

Preface

Urban ecology in Berlin has been developing over the past 350 years, from garden floras and wild floras of castles and ruins to the Graduate Research Training Group 780 “Perspectives in Urban Ecology”. This program has brought together universities and scientific institutes from all over Berlin.

Since the beginning, urban ecology in Berlin has included approaches from biology and geography, leading to the current interdisciplinary work documented in this summarizing publication.

During the second half of the last century, urban ecology has evolved out of landscape ecology by intensively studying human settlements. As a separate discipline, urban ecology was established with systematic studies of climate, soil, water and organisms inhabiting cities. Urban habitats of many cities in Germany, Europe and other continents were described and mapped in detail in the context of science and nature conservation. Pioneering naturalists and scientists have always emphasized the importance of biological diversity in human-dominated systems. This emphasis has paved the way for cities to focus on nature conservation programs.

For the future, we hope for more studies in comparative urban ecology with investigations in different cities also stressing international cooperation. The knowledge about socio-economic factors interfering with the ecological dimension of the urban environment may foster the participation of all city dwellers in urban planning as shown at the “Langer Tag der Stadtnatur” (long day of urban nature) in Berlin with programs and excursions during the day and night. Furthermore, ongoing climate change already affects many cities which encourages international collaborations. Besides the unsolved challenges in the context of climate change, particular adaptation measures in cities could improve the quality of urban planning and urban design in the future.

A rapidly growing proportion of the global human population lives in cities. Studies of cities including the nature in cities should be supported by international programs.

Berlin, Germany

Herbert Sukopp



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