Abstract

Green activism and guerrilla gardening lie at the more informal end of the urban food growing movement, but little is known about the extent of this practice or the future of such unplanned activities. Accordingly, this paper firstly explores a range of informal Urban Agriculture practices, illuminating the practice within Europe, North America, Africa and other continents. The paper then proceeds to focus explicitly on Salford, UK, where guerrilla gardening is being encouraged by the local authority. Using ethnographic and interview data, we focus on the actors involved, their relationship with authority and the wider impact of their activities; exploring their motives, aspirations, values and beliefs. The results reveal the ability of the informal movement to regenerate 'forgotten' space and bring communities together, and the 'darker' side of the activity, with actors sometimes restricting access to colonised land. Ultimately, the paper reveals how this movement is expanding and that more research is required to better understand the actions of those who pursue a more informal approach to urban gardening and those who seek to regulate land use activity.

1. Introduction

With populations rising and cities expanding there is a nascent debate surrounding idea of productive urban landscapes and their ability to tackle food chain disconnects (Wiskerke and Viljoen, 2012). At the forefront of this debate is the practice of Urban Agriculture (UA) which is on the rise across the globe (Moragues-Faus and Morgan, 2015; Noori and Benson, 2016); fundamentally, the concept revolves around the growing of food or rearing of liverstock in cities (Caputo, 2012). Arguments for UA vary, ranging from its potential to cut

26   food supply chains and relocate production closer to urban consumers, to the social

27   contributions of the concept such as its perceived ability to bring together communities

28   through allotments, communal gardens and other such spaces (Gorgolewski et al., 2011;

29   Wiskereke and Viljoen, 2012). The latter is often argued to be the core reason for the practice

30   in the Global North, with yield deemed minimal since spaces are relatively small and used

31   predominantly for recreational purposes (Wiltshire, 2012). Nevertheless, technologies such as

32   hydroponics and aquaponics are testing this argument and enabling vertical systems and high

33   yield even in the smallest of spaces (Hardman and Larkham, 2014). Meanwhile, in the Global

34   South, there is emerging discussion on the importance of UA and its ability to enable citizens

35   in deprived areas to survive through providing the urban poor with much needed access to

36   fresh produce (Chipungu et al., 2015).

37

38   Urban growing encompasses an array of practices and spaces, from traditional allotments to

39   community gardens and larger spaces such as urban farms and rooftop developments. Yet to

40   date many of these spaces are poorly defined and explored (Caputo, 2012). If we take the

41   example of an urban farm, it becomes clear how this larger form of UA not only lacks

42   coverage in both academic and non-academic literature, but also a distinct definition, with

43   Hanson et al.'s (2012: 5) attempt perhaps closest: 'an urban farm is an intentional effort by an

44   individual or a community to grow its capacity for self-sufficiency and well-being through

45   the cultivation of plants/animals'. Indeed, the very notion of UA is contested, with questions

46   surrounding whether the term focuses purely on food growing activities or constitutes any

47   form of agricultural activity within the city context (Lohrberg et al., 2015).

48

49

50 Figure 1: The world's largest rooftop urban farm in Brooklyn, New York City, USA

51 (Hardman, 2015)

52

53 In terms of exemplars of UA practice, figure 1 depicts a large-scale form of the activity, in

54 this case Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm in New York City, USA. The figure highlights the

55 potential for UA and how the practice can involve projects which employ gardeners and

56 operate as a business, with the project shown in the figure growing some 50,000lbs of

57 vegetables each year (Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm, n.d.). This large-scale form of activity

58 is growing, with companies such as Gotham Greens (2016) starting new UA projects across

59 North America and employing more people within the sector. Within the UK there is a rise in

60 this large-scale form of the practice, with aqua farms, hydroponic, rooftop and conventional

61 urban farms appearing more and more (see for instance Sustainable Food Cities, 2017).

62

63 Proponents of UA often cite Detroit (USA) and Havana (Cuba) as exemplars in which the

64 practice has made significant impacts in cities: regenerating space, feeding residents in

65 deprived areas and helping to create more sustainable economies (Giorda, 2012; Ioannou et

66 al., 2016). In both these spaces, UA has been successful and contributes significantly to both

67 economies. This has in turn enabled residents of the two cities to have better access to food

68 and obtain new skills which could help with future employment opportunities. There are

69 other exemplars, such as New York City's urban farms and community gardens (McKay,

70 2011) alongside high-tech projects in Singapore (see One World, 2012).

71

72 Within academia, an recent argument surrounds the potential for UA to create a more socially

73 'just' food system (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011). Whilst the link between food justice and UA

74 has a solid research base in North America, there is little exploration elsewhere, particularly

75 in the European and UK contexts (Tornaghi, 2014). There is also emerging research which

76 focuses on the multiple environmental benefits derived through UA, particularly its

77 contribution to regulating and provisioning ecosystem services (UKNEAFO, 2014). However

78 this has led to calls for more research around the risk associated with such practices,

79 particularly in relation to the contaminated land upon which many of the projects are

80 constructed (Chipungu et al., 2015). Yet, whilst there is a blossoming research base on the

81 formal element of UA, there is scant regard for researching the more informal approaches

82 (Zanetti, 2007).

83

84 Indeed, evidence demonstrates how many successful UA projects began through an informal

85 approach and legitimised to seize on funding and opportunities to grow their action (Hardman

86 and Larkham, 2014). Guerrilla gardening is a broad term which is associated with actors

87 occupying space for the growing of vegetables or plants without permission (McKay, 2011).

88 Guerrilla gardening is a global movement and is apparent in every country, from Africa to

89 China, the USA and UK, students, businessmen, the elderly and others are regularly

90 practising the activity (Reynolds, 2008). The perception that guerrilla gardening is merely

91 small-scale is incorrect, with the global Incredible Edible movement and many more formal

92 projects owing their success to the informal practice (Scott et al., 2013). This paper explores

93 informal UA and provides an insight into practices around the globe, drawing on a range of

94 case studies before focussing on a local authority in the UK which is actively encouraging

95 citizens to adopt a more informal route.

96

97

98 **2. Pursuing an Informal Agenda**

99

100 'Guerrilla gardening has seen increased practice and popular media coverage over

101 the last 5 years, but has yet to receive much attention from the academic sphere.

102 This is likely due to guerrilla gardenings' conceptual fuzziness – its relational and

103 contextual nature makes collapsing it to a specific definition difficult'

104 (Crane et al., 2013: 76)

105

106 In a similar manner to the wider practice of UA, the idea of an informal approach is ill-

107 defined and elusive. When raised, the informal movement is often linked to the idea of

108 guerrilla gardening, a broad term which encompasses any form of growing activity conducted

109 without the permission of the land owner (McKay, 2011; Reynolds, 2008). In academic

110 literature the two are used alongside one another uncritically, often without a clear definition

111 of either practice. Guerrilla gardening is a militaristic term and is often stigmatised as an

112 activity of younger radicals with a deep political agenda (see for instance McKay, 2011).

113 Furthermore, there is often a perception that those practising guerrilla gardening are adopting

114 an illegal rather than merely an informal approach (Adams et al., 2013; Hung, 2017).

115

116   With the lack of arrests and no documented prosecutions, guerrilla gardening is more

117   appropriately conceptualised as an informal act as opposed to an illegal act (Adams et al.,

118   2015; Reynolds, 2008). Although no guerrillas have been arrested, there are several instances

119   relating to threats to detain, such as Richard Reynold; his encounter with London's

120   Metropolitan Police whilst gardening in the British capital (YouTube, 2008). Under UK law,

121   guerrilla gardening would not constitute criminal damage and thus the Police Officer in

122   question was incorrect in this video (Hardman, 2013). Perhaps the most unlawful action of a

123   typical guerrilla gardener is their avoidance of obtaining planning permission or dealing with

124   the bureaucracy of local authorities through avoiding risk assessments, insurance and other

125   such paperwork usually required to establish a formal site (Zanetti, 2007). Ironically, one

126   could argue that the idea of participatory planning may give these actors a voice and enable

127   some avoidance of the informal occupation of land. This concept involves involving the

128   community and interested parties in planning processes, with tools such as neighbourhood

129   planning proving population within the UK context (see for instance the DCLG, 2012).

130

131   The motivations for employing a guerrilla gardening approach vary; from actors who are

132   confused about how to obtain permission for a legitimate community garden or similar space

133   through the planning system, to others who pursue it for a 'thrill' where challenging authority

134   becomes the core motivation (Adams and Hardman, 2014). A review of the literature shows

135   that a lack of knowledge regarding the regulatory planning environment a is a core reason for

136   those adopting a more informal approach (Adams et al., 2013; Crane et al., 2013; Tracey,

137   2007; Reynolds, 2008). For instance, in the UK Scott et al. (2013) argue that the planning

138   system is often perceived to be disabling with regard to innovative activities such as UA and,

139   in this case, has pushed some to adopt different tactics to enable such activities to occur.

140   However, the authors identify a number of 'hooks' (opportunities) in existing UK policy in

141 which planners can act as enablers but warn that such uptake is reliant on their 'willingness to

142 engage widely in a new constructive dialogue and way of working that crosses the planning

143 and environment divide' (Scott et al., 2013: 44). In this sense they are discussing the

144 Ecosystem Approach and Ecosystem Service concepts which offer an opportunity for UA to

145 be increased in cities.

146

147 With regards to obtaining planning permission, a considerable amount of UK-based UA

148 advisory bodies stipulate that groups and individuals must seek guidance on whether they

149 require such consent before creating spaces for food cultivation, regardless of whether it is

150 eventually required (Community Land Advisory Service, 2012; Federation of City Farms and

151 Community Gardens, 2009; PlanLoCal, 2012). In this case, planners are the individuals who

152 can either support, or restrict, UA practices (Neegard et al., 2012; Shackelton 2012). It is here

153 that the risk-adverse planning system can frustrate locally-based initiatives even though

154 suitable planning tools are available to enable such activities to occur (White and Natelson,

155 2012). For example Scott (2001) found that often the micropolitics and personalities of

156 individual planning officers played a key role in whether a particular development was

157 supported. Furthermore, the Welsh Rural Observatory (2012: 17) critique restrictive planning

158 practice in parts of the UK where 'planning was identified as a major barrier to the formation

159 of new community growing sites and activities'. This problem reflects a lack of mutual

160 understanding of the nature of the activity and the complexities of planning law (Scott et al.,

161 2013).

162

163   "Established growing projects and groups also reported problems in negotiating

164   the planning system. It was suggested that there were difficulties on both sides,

165   with many communities and groups often lacking the necessary expertise and

166   experience in dealing with the planning system, and planners uncertain about how

167   to deal with applications for community growing activities"

168   (Welsh Rural Observatory, 2012: 17)

169

170   A considerable number of sites analysed in this Welsh Rural Observatory report were of an

171   urban origin and a core issue identified was the lack of contact with the planning system.

172   Such a barrier resonates well with the guerrilla gardening literature which identifies similar

173   issues, resulting in many actors adopting the informal approach as a last resort in an attempt

174   to enable the activity to take place (see for example Reynolds, 2008). Similar arguments can

175   be found in the international context, with studies in Africa, North America and beyond

176   revealing issues with their respective planning systems (see for instance Chipungu et al.,

177   2015; Crane et al., 2013). For instance, in many African countries planning policy often

178   restricts UA and thus actors resort to guerrilla gardening on a mass scale (Chipungu et al.,

179   2015); this results in vegetables being grown in often contaminated land and often across
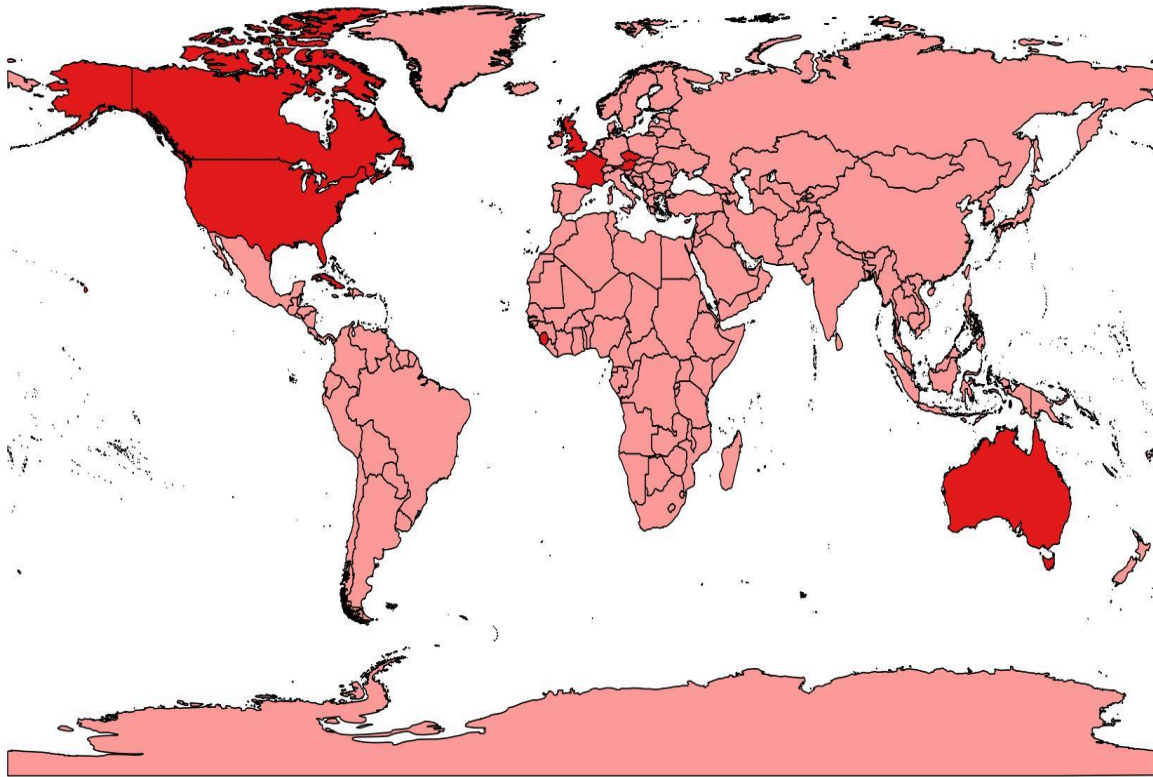
180   private property.

181

182

183   **3. Exploring Practice**

184

185

186   Figure 2: A GIS analysis of the location of published academic studies prior to 2016 on

187   guerrilla gardening, the majority of which are in the Global North (Armitage and Hardman,

188   2016)

189

190   This paper now proceeds to provide a worldwide overview of different approaches across the

191   globe and examples of informal UA on the ground. To date, few studies interact closely with

192   the informal or 'guerrilla' movement (see figure 2 and Crane et al., 2013; Zanetti, 2007). As

193   figure 2 demonstrates, the majority of these studies focus on the practice within the Global

194   North, predominantly in North America (see for example, Hardman, 2009, 2013; Harrison,

195   2010; Zanetti, 2007). Furthermore, the authors observing the guerrilla gardening practices are

196   often informal gardeners themselves, which arguably argue creates an issue around

197   objectivity.

198

199 One of the few to explore guerrilla gardening up close is that by Crane et al. (2013) who

200 focussed on how guerrilla groups formed and practised within Kingston, Ontario. Their

201 findings revealed the spectrum of actors involved and how the activity had a positive impact

202 on the surrounding environment; beautifying neglected space and bringing production into

203 the heart of the city. In particular, they highlight the positive aspects of adopting such an

204 approach 'actions like guerrilla gardening encourage and promote open expression and

205 agency provide powerful opportunities to reclaim city space as a lived project' (Crane et al.,

206 2013: 85). They conclude by arguing that more encouragement is required for such self-

207 expression which will enable more citizens to become involved and reclaim neglected spaces

208 within our cities.

209

210 Whilst there is a burgeoning literature base, there is still a distinct lack of a critical lens

211 placed on guerrilla gardening in both academic and non-academic literature. From Reynolds

212 (2008) to Crane et al. (2013), McKay (2011) and beyond, the explorations so far are largely

213 positive. We have previously conducted a series of studies on guerrilla gardeners,

214 predominantly in the West Midlands region of the UK, analysing their practices and the

215 impact of their activities on the surrounding area; our core aim to critically analyse the

216 practices of the groups involved. Our findings highlighted a diversity of individuals involved

217 in the informal movement; from teachers to planners, students and the elderly. The data also

218 revealed the darker side to the action, with actors colonising land not only without the

219 permission of the local authority, but also the communities which surrounded the spaces

220 (Hardman and Larkham, 2014). This resulted in some locals becoming disgruntled with the

221 action and angry with the lack of consultation and local authority enforcement. In one case,

222 guerrilla gardeners would colonise the land and plant vegetables but would not maintain the

223   space on a regular basis. Ironically, this soon led to the informal intervention adversely

224   impacting on the aesthetics of the space, with a severe lack of maintenance resulting in the

225   vegetation dying (see Hardman and Larkham, 2014).

226

227   However, there are also examples that show the positive impact and multiple benefits of

228   those cultivating land without permission. For example Caldmore Guerrillas, who operate in

229   Walsall, UK, was formed by a Polish migrant who wanted to connect with the community

230   and help to regenerate leftover space in Walsall. Through guerrilla gardening she was able to

231   bring together the fragmented community and create a community garden in the heart of a

232   deprived area. The activity soon flourished and, like so many successful cases, soon

233   transitioned into a permitted form of gardening which was able to grow further and obtain

234   local funding.

235

236   Whilst many of these studies focus on English-speaking countries, there is an array of

237   evidence to show how the informal movement is just as rife in other areas of the globe (Crane

238   et al., 2012; Hung, 2017; Wiskerke and Viljoen, 2012). As previously mentioned, Cuba is an

239   exemplar of guerrilla gardening on a large scale given that much of the activity is informal

240   and without the consent of the appropriate authority. There is evidence for guerrilla gardening

241   in Pakistan (Cityfarmer, 2013), China (guerrillagardening.org, n.d.), Hong Kong (Hung,

242   2017) and many other non-English speaking countries (see guerrillagardening.org for a list

243   and links for each country). Within these contexts the subversive nature of the activity results

244   in connections relying on face-to-face contact rather than through social media, possibly due

245   to the lack of widespread access to such technology and tools in parts of the Global South.

246

247

3.1 Guerrilla Gardening in South Africa and the UK

248

249 In order to provide a flavour of the diverse nature of guerrilla activity we now draw on our

250 recent in South Africa and the UK to show practice on the ground; providing a snapshot of

251 contrasting work in the Global South and North. With the former, we provide a brief

252 overview of action and then with the latter add some empirical material from a case study in

253 Salford, UK. In terms of the South Africa, we begin by focussing on Umlazi, which is the

254 second largest township (after Soweto) in Durban, South Africa. Development of the Umlazi

255 township began in 1961 and by 1965 it was opened for occupation (Minnaar, 2001).

256

257 The Umlazi township inherited the aftermaths of the apartheid government characterised with

258 spatial and economic isolation. Due to its sheer size, the typical problems of severe housing

259 shortage, major informal settlements, and high levels of unemployment were magnified. The

260 area is not only an economic heartland of Durban, but also an environmental hotspot

261 characterised by heavy industrial and large-scale residential development located in close

262 proximity in a topographically contained region. Hence the practice of UA in this area

263 represents a diversity of agricultural practices which have evolved from apartheid restrictions

264 to current mixed typologies consisting of communal and individual gardeners operating on

265 both subsistence and commercial levels. Though predominantly practised by women, it is

266 fulfilling nutritional and economic demands among the urban poor.

267

268

269 Figure 3: guerrilla gardening at a bus stop in Umlazi (Chipungu, 2016)

270

271 With regard to the informal movement, most of the UA practiced falls within this definition.

272 The practice of guerrilla gardening in the Umlazi area is a common phenomenon on road

273 verges, where municipal infrastructure (in the form of road signage and electricity power-

274 lines) compete for space with crops as shown in figure 3. On the other hand, open spaces,

275 meant to accommodate other social functions, have been overtaken by similar activities. In

276 this case, the residents are colonising any form of leftover space for UA activities, allowing

277 them to add to their diets and grow food within close proximity to their dwellings.

278

279 The extent of informal activity is also due to the lack of support for formal UA by authorities,

280 with significant barriers facing those those who wish to pursue more legitimate routes

281 (Chipungu et al., 2015). As Arku et al. (2012) note, there is a general lack of encouragement

282 and enabling around formal UA in African cities, with planners and other key gatekeepers

283 not realising the wider environmental and social benefits of the practice. Chipungu et al.

284   (2011) blame the historical development of many African cities which prevented the practice

285   developing in the heart of the urban centres. Due to the risk of the informal approach in

286   Africa, predominantly surrounding soil contamination, there have been calls for more funding

287   and support to encourage more legitimate projects to ensure that public health is not

288   endangered through the use of heavily-contaminated land for guerrilla gardening activities

289   (Chipungu et al., 2015; Haysom, 2007). Guerrilla gardening is not merely concentrated in

290   South Africa but spreads across the continent itself, with activity in the likes of Kenya,

291   Zimbabwe to the far reaches of Libya and other nations (Chipungu et al., 2015).

292

293   In terms of the Global North, and specifically the European context, there is a wide range of

294   informal guerrilla practices on the continental mainland, with activities in Spain, France,

295   Germany and elsewhere (see Bell et al., 2016); although this range is not reflected in

296   published academic material displayed in figure 2. An example from our own research can be

297   seen in Nitra, Slovakia, where guerrilla gardening has acted as a mechanism for reclaiming

298   unused land and starting a wider green movement. Close to the urban centre, in the year 2010

299   students colonised leftover patches of greenspace and began an informal allotment site. This

300   attracted others interested in the idea of UA before the students eventually applied for

301   permission to use the space legally. Retrospective permission was granted by the local

302   authority and now a successful project entitled 'Hyde Park' occupies the space, attracting

303   local residents and students alike to the area (Hyde Park, 2016).

304

305   Whether in the Global North or South, guerrilla gardening is an activity which has a profound

306   impact on the area in which it is practiced. Nevertheless, a connection between all these case

307   studies is often the lack of encouragement from authorities for this route; rather actors pursue

308   the authority once an informal project is established. As Reynolds (2008) argues, such

309 activity either eventually fails or legitimises in order to grow and seize on support. This is

310 particularly relevant in the South Africa case study in which guerrilla gardening was

311 practiced on a large-scale. We now, in contrast focus on an example of a local authority

312 embracing the informal movement and which is issuing a call for actors to help transform

313 neglected space on a large scale in the UK; drawing on empirical material, we add to the case

314 studies explored in this section. We then reflect on this approach before critiquing whether

315 informal UA should be encouraged on a wider scale.

316

317

318 **4. Embracing Informality: A Case Study of Salford, UK**

319

320 Salford, a city in the North West region of the UK, is one of the country's most deprived

321 areas (ONS, 2016). It is located in close proximity to Manchester and historically has offered

322 supporting services for its larger rival. In 2012 Salford City Council commissioned a master

323 plan for a large regeneration project in the heart of the city (see Pendleton Together, 2013).

324 The regeneration aimed to rejuvenate an area known as Pendleton through creating new

325 homes and employment opportunities for residents. The investment into this scheme stands at

326 around £650,000,000 and involves changing the urban fabric entirely: reducing brutalist

327 tower blocks, creating new jobs in the city and adding green infrastructure to the area

328 (Salford City Council, 2016).

329

330 Through the consultation process, planners and other key actors embraced the idea of UA and

331 embedded the concept within the masterplan. This included areas for new allotment sites,

332 temporary community gardens and the development of a large commercial urban farm.

333 Interestingly, the masterplan fits well with Viljoen's (2005) Continuous Productive Urban

334   Landscape (CPUL) concept, with the linking together of UA sites through green corridors

335   and other such tools. The urban farm acts as a hub for the regeneration, with the allotments,

336   community gardens, orchards and other UA connected to the space. Therefore there is a

337   conscious effort by the local authority to link together the spaces and create an inter-

338   connected network of UA across Salford. This also ties in well with key national UK policies

339   such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Natural Environment White

340   Paper (NEWP) which urge actors to maintain and improve the natural environment; the latter

341   also explicitly mentions the need to enhance green corridors, which aligns with the plan of a

342   CPUL network by Salford (DEFRA, 2011; DCLG, 2012).

343

344   In the Salford context, planners are championing a radical form of UA through the creation of

345   a commercial urban farm in the heart of the city's most deprived area. Salford is not alone in

346   the UK as there are similar examples including Brighton and Bristol which demonstrate how

347   planners are beginning to embrace the idea of UA (Wilson, 2014). In the Brighton example

348   planning guidance now exists for decision-makers to consider UA in new developments

349   within the city (see Brighton and Hove Council, 2011). There are also planned commercial

350   farms in other areas around the country, including in Oldham which was recently labelled the

351   UK's most deprived town (BBC News, 2016). However, unlike these other cities, Salford is

352   the first to actively encourage the informal movement in this landscape through using a

353   variety of marketing tools to call out to guerrilla gardeners to help regenerate land and enable

354   UA within the city. This adoption of guerrilla gardening is the first of its kind and thus

355   presents an interesting model to critically analyse.

356

357   Methodologically our research in this area focussed on mapping guerrilla activity before

358   conducting a series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews alongside

ethnographically-informed observation with three groups which operate in the city. Through

using a mixed methods approach we were able to gather an array of data, both subjective and

objective on the activities taking place. The primary aim here was to understand practice

from the key actors on the ground, both the guerrillas and local authority alike. The

ethnographic element involved attending digs and tours of previous sites by the guerrilla

gardeners. An interview was also conducted with the lead regeneration officer who was the

main actor behind the local authority's drive to encourage guerrilla gardening in the city. This

was in order to discover why the local authority was adopting such a proactive approach and

its ambitions for the activity. Through conversations and desktop research, three core groups

were found to be operating in the area:

- Incredible Edible Salford – started through guerrilla gardening in Eccles, a district

  of Salford before legitimising their activities. Some 20 people are involved in this

  group and range from retired individuals to horticultural experts and businessmen.

- The 'Guerrilla Gardener' – a lone gardener who colonises patches of land around

  the area, mainly for beautification purposes.

- The 'Pendleton Guerrillas' – a semi-formal group which is being used by the

  authority to attract others to the area. This mainly consists of local authority and

  community volunteers with around 5 in total.

The informal movement in Salford is extremely diverse, with a wide range of ages involved

and individuals from different backgrounds. With Incredible Edible Salford and the

Pendleton Guerrillas, this mainly involved local residents from deprived backgrounds,

whereas the Guerrilla Gardener was a member of staff at the nearby University. There were a

variety of reasons for their activities; from greening the urban environment to raising

384 awareness around UA to the average Salfordian. The latter connected all three, who viewed

385 UA as a potential tool for those with poor diets to have better access to fresh produce. As the

386 leader of Incredible Edible Salford stated, 'we were able to put that food out in the urban

387 setting to support people who may not have access to free fruit and vegetables, might not

388 even have the knowledge of what to grow, where to grow, what they can do with the food'.

389 This was reinforced by the solo 'Guerrilla Gardener' who felt that such activity was needed

390 in the locale alongside beautification, 'there's a real need to get people growing their own

391 fruit and vegetables in Salford'.

392

393   'Guerrilla gardening revives spaces - creating noise and getting people engaged. It

394   is fun, informal and a catalyst for bringing people together. There is an informal

395   movement in Salford. We've seen things just 'pop-up' in places!'

396   (Lead Project Officer, Salford City Council)

397

398 In terms of the third group explored, the Pendleton Guerrilla group was created through a

399 local authority officer responsible for the large regeneration project in the city. In this case,

400 he viewed guerrilla gardening as a mechanism for starting a grassroots movement in the city

401 which would enable residents to have a more intimate connection with the space. His vision

402 was to grow the movement and allow the community to take ownership of spaces; adopting

403 small patches of greenspace and larger ones within the regeneration area. A core reason for

404 this encouragement was his view that the space was overly-protected with large amounts of

405 fencing, CCTV and other negative features, 'we want to create a friendlier place, remove the

406 fences and get people growing stuff' (Lead Project Officer, Salford City Council).

407

408   He viewed guerrilla gardening as the perfect tool through which to push change from the

409   bottom up. The Pendleton Guerrillas was branded by the project officer who then pushed for

410   community members to take ownership of the brand; ironically this somewhat positions the

411   activity as top-down and as a hijacking of the guerrilla brand. During the interview, his

412   passion and enjoyment for the concept were evident 'Ron Finley [a Los Angeles guerrilla

413   gardener] is great, we really need our own Ron in Salford' (Lead Project Officer, Salford City

414   Council). His reference to Ron Finley here demonstrates his wider knowledge around the

415   practice. He also appeared to take inspiration from Africa, North America and other global

416   practices and wished to replicate the best of them within the Pendleton context: 'I really

417   would like people to get involved – the more the merrier!' (Lead Project Officer, Salford City

418   Council). This support goes beyond mere encouragement and involves the gifting of land to

419   guerrilla groups if they wish to use it. This actor now occupies a political position overseeing

420   a large area of the city and still actively encourages the practice. Through doing so he

421   influences local policy and attitudes towards guerrilla gardening.

422

423   With the Pendleton Guerrillas one could question whether this constitutes being part of the

424   informal movement as it appears to be encouraged (even initiated) by the local authority. It

425   must be noted that our observations nevertheless revealed that planning permission, risk

426   assessments and other such rigorous procedures were largely ignored. Rather the Pendleton

427   Guerrillas (in a similar manner to the wider guerrilla movement) adopted space without direct

428   consent and permission. Activities of this group included the creation of a 'guerrilla orchard'

429   and a range of temporary sites across the city. Figure 4 shows one of the 'meanwhile sites'

430   which used militaristic signage to raise awareness amongst the local community, attempting

431   to ensure that the activity was connected with the guerrilla group and not the wider authority.

432 Fundamentally, meanwhile sites are temporary spaces: often stalled development or leftover

433 land in which innovative activities can take place.

434

435

436 Figure 4: a meanwhile site complete with signage by the Pendleton Guerrillas (photograph

437 courtesy of Project Officer)

438

439 Observations were carried out on a variety of projects undertaken by the Pendleton

440 Guerrillas, with the most recent, a guerrilla orchard, being created in February 2016. This was

441 a large project which aimed to reclaim a site previously inaccessible to the community. In this

442 case the Pendleton Guerrilla group used trees donated by a local celebrity and planted 20

443 adjacent to the main road running through the city of Salford. Their aim was to 'provide free

444 fruit to the community' whilst simultaneously improving the aesthetics of the area (Pendleton

445 Guerrilla member). Through doing so they aimed to raise the profile of guerrilla gardening

446 and more formal types of UA in the city, encouraging other community members to join the

447 action. We conducted much of the observational element of the study in Salford and

448   witnessed a large turnout to this particular form of action, with an array of students, locals

449   and some authority members making an appearance.

450

451   In terms of other guerrilla practices, Incredible Edible Salford demonstrates the potential of

452   informal action to make a significant impact in a deprived area. The group formation shared

453   many characteristics with the Incredible Edible Todmorden group, using an informal

454   approach before proceeding to a more legitimate body which would enable it to access

455   funding. Through adopting a range of meanwhile sites, obtained through working with the

456   local planners and other key actors, they were able to grow their action and involve residents

457   across Salford. Eventually the group was able to purchase sites and have a permanent

458   physical and social footprint on the city's landscape, 'we have a farm now and sites across

459   Salford, working with the NHS, Age UK and others' (leader of Incredible Edible Salford).

460

461   Observational work with Incredible Edible Salford was more sporadic due to the varied

462   nature of their activities. Whilst out creating spaces for UA, either with permission or

463   without, it was clear the group had an intimate connection with the community. They often

464   used bizarre growing methods to attract attention, such as using leftover bottles to grow

465   vertically for instance or placing planters in very busy locations. This acted as a mechanism

466   to ignite conversation with passers-by who in turn became interested in their practices and

467   engaged with them about the concept of UA. In turn, this helped the Incredible Edible Salford

468   group to spread their message and encourage others to become involved in the wider

469   movement.

470

471   Whilst these two groups are quite vocal about their activities and easy to locate through social

472   media, the solo self-proclaimed Guerrilla Gardener demonstrates how there is often a

473   plethora of activity which is ongoing and difficult to track. The discovery of this informal

474   action in Salford was largely by accident, with the Guerrilla Gardener opting to take a much

475   more secretive approach: 'I just get on with things and plant stuff here and there' (Salford

476   Guerrilla Gardener). This correlates with earlier research which shows how many groups

477   prefer this approach and are not vocal about their work, rather they prefer to hide from the

478   media and cultivate space without the knowledge of others (Flore, 2006; Hardman and

479   Larkham, 2014). This solo guerrilla was encouraged by the local authority's encouragement

480   of the activity and viewed it as a positive move, 'I'd like to get involved and help, it makes

481   me feel less nervous about doing stuff' (Salford Guerrilla Gardener).

482

483   This removal of persecution was exactly the reason the lead project officer wished to

484   encourage the informal movement in Salford: 'we wanted to take away this idea that it wasn't

485   allowed… we really want people to get involved in whichever way they want to' (Lead

486   Project Officer, Salford City Council). Although this strategy may work with some

487   individuals, previous research has shown how the 'naughty' angle is a key driver for many

488   taking part in this movement (Hardman and Larkham, 2014). Many groups also use guerrilla

489   gardening as a tool to challenge authority and the right of the city, which again could be an

490   obstacle to embracing the underground movement. Through removing the thrill element – the

491   idea that you could be arrested for planting flowers or growing produce – the local authority

492   may be pushing away more 'radical' guerrilla gardeners.

493

494   Nevertheless, the authority's stance in this context appears to have encouraged more residents

495   to be involved in the informal route. Discussions with those taking part in activities revealed

496   how many were happy with how easy it was to be involved with UA in the city and how the

497   bureaucracy was largely removed. Through pushing for a more informal approach, the local

498   authority has removed the barriers preventing the community becoming involved in the UA

499   movement and has ultimately impacted positively on the area. Many of the guerrilla

500   gardeners surveyed revealed how they intended to apply for permission to grow their

501   activities and, like so many other groups, seize on funding for their projects.

502

503

504   **5. Moving Forward: Should we Encourage Guerrilla Gardening?**

505

506   The Salford case study raises the notion of how best to address the rise in the informal

507   approach and whether encouragement or restriction is preferred. In this case the authority has

508   embraced and enabled a range of informal UA activities across the city. The result is that

509   more residents are engaging in informal activities within the area and feel empowered to help

510   revitalise space. This in turn has enabled the local authority to entice those practising

511   informal action onto a more legitimate path, through offering land to enable their action to

512   grow and have a wider impact on the city's inhabitants. However, one must question those

513   involved and whether the informal approach is inclusive; contrary to formal UA, which has

514   often involves a need to embrace communities and those wishing to use the space, the

515   informal route does not necessarily have this option and practice differs widely between

516   groups. As previous research has shown, there is a darker side to this action and a risk that a

517   small element of the wider community is making self-interested decisions without

518   consultation (Crane et al., 2013; Adams et al., 2015). This is even more important when one

519   considers the possibility of transient communities (e.g. students) changing space without the

520   permission or inclusion of the local residents.

521

522   The Salford example challenges many of the negative assumptions of local authorities and

523   planners on their risk aversion to radical concepts such as UA and the use of meanwhile sites

524   for innovative activities (Scott et al., 2009; Taylor, 2010; Tornaghi, 2012; White and

525   Natelson, 2012). A crucial element of this wider criticism is the disjointed approach to

526   approving projects; decisions are argued to be subjective and vary from authority to authority

527   and across scales (Scott, 2001: Adams et al 2013). Whilst one may understand the positives

528   of a UA project, others may view it in a different manner (Scott and Carter, 2012). This is

529   evident with the example of Incredible Edible Todmorden, which has been fortunate enough

530   to have a proactive local authority interested in the notion of UA (IET, 2011). Nevertheless,

531   Reed et al. (2010) demonstrate how key actors, such as planners, are generally risk adverse

532   and embedded within legislation which guides the practice. In the UK, the planning system's

533   reliance on legislation, particularly the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), which

534   characterises agricultural activity in a rigid manner, is argued by Adams et al. (2013) to be a

535   major obstacle for UA. Scott (2001) explains that projects which do not conform to the act

536   are deemed 'unsustainable' in most cases, but the decision to approve a space is solely in the

537   hands of the planning officer/councillor dealing with the case: decisions are highly

538   subjective.

539

540   Adding to this critique, Reynolds (2008: 33) is extremely negative towards planning practice,

541   explaining that 'planning rules and codes of conduct' create places without personality or

542   landscapes of order (Qvistrom 2007). Through adopting an informal route Reynolds (2008)

543   argues that this can add much needed character and diversity to the local urban landscape,

544   with actors not restricted to spatial norms and able to act outside of restrictions often imposed

545   on more formalised projects. Adding to this, Crane et al. (2013) argue that guerrilla gardening

546   is a practice which brings creativity and innovation to our urban landscapes. Their case study

547   in Canada demonstrates how guerrilla gardeners can interpret the cityscape differently and, in

548   this case, use large amounts of available space for their UA action.

549

550   The hardline anti-planning rhetoric presented above by Reynolds suggests that it will be more

551   difficult to work alongside more radicalised guerrilla gardeners. Indeed, many guerrillas were

552   angry with recent UK Government efforts to bring about a 'Big Society' agenda in which

553   volunteers would effectively replace/add value to frontline authority services; in this case, the

554   rebellious gardeners were worried that, if they adopted a formal approach, their action would

555   be aligned to this ideal. Such groups and individuals will be reluctant to work with authorities

556   who may wish to encourage the activity. McKay (2011) has a negative view of such rhetoric

557   and argues that Reynolds' philosophy is too militarised in parts and isolated from other

558   aspects of guerrilla gardening. A core critique by McKay (2011) revolves around the

559   numbering system devised by Reynolds: those who sign up to his site are given a tag, with

560   Reynolds adopting 001. In this case, McKay (2011) feels that Reynolds is a self-imposed

561   general of the movement.

562

563   Since our research demonstrates how many are pursuing the informal approach purely for

564   ease, through the idea that they do not understand the procedure for applying for formal

565   permission, there is a real opportunity here to seize upon this interest. A simple solution

566   could involve raising awareness of the procedures through providing more information,

567   perhaps targeting existing UA provision first before the general population. In doing so more

568   formalised UA projects could be encouraged and prevent individuals from pursuing the

569   informal route; using charters, policies and other mechanisms to support the practice. Another

570   solution here could see more authorities following Salford's lead through the embracement of

571 those practicing without permission. In a similar manner to Salford, some form of loose

572 control could be implemented which still allows actors some freedom with their efforts.

573

574 Indeed, the very notion of formalised guerrilla gardening is an oxymoron; many pursue the

575 activity predominantly due to its informal nature (McKay, 2011). As Reynolds (2008) shows,

576 guerrilla gardeners have a passion for taking back control and not fitting with authority

577 views. If planners and other key actors were to legitimise their action this could take away

578 crucial elements of the subversive practice. Taking away the informal nature of the activity

579 will render guerrilla gardening to merely transition to formal gardening, with many actors not

580 wishing to pursue the activity without the former element (Hardman and Larkham, 2014).

581 Some work is needed here to engage core guerrilla gardeners around this idea and how both

582 parties, the planners and informal actors, can work together to enable greener and more

583 productive cities.

584

585 Ultimately more research is required on the nature, extent, variety and success of practice and

586 to uncover the benefits derived from adopting an informal approach to UA. Along with more

587 work with officials – in particular planners – there is a need to delve further into practices

588 located in the Global South and to move away from the UK and USA which dominate the

589 literature base. Perhaps more urgently there is a need for a more thorough quantitative

590 exploration into the risk associated with both formal and informal UA practices, discovering

591 the levels of contaminants in community gardens, allotments and other such spaces. In

592 arguing for more research into these particular areas we hope more studies will add to the

593 emerging research base around informal UA and provide more of an insight into this

594 secretive world.

595

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