Urban Gardening Template case study & bibliography

'Food citizens? Collective food procurement in European cities: solidarity and diversity, skills and scale.'

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This literature review problematizes some of the existing research on food networks and urban gardening and foraging, framing this literature in an anthropological way in order to gain a broader conceptualization of these practices. The idea is to focus on the agency of citizens in these networks, recognizing that this agency is shaped and constrained by local sociocultural knowledge that is dynamic and processual rather than static or entirely based on 'tradition' or 'history'. This systematizes the existing scholarship in a way to lay out how our empirical example of urban gardening and foraging may be approached, contextualizing our case studies in the broader framework of similar networks elsewhere in Europe.

Urban gardening may at first glance seem like a neutral, individuated act, or one simply motivated by personal economic considerations of needing to provide food for household consumption to make up for lack of income. However, social scientists have found a variety of ways in which urban gardening may be conceptualized as reflecting political ideas or motivations. Even though urban gardening may rise in importance during periods of economic flux, urban gardening may also reflect political ideas or contribute to political projects. They may even be activist in nature, or give rise to new fractures in communities. They may also help to cultivate common ground, repairing pre-existing fractures.

Social scientists have found that individuals participate in urban garden projects for a diversity of reasons, and that there may sometimes be unintended consequences to this participation. Participation may be motivated by agrarian imaginaries, and give individuals the space to live those out. Virtuous eating and living are middle-class values that may be played out at a gardening level in a public performance of one's values. Even so, researchers have found that despite the level of intensity required to cultivate one's own food garden, the food may not even ultimately be eaten, raising the question of the true motivators to urban gardening by some individuals or communities. Gardening may even have an overall negative affect on communities if it is taken into consideration that food cultivated individually is food not bought from small-scale farmers relying on farming for a living. Thus, urban gardening may be political in intent and even if not, politicized by researchers. This review of the literature cites such studies as a way to highlight the diversity of perspectives on urban gardening for those undertaking research on them.

Political aspects of urban gardens

Urban gardens may be situated in a political terrain. This has historical precedent. For example, during the WWII war effort, where food democracy was valorized, allotment gardens were promoted as part of a strategy of American patriotism (Mares 2014: 33). Such gardens are also found in eastern Europe and although relied upon during the socialist era as a coping mechanism (Smith and Jehlička 2007: 403), in post-socialism self-provisioning has been cast as a way of 'consuming normality', which includes eating a healthy, western-style diet and adopting alternative economic practices (Smith and Jehlička 2007: 399-401). Here, turning to 'communitarian commitments' through self-provisioning is regarded as 'a novel political dimension' of action rather than simply a response to rising economic precarity (Smith and Jehlička 2007: 404). This can be seen in recent EU efforts to organize research on how practical it may be in various urban European centers to transform allotment gardens into community gardens for social reasons.

As an example of the diversity of ways that urban gardens may be politicized, Palestinian food production and guerrilla gardening have been cast as forms of political *resistance* because they are tactics for survival (Meneley 2014: 77). Here, infrastructure is cited as physically designed to 'impede and exclude flows… [of] commodities of sustenance' (Meneley 2014: 70, citing Elyachar 2014: 46), which highlights the need in our own research to recognize that urban gardens are at once communal spaces and in some ways private, as they are governed and used by groups and may become privileged spaces of their own in cities where participants cultivate cognitive maps of foodscapes through collaboration. Cities have regulatory roles for local food systems, making political power important to understanding these systems (Matacena 2016: 54).

Part of this research may lead to the problematization of the extent to which urban gardening and foraging constitute *activist* activities *per se*, as the motivations for engagement are multi-vocal, and include the basic need for self-provisioning in the context of economic precarity. Still, two main themes in this research are power and agency in different forms of collective food procurement, whether active or passive in their articulation. When analyzing food activist networks, it is important to recognize, as Siniscalchi and Counihan (2014: 8) point out, that such actors are 'enmeshed' in 'relations of power, inequality and competition' (quoting Ortner 2006: 130-1). Communal groups may have somewhat hidden hierarchies as a result, and over time various constraints may lead to a 'narrowing or reforming of their goals or membership' that challenge this open, egalitarian communal facade (Siniscalchi and Counihan 2014: 9). This runs counter to the ideal of food democracy goals as all members having 'equal and effective opportunities for participation' despite the common goal of food sustainability (Hassanein 2003: 83). Even alternative systems are socially embedded in obligations of reciprocity and values of trust and rooted in commodity relations, in the sense that food is still commodified (Hinrichs 2000: 295-6). Such systems create hierarchies and webs of social debts, creating so-called *ties that bind* that necessarily are partially generative of power relations.

Reasons people participate in urban gardens

Participation may also be somewhat coerced, to the extent that 'the voluntary work of a community group regenerating a derelict site in their neighbourhood is categorized alongside the type of "enforced" volunteerism that is increasingly part of neoliberal workfare regimes' (Crossan *et al.* 2016: 939). Similarly, Hebert and Mincyte (2014: 209) suggest that urban self-provisioning may 'further entrench capitalist logics', finding in multiple field sites that 'personal stories of self-reliance became the primary vehicles to make claims about the authenticity, quality, and trustworthiness of their products, even if they relied heavily on state infrastructures and European funding for support' (*ibid*.: 218). Thus, one must remain cognizant of the underlying motivations for participating in such networks. Although actors may perceive their participation as voluntary, social or political pressures may inspire some actions.

Urban farmers are in part enacting agrarian imaginaries, utopian visions of rural life that they are relocating in urban settings. There are sets of values that tend to be associated with the agrarian lifestyle, including a depiction of farmers as 'inherently honest, politically stable, morally upright and independent', an imaginary that contributes to the idea that small-scale agriculture should be exempt from over-regulation (Weiler *et al.* 2016: 1143). However, small-scale producers may not follow the law even if the guiding assumption of AFNs is that such producers are more careful,

and farm labor on such farms may be put at risk due to their informal status, in that as they are working on a voluntary basis, they may not have insurance against injury (Weiler *et al*. 2016: 1140). This is also true for urban gardeners, who may be using green spaces that have untested soil or may be engaging in farming practices that are out-dated or simply do not conform with what is considered 'safe' production practices in terms of chemicals or fertilizers used. Here, knowledge acquisition becomes a critical aspect of production, as these are unregulated or un-uniformly regulated food spaces governed and used by non-farmers.

Participating in urban gardening may be motivated at least in part by values of trying to incorporate ethical eating into one's everyday practice. Consumers are increasingly interested in supporting ethical food production as a way to 'demonstrate a virtuous approach to eating and thus to living' (Williams *et al*. 2015: 325). Values such as buying fair trade and local food are part of being ethical consumers (see Adams and Raisborough 2010), and indeed, many of the participants in such networks may usually be more food consumers than skilled producers. Those engaging in urban food growing may also shop in supermarkets or farmers' markets, meaning that efforts to transform local food systems may be limited even though increasing engagement in gardening results in more reliance on it (Veen *et al.* 2014: 268). Researchers have found that in Dutch urban gardening groups, participants 'perceive engagement in the gardening practice as a hobby, not as an economic activity', and may not manage to incorporate the food they grow into their daily consumption habits (Veen *et al.* 2014: 296). In Berkeley, California, supporters of local organic food production advocate through employing a discourse borrowing heavily from environmentalists advocating for wilderness preservation that also incorporates an understanding of the physical labor of humans involved in food production, which emphasizes values cast as 'their middle-class sensibilities and desires' (Alkon 2012: 675-6). This observation highlights how AFNs draw on progressive themes but may ignore social inequalities that limit access to various alternative food sources (see Lambert-Pennington and Hicks 2016 on racial exclusion in Memphis, Tennessee). Autonomous food production may actually weaken the agrifood sector because it further decreases the consumption of farmed food by full-time farmers. Furthermore, ethical initiatives may gloss over environmental concerns, reproduce inequalities in society, or foster 'an infertile consumer politics by deepening individualist practice and reproducing neoliberal configurations that hinder social change' (Moragues-Faus 2016: 456). This speaks to the idea that 'ideas of localism, consumer choice, and value capture' are in fact standard neoliberal ideas (Guthman 2008: 1174, cited by Harris 2009: 61). Thus, one must approach these production structures with critical eyes that question *what* motivates participation and *how* this participation might actually feed into a state's goal of creating neoliberal citizens.

In post-Soviet Russia, natural foods discourses and practices speak to western ones, but 'depart significantly in their attention to nature as the source of uniquely Russian qualities of sociability and spirituality' (Caldwell 2007: 44). Russians have what Caldwell (2007: 45) describes as 'affectionate preoccupations' with not only wild foodstuffs, but cultivated foods grown in kitchen gardens and summer cottages, as well as in city parks, balcony gardens, and grassy strips along roadways. Caldwell (2007: 46) has found that what is unique about Russian conceptualizations around natural foods is the 'directionality of the stewardship relationship between person and land', in that 'Russians look to the land as the caretaker of society, rather than emphasizing the moral responsibility of individual citizens to safeguard nature'. Additionally, she found that

Russians conceptualize 'natural foods' as embodying a representation of the environment as 'a source of sociability and spirituality' (Caldwell 2007: 46).

Identity linkages to the politicization of food are apparent across Europe. For example, Leitch (2003: 443) found in Italy that consumerist identity-production 'coincides with the development of new possibilities for consumer politics in which culture has become a favoured idiom of political mobilization'. In Lithuania, alternative consumption practices, such as engaging in the networks of informal milk producers, may be characterized as enacting agency in the economy and community in an attempt to find their place in Europe (Mincyte 2011: 42).

In fact, many collective urban gardens and foraging practices take place in the informal economy, to the extent that they are not regulated activities. Knezevic (2016: 410) points out that even in Canada, participation in informal food activities exposes the shortcomings of food safety regulations, in that participation embodies their 'interpretations of food and health governance… as well as ideological and material forms of resistance' (Knezevic 2016: 421). Food regulations are a 'surrogate for trust' (Knezevic 2016: 416 citing DeLind 2002), in that they mediate relationships between producers, sellers, and buyers. Even though urban gardening removes the question of '*Where does my food come from?*', such unregulated food spaces may also be sites of risk, as they are sites of innovation and not subject to government scrutiny like other food producers. This is important because of the centrality of trust to these systems in facilitating the cooperation and coherency that ultimately make them stable systems (Thorsoe and Kjeldsen 2015: 165). In Russia, '"ecologically clean" foods are those that are grown by a relative or friend, gathered and processed in the course of group activities, and then circulated through personal networks, preferably as gifts. Not only does the personalized nature of these foods make them trustworthy, but it also endows them with attributes of taste, quality, and cleanliness that are believed to be lacking in foods produced by anonymous, impersonal capitalist means' (Caldwell 2007: 54). Indeed, in post-socialist Europe, urban gardens may take on a role of providing for household consumption, 'as well as sharing and bartering' in informal ways, in that participants may not be encouraged to sell their food on the market but may trade it in their communities (Bellows 2004: 250). During socialism, allotment gardens were sometimes sites of subversiveness, as in late socialism, nationalist resistance to Soviet domination could be found in domestic acts such as a family growing 'subversive potatoes', a potato varietal discouraged by the state to grow that the family thus hid by cutting its distinctive red flowers daily (Bellows 2004: 259-60). However, even though these practices take place at the margins of the formal economy, they do interact with the dominant food system. In this sense, they may be said to 'interact and co-evolve with the conventional food system and attempt to change it from within' in the sense of developing 'different operational logics and value systems' in the people that participate in their networks (Matacena 2016: 52). It is in this sense that such groups engage with the power structures of the agrifood system.

People also participate in urban gardening and foraging because of the perceived higher quality of this produce than that which they may find in stores. In Rotterdam, the local government distributes information about wholesome food and is attempting to increase the number of vegetable gardens in less green districts of the city, an initiative that includes education about gardening in schools, regarding participation in urban gardening as widening access to healthier food for lower prices for low income residents (Cretella and Buenger 2016: 8). One interesting way of conceptualizing

quality is as negotiated, which is described by Callon's (*et al*. 2002) 'economies of qualities'. Krzywoszynska (2014: 496) summarizes the idea of 'economies of qualities' as placing the 'qualification of products as a central concern of all market actors, and as the basis for the structuring of markets', where these qualities are 'established in processes of qualification, which can be seen as moments of adjustment between goods and markets', revealing quality to be a socially negotiated characteristic of foods. The emergence of 'quality agriculture discourse' has been characterized as 'a form of governmentality' of both powerful political institutions and activist organizations (Heller 2006: 319). Here, the adoption of quality agriculture discourse by the union of French family farmers is cast as a technique of resistance, whereby a union which is otherwise struggling to 're-establish the legitimacy of small-scale agriculture' adopts this discourse to shift from a focus on production to that of consumer-oriented product quality.

EU intervention in small-scale agriculture has been cast as 'a tactic of empire', for example in the case of the implementation and enforcement of EU seed laws that are characterized as 'techniques of classification and control' over seeds that embody cultural memories and have local economic value (Aistara 2014: 14). The EU's approach to managing agriculture has been pointed to as actually creating barriers to entry for small farmers because of its focus on regulatory 'disciplining', for example in the institutionalization of organic agriculture in Poland (De Master 2012: 95). That said, the EU is also active in facilitating interdisciplinary and transnational research on urban gardening in both western and eastern Europe. Such projects bring together practitioners, academics, local policymakers, and civil society organizations to problematize urban agriculture from their professional perspectives. This, as the following section on European urban agriculture case studies below will reveal, has led to novel collaborative projects that extend beyond any single garden project. Participants interpret such projects as helping marginal communities become more self-sufficient and contributing to food security. Urban gardens may have much deeper significance to the communities engaging in them, and the European Union's promotion or investment in them may be interpreted not as a neutral act, but as one that may influence core issues such as European identity and belonging. For example, Leitch (2003: 441) explains that the 'deepening concerns in Europe over food policy are linked to questions of European identity, indeed with moral economies and with the imagination of Europe's future as well as its past'. Moreover, Leitch (2003: 442) describes food and identity in Europe as 'a single common discursive currency through which to debate Europeanness and the implications of economic globalization'. Such observations suggest that urban gardens may be a fertile ground to investigate themes like identity in new contexts.

Perceptions of urban gardens

Urban gardens have been described as important to building 'local ecological and social response capacity against major collapses in urban food supplies' (Barthel *et al*. 2015: 1). Particularly in the west, they have been responses to food shortages and have helped to resolve social problems resulting from waves of mass migration (Barthel *et al*. 2015: 3). In Poland, allotment gardeners 'represent the largest land managers or users in Poland', where contemporary city land-use policies 'reflect a history of social stability that spans the political and economic transformations' from the 19th century to the present and where such gardens are used to 'augment social stability' and specifically target female labor, rather than being entirely altruistic endeavors (Bellows 2004: 247-8). In Glasgow, Crossan (*et al*. 2016: 937) explains that community gardens 'promote an equality-

of-participation in place and community making' which, the authors posit, 'can be generative of progressive forms of political practice that offer us glimpses of a radical future for the urban citizenry'. In adopting a practice theoretic approach to analyzing participation in urban gardens and other alternative food network formations, Mincyte (2011: 43) suggests that we may rethink 'consumption as set in broader infrastructures, subjectivities, cultural formations, and power relations', which, as she has argued, may allow us to look at formations as reproducing 'social order in performing daily tasks and routines'. This reveals how these practices are not neutral, but rather may act to reshape personhood (see Dunn 2004). Indeed, using practice theory, Mincyte (2011: 43) argues that we can frame consumption as performative, as goods are 'domesticated' into daily routines, and when this anchoring happens is when alternative agro-food networks may be realized. Finally, Gieser (2014: 132) poses the idea that 'enskillment' is relevant to the learning and practice of horticulture, suggesting that industrialized agriculture creates gardeners that have lost touch with nature and rely on standardized production rules rather than their own experience (Gieser 2014: 147). This suggests further that a sort of 'reskillment' may be underway as urban gardens deindustrialize and incorporate gardeners with fewer preconceptions about how gardening is properly practiced.

Finally, urban gardening and foraging may be analyzed in a quite similar way to how anthropologists have considered *terroir*, in that both producers and consumers place special value on the knowledge that their food was grown in a specific place under certain conditions. *Terroir* is said to imbue food with specific qualities not found elsewhere. Urban-gardened food is elevated to a special status of homegrown, ethical, social, etc. What makes *terroir* products taste good, Besky (2013: 86) explains via Paxson (2006: 2012), who has analyzed American farmstead cheeses, 'is related to the values embedded in explanations for why these cheeses are "good to make". Such explanations of goodness and appeals to social values, as Weiss (2011) shows, appear in the repeated and highly structured way in which consumers and sellers learn about the foods they exchange'.

Conclusion

This literature review has investigated the various ways that urban gardening may be conceptualized through an anthropological lens. Our project takes special note of the political aspects of urban food procurement practices, highlighting the diverse ways that power may be embedded in systems of relations and practices, and the influence of larger political forces on these systems. Depending on the site, urban gardening may take on an activist feel, but just as likely it may be more an everyday strategy of making ends meet in the context of economic precarity. This means that concepts such as 'food democracy' may have very different meanings for different groups, and that reciprocal relations may be valued for a diversity of reasons that may not always be apparent at first glance. Participation may seem voluntary, but in fact may be coerced or necessary for survival. Others may engage in it to cultivate mindfulness and connection to land, act out rural imaginaries in their urban home context, build a social network, or gain new practical skills. Many others may be inspired by the values of ethical eating, supporting local producers, or desire to have more knowledge about the conditions under which the food they eat is grown.

Even though widely regarded as a progressive social practice, urban gardening may have more classist dynamics than is immediately apparent, where social inequalities in access to alternative

food sources may be glossed over by more abstract ethical dimensions of food production. Discourses around food may also rely heavily on society's relationship to land that include spirituality, morality, and identity. Although urban gardening is often cast in a progressive light, it may also be interpreted as part of informal food production and procurement. Urban gardening thus challenges informality as being a simply negative economic phenomenon, as even though such production, distribution, and consumption may go unregistered, these are sites of innovation, sociality, and self-provisioning, amongst other things. People may also obtain higher quality food and greater food security. It is for such reasons, and others, that the European Union has taken interest in funding small initiatives to research the feasibility of urban gardening in European cities. However, EU-intervention in agricultural projects has sometimes been met with criticism, as attempts to change local practices may be interpreted through the lens of identity and morality. Still, urban gardening contributes to local food supplies.

As we have seen, urban gardens may be interpreted through many lenses. One particularly useful way of approaching our analysis is through practice theory, in observing the everyday practice of participants and how gardening is incorporated into their ways of being and engaging with others. This allows us to investigate how gardening may shape personhood, how it is domesticated, how enskillment or reskillment may take place at an individual and social level, and how such processes translate into conceptions of citizenship when practiced in networks.

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