

GREEN RETREAT

ESSAY: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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TOPIC RECEIVED: 17.10.2020

SUBMISSION: 31.01.2021

MUNICH, IN JANUARY 2021

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1. Introduction

As students of the Munich University of Applied Sciences in the tourism management department and as cosmopolitan hobby travelers, we were able to enjoy discovering many wonderful places in the world. During various city trips, one thing became clear to us – it is not always evident where you can find natural retreats in the urban space.

With this knowledge and our great interest in ecological sustainability, which is also the focus of our studies that we have chosen, we came up with the idea of creating a website that would provide a platform for information for locals and tourists about urban feel-good spaces as well as a network to bring contractors and clients together to create more natural relaxation places in the city area.

In the course of this essay, it will be shown why green retreats are so important: Not only for an attractive cityscape, but especially for the people who use them. In addition, potentials will be discussed, such as the trend of urban gardening, which is only just beginning, or the keeping of farm animals in the city. It is also the intention to build a network to bring together all those who are interested. Be it companies, tourists or locals.

2. Vision

In everyone's life, situations arise in which it seems as if the world stops turning from one moment to the next. This can be caused by the death of a loved one, the end of a love relationship or the loss of a job.

Some of us are given this mental resilience from an early age, others must acquire it first. Resilient people are considered cheerful, balanced, creative and adaptable. They have a strong character and a large circle of friends. The good news: It is never too late to increase your own resilience.

The above may seem a bit far-fetched, but the authors are convinced that green spaces in urban areas are interdependent to those situations. Thus, it remains to be stated that the topic is often given too little attention in this context, because: Green urban spaces have a positive influence on people's state of health - both physically and psychologically. They offer space for sports activities, and children can better develop their cognitive skills by spending time in nature. Parks are social meeting places and can also counteract loneliness. Highly dynamic cities such as Berlin, Munich or Hamburg must contend with higher traffic volumes and increasing noise pollution due to the increase in population and commuter flows. With each growth spurt in a city, the existing green spaces become more valuable and worthy of protection. And if the quality of life in cities is to be maintained or even further enhanced, there is a growing need to further improve the green structure and make green space development a central urban planning task.

At this point, it should be mentioned that this applies not only to individuals, but also to companies and other groups. Resilience analyses can help companies to promote the resilience of employees, reduce absenteeism and increase loyalty to the employer.¹

¹ Pies 2016, p. 39 ff.

For further illustration, the central competencies regarding resilience are now mapped, which, according to the authors, are becoming increasingly significant, especially in times of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the climate crisis for our societies.

Seven pillars of resilience



Illustration 1: Core competencies of resilience

URL: <https://www.isg.com/en/isgsupportnow-part-13/> [04.01.2021]

3. Relevance of green space and urban gardens

Since 2007, more people around the world have lived in cities than in rural areas. They still live from the land. Doesn't it seem logical that agriculture should now also return to the cities? What is an obvious strategy against poverty and social neglect in the metropolises of the global south (and also in North America)² - urban gardening - has been booming in European cities since the beginning of the 21st century, albeit for different reasons. A growing variety of new urban gardening activities - as well as their emphatic media reception - indicate that gardening opens up unimagined perspectives on the urban living space.

3.1 Participatory and community-oriented: the diversity of urban gardens

Urban gardening is remarkably multifaceted. Central characteristics are participation and community orientation. Be it the small neighborhood gardens run by residents in densely populated city districts, be it the selective and targeted but spectacular guerrilla gardening that primarily aims to sensitize people to the importance of inner-city greenery, but can sometimes also lead to the establishment of a neighborhood garden (as in the case by Rosa Rose www.rosarose-garten.net), they all have in common that the urban vegetable garden functions as a transmitter, medium and platform for topics as diverse as urban ecology, neighborhood design, local knowledge transfer and intercultural understanding.

² Bakker et. al. 2000, p. 18

3.2 Added value of green infrastructure

Green spaces provide a wide range of ecosystem services in the city, such as local climate regulation. For example, they counteract urban heat islands and mitigate summer heat effects through shading and evaporation. They improve the microclimate and reduce the health impacts of heat islands for urban residents. At the same time, they form potential floodplains during floods or heavy rains and contribute significantly to the recharge of clean groundwater. And they also enrich the cityscape aesthetically. Publicly accessible "green places" such as parks, urban forests or riparian zones therefore occupy a prominent position in the development of cities. The multifunctionality outlined here is increasingly becoming the focus of public interest, which is why the preservation of green spaces is increasingly finding its way into urban land use plans.

4. Outline of problem areas & solution approach

Additionally, surveys from Germany show that urban greenery is rated as important or very important by the inhabitants of cities, with an upward trend. The best-known indicator of the amount of vegetation in a city is its proportion of green space per inhabitant. But this average value says nothing about the spatial distribution in the city. It also does not describe the supply of individual city quarters with greenery or the accessibility of green spaces for residents and their possible uses.

In the opinion of the authors, this gives rise to two central questions for a planning concept: How can a city like Munich a) continue to grow and b) still remain compact and generate more quality of life, all by itself?

This is to be achieved through the creative appropriation of previously underused areas such as open spaces, flat roofs, facades, gaps and niches. Green spaces are to be rethought and used more sensibly and intensively than before. Urban densification here means an increase in the quality of life through do-it-yourself and personal initiative.

5. Prototype

The domain of our platform will be named “greenretreat.info”. We checked the domain – it is still available. We created the website with the popular website builder WordPress.com. We built a home page, where we give a short introduction to the platform, followed by a “More Information” link which directs to the “About” page. On the “About” page we introduce ourselves, our vision and give more details for the usage of the website. As the “About” page every page is easy to find in the header of the website, which is visible on every page of the site. In the left of the header is the “Green Retreat” logo which directs to the Homepage. In the right of the header are the links to every other site of the platform placed.

At first when we get online, we are focusing on the three largest cities in Germany – Berlin, Hamburg and Munich – with the vision of expanding this to other cities and countries. If we click on the individual cities in the header of the website, we will find a small slide show for each city with pictures of green feel-good places, a map with the corresponding places and a list of the common green retreats, divided in three categories: public recreational areas, hotels with green roofs and gardens or urban gardening projects. We still collected a lot of places to every category and the plan is to expand this collection and the categories, so that in the future the user is able to find all green retreats in the corresponding city. The next link in the header is our so-called “Relaxation-Finder” with which it is possible to find all of the just mentioned green spaces on a map by typing in the city name you are.

On the “Network” page of our platform we want to bring people and companies together to ensure a greener and more sustainable city life. In this respect, our vision consists on the one hand of providing information about well-known green spaces, but also of green retreats that are still unknown to the public, for example on the roofs of office buildings. We want to sensitize hotels to think about their roofs and facades, insofar as it is possible to make them greener and more sustainable in order to increase the well-being of the guests and to attract new guests. Also, we would like to motivate hotel companies to take this issue into account when building new hotels. So, we'd wish to connect them to roofers,

professional roof gardeners, architects, landscape architects and construction companies. It is our dream to use our platform to bring hobby gardeners together with the corresponding companies in order to enrich and beautify private green spaces and even to farm there. We wish to motivate people to do urban gardening as it is a wonderful and calming occupation and at the same time it is a local source of food that avoids transport emissions.

The last page in the header is the “Contact” page where users can directly send messages or find the post address and e-mail address to get in touch.

We didn’t build an imprint and disclaimer page because we all know how this looks but to get online we need this of course.

We plan to get sponsoring by hotels and companies we list and promote on our site. The costs for the website are not really high. As you can see in the screenshot below, the price for the basic WordPress.com subscription is about \$4 (USD) per month. The first year of the domain subscription is for free, after that it will cost \$10 (USD) per year.

The screenshot shows the WordPress.com checkout page with the following details:

- WordPress.com Sicheres Bezahlen** (header)
- Deine Bestellung** (checked): Website: greenretreat.info, [Bearbeiten](#)
- WordPress.com Persönlich: US\$48
- Abonnierter Tarif: US\$4 pro Monat × 12
- greenretreat.info: ~~US\$10~~ US\$0 (Rabatt für das erste Jahr)
- .info Domain-Registrierung: jährliche Rechnung
- Hast du einen Gutschein? [Gutscheincode hinzufügen](#)
- Gib deine Kontaktinformationen ein** (1): Bei der Registrierung eines Domainnamens sind gültige Kontaktinformationen erforderlich. Der Datenschutz ist bei allen berechtigten Domains zum Schutz deiner personenbezogenen Daten inbegriffen.
- Vorname: _____ Nachname: _____
- In deinem Kauf inbegriffen:**
 - greenretreat.info – mit deinem Tarif ein Jahr kostenlos
 - Entfernen der WordPress.com-Werbung
 - Freischalten deiner Inhalte nur für zahlende Abonnenten.
 - Zugang zu unbegrenztem E-Mail-Support
 - Geld-zurück-Garantie
 - Brauchst du Hilfe? Chatte mit uns!
- Gesamt: US\$48**

Illustration 2: Check-out WordPress.com

URL <https://wordpress.com/checkout/greenretreatde.wordpress.com> [10.01.2021]

We plan with one hour per month of work by a web designer which costs about 120 € per hour. We need the web designer to keep the information on the page and the security plugins and the disclaimer up to date. The plugins will cost about 5 € per month. By the current exchange rate of 1 € = 1,22 USD we have all in all costs about 128,29 € per month

and 1.539,48 € per year in the first year. From the second year we have yearly costs about 1.547,71 € per year.

You can take a look on our website <https://greenretreatde.wordpress.com/> and you can also watch a screen video we recorded which you can download from the WeTransfer link <https://we.tl/t-sQG3NkEsQc> - it is only available until the 11th of February 2021!

6. Conclusion

Finally, we would like to express once again how important we consider quiet retreats in nature for people from urban areas. For it is precisely there that life has become exceedingly fast-paced due to mainly technical influences as well as developments since the turn of the millennium. It is precisely there, and the authors would like to emphasize this, that our approach lies, which should go beyond "quickly take a break in the countryside and then move on". It is in the interest of all of us that we as a society decelerate. The basis of this train of thought, also discussed during the course, is the post-growth theory. Here, contexts are described that justify an economy without growth as a guiding principle. Generation of change knowledge and options for action, in order to be able to practically implement an overcoming of the growth orientation.³ Accordingly, it is not the task of politics to prescribe the life model to responsible citizens (i.e. no paternalism), but alternative life models should be made possible. This inevitably means that an individual must be held accountable for the negative effects that his or her chosen life model inflicts on others.

Since the outbreak of the Corona Pandemic in late 2019, many people have been living in loneliness and renunciation. While the former can hopefully be countered soon with an end to contact restrictions, the authors view the latter with concern. Here, we would like to firmly counter the "Now more than ever" mood - in case of a quick success of the vaccine - and suggest a break for rest and reflection in a green retreat, which is quickly found on "www.greenretreat.info"

³ URL: <https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/postwachstumsoekonomik-53487> [05.01.2021]

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