<b>Fingal County Council</b>	Powerstown	600 with further plans for 200 in Balbriggan	12mth.licence.terminated ev. yr €50 €100 €200	5 x 10 m2  10 x 10 m2  20 x 10 m2
	Turvey		Same	Same
	Donabate		Same	same
	Skerries		Same	same
	Balbriggan		Same	Same
<b>Dublin Central</b>	Mud Island Cy Garden		11 month lease	
	Newcomen Court-Cy Gdn			
	De Courcey Sq		€10 per yr	2 sizes:
	St. Anne's Park			
<b><u>Dublin South</u></b>	Friarstown	120 with plans to expand by 169 plots this year		200m 2  &  150m2
	Corcagh Pk	25		100 m 2
	Waterstown	15		
	Tymon Park	300 acre Park		
<b><u>Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown</u></b>				

**Visual Methodologies:**

**Wind Turbine for Water Harvesting System: Pearse College**



**Recycling Materials used on Plots (Drainage pipes & Housing signs dumped on site as windbreakers**





**Recycled Bottles**

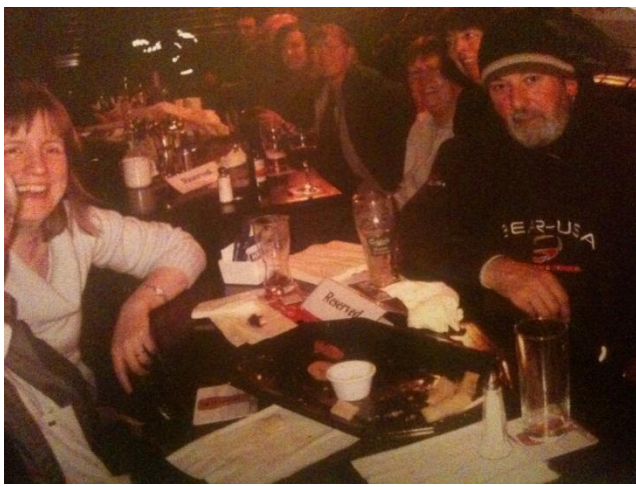


**Recycled crates for organic planting**

## The Manequin



## Social Interaction



## Appendix 1 Reference region fact sheet

location in Europe



**Reference region: Dublin and its hinterland**

**Country: Ireland**

**Area:** Dublin metropolitan region 921 km<sup>2</sup> (92,100 hectares).

**Inhabitants / density:** The population of the Region is 1,270,603 million (2011), an increase of 7% on the 2006 figures and representing 28% of the State's total population. Approximately 525,383 persons live in the Dublin Metropolitan Area with the remainder outside the city limits. In 2006 densities ranged from 3 persons per sq.km (Wicklow mountains) to 19,500 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (parts of Dublin City Centre).

**urban identity and context:** The Dublin metropolitan Region comprises the constituent city/county council administrative areas of [Dublin City](#), [South Dublin County](#), [Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County](#) and [Fingal County](#) in the east of Ireland. Most of the recent population growth has been on the perimeter of the city and in the adjoining counties pointing to a pattern of suburbanization and ex-urbanization.

### **Agricultural identity and context:**

Similar to much of northwest Europe, Dublin experiences a [maritime climate](#) with mild winters, cool summers, and a lack of temperature extremes. The average maximum January temperature is 8.3 °C (47 °F), while the average maximum July temperature is 19.6 °C (67 °F). On average, the sunniest months are May and June, while the wettest month is December with 73 mm (3 in) of rain, and the driest month is July with 43 mm (2 in). Rainfall is evenly distributed throughout the year.

Dublin had 798 farms constituting 38110 hectares designated as Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA), that is, the combined area under crops, silage, hay, pasture and rough grazing land in use (including fallow and set-aside land), (CSO Agricultural Survey, 2012).

The city has quality soil for vegetable growing. There is a tradition of market gardening in the north of the city (Fingal County Council) with most produce directed almost exclusively at the Dublin market in terms of retail and prepared foods.

Dublin ranks as the most important county in Ireland for field vegetable production (4,755 hectares under cultivation in 1999 (Bord Bia, 2001).

map / satellite map





The four city authorities between them provide just over 1000 allotments for vegetable growers in and around the city. These are supplemented by some privately provided allotments (particularly in the adjacent counties of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow and community gardens.

There are 29 farmers markets that operate in the city on a regular basis, (Bord Bia).

### **Problems to solve**

There is a significant demand for more opportunities to 'grow your own' in the Dublin metropolitan region. There is also considerable interest sourcing food locally. In February 2010, Bord Bia published a qualitative and quantitative research report on Local Food, updating a previous study in 2007. The main findings of the report were that local food is now considered a food category in its own right, with 93% consumer awareness recorded. Since 2007, the definition of what local food is has evolved from 'food produced in Ireland' to the point where 50% of consumers describe it as 'food that is produced or grown by local people' and 20% of consumers seeing it as 'food that is not mass produced', (Bord Bia annual report, 2010). Urban Agriculture could play an important future role in the region through initiatives that respond to the demands for opportunities to engage in urban agriculture or to access locally produced foods.

### **possible cooperation with stakeholders:**

- Four local authorities covering the Dublin region who have a remit to provide allotments in the city
- Grow it Yourself national not-for-profit organization promoting and facilitating garden and allotment food growing.
- Allotment holders associations such as South Dublin Allotments Association
- Farmers markets have a strong presence in the city Farmers markets in the city

-Bord Bia is the national advocacy group that carries out research and analysis on the food sector in Ireland. It sponsors initiatives such as Incredible Edibles Schools programmes that promotes the growing of vegetables in school settings.

-In the wake of the property crash there are many disused and underutilized sites throughout the city. There are potential opportunities to convert such sites into allotments, market gardens or community gardens.

#### ‘Trees on the Quays’



Architect Paschal Mahoney proposed in September 2011 that the unfinished planned headquarters of the now defunct Anglo Irish Bank on the city quays be turned into a ‘vertical park’, carving the building into a series of terraces including walkways, a public park and a transparent top-floor meeting space. The building has now been bought by the Irish Central Bank and will be completed and tenanted by bank staff.