CHAPTER 3

Grassroots Movements – Towards Cooperative Forms Of Green Urban Development?

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Private and public gardens have been an integral part of European cities ever since – as spaces for urban food production, recreation and social interaction (see Chapter 1). Beside the conventional forms of allotment gardens, a new variety of urban gardening is emerging across Europe in recent years: New grassroots movements expand the types of urban gardening (see Chapter 9) through new forms of community, guerrilla, intercultural or neighbourhood gardens (Ernwein 2014; Bendt et al. 2013; Ferris et al. 2001). Various groups of actors initiate gardening projects from the bottom-up or perform gardening as projects which have been initiated top-down, respectively. They are either part of existing urban garden communities and associations or constitute as new ones. These gardening initiatives are seen as a response to recent urban social, economic and political crisis and as an expression of "green activism" at the same time (Shepard 2013; Rosol 2010). The gardening activists often anticipate upcoming changes, e.g. climate change and post-fossil-age or appropriate public spaces through gardening as a form of political protest and a quest for the "right to space" (Adams and Hardman 2014; Schmelzkopf 2002). These new urban gardens are considered as social places as well as spaces for food production and therefore related to urban agriculture and farming (Morgan 2015; Eizenberg 2013; Viljoen and Wiskerke 2012; Ferris et al. 2001).

Although urban gardens are highly appreciated in public debate for their various contributions to a sustainable development of liveable urban environments (Guitart et al. 2012), they appear as "contested spaces" due to spatial conflicts and diverging

interests in urban planning and development (Schmelzkopf 1995, 2002). Even the community gardens in New York City, which are a source of inspiration for the recent gardening movements in Europe, are still considered as contested spaces although they emerged in the 1960s already and have partly been legalised and supported by the municipality in various ways (Eizenberg 2013). Although the new forms of gardening have been emerging in Europe since the 1990s they have just recently been discovered by local political and administrative actors as an important agent of urban development (Ernwein 2014). Despite a growing acknowledgement of their contribution to green and liveable urban neighbourhoods, the responses from local politicians and planning authorities to these new gardening projects vary considerably: They encompass a variety of cooperative, bureaucratic, neo-liberal and even hindering practices (Adams and Hardman 2014, Rosol 2012). In this regard two observations can be made: On the one hand voluntary or civic engagement of gardeners is seen as an important key to sustainability as it enables new cooperative forms of green urban development. Thereby civil society and political-administrative actors work together collaboratively in terms of green space governance encompassing joint planning, implementation, use, maintenance and protection of these gardens (Ernwein 2014; Ghose and Pettygrove 2014; Sondermann 2014; Rosol 2010). On the other hand problems and conflicts can be observed regarding the use of urban spaces for gardening revealing logics of political and administrative thinking, neo-liberal attitudes and the "dark side of planning" in this context (Certomà 2014; Rosol 2012).

These possibilities and limitations of cooperative forms of green urban development are of central interest in this chapter. Starting with a closer look on new grassroots movements we contextualise these in the realm of spatial politics and planning. Our focus thereby is on responses from political and administrative authorities to urban gardening practices in general and forms of cooperation in particular. Accordingly, this Chapter is based on an overview of new gardening initiatives in selected countries within Europe, through demonstration of their emergence and functions (see section 3.2). Furthermore, the corresponding approaches in politics and planning will be analysed by decoding the constellation of actors and planning frameworks as well the various forms of supporting and non-supporting approaches (3.3). Drawing on this analysis, changes in political and planning cultures towards

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cooperative forms of green urban development will be discussed (3.4). This chapter is based on and illustrated by findings from European case studies conducted in Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and the UK.

3.2 GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS – NEW GARDENING INITIATIVES AND COMMUNITIES

Democracy and public awareness at local level are key components of collaborative planning and participatory spatial practices. Democratic spatial governance targets the overall deliberation of collective activity involved in place management and development (Healey 2010: 49). There is a common background for new forms of gardening initiatives all over Europe, which focuses on the notion of "collective" (Kitao 2005) more emphatically than the traditional allotment and family gardens do. This is a result of the needs and the processes motivating these initiatives, as well as the social groups they attract (Adams and Hardman 2014). If a main goal of the traditional forms of urban gardening was the reconnection of the urban population with nature, soil and food production, new initiatives are more on the side of reclaiming a true notion of public space in terms of public access, community management and function for the public interest (Ernwein 2014, Weilacher 2013, Madanipour 2009).

What is new about the new gardening initiatives?
New gardening initiatives are not referring to traditional forms of allotment, war or relief gardens that could be found in Europe during the 20th century; neither to vegetable and family gardens grown under the tradition of urban informality in Southern Europe since the 1950s (Ioannou 2014; Douglas 2014). In many of the cases new gardens do not have an autarchic, survivalist or propagandist aim, showing a notable conceptual shift compared to previous forms of gardening whose origin is described in detail in Chapter 1.

The very names taken by these gardens show their focus on a community dimension: "giardini collettivi" in Italy and "syllogikos kipos" in Cyprus (collective garden), "huertos comunitarios" in Spain and "Gemeinschaftsgärten" in Germany (community gardens), "Interkulturelle Gärten" (intercultural gardens) and "Kiez-" or

"Nachbarschaftsgärten" (neighborhood gardens) also in Germany, "volkstuin" (socially-oriented gardens) in Belgium, and many similar designations used all over Europe referring to projects that could be encompassed under the community gardening term.

Most community gardens are bottom-up initiatives, arising from local communities, whose main feature is being planned and run collectively by civilian groups that occupy urban brownfields or vacant plots, and that in general only later attract (or explicitly require) administrative support in financial, logistic and legal terms. As gardening requires a certain security in land access in order to invest time and resources and being able to see the plants growing, a balance is generally maintained between informality and formal steps. Nevertheless among community gardens hybrid forms can also be found, launched or supported by institutions or even local authorities, including the renovation of traditional forms of allotment gardens (e.g. in Belgium the relocation or reorganization of allotments leads to the development of new recreational, sport and open areas). All of them are responding to new social contexts and concerns, so they're developing new objectives, uses and images. This is spatially translated into the significance of common spaces designated for social exchange, recreation and creativity, and into their unique designs and locations that differ from those of allotment gardens, unfolding a wide range of new types (see Chapter 9).

The references of these new initiatives are not local or national, but rather international movements, particularly the community gardens born in USA in the 1970's, Latin American urban agriculture, and more recently the Transition Towns and the Guerrilla Gardening movements. The latter can be broadly defined as the unlawful occupation of land, and has its origin in the UK (Reynolds 2008); this movement brings together students, businessmen, local authority employees and a wide range of other actors who are interesting in colonising the urban. Generally speaking, within the UK, guerrilla gardeners either pursue the activity for aesthetic reasons or for the production of food (McKay 2011; Milbourne 2010, 2011). Many successful urban gardening projects have sprouted through guerrilla gardening: perhaps the most famous is Incredible Edible Todmorden, which is an initiative in the North of England involving the growing of produce across every vacant space in a

small town. This highly successful project began through guerrilla gardening and soon became a global sensation (Adams et al. 2014).

A common sort of guerrilla gardening is street gardening, consisting in green interventions, mostly in form of planting flowers along streets, on traffic islands or around street trees (Haide et al. 2011). In most cases it is an occasional action where gardeners remain anonymous, intending to emerge as an oppositional act to conventional forms of greening public spaces by municipal authorities. Nevertheless it is not always considered in this way, in several German cities this action is encouraged by local authorities turning into a more formal initiative. For instance, the local authorities in Düsseldorf and Hannover officially support "street gardening" since the early 1980s, whereas in other German cities it is still regarded as illegal or informal (Sondermann 2014).

The emergence of urban gardening and food growing through informal and interim uses of land is usually due to the inadequacy of traditional forms, to the public authorities' lack of interest and to the administrative delays in the development of new sites or schemes; as a result of that civil society takes responsibility, developing and maintaining new spaces. In countries with a tradition in allotment gardens, issues around too lengthy allotment waiting lists, inadequate access to such sites, and the lack of support from planners and other key actors for urban agricultural activities have made gardeners turn to other forms of urban food growing (WRO 2012, Scott et al 2013; Tornaghi 2012, 2014). In addition some gardeners consider traditional forms of allotment gardening to be too conservative and overregulated (Appel et al. 2011, Sonderman 2013).

Crisis, collective action and gardening initiatives

Varied reasons can explain the emergence of new gardening initiatives; every region and country have their own context and particularities and the social actors approach the projects from specific concerns or struggles, but some recurring urban and social processes can be outlined here. The link between crisis and urban gardens is commonly remarked (Adams and Hardman 2014; Schmelzkopf 2002). This is also true for the community gardens, appeared in New York City during the oil and fiscal crisis in the 1970's, with the distinctiveness that for the first time the gardens were not

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fostered by a governmental program – a group of artists and activists called 'Green Guerrillas', beginning a grassroots dynamic related to human wellbeing, community building and improvement of everyday living spaces at neighbourhood levels (Eizenberg 2013). This sort of projects is the inspiration for those community gardens and urban farms that appeared in the UK and the Netherlands shortly after, where echoes of May 68, counterculture and environmentalism can also be found (Mckay 2011). Society's demands about participation and decision-making in urban development and dissatisfaction with the traditional planning system can be also found in this period in some European countries (Haumann 2013, Othengrafen and Sondermann 2015).

During the 1980's and 1990's other regional social movements continued working in urban requalification, reclamation and creation of green areas. Gardening initiatives were promoted by environmentalist or landscape associations in Italy (such as Legambiente, WWF or Italia Nostra), or by neighbourhood associations in Spain, although community gardens were not widespread. In Germany the environmental movement also reclaimed more urban green spaces during the 1980's (see Box 4), and some areas were squatted for gardens and urban farms (Rosol 2010), until in the late 1990s gardening projects were established in bigger German cities, especially in Berlin (Appel et al. 2011; Meyer-Renschhausen 2011).

More recently the Mediterranean Spring, initiated by the protests in Spanish and Greek cities in 2011 and 2012 encompassing the movements "15-M" and "¡Democracia Real YA!" (real democracy NOW!), has revitalised collective action in Southern Europe, and has spread globally. New gardening projects such as "Huerto del Sol" in Madrid or "L'orto errante" in Rome are directly or indirectly linked to the social movement and both physical and symbolic artefacts thereof in the neighbourhoods. Spain, Greece and Italy have seen a growth in community gardening after the protests, although the first experiences began in the mid-2000s (Fernández and Morán 2015). The Occupy movement is also linked to community gardening, for example through by planting flowers at camp sites, collaborating with existing projects or mutual support as expressions of solidarity and opposing economic and political elites (Karim 2014).

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A direct link between crisis and urban gardens is related to food access. In this regard, an outstanding reference is Detroit, a city hit by economic decline, unemployment, social inequalities and urban shrinking processes, that are being faced by a huge diversity of grassroots urban agriculture projects and networks (including more than 1000 community gardens), intended to ensure food justice, environmental regeneration, education and community empowerment (Pothukuchi 2011, Viljoen and Bohn 2014). Although there's no such a broad process in Europe a parallel could be drawn. Especially in Southern Europe an austerity urbanism is arising from the difficulties in maintaining public spaces and developing facilities (Ioannou 2014). Most of the community gardens in these countries are located in public land and are used with a new political mean, reclaiming social participation in public space planning and management; in this regard the gardens can be seen as embedded in the overall struggle against privatization of public goods and services. Community gardens are also used as testing and learning spaces, linked to the reflection about alternative employment and local food networks (see Box 1).

Contemporary crisis is both a direct and a subtle reference in European urban gardeners' motivations, even in countries less affected by it, but where several groups, as immigrants and vulnerable population, face austerity (Morán and Fernández 2014). High unemployment rates and other direct effects of economic crisis, as food poverty, are addressed in gardening projects, generally conducted by social institutions, NGOs or local authorities, in which socially oriented gardens food production is part of other forms of social assistance (see Box 3).

BOX 1: 'Agros in Hellinikon', Greater Athens Area (Greece)
Author: Theodosia Anthopoulou

"Agros" (farm) in Hellinikon, a community garden in the Greater Athens Area, was initiated in 2011 by a group of political and ecological activists as part of the struggle to prevent the large-scale privatization of the former international airport of Hellinikon. The area is considered as the last major unbuilt public property in the metropolitan Athens area (620 ha) located in the southeast seafront of Attica. Initial government plans in the 2000s was the creation of a high green Metropolitan Park but public debt crisis in 2009 foiled this perspective. The whole project has been internationally

promoted as one of the largest planned real estate development in Europe (Prentou, 2014). At regional and local level, it is still claimed by municipal authorities and citizens as a freely accessible public space.

Agros in Hellinikon is an emblematic case of guerilla gardening in Greece. It represents a grassroots response to the multifaceted crisis (financial, political, socio-economic, etc) experienced by the Greek society. Its main objective is to propose another model of land management through participatory processes relying on productive activities and social functions. The garden covers 2,6 ha including a vegetable garden and an olive grove (1.400 trees). The municipal authorities have provided the basic equipment and watering supply. The core members of the collective include about 20 people on about 100 volunteers, and the decision-making process follows the principles of direct democracy, equality and self-organization.

The basic aim is not food production per se but the educational and demonstrative character of the garden. Traditional seeds are coming from Peliti community as well as from other organic farmers, and a seed bank has been organized with different Greek varieties. Biological methods are used for the pest control and fertilizing. Produce is predominately given to the social services and offered to needy citizens through relevant organizations. Until now, the garden has received students from the area's schools in the context of environmental education and has supported school gardens by providing traditional seeds and farming advice. It also organises seminars on permaculture and festivals as well as provides seeds and know-how to interested growers, highlighting the issues of urban food sovereignty.

"Agros" in Hellinikon represents new emerging city movements in Greece challenging both the post-war urban development model and the delocalisation of food production within productivist agriculture. At a local level, it functions as a meeting place that brings together concerned citizens from the broader Athens area who, through gardening, express the social demand for the re-appropriation of public space.

Photos

Fig. 3.1: "Agros in Hellinikon" community garden, Crop tending by volunteer growers, City of Hellinikon (Greater Athens Area), Greece, Spring 2013. Credits:

References

Anthopoulou 2013; Morán and Fernández 2014; Prentou 2014

Links

http://agroselliniko.blogspot.com

http://www.peliti.gr

Social, environmental and political meanings and goals

Community building and social cohesion, human wellbeing, empowerment, cooperation, solidarity and multicultural integration are common goals of community gardeners across Europe, and not only in gardens located in vulnerable city areas, or addressed to population in special needs. Examples of socially-oriented projects can be found in gardens devoted to varied issues, from the German intercultural gardens aimed to social integration of immigrant population (Appel et al. 2011), to the mutual aid garden communities in Greek medium cities; gardens holding activities for disabled people, or those assisting social and economic problems as social gardens in Greece, Cyprus, Spain or Belgium.

Although gardeners are often depicted as young, well-educated individuals, studies show that garden communities are heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, educational and financial aspects, including individuals from the middle class to the elderly and working class (Adams and Hardman 2014) with different backgrounds and usually without previous experience in farming (Ioannou 2014). Gardening communities are often organized in assemblies and working groups in which decision making takes place. Generally everyone involved in the organisation process is also a gardener, although a broader distance between organizers and participants can be seen in some socially-oriented initiatives, developed by NGOs, volunteers, social action groups or municipal social services. Despite the organizers act as facilitators,

starting the projects and encouraging citizens' involvement, this is not an easy task because the residents of vulnerable urban neighbourhoods may lack in community notion and motivation. While a broad involvement is always the best practice, sometimes it is difficult to avoid internal subgroups for management and coordination. A deeper insight into gardeners' motivations and relationships can be found in Chapter 13.

The act of taking care of the daily life spaces and their beautification leads to a physical and mental appropriation of space, and increases the place attachment (Gadenz 2011). Subsequently a commitment with self-managed spaces is developed, and the communities are strengthened around them, developing a "relational regeneration" parallel to the spatial regeneration (Fernández and Morán 2015). This relational regeneration involves not only the gardening community but also a wider network of social actors within the neighbourhood, including schools, social and senior centres, and local associations. Links and alliances can be identified even at city or at regional level, where loose networks are created focussing on different issues, as food, planning, environment and participation. This array of informal links highlights the development of a new political tradition, different from those of the allotment gardens that belong to formal structures, as national or international federations, which were more related to the classical working class culture. Especially where such traditional structures do not exist, community garden networks are a further step towards stability, visibility, legitimacy and negotiation capacity, proving to be a successful tool for supporting and promoting new projects, holding joint events, as well as making easier the daily practice by activities such as collective purchasing of resources (eg. manure or straw), training workshops, or designing of manuals and protocols (see Box 2).

BOX 2: Community garden networks and their impact on politics and planning – the case of Milan (Italy)
Author: Giorgia Silvestri

In the first phase of the community garden movement in Milan (2003-2009), the different gardening groups did not collaborate and conducted negotiations with public administration on their own. During this period several gardening projects have been

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established, like 'Il Giardino degli Aromi' (2003), 'I Giardini del Sole' and 'Gianbellgarden' (2009). In October 2010, during a public event at 'I Giardini del Sole', some organizers of the first community gardens got in touch with each other and started to share information. After several meetings between different community gardeners they established a network called 'Libere Rape Metropolitane'. Through this network community gardens initiatives can support each other, share information, organize workshops and events, and advice citizens that want to create a community garden. In this period several community gardens were created (e.g. 'Isola Pepe Verde', 'I Giardini in Transito', 'Gruppo Verde' at 'Cascina Cuccagna', 'Quarto in Transizione' of 'Nostrale' association). The network 'Libere Rape Metropolitane' progressively empowered, grew and established a contact with the municipality of Milan. After a seven month dialogue process with city councilmen, the community gardens' network reached an agreement on the management of the vacant green spaces of the municipal property called 'Giardini Condivisi' and in 2012 other community gardens were created including 'Cascina Albana', 'Passparverd', 'Coltivando', and 'Ortofficina'. Despite these successes of the network, in 2012 a part of the park where 'I Giardino degli Aromi' community garden is set, was at risk as has been selected for the realization of a building project by the Province of Milan. The practitioners of 'Il Giardino degli Aromi' opposed that plan and through their networking they successfully mobilized associations and citizens and even created a new activist network, with the collaboration of multiple local associations and cooperatives, with the purpose to stop the building project – the 'Seminatori di Urbanità' (In English Sowers of Urbanity). Collaboratively they developed a campaign to demonstrate the environmental value of the area and collected signatures aiming to request a variation of the 'Piano del Governo del Territorio' (PGT) (local development plan). In November 2013 the municipality of Milan approved the request of 'vincolo paesaggistico' (special planning control) for the area surrounding 'Il Giardino degli Aromi' considering the interests of the citizens and activists and taking into account its environmental and historical values. Currently the bureaucratic process for the approval of the 'vincolo paesaggistico' of the area is still ongoing since the change of the PGT need to be approved by the governmental department responsible for the environment and the historical buildings of the Province of Milan. This example illustrates how important networking is for gardeners as it contributes to new balances of power and interests in negotiations with political and administrative

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actors.

Fig. 3.3 Isola Pepe Verde – The creativity of creating green from the cement, Green Pepper Island, Milan, Italy, July 2013. Credits: Giorgia Silvestri.

References

Based on forty-five semi-structured interviews with actors, conducted by Giorgia Silvestri; Silvestri and Frantzeskaki (forthcoming); Silvestri 2014

Links

http://www.agricity.it

http://www.nostrale.it

http://www.ilgiardinodegliaromi.org

https://isolapepeverde.wordpress.com

http://rape.noblogs.org

Fig. 3.4 School visit to a community garden in Madrid. Credits: J.L. Fernández Casadevante.

Environmental consciousness is the other main aspect describing new gardening initiatives (Shepard 2013). Most of the community gardens are intended to contribute to ecological regeneration and environmental education, greening derelict land and brownfields. Organic practices are followed, as biological pest control, efficient watering systems and composting, moreover, an effort is made in integrating and making visible natural cycles in the city, using demonstrative and educative means and tools (see Box 4). A commitment with traditional local knowledge can also be found in some gardens, regarding preservation and reproduction of local varieties, collaboration with seed banks and agro-diversity networks, recovery of traditional organic systems, and dissemination and training activities (see Box 1).

Being aware of various forms of environmental crisis, gardening activists refer to discourses such as post-growth economy, transition towns, peak oil, food sovereignty and local food networks (Sondermann 2014, Fernández and Morán 2012). These

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references represent the more political side of the new initiatives, opposed to neoliberal city planning, and reclaiming the "right to space" (Adams and Hardman 2014; Schmelzkopf 2002). In this sense the gardens are seen as "emergent spatialities", glimpses of a different, desired urban life, materialized and tested by collective action (Stavrides 2010).

Whilst in traditional allotment gardens some social and environmental concerns may have been included with varying success, the new initiatives treat them as central features. Social and environmental objectives are producing new ways of gardening and use of space, holding new activities and events in the gardens, and developing new ways of design, implementation and management.

Fig. 3.5 Organic farming practices in Agros in Hellinikon, Athens. Credits: P.Totsikas and S.Ioakim

3.3 URBAN GARDENING IN SPATIAL POLITICS AND PLANNING

Focusing on the various approaches and responses to urban gardening in different countries, the following section proceed to present the key actors involved in each country, how urban gardening is viewed by planning departments and authorities generally as well as what barriers preventing the practice or what policies supporting initiatives are put in place. A broad variety of forms and tools are deployed in different European contexts for advancing different approaches to understand and collectively re-invent public urban space and addressing some important spatial issues related to neoliberal city planning, most notably the complex interplay between public and private space (see Chapter 9). This crucial relationship is creatively re-interpreted from urban gardeners with ad hoc solutions, negotiation of different interests and the production of innovative forms of "producing" spaces of meaning through practices of everyday life (de Certeau 1988; Eizenberg 2013).

From the comparative analysis of different national contexts it can be understood that two specific structural elements need to be present for new forms of urban gardening to emerge:

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1. **commitment or openness toward urban informality** (Douglas 2014) as a possible mode of negotiation between citizens and official planners, which can produce collaborative planning initiatives;
2. **presence of a vibrant civil society** and social movements endowed with strong global connections that are able to forge links, gather support, exchange experiences and aggregate locals around a common matter of concern, most notably the lack of green public space (see Chapter 13).

For instance, in Italy urban gardening initiatives often emerge in tight link with the social movements (e.g. most of the major social and environmental organisations today run gardening projects, e.g. CEMEA, Legambiente etc.). This also explains why gardeners often establish links with other informal planning initiatives, including alternative economic networks, transient cities or urban green renovation programmes, projects for disadvantaged people or initiatives in sustainable mobility (Calori 2009).

A noticeable difference, however, between these two last points arises when coming to the regional contexts. The traditional form of allotment gardens was historically quite popular in West and central European countries (e.g. Austria, France, Germany, Poland and the UK) with the aim of helping the needy and providing working class with the possibility to cultivate their (fresh) food (see Chapter 9). These countries still present a quite strong definition of both gardening practices in urban space and their regulation – including in applying definitions and rules to new forms of urban gardening. On the contrary Mediterranean countries had a weaker, or none, history of allotment gardens in their cities; this means that urban gardening is a comparatively recent phenomenon (including allotments) and its regulation is still in an initial phase while many urban gardening initiatives primarily emerged as forms of socio-environmental activism. The Eastern European countries and the Scandinavian region present on their turn a decisive interest for the form of allotments whose presence, despite not dating back many decades ago, is highly regulated and understood by administration as social welfare measure. These differences are being currently levelled by the increasing amount of cross-bordering connections but they still explain most of the distinctive traits in the evolution of urban gardening in different countries and different planning regimes (see Chapters 1, 2 and 4).

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Actors involved

The kind of actors involved in urban gardening initiatives in different countries is rather similar. Principal actors can be grouped in three categories (Fig. 3.6): Firstly to mention are urban gardening initiatives, which run by local citizens who are either formally organised in associations or informally constituted as groups. They initiate, plan, implement and maintain gardening projects either as informal land-uses or in cooperation with local politics and administration. This second group of actors is officially in charge of the (legal) regulation of all kinds of land-use. In some cases political and administrative bodies proactively advance new gardening initiatives by permitting the use of land, by the allocation of public land to these initiatives or even through initiating own projects. Other actors such non-profit associations or even private investors are in some cases involved in gardening initiatives as they provide support (information, funds, time, tools…). In some occasions existing environmental, social and landscape associations contribute to the diffusion of gardening culture by helping existing processing, fostering emerging spontaneous initiatives and establishing official contacts on their behalf with relevant administration (e.g. the protocol between the Italia Nostra, one of the oldest Italian landscape association, and the National Association of Italian Municipalities for granting support to urban gardeners all over the country). In specific circumstances new forms of urban gardening are initiated by established environmentalist or landscape associations (e.g. the Legambiente, WWF or Italia Nostra initiatives in Italy). Last, but not least, the property owners are involved as they have to agree to the use of their property for urban gardening.

Fig. 3.6 Actors involved in cooperative green urban development. Credits: Own illustration (Martin Sondermann)

Relationships between these groups of actors are generally non-linear. In some cases associations take the initiative and the municipality is involved afterwards; in other cases the municipality itself run the process; or this is automatically a partner because urban gardens are allocated to lands being redeveloped by the city. In general the planning of urban gardens often escapes the duality of official planning

versus bottom-up planning. In most cities there are networks of people and organizations involved in urban gardening and urban agriculture that include citizens, companies, organizations as well as the municipality and research institutes (e.g. many gardening initiatives in Belgium are characterised by this trait). In contrast to conventional allotment gardens, modern urban gardens such as community gardens are not regulated specifically through laws or acts on federal and states level, neither in those countries, like Germany, that already issued specific rules for urban gardening (Sondermann 2014).

Municipal offices however are the first interested and required to deal with the phenomenon; it is therefore quite common to find many different rules issued by different cities administrators and concerning planning and permissions, land-use regulations, stakeholders' roles and responsibilities all over Europe. Basically the local authorities are interested in regulating the terms of use and clarifying responsibilities, rights and obligations. Therefore they often sign contracts and agreements with community gardening associations or individual gardeners, like leasing contracts, contracts for maintenance or formal sponsorships; or, in those countries where this is allowed such as Germany, informal permissions to use public spaces can be also granted (Sondermann 2014).

Fig. 3.7 Greenhouse shared by the Madrid Community Gardens Network, located in University premises. Credits: Alberto López Romero

Urban planning

In almost every country the municipalities have sovereignty over legally-binding planning decision and thus can determine the border between authorised and non-authorised gardening initiatives in agreement with both their political willingness and administrative constraints (see Chapter 2). In considering the implications of the municipalities' power over planning decisions, some common traits in the investigated cases suggest that the key issues are:

- assessment of public interest
- degree of professionalization in urban planning and open space design
- legal recognition

- reliability and long-term commitment

Even when administrations are in general supportive towards new urban gardening initiatives, this does not imply that they will support any single initiative. In some cases the real public interest character of the initiative can be questioned (e.g. in gardens where fences are required to prevent vandalism). Moreover, an assessment of interests is obligatory in the cases of public property with other potential uses such as social housing, children playgrounds, sports areas or public parks. As most activists are not professional planners, neither gardeners and in some cases this can be an obstacle in performing their initiatives; therefore their degree of professionalization in urban planning and open space design is also an important success factor. Many gardening groups are organized as loose groups and they do not form legal entities. This prevents them from the possibility to conclude contracts and in some cases it even determines the failure of projects because of a missing legal recognition through local authorities (Sondermann 2014). Some local authorities express their concerns about the seriousness of gardening initiatives which are perceived as extemporaneous forms of political opposition. Quite often two conflicting rationals of action can be observed in the cooperation between public and civil society actors: 'short-term interventions' vs. 'long-term development' and 'gardening as ecological and social action' vs. 'political protest and opposition'. These conflicts are hindering trustful and reliable partnerships and consequently the cooperation between garden-activists and local politics and administration (ebd.).

Responses to urban gardening practices

Whilst the previous section focussed on key actors, our attention now shifts to political and administrative responses of urban gardening practices (see Chapter 9 for a reflection on motivations for formal gardening practises). Attempting to map responses to urban gardening across Europe is extremely complex and thus this section provides a snapshot, based on case studies, to illustrate the various views and thoughts on the practice. Whilst urban gardening has been embraced in North America for decades, 'new' forms of the practice are only just being established within the European context (Adams et al. 2014, Anthopoulou 2012, Eizenberg 2013, Ernwein 2014, see Chapter 9).

In the UK for instance, these alternative forms of urban gardening are slowly being embraced; cities such as Manchester, London, Brighton, Bristol and many others form part of the Sustainable Food Cities network, whilst many urban areas have a food charter and a food policy to improve or champion newer forms of urban gardening (Hardman and Larkham 2014; Tornaghi 2014). This shift has only occurred in the last few years, with many UK cities looking to North America for success stories and examples of how to garden differently in urban built environments (Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). A similar situation can be seen in countries such as Germany, France, Switzerland and others, which are now embracing these spaces and promoting the ideal of a more informal form of urban gardening (Ernwein 2014, Sondermann 2014).

Despite some advances in the political and administrative handling of new forms of urban gardening there are still difficulties occurring in the coordination and regulation of land-use. Such difficulties have led some groups to practice urban gardening without permission: starting unlawful community gardens, urban farms and smaller projects without consent from the landowner or local authority. 'Guerrilla gardeners', as these groups are sometimes named, can be found across the globe (Crane et al. 2012). Yet despite the global reach of this movement, there is little analysis of guerrilla gardening practices, especially within the European context. Hardman and Larkham's (2014) ethnographic research into guerrilla gardening demonstrates how sites in the UK range in size: from the small-scale action of 'F Troop', a group colonising land next to a busy motorway system, to the ambitious plans of the women's group, who created an unlawful community garden, guerrilla gardeners can substantially alter and improve urban spaces. Adding to this are other accounts of guerrilla activity, such as Zanetti's (2007) observations of London-based unlawful gardeners or the many accounts by Reynolds (2008) from across the globe. It has been argued that the guerrilla gardening movement is expanding not only in the UK, but across the world (Adams and Hardman 2014). Within the UK, Scott (2001) provides a glimpse into how authorities may respond to large guerrilla agricultural projects. In this case, an unpermitted permaculture project in Wales is discovered by a planning enforcement officer during routine aerial photography (Adams et al. 2014; Scott 2001). Despite the group applying for retrospective planning permission, to

farm the area and erect small huts on the space, the planning authority refused the application and declared that the group should disband their operation. Following a large international protest, the authority eventually relented and permitted the group to practice on the land under a temporary agreement. Similar situations can be observed in other European countries, such as the Rosa Rose garden in Berlin, Germany, which originally started through guerrilla gardening before transitioning into a formal space (Bendt et al. 2013). However, when a developer decided to seize the land, the group reverted to their guerrilla gardening ways to protect the space. Other countries, from Spain to Portugal, Greece, Italy and more feature a large array of guerrilla gardening; particularly those countries hardest hit by the economic recession can see a rise in such urban gardening practices (Morán and Fernández 2014; Sevilla-Buitrago 2014).

Fig. 3.8 'Elisabeths Garten / Garten am KIT' – Temporary garden set up in the context of the international art festival 'Quadriennale Düsseldorf'. Credits: M. Sondermann

In response to the vast amounts of interest and uptake of the activity, one would presume that authorities have plans for regulation, but this is not always the case. In the UK for instance, whilst traditional allotments have been regulated for some time, these newer forms of urban gardening are almost unregulated (cf. Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). A similar situation can be found in Belgium, which has also seen allotment gardening regulated for decades: using a standard set of laws and regulations, with these determining the amount of space that is used for planting and for leisure, the character of the hedges and garden sheds, and so on. However, the new types of urban gardens do not fit to a standardised set of rules. Yet in Belgium there are some examples of a new kind of regulative system being used. One such example, that surpasses the scale of the urban gardening complex, is the system of 'Torekens' at the Rabot site in Ghent: Local people (usually low-income migrant population) are paid in an alternative currency for every hour they work in the garden. The Torekens can be used in certain shops and in the local social restaurant. Torekens can also be earned by working as a babysitter, flowering the streets, etc. and the currency can be used to 'buy' vegetables in the urban garden. This way a new kind of regulative socio-economic regulative system is installed that runs parallel

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to the 'real' world but is used as an educational device to teach people how to integrate in society (see Box 3).

BOX 3: Hybrid brownfield development – De Site community gardens in Ghent (Belgium)

Authors: Chiara Certomá and Bruno Notteboom

The De Site ('The Site') community gardens cover a one-hectare brownfield in a former industrial site in the Rabot area in Ghent (Belgium). When the industrial plant was closed in 2006, the entire area became property of the city. It is positioned next to an area that is mainly inhabited by low-income people and migrant families. At that time, the city and the Tondelier development company drew a plan for sustainable residential housing, facilities and services. As the reconversion project was expected to take more than ten years, the community development association Samenlevingsopbouw involved the city as a partner in a gardening project in 2007. During the planning process many actors were involved: The City Council, Samenlevingsopbouw, Tondelier, the neighbourhood residents, local shops, social and cultural associations. As a first step the city administration negotiated with Tondelier some temporary restoration works for protection from soil contamination and the provision of a basic water irrigation system.

De Site is a great success amongst the different communities in the area, and today it includes 160 family plots, a common assembly and education area, a greenhouse, recreation and barbeque areas, an oven for making bread, sporting areas, a bmx (biking) terrain, football and skating areas, a playground and small barns. The project is as much about developing a sense of community in a poor area of the city than it is about growing food. Social and economic goals are also paired with a strategy of greening the area by means of a local neighbourhood currency, the Toreken, a new kind of regulative system. People can earn these by volunteering in the garden or in cleaning and greening the neighbourhood and it can be spent in certain shops, a social restaurant, and on De Site itself, allowing unemployed or marginalised people to take part in the community life and to improve their living standards. When the housing project will be finished, the community gardens will move elsewhere in the

area. Hopefully it will stay part of the socio-economic fabric of the neighbourhood.

References: www.rabotsite.be; 3 interviews with actors of De Site and Samenlevingsopbouw, conducted by Chiara Certomá in 2013.

Fig. 3.9: Overview of De Site community gardens in Ghent, Belgium, May 2013. Credits: Chiara Certomà

References
3 interviews with actors of De Site and Samenlevingsopbouw, conducted by Chiara Certomá in 2013

Link
http://www.rabotsite.be/en

In Italy, as for many other countries, aside from some local rules on allotment gardens, there is no other legal provision for collective gardening. Thus in most cases prospective gardeners' claims seek legitimation in other existing legal provisions, such as participatory planning laws or rules on ownership and duty of care for green areas. The same reclamations can be found in Spain or Greece, where there are additional difficulties because of the lack of tradition and the need to develop new tools and procedures. Beyond the legal issues of regulating the land-use, urban gardening is supported by local politics and administrations through other instruments. For instance, Rome's administration welcomes such gardening initiatives and directly promotes some gardening projects as these fill a permanent gap in the maintenance of public space (Redazione Online 2010). At the same time, a new central office, called *Orti Urbani*, has been opened; and a first call for the voluntary restoration of derelict area in the East and South districts of the city has been issued (Comune di Roma 2013). In Spain, some cities as Vitoria or Madrid are launching the first municipal programs for community gardens in vacant public land, developing the basic infrastructure and offering technical support (Fernández and Morán 2015). Yet this is not always the case and, in other European countries, there is very little official support.

3.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: TOWARDS COOPERATIVE FORMS OF GREEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT?

The various gardening initiatives emerging in Europe (cf. 3.2) are affecting urban politics and planning in terms of new cooperative approaches (cf. 3.3). They are subject to negotiations between activists from civil society with political and administrative actors about the use and design of land in terms of urban planning and development. Thereby different political and planning cultures can be observed across Europe on national, regional and even local level, which are characterised by the mind-sets of the actors being involved and their specific ways to negotiate and act (Sondermann 2014; Othengrafen and Reimer 2013). Following the central topic of this chapter (cf. 3.1) this discussion will focus on the question whether and how political and planning cultures changed in the context of urban gardening towards cooperative forms of green urban development. When it comes to changes in the cultures of urban politics and planning, two aspects are of special interest: the understandings of urban planning and development, and routines of political decision making and planning practice (cf. Hölzl and Nuissl 2015). These two aspects are used to structure the following discussion:

- Firstly, social movements are considered concerning their relations to changes in the (theoretical) understandings of urban planning.
- Secondly, the responses of politics and planning authorities to new urban gardening practices are reconsidered concerning changes in planning practices.

Social movements and the understandings of planning

A broad variety of actors and forms of gardening can be found reaching from illegal guerrilla gardening by unorganised groups up to top-down supported community gardens and hybrid forms in-between. Interestingly the gardeners share the similar motivations and objectives all over Europe which can be grouped into

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- a social dimension (community building, integration, solidarity etc.),
- a political dimension (alternative economies, opposition to neoliberal city planning) and
- an environmental dimension (e.g. ecological food production).

These three dimensions are rooted in or related to broader movements in society: In general these movements traditionally started in times of crisis and conflict, which lead to protests and bottom-up initiatives. The protests of 1968 against the dominance political and economic elites lead to social and environmental movements in the 1970s across Europe. An increasing political emancipation of young citizens and a growing awareness of ecological sustainability lead to socio-ecological movement which included the foundation of new community gardens in the UK and the Netherlands (McKay 2011). At the same time the understanding of planning as a comprehensive, technical top-down action has been increasingly criticized by civil society actors, who did not feel adequately represented by professional planners anymore (Healey 1996). During the 1980s and 1990s neighbourhood movements demanded urban requalification, the creation of new green spaces and an increase of human wellbeing – for example in Spain, Italy and Germany, where new forms of green urban development and gardening have been established (see Box 4). Through this political emancipation and active community involvement of civil society actors the understanding of planning changed from technocratic and bureaucratic to communicative and collaborative approaches. Thereby the attitudes of politicians and planners changed: the idea that planning 'experts' are able to find 'perfect solutions' on their own was challenged as their plans often lead to conflicts with civil society actors, who wanted to participate in planning processes bringing in their own experiences, needs and visions. Consequently forms of formal participation and informal instruments (e.g. 'round tables') were established. This change was accompanied by the "communicative turn" in planning theory (Healey 1996).

The most recent wave of social movements is mostly represented by the "Mediterranean Spring" which started in 2010 with strikes and protests in Spanish and Greek cities (cf. 2.2). People suffering from the economic crisis claimed that political and economic elites caused the crises with their (wrong) actions. The protesters had the same message as in 1968 – they called for real and direct

democracy ("Amesi Dimokratia Tora!" in Greece and "¡Democracia Real YA!" in Spain). Occupation of central squares supposed a physical and symbolic change in spatial relationships, exploring new practices and uses of public space, and spreading them to the neighbourhoods (Sevilla-Buitrago 2014). Once again the meaning of public becomes central in social mobilizations and struggles (Ernwein 2014). These protests clearly show that there is still a gap between theory and practice in policy making and urban planning. In theory cooperative forms of urban planning would be based on a commitment to "open, transparent government processes of reasoning in and about the public realm" (Healey 2010). Thereby the institutional structures and the processes of urban planning need to be redesigned in ways that redistribute power, potentials for intervention and action for the benefit of less influential groups of civil society (Lanz 1996). Planning practices, however, still show the dominance of actors from the political-administrative system as well as from the economic sphere.

BOX 4: Collaborative green urban development – the example of Ökotop Heerdt in Düsseldorf (Germany)

Author: Martin Sondermann

Subsequent to the political protests of 1968 new social and environmental movements emerged in 1970s and 80s within the Federal Republic of Germany. One focus of the activists groups was the establishment of new and experimental forms of urban and neighbourhood development. In that context new projects for community living and gardening emerged which are considered holistic in terms of social and ecological sustainability. One of these projects is "Ökotop Heerdt" (ecotope) in the district of Düsseldorf-Heerdt. The project started in 1972 when a group of active citizens in the neighbourhood claimed the requalification of their area through the establishment of new playgrounds and public green spaces. In 1982, after ten years of networking and engagement for urban development, the group actively took part in the setting up of a new land-use plan for a 16ha industrial brownfield site. They actively promoted their idea for a new ecological way of urban development by organising public events, writing publications and negotiating with local politicians and the local planning authority. Four years later the city council of Düsseldorf agreed

that their proposed plan can be implemented in cooperation with local planning and gardening authorities. This bottom up project was made possible through voluntary commitment as well on the support by professional citizens (such as architects and urban planners). Up to the late 1980's the project developed as an open project, which means that new people can join the group (which is now a registered association), bring in their ideas and contribute to a successive development of the site. Today the "Ökotop Heerdt" encompasses different components which are set within a public green space: naturally designed open spaces with ecological community gardens, urban agriculture, a nature discovery park, an ecological settlement and a centre for ecological education, information and meetings as well as several training places for gardening and beekeeping. Until today the association is ideally supported by the municipality and receives financial compensation for the maintenance of the green spaces which are open to the public.

Fig. 3.11 Ökotop (ecotope) Heerdt – urban gardening area, Düsseldorf, Germany, August 2014. Credits: Martin Sondermann

References

Interviews with members of the "Ökotop Heerdt"-association and local authority for gardening in 2013, conducted by Martin Sondermann; Sondermann 2014; Steffler et al. 2006

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http://www.oekotop.de

New planning practices

Firstly it is notable that the tradition of citizens to get actively involved in planning and using of urban spaces is still alive and sort of in line with the social movements since the late 1960s. Until today the dominance of political and economic actors is questioned, especially in form of competing attitudes in top-down vs. bottom-up and socio-ecological vs. neoliberal-economic approaches in urban planning (cf. 3.3). Gardening activists can be seen in the tradition of socio-ecological and bottom-up approaches as they have their roots in the urban counterculture (Schmelzkopf 2002).

Until today urban gardening in these spaces is seen as a form of green intervention, political protest and a quest for the "right to space" (Adams and Hardman 2014). Thereby the collective approaches of the gardeners, their solidarity and networking (see Box 2), their fairly loose organizational structures and their informal ways to take action are conflicting with the logics of neoliberal 'governmentality' (Rosol 2012) and formal planning within a highly institutionalised political-administrative system.

How do these two quite different groups of actors with considerably different cultures find a common ground for cooperation and what are the major potentials and obstacles in this regard? Local planning practices vary considerably from municipality to municipality, representing different cultures of politics and planning on local level (Sondermann 2014). These are, however, overlapping more or less with the societal environment as well as with practices in other (international) contexts. Urban gardening as well as its political-administrative handling in terms of planning has significant international linkages. Like 'travelling ideas' (Healey 2012) certain approaches of gardening and planning can be found across Europe and beyond, regardless in which city, region or state they have their origin. In that sense the gardening and planning practices in a British and an Italian city could be more similar than in two Austrian cities.

In recent years a growing awareness of the multiple positive effects of urban gardening as well as open-mindedness toward such initiatives amongst local politicians and urban planners can be observed: They perceive these gardening projects as valuable contributions to a social and ecological urban development (Sondermann 2014, Ernwein 2014). However, this often works in theoretical terms, but not in planning practice, where gardening activists are confronted with a lack of support or even with bureaucratic hurdles. The professionalization of gardeners is a second important issue to be addressed: As a lot of gardeners are non-professionals in the field of urban planning and open space design, processes of mutual learning between the civil society and political-administrative actors are important in order to recognise the mind-sets, needs and obligations of the other parties. Still it seems obligatory for gardeners to set up an organisational structure (such as formal associations) which is legally recognised by local authorities in order make contracts or give financial support. In this respect it should be pointed out that the logics of the

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administrative system are very persistent and dominant as the legal recognition of organisations as well as legal security in terms of formalised land-use are mostly seen as pre-condition for cooperation (cf. 3.3). Last, but not least, the reliability of actors has to be mentioned: if they act as political actors who are mostly motivated by the idea of opposing local politics and administration, the development of trustful relationships and forms of long-term cooperation is very difficult or even not possible. However, the gardening initiatives claiming more democracy and their "right to space" are less interested in cooperative planning than in changing the political-administrative system (cf. 3.2; 3.3). In this regard the tradition of social movements against 'the establishment' is still alive.

Do the cultures of politics and planning change?
It can be argued that the cultures of politics and planning changed in a general way towards cooperative forms of urban development since the late 1960s. Today citizens have more rights to participate in urban development, which is broadly reflected in planning theory by approaches of communicative and collaborative planning (Healey 2011, 2012). Planning practices, however, are very heterogeneous and differ from topic to topic and context to context (cf. 3.3). The public debate on urban gardening and its positive implications has positive effects on the perception by and handling through political and administrative actors, who increasingly support new initiatives – but only under certain conditions (Ernwein 2014). At the same time, however, certain routines in planning practice did not change as they are closely linked to basic assumptions and values in public administrations such as 'acting in a general interest' and 'being responsible for legal issues' (Sondermann 2014). These assumptions change very slowly due to the 'longue durée' of cultural determinations such as traditions (Fürst 2009; Othengrafen and Reimer 2013).

Despite these general developments, various changes can be observed on the local level: the ways of handling are never fixed and can change over time through negotiations. Local politicians and administrative actors sometimes even change their minds from abolishing illegal gardens to give permissions for land use if the gardening initiatives are supported by other actors and public debate (Scott 2001). In that sense political and planning cultures can be considered as dynamic systems which are changing through conflicts, protests and initiatives (Othengrafen et al.

2015). In contrast to traditional forms of protest the actors of the new gardening movements actively contribute to green urban development and thereby to new approaches in urban politics and planning.

Fig. 3.12 Gardening community in Huerto Comunitario de Adelfas, Madrid. Credits: N. Morán.

Concluding considerations

Urban gardening is creating a new field of debate among grassroots movements, local politics and formal planning. During the last fifty years a broad new variety of forms of urban gardening is flourishing. Many of these widespread forms of urban gardening as collective, community, guerrilla, intercultural or neighbourhood gardens are quite similar with regard to their affiliation to local and global movements or intellectual traditions like sustainability, green cities, solidarity and social cohesion or more natural way of inhabiting urban space. The right of the civilian to comment and affect the spatial development process is not only reflected in planning theory but is also increasing in daily practice. During the last decades, bottom up initiatives are more positively faced and supported than this was happening in the past. The societies usually support urban gardening in any of its new forms. This makes management and handling in terms of local governance much easier.

Nevertheless, social processes affecting gardening initiatives are not always smooth. Crisis and conflicts reshape political and planning cultures so in some cases bottom-up initiatives maybe eliminated instead of enhanced. At the same time the values of green and resilient city, embodied in any gardening action, are also appreciated by the planning professionals and most of the technocrats supporting the decision making procedures. So information and awareness of relevant groups of professional could be a 'protection net' in such a case.

In these terms civic engagement and the notion of "collective" in recent urban gardening practices represent the opportunity to fulfil the ideal of cooperative (green) urban development. This is theoretically and practically related to the democratic dimension of urban gardening, planning and development in terms of "micro-practices of democracy-in-action" (Healey 2011: 20). These can be translated into

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civic engagement, equity and fairness, which are usually fundamental elements of the organization of these new forms of gardening. Because of that democratic dimension, grassroots movements do have an impact on the cultures of (local) politics and planning. Today, local, regional and European evolutions in terms of economic development and societal structure reveal new forms of gardening as an expression of a new way of social commitment among the civic society. Local governments and planning authorities have to realise this new reality, learn from these initiatives and support their endeavour on the long-term. Thereby the understandings of and practices in urban planning and development need to be adapted successively to the engagement of citizens for a democratic and cooperative green urban development.

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