Growing Your Own *And* Growing Social Cohesion?

A Study of the Social and Civic Dividends of Urban Agriculture (UA) Initiatives: Dublin and Belfast

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For Dad

*"You'll catch more flies with a spoon full of honey than you will with
a barrel full of vinegar"*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UA   Urban Agriculture

UN   United Nations

COST.eu   The COST.eu Action (TD 1106) Urban Agriculture Europe, was established in 2012 and runs until 2016. It includes researchers and practitioners from more than 20 European countries. The objective of this Action is to elaborate a European perspective on Urban Agriculture and its potentials for sustainable development, according to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the social and civic dividends of allotment gardening in two diverse urban contexts: Dublin, Ireland and Belfast, Northern Ireland. Traditionally, allotments were associated with older men and lower socio-economic groups. A demonstrable rise in urban agriculture (UA) initiatives in recent years has seen a significant shift in the traditional demographics engaging in practice. Those investing are increasingly younger, from the middle classes, and include more and more women. Drawing on empirical investigations in both cities between 2011- 2013, this thesis argues that the revival of the urban allotment represents a form of resistance to the *dis-embedding* processes associated with post-modern lifestyles. Urban gardening represents an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to (re)connect with traditional forms of knowledge, the land, and practice. UA enables urban dwellers to (re)connect with others, (re)generate a sense of community, and to restore a sense of belonging in the city. The rise in demand for UA in Belfast also represents an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to engage in bridge-building across the community divide, ameliorate residual ethno-religious/national divisions in the city and transcend the politicization of everyday urban life. Indeed, in both cities, allotment gardening creates a form of social levelling that contributes to social integration and localised forms of social cohesion. The study develops an innovative typology of allotment gardeners, and introduces the concepts of *agrarian habitus* and *aspirational habitus* to explain the complex relationships between ecological goals and beliefs and actual cultivation practices. An extensive archive of photographs is drawn upon to illustrate the physical, social, ecological and aesthetic dimensions of allotment gardening. Finally, the study makes a number of recommendations for how policy makers might better integrate UA practices into everyday life in the city.

Key words: Urban Agriculture, Dis-embedding, Re-embedding, Belonging, Politics of Place, Civil Interfacing, Social Integration, Social Cohesion

A city isn't just a place to live, to shop, to go out and have kids play. It's a place that implicates how one derives one's ethics, how one develops a sense of justice [and] how one learns to talk with and learn from people who are unlike oneself, which is how a human being becomes human.

(Sennett, 1989:83)

1.

SITUATING A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO URBAN AGRICULTURE

1.1. Introduction

Cities are the crucible in which economic, political, social and cultural forces intersect. They are where humans find access to basic needs and essential public goods, where ambitions are realized, and increase our prospects of both individual and collective well-being (State of the World's Cities Report, UN-Habitat, 2012/2013:2). However, contemporary cities face a number of key challenges including, economic (the global financial crisis and concomitant fiscal crisis confronting both national governments and urban regimes), and social (the retrenchment of the welfare state, widening poverty gap and growing levels of obesity associated with more sedentary lifestyles). Cities are also becoming more diverse (intensified migration). Issues of integration[1] and social cohesion[2] are increasingly deliberated within academia and the wider public sphere (Lockwood, 1999; Beauvais & Jenson, 2002; Sennett, 2005; Chan et al, 2006; Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007; Fahey & Fanning, 2010).

Indeed, social exclusion, social polarization and even social segregation are characteristic of many cities, where "urban space, while it is functionally and economically shared, is

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[1] Social integration does not simply refer to the way a more ethnically and culturally diverse society can occupy the same streets or place, but rather, takes into account the wider process whereby social actors from different economic and social backgrounds can learn to live together, have equal life-chances, and where opportunities are dictated by merit and aspirations and inspired by what people have in common rather than by what divide them (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007:2-3). Furthermore, social integration requires interactions and participation between all sections of the community, and emphasises responsibilities, rights and solidarity (ibid:3).

[2] Social cohesion, is defined as "a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and horizontal interactions among members of a society, and is characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging *and (repeated) altruistic acts* (co-operation), such as the willingness to participate and help others, as well as their behavioural manifestations (solidarity, common values, and *(place) identity (which are spatially specific)*" (Chan et al, 2006, *my emphasis*).

socially segregated and culturally differentiated" (Robins 1993:313). Nevertheless, research shows that public and voluntary bodies operating in the civil society sphere can play a crucial role in fostering better social relations, social integration and social cohesion (Vertovec, 2007). Recent literature suggests that a 'shared politics of place'[3] attained through joint activities which acknowledge difference and promote inclusion can foster social integration and provide people with a means to practice co-operation (Baumann 1996; Sanjek 1998; Eizenberg 2012; Sennett 2012). Such a shared politics of place is most likely to occur in the context of public space, conceptualized broadly as "the setting for everyday spatial behaviour of individuals and communities, emphasizing ordinary activities of citizens," (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007:8).

Against this backdrop, this research examines one such element of public space – urban agriculture (UA) sites- with a view to identifying *what role* UA can play in engendering social integration and social cohesion given the general challenges faced by cities today and the specific localised challenges faced by both case study cities: Dublin (Ireland) and Belfast (Northern Ireland),. In particular, the study seeks to identify whether or not social and civic dividends flow from the practices associated with allotment gardening, and the extent to which a shared politics of place can be created and nurtured amongst the cultivating citizenry. Crucially, the study seeks to identify whether or not allotment gardening provides people with a means to practice cooperation, facilitates and promotes social inclusion, , social integration and social cohesion amongst the urban citizenry in these diverse urban locales.

Allotments in both cities were originally empanelled (enshrined) under the same British legislation which ensured their provision, maintenance and legitimacy to the present day.

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[3] A shared politics of place can be understood as a set of common quality of life issues which serve to forge coalitions and alliances amongst individuals, such as common causes (Sanjek, 1998)

The residualisation of urban agriculture was a marked trend in both cities during the twentieth century (although this was more so the case in Dublin than in Belfast). Nevertheless, there is evidence of a renewal of interest in urban agriculture (UA) in both cities, demonstrated in the rise in demand among the citizenry for plots, increased provision by both municipalities and private operators, and through a growing awareness of the value of growing your own food amongst the urban citizenry-at-large (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015).

Drawing on empirical investigations in Dublin and Belfast between 2011-2013, this study seeks to identify what role UA can play in fomenting a shared politics of place, social integration and social cohesion at a time when cities are viewed as becoming increasingly privatized, more polarised and more exclusionary (Punch, 2005; Sennett, 2005; Sassen, 2013). The study (i) identifies practitioners' motivations for investing in UA and examines the various factors contributing to the demonstrable rise in demand for allotments in both cities; (ii) conducts a rigorous assessment of allotment gardening practices, (iii) identifies the specific social and civic dividends flowing from UA in diverse locales across both cities, (iv) identifies the various social processes *and* forms of sociality generated by participating in UA, and (v) assesses the *potential* of UA to facilitate, promote and engender a shared politics of place, social integration and social cohesion, given the challenges facing cities today and the specific challenges facing both cities (see below).

1.2. **Rationale for the study:**

Research on urban agriculture has primarily focuses on the contribution of UA to urban bio-diversity, sustainability and socio-economic development (Binns and Lynch 1998; Hampwaye *et al*. 2009). Indeed, much interest on UA predominantly focuses on its contribution to sustainability in cities of the developing world (for example; Cape town, Kenya, Cuba) (Smit & Nasr, 1992; Mougeot, 2005, 2006; Premat, 2005; Battersby-

Leonard, 2013). This is unsurprising as the engagement of citizens in the production of food in the Global North has been limited and marginalised, with the exceptions of periods of war and economic crises. However, the literature also highlights the direct benefits UA offers in terms of public health, cultural connection, human interaction and community development (Howard 1965, Moselle 1995, Crouch, 1989, Smit & Nasr 1992). Studies on home-grown food in Toronto for example, suggest that gardeners seem to value allotment gardening more for its social value than for its contribution to their families' subsistence (Kortright and Wakefield 2011). Other studies in the United States suggest that UA practices are an important means of self-expression, help migrants maintain cultural identities, contribute to the enhancement of health and well-being for urbanites, and constitute landscapes which cement relationships within communities (Warner 1987). Intercultural gardeners in Germany and Sweden for example, have recently been identified as particular spaces that respond to the specific needs of migrants, providing access to an arena of social interaction that promotes mutual respect between participants (Moulin-Doos 2014; Andersson, & Delshammar et al, 2014). Such gardens eschew a patronizing approach to the integration of immigrants, and focus on engaging in joint activities which allow the urban citizenry in concert to give shape to their immediate environs (Muller 2007). Moreover, Karantasai (2011) refers to 'transcultural gardens' as primarily 'collaborative spaces' that enable migrants from rural backgrounds in particular, to integrate into urban contexts (see Corcoran and Kettle, 2015).

Whilst much research focuses on UA's contribution to sustainability and greater food insecurity in cities of the developing world (Mougeot, 2005, 2006), the attraction of UA increasingly extends beyond the densely populated cities of the Global South to cities of the Global North. In New York City for example, community gardens are viewed as an instance of counter-hegemonic space that can arrest the decline of the commons implicit in the neo-liberal political project (Eizenberg, 2012). According to Eizenberg (2012),

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community gardens represent a revival of the commons - the notion of space not as private property, but as a resource that belongs to everybody and to nobody at the same time (also see Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007 and Dines & Cattell, 2008). Similarly, in her classic work, Lyn Loftland (1973) defines public space as those areas of the city which all persons enjoy legal access: they belong to no one and therefore, to everyone (p. 9-10). As such, they have the potential to generate an alternative framework for generating social relations and social practices that can contribute to, promote and engender a shared politics of place, social integration and social cohesion. However, as Tornaghi (2014), in a recent critical review of UA research also suggests, we still lack a systematic analysis of 'the geography of urban food cultivation and its relation with the politics of place" (p.3). She calls for an exploration of the meaning of UA initiatives in different urban contexts, and stresses the need to explore the role of UA in addressing urban problems. (Also see McClintock, 2014).

Whilst a growing body of literature is beginning to highlight the direct benefits of UA in the global North, and interest in land cultivation and food production is attracting increasing interest in a wide range of disciplines (from planning to landscapes, urban geographers and cultural studies), it remains a very marginal and almost unexplored field in Sociology. This thesis addresses the current gap in the literature by focusing on two cities on the Global North: Dublin and Belfast, each of which has faced specific localised challenges – the financialisation of urban space (Dublin), and the politicization of urban space (Belfast). Specifically, the study provides a systematic sociological analysis of UA in both cities, taking into account their specific geographical contexts *and* the particular challenges facing both cities today. The study identifies the specific social and civic dividends flowing from UA, the meaning of UA, and illuminates the potential of UA to foster and promote social integration and localised forms of social cohesion. Crucially, the study provides evidence to show that in *both* cities, UA initiatives move beyond the processes of the financialisation

of urban space (Dublin), and the politicization urban space (Belfast). They accommodate the urban citizenry with 'shared-in-common' spaces, where urban dwellers can join in concert and give shape to their immediate environs, and generate a 'new kind of public space' which in doing, facilitates and promotes social levelling, and affords opportunities for mutual tolerance and respect to friend and stranger alike. In this way, this study illuminates the *potential* of UA in terms of nurturing inclusive, vibrant public spaces and public infrastructures in the contemporary urban metropolis (Amin, 2010).

1.3. **The Dublin case**:

In recent years Dublin city has witnessed immense economic, cultural and social change. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the city flourished economically through the implementation of strategic policies aimed at bringing in foreign direct investment primarily in manufacturing and information technology sectors. Incomes rose significantly and spending power increased, evidenced in the high prices paid for modest homes, an increase in international travel and spending on a range of leisurely pursuits (depending on credit rather than savings). Since the economic collapse in 2008 which resulted in Ireland's EU/IMF bailout, Dublin now finds itself in a precarious and somewhat uncertain state. Austerity policies (for example, cuts in public spending, in recruitment in both the public and private sectors, and the introduction of the Universal Social Charge (USC)) have meant that incomes have dropped significantly, consumer spending has contracted, unemployment levels have risen (although this is steadily beginning to decrease), and that emigration has rapidly replaced immigration. During the same time period, the city also witnessed a demonstrable rise in urban agriculture (UA) initiatives. Allotments and community gardens emerged in abundance in the city and on its perimeter. Whilst efforts have been made to meet the rise in demand for UA through both public and private provision, demand currently outweighs supply.

Traditionally, allotments in Dublin were associated with older men and lower socio-economic groups. However, recent practices indicate a significant shift in the traditional demographics engaging in practice today. Those investing are increasingly younger and from the middle classes, and more and more women are investing. But what is motivating practice? What has caused this shift? And why are professionals in an advanced capitalist society choosing to cultivate food in and around the contemporary urban metropolis? These are some of the questions I attempt to address in this study. In particular, I am concerned with identifying whether or not UA initiatives can play a role in (i) promoting social solidarity, social integration social cohesion and, a shared politics of place, in the wake of a period of intense financialisation of everyday life and under current conditions of austerity.

1.4. The Belfast Case:

Belfast is a city that remains divided along ethno-religious and ethno-national lines. Despite the political resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland, Belfast is a city characterised by a long history of sectarianism, segregation, territoriality, street marches, parades and commemorative activities. Sectarian inscriptions on the landscape continually reinforce both the idea and the reality of a divided city in terms of national/religious identity and the physical landscape (O'Dowd and McKnight, 2013). The physical morphology of the city reflects a continued salience of religion in everyday urban life, evidenced in the distribution of places of worship across the city (ibid). Moreover, violent divisions are effectively inscribed in the cityscape, through periodic protests, riots and paramilitary campaigns aimed at disrupting the normalisation processes underway in the wake of the political resolution and conflict (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015).

Whilst the British government recently adopted the language of cohesion as a descriptor for a whole range of policy proposals to tackle dialogue and encourage bridge-building

across the community divide (Building Community Cohesion Report, 2009), and alternative forms of social solidarity and social mobilisation exist, these are less frequent, less visible and less embedded in either civil society or the state (O'Dowd and McKnight, 2009). Furthermore, other contested concepts such as 'place, 'space' and 'territoriality' are embedded in extremely complex ways in the material fabric of Belfast (O'Dowd and Komarova 2009). To some extent, the publicness of the city has been re-configured as a theatre of action in which two ethno-religious/national traditions are publicly performed and played out. This raises the question of what other avenues may be available that can allow Belfast's citizens to engage in a shared politics of place, despite the history of sectarianism and residual ethno-religious/national conflict. Do UA landscapes have the potential to become sites where social cleavages are transgressed, where political affiliations are rendered less salient and where widely accepted labels of 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' are eschewed in favour of a common interest in cultivating urban land? Do practices on allotments in Belfast promote integration or reinforce segregation? Do UA sites have the potential to (re)generate a sense of communality, mutuality and a sense of solidarity between the cultivating citizenry? Are allotments inchoate public spaces that provide a means to practice co-operation and restore bonds of trust? And do UA practices have the potential to nurture a new kind of politics of place, foster social integration and facilitate bridge-building across the community divide? These are some of the questions I attempt to address in this study.

Through a systematic sociological analysis of the practices and experiences of allotment gardening across diverse locales in both cities, this study illuminates elements of the interaction order in both cities. It provides evidence to show that UA initiatives provide a means to practice cooperation, an opportunity to interact, engage and participate with diverse class, ethnic and religious/national groupings, foment social levelling and facilitate the (re)construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground. Specifically, the study will show that

allotments are 'civic interfaces' where barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed in favour of a common identity generated by cultivating alongside unknown others in a designated space (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015). They are I argue, 'people'd landscapes' (Viljoen, et al 2012), which nurture and promote a *new* kind of politics of place, facilitate and promote tolerance of difference and respect for friend and stranger alike. Their *modus operandi* is I argue, predicated on a willingness to disregard social categorisations (class, ethnicity, religions/national categorisations) while on site. Hence, they are important 'spaces of potential' in the contemporary urban metropolis that can produce an inclusive and socially cohesive notion of the public and a shared politics of place premised on individual labour carried out in a common cause (land cultivation), mutually agreed tacit rules of engagement *and* tolerance of diversity. This is not to deny that such differences exist and indeed persist, but rather, suggests that allotments offer 'a space of potential' in the contemporary urban metropolis where those differences are, at least for a time, rendered less salient (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015).

1.5. Theoretical considerations

My approach calls for a form of research that is inductive and contextualising, which sees meaning and action in their natural settings, that is - from the insiders' perspective. This approach places the current study in the interpretative sociological tradition. We can trace such interests back to the work of early luminaries of symbolic interactionism and grounded theory (Max Weber, (1904-5), Georg Simmel (1903) and, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967, 1978, 1992)).

As a social-psychological perspective, symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals develop socially by participating in group life, by focusing on small-scale interpersonal relationships *and* on the processes by which individuals make decisions, form opinions, interpret, evaluate, define and map out their own actions. In this tradition, the active and

creative role of members of society is emphasised, by focusing on the interactions between an individual's internal thoughts and emotions and his/her social behaviour (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). Moreover, symbolic interactionism is committed to an inductive research approach by focusing on explanations and understandings of actions induced from data with which the researcher has become thoroughly familiar.

Max Weber's (1904-05) action theory places emphasis on interpretation of a situation and the importance of subjective meanings (*Verstehen*) to understand how human beings make sense of the social world (Weber, 2009). This helps the research to explore *how* meaningful actions can facilitate the construction of particular forms of sociality on allotments, and identify whether or not they can contribute to and nurture a shared politics of place, social integration and social cohesion given the challenges facing both cities today.

My aim is not merely to understand the allotment landscape as a physical space in itself, but *also* provide a rigorous assessment of *how* practitioners interpret, evaluate and define theirs and others actions and interactions, *and* assess the experiences and dividends those interactions generate. As we will see in this study, new forms of sociality and modes of being are (re)constructed and constantly (re)negotiated, nurtured, managed and performed by diverse members of the allotment culture who not only assess their *own* actions and interactions, but those of others. This facilitates the (re)construction of an incipient social identity, engenders a sense of mutuality, promotes bonds of trust and a sense of solidarity between diverse members of the allotment culture.

By exploring *how* actors interact, assess and negotiate actions and interactions with unknown others on allotments across diverse locales in both cities, this study will identify *how* the construction of meaning lies in the interpretations and interactions *between* allotment gardeners. Moreover, it explicates *how* urban allotments are 'people'd landscapes' (Viljoen et al 2012) that promote social levelling, engender a new kind of

public politics of place, and facilitate and promote social integration and a localised form of social cohesion between diverse members of the allotment culture.

However, it is imperative that research takes into account that these social actors act in diverse social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Thus, to analyse the behaviour of practitioners, identify the various forms of sociality generated by engaging in UA *and* the specific social and civic dividends UA practices generate, Georg Simmel's (1908) 'geometry of social space' helps piece together the complexity *and* significance of factors that contribute to, facilitate and influence interactions between practitioners' who possess diverse 'labels' such as 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' (Belfast), and/or diverse class and ethnic categorisations (Dublin).

Georg Simmel's 'geometry of social space' adumbrates forms of sociality within the modern metropolis, and examines their implications on the mind of the individual. Using the concept 'social distance' to explain the forms of sociality in the modern metropolis, Simmel (1908) stresses the importance of certain practices such as reciprocity, interaction and meaning; - meaning that only emerges through interaction with others, things or events (Frisby 1992; Ethington, 1997). Hence, Simmel's 'geometry of social space' helps sketch out the 'content' and 'forms' of sociality generated by participating in UA, identify the specific factors and practices that facilitate, promote and/or engender new forms of sociality, and enables the research to assess their impact on individual members of the allotment culture, in terms of the meanings those forms of sociality generate. Such an approach will provide a better understanding of the various 'forms of association' (Simmel, 1908 in Ethington, 1997) open to and generated by UA in diverse locales in both urban contexts.

Exploring various micro-episodes of interaction between diverse members of the allotment culture, identifying the various factors and practices that influence, inform and facilitate

interactions, and *how* social relations are (re)constituted, (re)negotiated, managed and performed (on both an individual and collective level), *and* analysing the subjective experiences/meanings those interactions have for plot-holders of 'multiple geographies of affiliation' (Amin, 2010), illuminates the *potential* of UA to foster social integration and a shared politics of place in these diverse urban locales. Moreover, the contributions of Jane Jacobs (1961), Richard Sennett (2012), Ray Oldenberg (1989), Hannah Lowsnbrough and Joost Beunderman (2007) and Steven Vertovec (2007) provide a framework for:

(i)   Examining the value of UA as a new version of urban public space in the contemporary urban metropolis

(ii)   Assessing the potential of UA to promote well-being and 'civil interfacing' between practitioners of 'multiple geographies of affiliation' (Amin, 2014),

(iii) Evaluating the impact, significance *and* potential of UA to transform the urban milieu, and

(iv)   Assessing the value of UA for improving the quality of urban public space, and crucially, the potential of UA to improve the quality of urban dwellers socio-spatial worlds.

Building on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1977), the study develops various concepts to explicate *how* new meanings, knowledge systems, practices and worldviews are (re)constructed, managed and performed through allotment gardening practices. These are developed to explicate *how* allotment gardening generates new mores, new knowledge systems and new forms of sociality in diverse locales in both cities; the creative and unpredictable dynamics of human interaction; *how* allotment gardening facilitates and promotes a shared politics of place and assess whether or not UA has the potential to provide a basis for renewed social cohesion. Such an analysis requires systematic methodologies.

1.6. **Ontological and methodological considerations**

Social phenomena and their meanings are not only produced *through* social interaction *but* are in a *constant* state of revision by social actors themselves (Bryman, 2001). Hence, the research must consider social actors involved in UA not simply as subscribers to particular types of practice *or* knowledge systems but rather, as *active* agents' who identify, interpret and construct meaning through interactions with (unknown) others, *and* by participating in specific (UA) practices. Therefore, an interpretivist approach enables the research to obtain a view of social reality through the eyes of participants, and assess their reasoning with the social world. Furthermore, such an approach allows the research to assess *how* actors' interact, (re)construct, make use of and pass on knowledge, generate alternative forms of sociality, cultivate and nurture a shared politics of place *and* assess *how* UA practices foster social integration and social cohesion in diverse locales in both cities.

Multi-sited ethnographic methods of triangulation (observation, semi-structured interviews and visual representation) have been the main methods of data collection, which add rigour, breadth, allow the research to obtain rich data and increase the validity of the findings. Settings for fieldwork were chosen to (i) reflect the provision and distribution of allotments (both public and private) across diverse locales in both cities, (ii) the changing demographics of practitioners engaging in UA in Dublin, and to reflect the ethno-religious/national populations engaging in UA across the political landscape in Belfast. Interviews were primarily drawn from the ranks of plot-holders on selected sites in both cities, with additional inputs from allotment activists, various advocacy groups and relevant members of local authorities. Interviews with practitioners were conducted on allotments to capture how relationships, knowledge systems, meanings and new forms of sociality are (re)constructed, negotiated, nurtured, managed and performed. Photographic evidence and additional interviews were conducted at various advocacy group meetings and at various

pedagogic and social events within and beyond the boundaries of allotments in both urban contexts, which supplemented data collection.

1.7. **Chapter Outline**

To adequately contextualise this study some attention must be paid at the outset to the socio-historical context of UA in both cities. Such a review is contained in **Chapter two**. In particular, definitions of UA are appraised followed by a brief socio-historical examination of allotment gardening. European and International practices are primarily assessed followed by a similar assessment of practices in Ireland (Dublin) and Northern Ireland (Belfast). Policies on UA are briefly appraised in Ireland and Northern Ireland and set against a wider European context. The chapter examines the upward trend in both supply and demand of UA in both cities, focusing in particular on the crucial role *key champions'* play in securing public land for UA. **Chapter three** examines the research methodology and design. Whilst the study is situated in two urban locales, the main analysis focuses on the Dublin case, followed by a case study analysis of allotment gardening in Belfast. **Chapter four** examines the motivating factors that provide urban dwellers in Dublin with the impetus to invest in allotment gardening. The evidence suggests that motivations for investing in allotments in Dublin today are related to, but not necessarily determined by a desire to cultivate food. The revival of the urban allotment after many years of abeyance I argue, represents an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to (re)connect with traditional forms of knowledge, the land and practice (food production systems), but primarily, to (re)connect with others, (re)generate a sense of community and to restore a sense of belonging in the city. In terms of motivations, allotment practitioners fall into five unique categories: (1) The Practical Gardener, (2) The Idealist/Eco Warrior, (3) The Socio-Organic Gardener (4) The Gucci Gardener and, (5) The Non-Gardening Gardener. I discuss each category and offer various vignettes and visual methodologies to explicate the characteristics that comprise each typology of gardener investing in UA in the city today. The remaining

chapters examine *how* urban dwellers are resisting these *dis-embedding* social processes generated by modernity by engaging in specific practices associated with cultivating urban land.

Chapter five examines *how* urban dwellers are (re)conceptualising and (re)constructing a 'new' (and somewhat revived) form of urban public space to generate *re-embedding* social processes to restore a sense of belonging to place. As a point of departure, this chapter examines the socio-spatial implications of the recent reconfiguration of urban public space in the city which I argue, has had a profound impact on the potentiality and pleasurable use of urban public space and the quality of urban life. I offer a textured analysis and visual representation of *how* urban dwellers are collectively appropriating, designing, constructing and governing this '*new*' form of public space to demonstrate *how* urban dwellers are attempting to improve the material, ecological and social quality of the urban and everyday urban life. I examine the various factors and conventions underpinning allotment construction and design, and reveal *how* urban dwellers are creating platforms upon which to disseminate knowledge, (re)connect with others and improve the quality of urban life. Urban dwellers I argue, are individually and collectively constructing a more *inclusive notion of the public* by constructing vibrant, productive, multi-functional, 'people'd landscapes' (Viljoen et al, 2012) in the city to (re)connect with others, build positive relationships between different communities and improve the quality of city life. The chapter illuminates the important role urban citizens can play in contributing to, and constructing, governing and managing urban public space. Crucially, the chapter illuminates the crucial role urban citizens can play in terms of improving the well-being and liveability of the city, and provoking the vivacity in urban public space (Sennett, 2011).

Chapter six continues this analysis and examines *how* urban dwellers individually generate *re-embedding* social processes by creatively designing and constructing 'the plots'. The

chapter examines the various factors underpinning plot construction, and provides a textured analysis (and visual representation) of *how* urban dwellers make knowledge of, and sense of the world around them amidst immense economic, cultural and social change. Crucially, the chapter highlights the importance of *space, place and place-based practices* in terms of (re)generating a sense of belonging to place, which will enrich our understandings of *how* urban dwellers are improving well-being and liveability of the city by engaging with others (and specific practices) in this designated space. Through the creativity associated with designing and managing one's plot, urban dwellers I argue, are producing *vibrant, productive, democratic and multi-functional, 'people'd landscapes'* (Viljoen et al, 2012) and an *inclusive* notion of the public to restore a sense of belonging to place.

Chapter seven examines how urban dwellers are (re)connecting with the land, knowledge, practice *and* crucially, to others in the city, by cultivating the land. The chapter takes as its point of departure, an analysis of *how* global food production systems, and in particular, the industrialisation of agriculture have subjugated food production and knowledge systems, created a dependency on the global food industry and disconnected urban dwellers from the land, nature, knowledge and practice *and* in particular, from the social relations inherent in the production and distribution of food. However, this chapter examines *how* urban dwellers are *resisting* these dis-embedding social processes and (re)connecting with knowledge, practice, the land and others by engaging in the tasks associated with cultivating urban land. The chapter identifies three growing cultures: (1) Organic Cultivation, (2) Conventional Cultivation and (3) Transitional-Organic Cultivation. I discuss each category, and examine the various approaches to cultivation being employed. Building on Pierre's Bourdieu's concept of '*habitus*' (1977), the chapter provides a '*habitus continuum*' to illuminate the complexity of factors underpinning cultivation practices on allotments across the city today. Crucially, the chapter explicates *how* cultivating an

allotment allows urban dwellers to (re)connect with others by generating an understanding of food production, which is wrapped up in a particular set of relations which involves people being in intimate contact with what they eat, how it is produced, distributed and consumed (Carolan, 2012).

Sociality, identity and communality are pursued in **Chapter eight.** This chapter examines the 'content' and 'forms' of sociality (Simmel, 1908 in Poggi and Sciortino, 2011) generated by engaging in UA. Crucially, the chapter illuminates the *potential of UA* to facilitate and promote social levelling, social integration and a shared politics of place. Specifically, the chapter examines *how* urban dwellers are transcending the social dis-embeddedness generated by modernity[4] by interacting, participating and engaging with 'strangers' in this designated space, and examines the conditions under which new forms of sociality are constituted, nurtured, developed and sustained. Critically, the chapter illuminates the potential of UA to build a more cohesive notion of the public and more sustainable, inclusive, vibrant urban public space, which improves the quality of the city

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[4] The move from traditional to 'modern' societies was seen as accountable in terms of a range of specific processes: industrialization, urbanization, commodification, rationalization, differentiation, bureaucratization, and the expansion of the division of labour, the growth of individualism and state formation processes. Modernity is thus defined as "a period associated with the West from the eighteenth century onwards and characterized by the reorganisation of society through a combination of the development of a capitalist economy, the political re-organisation of nation states, and the pre-eminence of cultural values such as rationality and progress arising from philosophy of Enlightenment, which gives rise to a particular social order that remained dominant in the West until the late twentieth century" (Hubbard & Kitchin et al, 2005:347-348). One of the most distinctive features of modernity is the increased inter-connection between globalizing influences and personal dispositions, and the profound reorganisation of time and space, which prise social relations free from the hold of specific locales, re-combining them across time-space distances which form important dis-embedding influences (Giddens, 2002:2). Modernity is thus understood as a post-industrial order, but not one in which the sureties of tradition and habit have been replaced by the certitude of rational knowledge, but rather, insists that all knowledge takes the form of hypothesis: claims which may very well be true but are always open to revision" (ibid:2). Under conditions of modernity, the future is continually drawn into the present by means of the reflexive organisation of knowledge environments (ibid:3). Hence, what sets modernity apart from all other historical forms of human cohabitation is "the compulsive and obsessive, continuous, unstoppable, forever incomplete *modernization;* and overwhelming and ineradicable, unquenchable thirst for creative destruction all for the sake of a greater capacity for doing more of the same in the future – enhancing productivity or competitiveness" (Baumann, 2012:2.) Wider theoretical debates in sociology concerning the conditions of modernity, and in particular, Beck's work on 'risk society' have exercised considerable influence in this respect. Beck argues that we now live in a new society form which he calls 'late modernity'; one that is dominated by uncertainty and reflexivity and characterised by crises, part of which relates to the environment, which are central to, and inseparable from, society.

and everyday urban life. Not only do allotments provide a range of therapeutic (and ecological) functions (both in a direct and indirect sense), but I argue, constitute important sites for' civic engagement'. They are 'shared-in-common' spaces (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015), where barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed in favour of a *common identity* generated by participating in similar activities, and interacting with unknown others in this designated space. They promote social levelling, engender social integration and foster a new kind of politics of place which engenders and restores a sense of identification with and belonging to place. Their value is I argue, *in* their sociability and the experiences interactions with unknown others generate. They are, 'spaces of potential' (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007 that provide a template for improving the quality of the urban and everyday urban life. They contribute to the enhancement of health and well-being for urbanites, provide access to an arena of social interaction and facilitate and promote social and civil integration[5] (Vertovec, 2007) They are I argue, *vivacious, productive, multi-functional 'people'd landscapes'* (Viljoen et al, 2012) which provide a means to practice cooperation, promote inclusion, a means to interact with unknown others and opportunities engage in reciprocal forms of exchange. They have the potential to generate an alternative framework for promoting better social relations and social practices. In that sense, urban allotments constitute an important 'space of potential' in the contemporary urban metropolis, which can provide new strategies of action to build a more sustainable, inclusive, vibrant, integrated and cohesive notion of the public, and improve the quality of urban life.

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[5] Civil integration, is a term coined by Steven Vertovec (2007) used to describe how individuals acquire and engage in routine practices to get on with others. These include simple forms of acknowledgement, acts of restricted helpfulness, types of personal consideration, courtesies and indifference to diversity which he argues, can be learned and promoted and better integrate individuals (particularly immigrants). By way of these civil practices, immigrants he believes, may be better integrated than (often) though.

Chapter nine provides a case study analysis of allotment gardening in Belfast, and illuminates the potential of UA to promote a *new* kind of politics of place in a city that remains divided along ethno-religious/national lines. Significantly, the chapter shows evidence that in Belfast UA initiatives move beyond the politicization of urban space, and everyday urban life.. As a point of departure, the chapter presents various typologies of gardeners in Belfast to explicate the various factors giving rise to the demonstrable rise in demand for UA there. In terms of motivations, allotment holders in Belfast fall into *three* categories: (1) The Socio-Practical Gardener, (2) The *Socio*-Idealist and (3) The Socio-Organic gardener. Whilst typologies of gardeners reflect may appear analogous with typologies of gardeners in Dublin, they hinge on a paradoxical combination of similarity and difference. I discuss each category and offer various vignettes and visual methodologies to explicate the characteristics that comprise the typologies of gardeners investing in UA in Belfast today. This is followed with an examination of *how* UA initiatives generate alternative forms of sociality that stand in contradistinction to those generated by ethno-national/religious divisions, and the politicization of everyday life. Significantly, the chapter shows evidence that UA initiatives allow urban dwellers to join in concert and give shape to their immediate environs, contribute to the material fabric of the city, and facilitate bridge-building across the community divide. They are sites where urban dwellers of diverse ethno/religious categorisations can (re)construct a 'shared-in-common' ground and move beyond parochial understandings of their lives. Their *modus operandi* is I argue, predicated on a willingness to disregard ethno-religious/national categorizations while engaging in the tasks of cultivation which allows urban dwellers in Belfast to engage in a shared politics of place *without* having to be conscious of or adhere to prescribed ethno-religious/national distinctions while interacting, participating and engaging with 'others'. As in Dublin, they are sites of 'civic interfaces' where barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed which allows for

the creation of a different kind of politics of place (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015). Widely accepted labels of 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' are rendered less salient as plot-holders invest their mental and physical labour in the care and cultivation of the land. The social levelling that results,(albeit temporary and site specific) indicates that as in Dublin, urban agriculture initiatives in Belfast constitute important 'spaces of potential' that fulfil an important role associated with urban public life (Sennett, 2011).

Chapter ten concludes the study by assessing the value and potential of the urban allotment as a new (and somewhat revived) form of urban public space, that can facilitate and promote social levelling, engender social integration and localised forms of social cohesion. Through a critical analysis of the specific social and civic dividends flowing from UA, this chapter highlights *the potential of UA* to nurture more inclusive vibrant public spaces in the contemporary urban metropolis. It assesses the importance of space, place and place-based practices and highlights the crucial role the urban citizenry play in (re)constructing *inclusive, multi-functional, liveable* and people'd landscapes (Viljoen et al, 2007, *my emphasis*) which provide possible, alternative frameworks to improve social relations in diverse urban contexts, the (material and ecological) quality of the urban, and the quality of the everyday urban life. UA sites facilitated and supported by public and voluntary bodies I argue, promote a more *public* politics of place, since practices and interactions are underpinned by what urban dwellers have in common, rather than by what divide them (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007). They are I argue, landscapes that stand in contradistinction to the more privatized politics of place since they provide a means to practice cooperation, engender mutuality, solidarity and help urban dwellers to (re)connect with others, generate networks and restore bonds of trust. Hence, I argue, that public space, far from being marginal space in the city can be defined by its centrality to the city's life world. As Dines and Cattell (2006) argue, public spaces are a fundamental feature of cities and their quality is commonly perceived to be a measure of the quality of urban life. In that

sense, the urban allotment I argue, has the potential to transform the quality of urban public space, reinvigorate a (crumbling) public realm and improve the quality of life in the city, since a degree of cooperation and civil integration is generated in the sense that plot-holders become engaged in "the acquisition and routinization of everyday practices for getting on with others in the inherently fleeting interactions that comprise city life" (Vertovec, 2007:4, in Corcoran and Kettle, 2015).

Hence, this study illuminates the centrality of UA in terms of constructing a 'shared-in-common' ground, and shows evidence of the potential of UA to produce more inclusive, integrated and sustainable cities of the future. Whilst the study show evidence of the dis-embedding social processes generated by late and post modernity and the politicization of everyday life (exclusivist renditions of belonging, social truncation, rigid boundaries, social segregation, social polarisation, social isolation) which continue to frame urbanite's identities and everyday urban life, this study illuminates the direct and ancillary social benefits UA offers in terms of producing more socially integrated, cohesive and sustainable cities of the future. The urban allotment allows urban dwellers to move beyond difference, promotes inclusion and proffers a template for reform and can provide a way towards a "new geography of acceptance" (Massey, 1995:74) in cities of the global North.

Whilst scholars argue that living with difference (ethnic, racial, religious, economic) is the most urgent challenge facing civil society today (Sennett, 2011) allotments I argue have the potential to create sustainable models of development and growth, improve the quality of the urban (ecological, spatial and social) and revive the public realm.

2.
URBAN AGRICULTURE: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY

Figure 1. Allotments. Morden, South London. circa Oct. 1939. Image courtesy of www.robuild.co.uk ©

2.1. **Introduction**:

This chapter examines two main themes. First, the chapter provides a brief socio-historical sketch of UA. Second, policies on UA are appraised in Ireland and Northern Ireland and set against a wider European context. Together, they provide a context within which to examine contemporary trends in UA in both case study cities and the various conventions being employed to meet the demonstrable rise in demand for UA. Key champions, I argue, play a crucial role in paving the way to greater collaboration and coordination among executing institutions in terms of accessing land, information and assistance, progressing policy strategies and operationalising new avenues that can assist urban dwellers to cope with many urban issues and constraints.

2.2.   **What we mean by UA?**

Urban agriculture (UA) is defined as "the growing, processing and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities" (Browne and Carter, 2003:3). A broad term, UA ranges from '*urban farming*' (intentionally materialised business models that take advantage of the proximity of the city to offer local/regional produce/services) such as small farms and community supported agriculture schemes, to '*gardening activities*',(individual production and collective schemes) such as family gardens and allotments, to educational, therapeutic and community gardening schemes, land-shares, food production in housing estates, in school gardens and public spaces and on roof-tops, to guerrilla gardening and other food production initiatives in cities (Tornaghi, 2014; COST, 2015 (forthcoming)). Whilst UA is a common practice in many cities of the Global South often pioneered by local governments to complement local rural and urban economic systems (Mougeot, 2005), people's engagement with food production in the global North has been relatively marginalised, with relevant exceptions during times of war and economic adversity (Tornaghi, 2014). However, in recent years, cities of the global North have witnessed a demonstrable rise in interest in UA. Projects promoted by single individuals, community organisations, cooperatives and social enterprises are harvesting plants in public spaces (such as motorways, roadways and interstitial un-used spaces – see below). In the majority of contexts, cities are witnessing a demonstrable rise in allotment gardening initiatives. Whilst definitions and characteristics between different UA practices vary, current systems of UA today date back to the early nineteenth century.

2.3. **UA:A socio-historical trajectory**

Urban agriculture emerged from the British system of allotment gardening, first appearing around the edges of cities and towns due to agricultural transformation, urbanisation and industrialisation (Share and Duignan 2005; Cullen 2008; McClintock, 2010; Forrest, 2011; Bell & Watson, 2012). Allotments provided a means of subsistence during times of war and economic adversity, and became traditionally associated with older men and lower socio-economic groups (Bell & Watson, 2012; Forrest, 2011; McClintock, 2010; Buckingham, 2005; Crouch & Ward, 1997; Gaskell, 1980).

Figure 2. Allotment garden in 'Shields', England. Image courtesy of City Farmer ©

In England, allotments had been stipulated by continuous Parliamentary Enclosure Acts, culminated between 1750-1850 (Crouch and Ward, 1988; Forrest, 2011); - a process which ended traditional rights to arable farming on land formerly held in common, which, according to some scholars "impoverished the masses of rural England, destroyed communal values inherent in the institutions of common property, and created a rural proletariat of landless labourers completely dependent on capitalist farmers for their livelihood" (Moselle, 1995:482).

Initially a rural phenomenon, allotments provided a means of subsistence for disenfranchised rural poor and landless serfs (Gaskell, 1980; Moselle, 1995; McClintock, 2010; Eizenberg, 2011; Forrest, 2011), performing a role analogous to that of the common rights enjoyed before enclosure. Whilst allotments were crucial in stabilising rural households and rural economies (augmenting wage income, reducing dependence on wage labour and increasing employment opportunities for women and children) (Gaskell, 1980; Moselle, 1995; McClintock, 2010; Eizenberg, 2011; Forrest, 2011) they soon became entrenched in British society because of concerns raised over the health of the nation's poor. With the onset of industrialisation, the pressures of enclosure generated a movement of the rural populace to newly emerging industrial landscapes, which scholars argue, transformed the elegance of cities into scenes of poverty and unrelenting squalor (Briggs, 1965; Scotland, 2007), provoking national discourse over the environmental, moral and social conditions of the city, and in particular, the public health and the social life of the city's poor (Gaskell, 1991; Bell & Watson, 2012) (Fig. 3).

Figure 3.Poverty in Victorian Britain. (Leeds) c.1890

Although the term 'garden' had already begun to appear in the literature of landscape and design and agrarian reform in the early nineteenth century (in terms of improving labourers life and the environment), the common usage of the term was employed to

denote something personal and private for the upper classes but *also* as a space of dissipation and ill-repute which working class labourers occupied (drunkenness, idleness, crime and vice) (Gaskell, 1980: 480). With a change in moral standards and leisure behaviour during the Victorian era, (allotment) gardens became a source of moral and physical regeneration of the labouring population; an antidote to disturbance and alienation, and a means of educating the working classes about social values of the middle-class orthodoxy (Bailey, 1978, cited in Gaskell, 1980:481). Fear of idleness, drunkenness and dissipation led to the propaganda for gardens throughout the Victorian era which transformed gardens from being a passive to an active agent in the recreative process: providing an open space in which individuals could engage in nature as well as its attendant benefits (ibid: 479).

With the pressures of enclosure, the extension of industrial towns and the restriction of 'traditional forms of recreation', the provision and promotion of (allotment) gardening provided a means of extending the ethos of industrial labour into society, which changed attitudes toward recreation and popular leisure activities. Whilst the British government had set up a select committee to investigate specific crises in cities, (which highlighted the need for gardens in which all classes could find pleasure and amusement), allotments were still recognised as one of the possible means of control over the moral and physical lives of the labouring population (ibid). Indeed, many industrialists operating within a transitional economy were cognizant of the benefits of (allotment) gardening (in terms of the industrial benevolence they generated), often arranging for the division of activities/labour between the factory and the field (Bell & Watson, 2012). Hence, allotment gardens, like schools, churches and other institutions became a means of social control, and were hailed by industrialists in terms of the virtues of hard work and industry, thrift and resourcefulness, self-reliance and self-improvement they generated (Gaskell, 1980: 480-484). However, it wasn't until the end of the First World War that allotments

were made available to all, and became a means of assisting returning service men instead of the labouring poor (The Allotment Society, UK).

Figure 4.UK Dig for victory gardens. Fig courtesy of waltons.co.uk ©

During the Second World War, campaigns such as 'Dig For Victory' extolled the virtues of gardening and served to protect the civilian population from potential starvation (Figs 4-9). Lawns, flowerbeds, playing fields and parks were dug up and planted with vegetables, whilst allotments appeared on railway sidings (for example; in the moat of the Tower of London and in the grounds of royal palaces such as Kensington Gardens) (Smith, 2013) (Figs 5 & 6).   In the same spirit, the BBC extolled the virtues of allotment cultivation with its Radio Allotment programme, resonating the 'Dig for Victory Anthem', *and* the potential (and moral) benefits of allotment gardening (BBC archives, 1943). Such was their success, that by the end of 1943, the nation's gardens and allotments were producing more than 1 million ton of vegetables annually (Smith, 2013).

Figure 5.Vegetable growing in Kensington Gardens, London

Figure 6.Vegetable growing in the Tower of London. Image courtesy of City Farmer. ©

Although gardens and allotments served to protect the civilian population from potential starvation, they continued to serve as a morale booster during the war. Whilst their main purpose was to provide a means of subsistence, it was during this period that allotments became empanelled (enshrined) under British legislation (Allotment Acts, 1919, 1922, 1925) which secured their provision, maintenance and promotion to the present day. Today, in the UK, 207 local authorities provide approximately 200,000 plots. Since the turn of the twenty-first century there has been a demonstrable rise in demand for UA. For example, in 2009, a survey conducted by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure

Gardeners found that the number of people waiting for plots was up 49 per 100 (Quarmby and Green, 2010). In London (as in other centres across the global North) municipalities witnessed a 20 per cent increase in demand for allotments between 2008-2010 (capitalgrowth.org). Although efforts are being made to meet the rise in demand for UA, across the UK, demand outstrips supply. Waiting lists currently stand at 87,000, averaging 57 per 100 plots (Campbell and Campbell, 2010). Hence, allotments continue to be a part of the everyday life of one in 65 families in Britain today (Crouch & Ward, 1997:xiv).

Figure 7.Wartime Posters. UK. Fig courtesy of cds.library.brown.edu and Imperial War Museum ©

Figure 8.Allotments Warwickshire, UK.   *Figure 9.Preparing an allotment on a bomb site:*

2.4. **UA: A European Perspective**

In Europe, the history of UA owes much to the British experience. As in Britain, allotments (and community gardens) in Europe played an important economic and social function, particularly during times of war and economic depression (Share and Duignan, 2005). With the growth of industrialisation and mass migration that followed, allotments were hailed for providing a means of food security particularly for working class populations isolated from their rural hinterlands. Such was the demand for land for UA in Germany at the end of the First World War, that the German government passed the first legislation for allotment gardening (The Small Garden and Small-Rent Land Law, 1919), which provided security of land tenure and fixed leasing fees (legislation that was later replaced by 'The Federal Allotment Gardens Act' (1983) which, (like Britain), has secured the provision, promotion and maintenance of over 1.4 million allotments (Schrebergärtens) to the present day (Gröning et al, 1995) (Fig 10)

Figure 10.Schrebergärtens (Allotments) in Schwabing, Munich & Berlin, Germany. Image courtesy of Berlin.de. ©

2.5. UA: An International Perspective

Similarly, in the USA subsistence food production was also part of American urban landscapes well into the twentieth century, often orchestrated by governments not only as a buffer for food security but as part of a coordinated measure to quell potential unrest during times of war and economic adversity (Moore, 2000; McClintock, 2010; Forrest, 2011). The 'Potato Patch Plan' for example, generated by the Mayor of Detroit, Hazen Pingree during the economic depression (1893) became an exemplar project in the USA, which explicitly addressed urban food provision and food rights (Figs. 11). Its success led to a prolific growth in the number of garden programmes in some thirty cities in nineteen states across the US in its first year (the largest of which was in Buffalo, New York where in 1897, 2,118 gardens were being cultivated) (Forrest, 2011). Garden Programmes exploded during World War I and II, and by 1944, under the National Victory Garden program, 20 million gardens were producing over forty percent of America's food (McClintock, 2010:198). During the 1970s economic recession: Liberty gardens, Victory Gardens and Inflation Gardens proliferated as a government response to food riots which gripped the nation enhanced by the 'back-to-the-land' ideas of the environmental movement during this period (ibid) (Figs. 13-14).
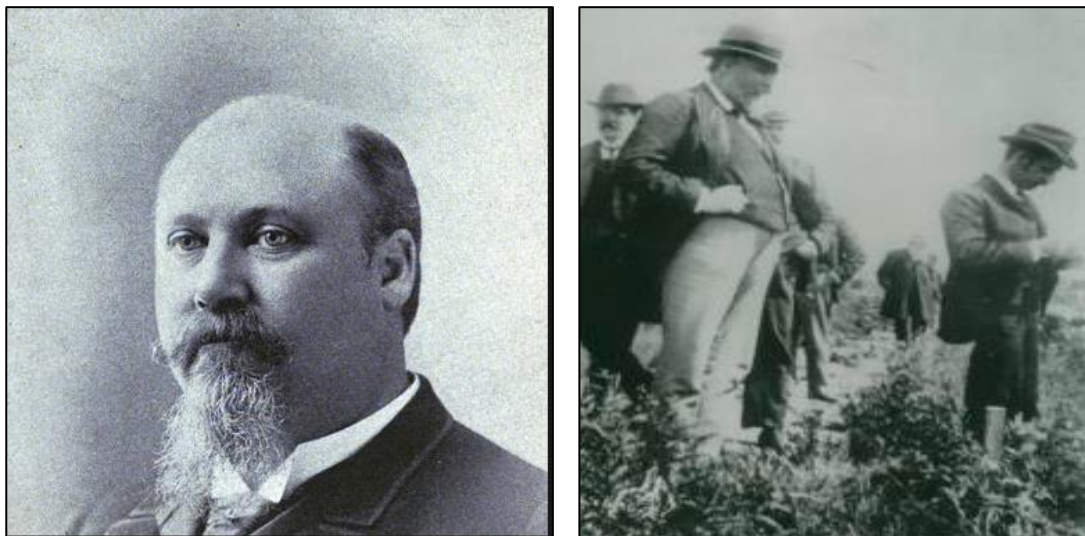
Figure 11.Hazen Pingree: The 'Potato Patch Plan'. Images courtesy of: wenglandhistoricalsociety.com, and seekinmichigan.org ©

By the latter half of the twentieth century, community gardeners and activists took over thousands of vacant lots in US cities fallen fallow in the ebb of industrial and residential capital (McClintock, 2010:198). Indeed, the notion of local food production was embraced by city dwellers and continues to drive many initiatives in US cities today. Today, in the USA, as in the UK many projects promoted by single individuals, community organisations, cooperatives and social enterprises are harvesting plants in public spaces (for example; P-Patch' in Seattle, 'Growing Power' in Milwaukee, 'DUG' in Denver, 'Food From the Sky' in London, the UK Land-Share movement and 'Grow Heathrow') (Tornaghi, 2014:2).

Figure 12.Dig for victory campaigns. Figs courtesy of acfonline.org.au ©

Figure 13.Detroit Thrift Gardens.   *Figure 14.New York Victory Garden 1943.*

2.6.   The genesis of allotments in Ireland: Dublin

Figure 15.Mount Street Trust 'Grow More Food' Allotment Clondalkin, Dublin. c. 1910.

The genesis of allotments in Dublin owes much to the British and US experience (Forrest 2011). With the growth of major cities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and mass migration that followed, national debates concerning the social and economic impact urban living had on new urban residents in Dublin reflected similar debates in England and the USA (Forrest, 2011; Bell and Watson 2012). Discussions on the health of the capital's urban poor providing good, clean, quality air and access to fresh fruit and vegetables) soon became entrenched in Irish society, provoking advocates to campaign for the provision of allotments in the city (Bell and Watson 2012) (Figs. 18-19**).**

At the invitation of the Dublin Unemployment Committee, Joseph Fels (an American Philanthropist) (Fig. 17), advocated for the provision of allotments as a practical attempt to deal with, and reduce unemployment and poverty in the city (Forrest, 2011; Bell & Watson, 2012). As a result, the Vacant Land Cultivation Society (VLCS) (spearheaded by Sarah Cecilia Harrison (an artist and the first female city councillor who became heavily engaged with workers issues) (Fig. 16), with the support of Dublin Corporation and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI), secured the provision of the first allotments in the city.

Figure 16.Sarah Cecilia Harrison. Circa. 1889. Image courtesy of HistoryIreland.com ©

Figure 17.Joseph Fels. Philanthropist. circa.1914.Image courtesy of HistoryIreland.com ©

Figure 18.. Urban Poor selling flowers/Veg at the base of Nelson's Pillar on Sackville St (O'Connell Street).Dublin. c. 1900 (National Archives. NLI, LNS 5445)

Figure 19.Living conditions in Dublin: Blackpitts, The Coombe, circa 1913. RSAI, Darkest Dublin Collection, No. 10. (National Archives ©)

Unlike 'working men's gardens' which had been flourishing in the country through the work of the Society of the St. Vincent de Paul (philanthropic society) provided at nominal rents, allotments supplied in Dublin were provided free of charge. However, they were often located on sites of poor quality and often awaiting development, which limited security of tenure. Between 1910 and 1917 the number of allotments had risen to 487 (Bell & Watson, 2012), and by 1920, that number grew to 6,151 (Forrest, 2011). Whilst Dublin Corporation and the DATI's involvement was largely confined to technical

instruction, the Vacant Land Cultivation Society played an active role in the provision of allotments in the city. However, as the allotment movement grew allotments became more politicized and self-reliant, flourishing during two world war periods and declining in their aftermath (Bell & Watson, 2012; Forrest, 2011). For example, the United Irish Plot-holders Union (1916), began to campaign for the cause of allotment members, advocating for allotment provision in rural areas *and* an allotment Act, urging municipalities *and* urban and rural councils to acquire compulsorily, land for purposes of allotments, fixity of tenure, agricultural rent and provision of free accommodation for meetings, lectures and educational purposes *and* the establishment of food depots on co-operative lines for the sale of surplus produce (Bell & Watson, 2012:80). In 1926, the United Plot-holders Union (which later became known as 'The Irish Allotment Holders Association') succeeded in convincing the government of the recently established Irish Free State that legislation was required, and in 1926, 'The Allotment Act' was passed. It identified allotments as "a piece of land intended to be let for cultivation by an individual for the production of vegetables mainly for consumption by himself and his family" (ibid), and included a clause allowing local authorities to lease land to voluntary associations interested in the allotment movement. However, despite legislation, two types of allotment holders were evidenced in the city: those who used plots as a means of subsistence, and those who held allotments for commercial use (Cullen, 2011).

Although the Allotment Act (1926) was passed as a nationwide policy, in practice it was only ever implemented in Dublin, but allotments became increasingly located on the periphery of the expanding city (Bell & Watson, 2012). Financial support for allotments in the decade before the Second World War was secured by philanthropic societies, some of which continue to support allotment projects across the city today. In the decade before the Second World War, unemployment was recognised as one of the largest economic problems for Western capitalist societies. Whilst many projects (both cooperative and

socialist) offered a variety of solutions, one project based in Dublin in particular, attracted the attention of politicians and social activists: 'The Mount Street Trust'. A non-political and non-sectarian project, the club was set up in 1934 to supplement State assistance, providing members opportunities to preserve their mental and physical fitness and promote active citizenship through various schemes such as allotments. Promoting a communal/cooperative system of farming, the club relied on donations and financial support from the public: a practice which continues to the present day (Mount Street Club.ie, 2014).

Whilst The Allotment Act (1926), and The Acquisition of land (Allotments) Amendment Act (1934) that followed made provision for allotments to accommodate unemployed persons at reduced and nominal rents, the 'Town and Regional Planning Act' (1934) was also adopted which noted that the provision of allotments may be made by local authorities to provide land for allotments. However, this was later replaced by 'The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act' (1963) which made no mention of the provision of allotments. As the city began to expand from the 1960s onwards urbanisation swallowed up residual pieces of land available for agriculture, and the majority of allotments were uprooted to make room for urban development. Nevertheless, interest in growing food in the city remained. During the latter half of the twentieth century, widespread environmental concerns enhanced by the emergence of the first Organic Movement (IOFGA)[6] generated a growing awareness of the value of producing and consuming *organic* chemical-free food (Jorgensen, 20). Indeed, the 1980s marked a newfound popularity and public demand for organic food, along with growing environmental concerns over the way in which food was being produced, distributed and

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[6] Organic farming in Ireland was dominated by individual, large scale landowners until the 1970s, when the actual movement was formed (Moore, 2003). Specific to Ireland, the organic movement comprised non-natives, immigrants whom Moore (2003) refers to as 'homesteaders' – individuals who had come to Ireland in search of space and rural living, and to live "alternative, self-sufficient life, based on the land, with due care given to the soil and the environment" (ibid:3).

consumed. This led to the emergence of wholefood and health food shops, and the formation of producer and consumer networks (for eg. The Dublin food Co-op)[7] Despite considerable interest down through the years, allotments were met with resistance by local authorities in making them a permanent feature of the urban and suburban landscape, and by the turn of the twenty-first century, allotments in Dublin virtually disappeared. For the few that remained, the improvement of working conditions, the decline in poverty and a rise in consumption and leisure industries in the latter part of the twentieth century transformed the function of allotments from a self-provisioning to a recreational pursuit.

In Dublin, as in London (and Belfast- see below), between 2008-2010, the city witnessed a demonstrable rise in demand for UA. While local authorities in London witnessed a 20 per cent increase in demand in Dublin, four local authorities currently provide just under 1,300 plots in the city (Tables, 1-3, Fig. 20), marking a 97 per cent increase in the demand for allotments during the same period. Whilst policy on UA there has enabled local authorities to make provision for the rise in demand for UA, in Dublin, the absence of policy on UA has meant that the provision and governance of allotments varies according to each administrative regime/local authority, security of tenure is tentative and extended waiting lists remain((see section 2.4.2.1 below). Although no official statistics on the provision of allotments in the city today are available, this study indicates that waiting lists stand at approximately 924, averaging 2 people for every plot currently occupied. (Tables 2 & 3).

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[7] The first Irish mobilisation of the organic movement (IOFGA) followed protests against a proposed nuclear power station in 1981. The largest Irish organic consumer group, the Dublin Food Co-Op (founded 1983) arose from a festival on the site (Jorgensen, 2009:167).

Dublin City Council Allotment Sites	No. of Plots (approx.)
Tymon Park	13
St. Anne's Park	90
Corkagh Park	37
De Coucey Square	25
Mount Anville	100
Turvey	250
Mill Lane, Palmerstown	73
Friarstown, Tallaght	298
Powerstown, Blanchardstown	250
Skerries, North Dublin	150
Current total provision: City Councils: Dublin	1286

Table 1. Public Site locations (Dublin City) (population, 1,273,069 (Census, 2011))
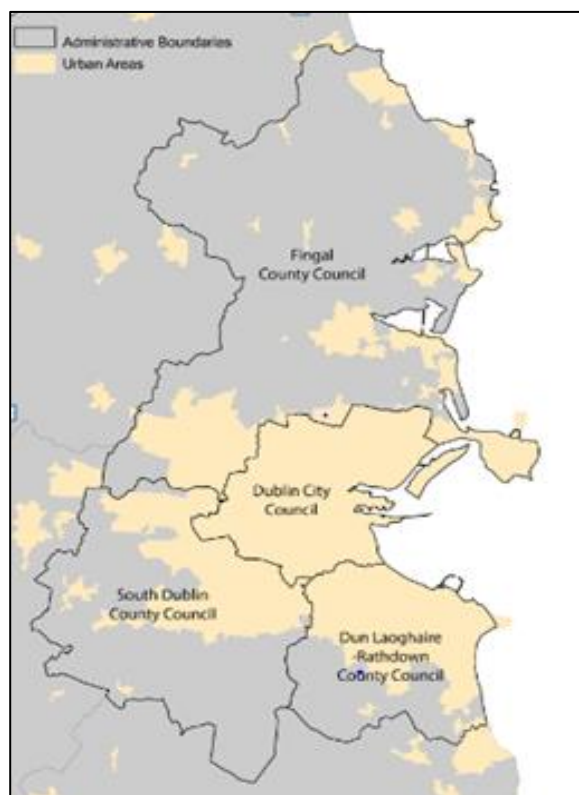
Figure 20.Administrative Council Areas: Dublin
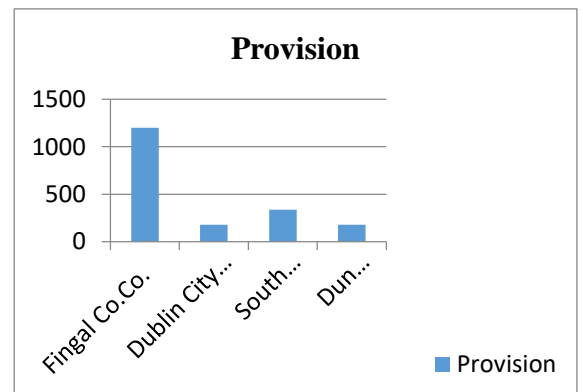
Table. 2. Allotment Provision (Public Sites)
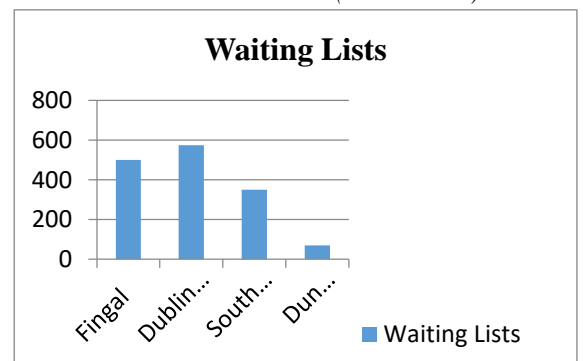
Table.3 . Allotment Waiting Lists(Public Sites)

2.6.1. Policy and UA Conventions: Dublin

As alluded to above, like many cities of the Global North, Ireland has no national (or local) policy on UA. As a result, the prerogative is retained by local governments in terms of making provision, allocating resources and the levels of commitment they are willing to devote to UA. Whilst recent government reports focus' on advancing a sustainable 'green' agenda to fuel economic recovery and restore economic growth (www.environ.ie), *and* recent city development plans advocate for the provision of *allotments* to achieve sustainable development objectives (Dublin City Development Plan, 2011-2017) (see chapter one), the absence of policy has meant that the provision of allotments is highly circumscribed, administrative regimes are inconsistent, security of tenure is tentative and extended waiting lists remain. Whilst efforts are being made to facilitate demand for sites for UA the absence of policy on UA has meant that local authorities have been largely reactive rather than proactive in facilitating demand for UA to date.

In Dublin, land for UA is organised into different types of conventions in and across the city (see Fig. 2.41 & 2.45). Whilst there is evidence of many bottom-up approaches to UA emerging in and across Dublin, civil society actors are pushing for a greener city agenda to have UA incorporated into the policy repertoire and urban regimes. These range from allotment gardening, community and roof-top gardening initiatives to numerous networks working together to promote UA (for example, Dublin Community Growers, The Community Garden Network, Dublin Food Coop and Grow It Yourself (GIY)) (Figs. 21-24) who are advancing cultural and social practices which aim to promote ecological and social sustainability through UA (providing support, sharing resources and disseminating knowledge, exchanging ideas and skills) (for detailed examination and analysis, see chapters 5-8). In addition, efforts are being made to meet rising demand for

UA. Public, private and voluntary bodies are adopting strategic approaches that provide opportunities for UA on greenbelts adjacent to build up areas in the city, on waste, abandoned and overgrown sites in the city, or on land previously zoned for development (Fig.25).
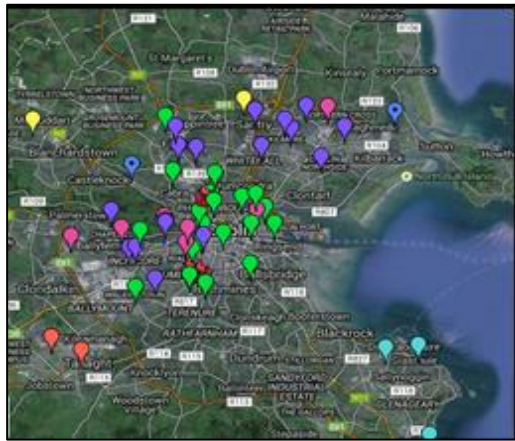
Figure 21.GIY. Ireland. Philanthropic UA

Figure 22.Dublin Community Growers

Figure 23.Community Garden Network

Figure 24.Spuds.ie

Figure 25.Abandoned/overgrown sites used for allotments. Dublin. 2009.

In Dublin three forms of conventions for the provision of allotments were identified in this study: Public, Private and Philanthropic, each varying according to their administrative and governance regimes, (access to) available resources, varying forms of tenure and annual fees (see below). Whilst no current statistics are currently available on the number of privately owned sites in the city, four local authorities currently provide just under 1,300 plots in the city (Table 1-3 & Fig 20), while one philanthropic site (located in in the North of the city) currently provides over 335 plots (with plans to extend provision by 200 in the near future). Whilst only one local authority has successfully cleared their waiting list since the completion of this research, and efforts have been made to meet rising demand in other regions of the city, the absence of policy has meant that current waiting lists remain.

Furthermore, with the absence of policy on UA, governance structures vary according to each administrative regime, which has a significant impact on the provision, development and quality of allotments in the city, and by extension, practitioner's experiences of UA. (For a detailed analysis of the construction of allotments, see chapter 5).

Publicly provided allotments comprise two main forms: Cooperative Partnerships and Centralised Administrative Regimes. Whilst private landowners and philanthropic groups have transformed vacant land parcels into allotments located in the hinterlands, rents for these are substantially higher which creates barriers to entry for specific social classes residing in these regions. While there is no standard size of allotments run by local authorities or private bodies, plots vary in size from 21 to 200 square metres. Rents for publicly provided plots tend to be less expensive, but pricing structures vary according to each administrative regime. Between 2011–2013, the average rent for allotments on public sites ranged from €50 to €200, and up to €300 on private sites. Given the current conditions of austerity, and the cost of renting privately owned sites, demand for public

sites has substantially increased. Whilst rents vary enormously, they are not always in direct relation to the facilities provided, and *all* limit security of tenure through an eleven-month licencing system, with notice to quit within seven days. In addition, many sites are located in interstitial areas, display weak visibility to the public at large, and require private transport. Furthermore, there is *no* onus on local authorities to provide alternative sites when the use of sites has ended. Despite various attempts to meet rising demand, waiting lists for allotments indicate that demand outstrips supply, and that access is therefore limited for prospective plot-holders. Hence, the absence of policy on UA has also meant that the onus is largely on communities and civil society actors interested in advancing a UA agenda to acquire land, seek help and support. A key link in this process is the key champion.

2.6.2. Acquiring Land for UA and the role of the 'Key Champion'

Acquiring land for UA in Dublin can be a challenging and arduous task, and (according to my respondents), is viewed by practitioners', advocates and local authority's as one of the most contentious issues surrounding UA today. Securing land is also determined by a number of key factors including; local authorities developing and implementing strategies in line with the City's Development Plan (2011-2017); the availability and suitability of land for cultivation; limited public resources; and key champions who advocate for, support, accelerate, and secure the provision of sites for UA.

To date, only one local authority has developed and implemented an allotment strategy in line with the city's development plan. As a result, (and alluded to above) public land given over for UA is organised into two different types of conventions in and across the city: Cooperative Partnerships and Centralised Administrative Regimes. A city official explains:

"....some [sites] are concrete, and others are polluted ...so they wouldn't be suitable. But you're talking city centre, and you can have all sorts of … gas n' things like that, so you have to be very careful you know? There's cambium in the soil, you see it in batteries. There's a lot of that in the soils in the city from pollution over years … . There's all sorts of those things that you have to mind too, and some sites just aren't suitable because of that. Others have been earmarked for development but to be honest, the real problem is lack of resources"   *Local Authority Official. 2012*

As in other urban contexts across the global North, access to land is more often an issue than availability or suitability per se. Similarly, this is largely due to the pervasive influence of neo-liberal ideologies, urban policies and proprietorial and commercial interests generating demands on public space (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Harvey, 2006; Leitner, Peck et al, 2007; Eizenberg, 2011). A city officials' comments' explicate:

"We have a lot of landholdings around here. When the market was good, we bought the land. We also own property around the corner, 5 development sites across the road here, and that will become a future development site whenever the market returns. Eventually they will all become development sites"   *Local Authority Official, 2013*

Moreover, this also indicates that the 'hegemony of property ownership', recent urban restructuring and the extensive privatization of public space have also resulted in an extensive 'erosion of public space' in the city (Blomley, 2004; Hackworth, 2007; Eizenberg, 2011). In many cases, urban dwellers seeking land for UA construe recent urban restructuring as dispossessing urban locales of common resources needed to sustain life in the city. Furthermore, in the wake of recent economic austerity policies, administrative bodies are under increasing pressure to deal with the current housing crisis. This, in conjunction with the continued focus on residential and commercial development and strategies aimed at fuelling economic growth and recovery, have meant that local authorities are under intense pressure which is impacting in the availability of public land for UA. However, many respondents believe that public interests are being made subservient to the needs of global capital and urban regeneration, and that economic growth continues to take precedence over the provision of allotments in the city (for a detailed analysis see chapter four). A plot-holder explains:

"…the planners were more interested in developing land, that's all. When it comes to decisions being made, they centred around development, and the tragedy is they don't take people into account. They should be made to think about having things like this [allotments], because its people that make towns, not buildings, isn't it?"

Plot-holder. 2013

Local authority officials' comments illuminate the increasing demands on public space,

and on local authorities in terms of the lack of resources, issues concerning public space,

and the challenges they face in terms of providing public land for UA:

"This area was always a densely built on area, and you don't have here what you have in the suburbs, where you have your housing estate and your open space. …and we have a duty of care to people on housing lists so that whenever the government gets funding, or when the department of the environment make monies available, we will be looking at that [derelict site] to redevelop it for social housing. If you look at the Parks, there is very limited space within [them]. We don't have the ability within the city boundaries to develop new parks, so I suppose there's more capacity there in X [suburbs] to be able to develop the allotment concept than there is in Dublin [city]".

Local Authority Official. 2012

Another local authority official explains:

"....yes, it's important that communities are generated yes, and that people take responsibility for their environment, but you have to give them a roof over their heads, and we really have to look at the whole social housing thing too you know?…but, none of them [current UA sites] are permanent"

Local Authority Official. 2012

In some cases local authorities are attempting to facilitate demand by providing sites for

community gardens on derelict sites in the city to reduce waiting lists quickly.

Furthermore, community gardens require little investment, and enable local authorities to

implement *devolved* management strategies to encourage a sense of civic responsibility

to place, dismantle public perceptions *and* dependency on local authorities as care-takers

of public space. A city official explains:

"We would devolve everything to the people you know? What we want to do is to devolve them to the people like the London model. Psychologically you see, people in Ireland, well in the city, think that if the council have let it, they should provide everything and should maintain the sites. But if they're devolved to the people to manage, they take responsibility for them. The real problem is there's no resources, and the best way to solve the current problem is to devolve them to the people and to get committees to maintain and take responsibility. It helps us keep sites maintained too because of the lack of resources to maintain them…"

Local Authority Official. 2012.

Despite recent city development plans to support the provision of community gardens *and* allotments on land for temporary use, only two local authorities (in the Greater Dublin area) actively promote allotments in the city, with only one developing nd actively implementing an allotment strategy to date (as alluded to above). Hence, the demand for UA is largely advocated by key champions and communities. A local authority official's comments explicate:

"we don't advertise, no. What we do is, if somebody local comes to us, they come to us and say, "this site is yours, and we would like to use it, for allotments, are you open to that?' We don't get involved in allotments per se but we get involved in community gardens. Like we've a big site around the corner and we don't go and say 'we want expressions of interest in it for [UA]'. The way we normally do it is, they come to us, but we don't advertise"   *Local Authority Official 2012*

Another local authority official's comments illustrate:

*"*we're lobbied by certain groups like a gardening group who need land, they [the municipality] provide sites if people approach them, and it's done on a case-by-case basis only. They [the municipality] just react to people in the community knocking on their door. … they come and ask me … …we usually say, "well if you're going to look after them and you mind them, don't come crying to us" and we leave it with them. But you see, none of the sites are permanent*"*   *Local Authority. Official. 2013*

Accordingly, the procurement of land for UA in Dublin is given on a temporary basis, and largely dependent upon the assiduous efforts of key champions within both communities *and* local authorities, who mobilise and advocate on behalf of urban dwellers in acquiring land for UA. Significantly, key champions can be viewed as 'civic minded' individuals, aware of the value and *potential* of UA for transforming the city and urban dwellers quality of life. The majority are social actors who move across and between networks, establish connections and advocate *and* facilitate cooperative partnerships/cooperative models of self-governance of UA for the greater/'common good'. Their involvement in the provision and promotion of UA and various advocacy groups pays extraordinary dividends within communities in terms of influencing, transforming and advocating specific forms of social action and cultural practices to achieve sustainable development and growth.

They comprise plot-holders, community garden volunteers, food entrepreneurs, local authority officials and members of various UA advocacy groups. Their involvement presents a picture of UA which links concerns about the provenance and quality of food, the environment, sustainability, environmental awareness, knowledge transfer, individuals' sensitivity to nature and the importance of well-being for improving everyday urban life. They play an active role in promoting and enhancing a UA agenda, and secure land by promoting the notion of community development, bio-diversity and improving the environmental quality of the city. Niall, a key champion explains:

"…I was hounding X [local authority] for a place…..going everywhere looking for a space to do this. Just looking for a piece of land, any land that wasn't going to be utilised or that was originally up for development. I kept hounding them [local authority]…… hounding them for something like this for the community for ages, for over two years in fact, because I believed it would be something everybody could participate in … but I couldn't get the land. I'm eager to improve things and do more for my community … I think this [UA] is a way of bringing people together. They'd learn new skills, improve the environment, and become more involved in the community. It would improve biodiversity too. The councils and government should be there to service the needs of the community and this is a way of servicing not only the needs of the community, but also the environment, bio-diversity and education and other things all at the same time ... but I think, that it really was the environmental issue that got them on side"

Niall. Key Champion, 2012

Similarly, a key champion and UA practitioner keen to promote the notion of sustainable urban development (ecological and social), recall their own experiences of securing land for UA:

"we decided to make a play for this site…..but it wasn't made easy put it that way. We had to make a lot of arguments in the proposal, how it would benefit the area, and if we wanted to get funding like the Agenda 21 money for example. We had to say the benefits to the environment, the social benefits to the area, the recreational benefits and all that sort of stuff in our proposal … The well is drying up [economic retrenchment] I suppose with the recession, and they [local authority] don't have much funds really ….but it wasn't made easy, no, not at all" *Martha Socio-Organic gardener. 2013*

"we had endless meetings with the council, regular meetings for about two years and eventually we convinced them to go with the idea … you have to convince them by going the sustainability route … but I'm keen to promote that"

Bobby Key Champion, 2013

Hence, key champions play an active role in promoting and enhancing UA, and redefining urban space to improve the (ecological and social) quality of the city *and* the quality of everyday life. They pave the way for greater collaboration and coordination among executing institutions in terms of accessing land, information and assistance, progressing policy strategies and operationalising new avenues that can assist urban dwellers to cope with many urban issues and constraints.

The power of the key champion lies in their access to municipal advocates and networks, their knowledge and ability to promote UA on citizens' and communities' behalf. They are acutely aware of the value and *potential* of UA in terms of transforming the quality of everyday urban life. They categorically promote the direct and ancillary benefits of UA, and play a direct role in UA provision in the city today. Their involvement and movement within and across networks proffers an opportunity to accelerate and secure the provision of land by negotiating on citizens and community's behalf. In that sense, it can be argued that they play a *crucial* role in accumulating social and bridging social capital (that is, engendering bonds between individuals and extended communities), *and* are at the forefront of accruing external social capital through their partnership and connections with outside groups (in terms of establishing links to local authorities and relevant institutions). They play an active role in promoting cooperative-partnership approaches currently being employed by some local authorities across the city today. Moreover, they are keen to promote more cooperative (and democratic) models of governance to transform the urban and urban dwellers social worlds. They actively encourage a sense of responsibility and civic mindedness by promoting various practices on site (see chapter 4), and are able to mobilize support through their actions to achieve their objectives/aims. They play an active role in turning sites into cultivated plots, disseminate knowledge, and use their experience and skills to advance a UA agenda. They collaborate *with* practitioners to generate networks to ensure the provision of allotments is achieved and maintained.

Crucially, they actively encourage urban dwellers to interact on and between sites by promoting pedagogic events (see chapter 6), They encourage practitioners to participate in UA activities, and employ specific cultivation practices and techniques, and stress the importance of constructing spaces in the city where urban dwellers can engage in similar practices, co-mingle and interact.

They see UA sites as a means to practice cooperation and alter practitioners' practices and worldviews. They aim to maximise, promote and engender social inclusion, and disseminate knowledge and skills (through a variety of social and pedagogic events), to transform the material and ecological quality of the urban and give new meaning to urban dwellers social worlds.

2.7. The genesis of allotments in Northern Ireland: Belfast

Figure 26.Young girls learning to construct allotments on a bomb site. Image courtesy of The British Imperial War Museum ©

Figure 27.Jimmy West (aged 11) plants bean seeds on a make-shift allotment (a bomb site). The seeds he is sowing were donated by America (circa.1942.). Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.org ©

Allotments in Belfast emerged a few years earlier than in Dublin, and owe much to the work of a Belfast based solicitor Charles Black (Bell & Watson, 2012) who, in 1907, secured the provision of the first allotments in the city. Familiar with the allotment movement in England, (particularly the Manchester district), he secured the provision of the first allotments in the Strandtown district of the city (Bell & Watson, 2102). However, unlike Dublin, allotments were not provided free of charge, but at a nominal rent. Whilst allotments in Great Britain were common in Industrial areas, this was not the case in Belfast. Rather, the allotment movement was less developed in Belfast in the early years of the twentieth century, even less than in rural areas across Britain. Hence, the provision of allotments was slow and steady during the first decade of the twentieth century and largely attributed to a lack of public interest *and* the fact that rents of suitable land were prohibitive (ibid).

As in Dublin, the outbreak of the First World War pioneered the allotment movement which led to the rapid increase in the number of allotments in the city. Their provision however, was largely due to the work of a Protestant charitable group: 'The Belfast Christian Union' who later transformed the management structure of allotments, and in

turn, contributed to their (ongoing) success. In 1907 for example, the number of allotments in Belfast totalled 25. However, between 1914-1916 this increased to 1,700. In 1908, the 'Small Holdings and Allotment Act' had come into force which placed a duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments depending on demand. However, Belfast Corporation was not directly involved in the provision of allotments during this period and land used for allotments was largely under the control of the' Tramway Department' (formerly rented for grazing) (ibid). Plots were largely rented by artisans and labourers (mainly from the Belfast ship yard –'Harland and Wollf'), and members of the Royal Irish Constabulary. However, their management structures meant that there were no barriers to entry and allotments were made available to all classes in the city, providing a means of subsistence and self-improvement *and* (as in Britain and the USA) a means of social control to quell potential unrest during the war.

In Belfast, as in Dublin, allotments were generally located on sites that were of poor quality (at least until 1916) (Figs.26-27), and often awaiting development, which limited security of tenure. However, unlike Dublin, plot-holders displaced by urban development were relocated to alternative sites in the city. Furthermore, high levels of knowledge and cultivation standards were evidenced and noted in many articles on allotment practices during this period (Bell & Watson, 2012). Plot-holders were commended for their knowledge and practices which reflected rules stipulated by 'The Garden Plots Association' city (who in turn were controlled by the Christian Civic Union) who reserved control of allotments in the city. Whilst plots were predominantly cultivated by men, enlisting's during the First World War led to an increase in the number of women tending plots in the city (Fig. 28-29) (ibid). Whilst sites were largely constructed by the association, Belfast Corporation did not play any part in their initial development.

Nonetheless, they did begin to rent several areas in city parks to the association as demand for sites and the need to increase food supply increased during the war (Figs. 2.29-30).

Figure 28.Women working on allotment. Circa 1940.   Figure 29.Plot-holder on a Victory garden
Images courtesy of "The Telegraph" © & The Guardian ©

As the allotment movement grew, Belfast Corporation provided advisory and administrative support (primarily through the Municipal Technical Institute), and provided plot-holders with seeds, manure and technical assistance in the construction and development of sites, and through a variety of pedagogic demonstrations and events. However, land given over by Belfast Corporation for allotments was given on a temporary basis and restored to parkland following the end of the War.

Whilst the demand for sites waned in the aftermath of the war, they attracted attention once again with the advent of the World War II (providing a buffer zone for food security). During the 1940s, the Ministry of Agriculture recognized the importance of increasing vegetable production to combat the scarcity of many vegetables which, at that time, were mainly imported from mainland Europe (Bell & Watson, 2012). Campaigns such as 'Dig for Victory' that extolled in Britain meant that available and suitable land in the city was transformed and cultivated to increase food supply, and became places of refuge and social support (for example, Lawns at Queens University Belfast and the Botanic Gardens), (Figs. 30-31). The 'Dig for Victory' campaign became increasingly important during this period, and encompassed both plot-holders *and* anyone with a greenhouse,

garden or piece of land. As the Ministry of Agriculture stated in a report in 1942, "every endeavour should be made to utilise all the space available for the production of tomatoes." Hence, 75% of the glasshouses in the Belfast Botanical Gardens were given over to food production, and by 1942, over six tons of tomatoes, and over 40,000 plants were cultivated (Belfast City Council, 2013). Whilst the main allotment areas in the city were in Orangefield, the Ardoyne and Ballysillan, (all of which remain to the present day), the need to secure food supplies meant that city parks were once again transformed into cultivatable plots to meet rising demand. During the same time period, the Belfast Allotment Association was formed and the number of allotments substantially increased. The salience of allotments is evidenced in the number of plots in the city today, which currently stands at over 7,000, through both public and private provision (see below).

Figure 30.Belfast Botanic Gardens. c.1915. Image courtesy of Campbell. (Paper Visual Art (2014)

Figure 31.Lawns at Queens University Belfast. Circa laid out in allotments. c.1943-45

Strict regulations governing the control and management of allotments were introduced in 1933, requiring plot-holders to keep and maintain allotments clean, free from weeds, cultivated and well manured. In addition, plot-holders were required to take measures to prevent plants from encroaching on neighbouring plots, as plots were not marked by perimeter fencing (which remains the case on many sites today). Furthermore, plot-holders were forbidden to erect greenhouses or sheds for tools without permission, whilst other forms of recreation such as gambling were strictly prohibited (Allotment Society, UK). Although the 1908 Small Holdings and Allotment Act (British legislation) came

into force which placed a duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments depending on demand, and the provision of allotments in England and Wales was strengthened through the Allotment Acts (1922, and 1925), In Northern Ireland councils can provide allotments but do *not* have a statutory duty to do so. However, they continued to make provision for allotments throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. In recent years, the localism Act (2011)[8] has facilitated the devolution of decision-making powers from central government in Britain to local authorities and communities in Belfast, conferring power on local authorities to provide allotments under the remit of 'community needs' (interview with Belfast City Council, 2013).   Belfast city council currently provides over 278 allotments on six sites in the city[9] (six of which are fully occupied with a further two sites under construction) (Table. 4, Fig. 32).

Belfast City Council Allotment Sites	No. of Plots (approx.)
Annadale	92
Ballysillan	74
Belmont	57
Blythefield	26
Musgrave	19
Whiterock	10
Current total provision: City Council	278

Table 4. Public Provision of allotments (& Locations) in Belfast City (population, 280,962 (Census, 2011)

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[8] The Localism Act (2011) is an Act of the Parliament that changes the powers of local government in England. The aim of the act is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government control (in London) to individuals and communities. The measures affected by the Act include an "increase in the number of elected mayors, referendums and the "Local authority's general power of competence …and the authorisation of nationally significant infrastructure projects (as as long as that is not limited by some other Act).

Whilst the cost of private plots range from £200 for an 11-month lease, the cost of public sites ranges from £15-£20, although governance structures impact on the quality of sites in the city (see chapter 5). As demand for sites has increased in recent years, Belfast City Council[10] developed a cooperative 'Growing Communities Strategy' (Belfast Citywide Strategy, 2012-2022), comprising a steering group of 40 representatives drawn from the private, community, voluntary and statutory sectors, municipalities, local councillors, the Public Health Agency and the Belfast Strategic Partnership to working together to ensure continued investment in community cohesion and growth, as a key contribution to the sustainable prosperity of the city of Belfast. The strategy recognises increasing public awareness of a range of issues (particularly, sustainability, health and well-being, and increasing recognition of the potential of UA to contribute to community cohesion). This strategy is being actively implemented to ensure that there are more opportunities for growing in all its forms for *all,* so that the urban citizenry (from both sides of the community), can join in concert and experience the direct and ancillary social benefits of UA in a designated /shared space. Accordingly, they aim

> "to meet that challenge by providing a basis for enhancing current provision, developing further sites for community use, and supporting new and varied approaches to growing which meet the needs of the widest possible range of groups and individuals across the city" (ibid:4).

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[10] The counties of Northern Ireland were the principal local government divisions of Northern Ireland from its creation in 1921 until 1972, when their governmental features were abolished and replaced with twenty-six unitary authorities. Belfast City Council is the primary council/authority of the Belfast Metropolitan Area. Following the restoration of the power-sharing Executive (2007), the Executive agreed on proposals to reduce the 26 districts to either 7 or 11 In March 2012, the Northern Ireland Executive published its programme for government which included a commitment to reduce the number of councils in Northern Ireland to 11. Belfast City Council/local authority is the primary council of the Belfast Metropolitan Area: an area constitutes a grouping of 6 districts/councils with commuter towns and overspill from Belfast (Fig 32).

For example, plots originally 400msq are being sub-divided to make room for practitioners interested in, or new to UA, to ensure that practitioners interested in UA who may be experiencing work-time constraints can invest in UA, while additionally providing senior practitioners an opportunity/option to scale back on the work involved in cultivating larger plots whilst maintaining involvement in UA. Furthermore, community gardens are being developed and *actively* promoted across the city to meet the demonstrable rise in demand for UA, and reflect policy to meet sustainable development objectives. Employing this strategy has meant that waiting lists have decreased substantially. With plans in place to develop more sites in the city, waiting lists have been reduced to just under three hundred. Through both public and private provision, the number of plots in the city today currently stands at over 7,000 (Bell & Watson, 2012).
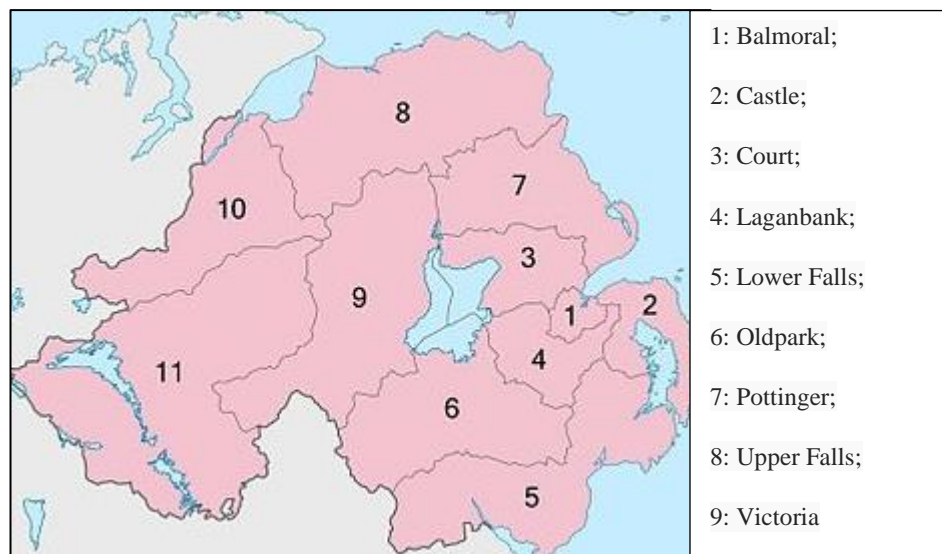
Figure 32.Local Authority Administrative Areas: Belfast

2.8. Scope for Policy on UA

With the exception of Britain and Germany, there appears to be no state or national level policy directed at UA in many cities in the Global North. This indicates a significant gap in the policy framework on UA. Although there *appears* to be instances of policy development and innovation at a municipal level *around* UA, these tend to be *indirectly* aimed at UA, and subsumed *within* policy briefs *of other urban policy* domains *rather than* explicitly addressing UA (COST.eu, forthcoming). For example, urban planning

includes attention to open and natural spaces, and enhancing biodiversity and food security whilst simultaneously revalorising post-industrial landscapes.

Although there are numerous examples of networks of partners working together in European cities (many involving co-operative ventures between municipalities and stakeholders which are *indirectly* aimed at UA, for example: the 'Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park', Barcelona), it appears that there is an 'ad hoc' quality to UA policy, as UA is not considered as a policy field in its own right. Rather, it appears to cut across a number of policy domains. Despite stakeholder's best efforts to secure provision of UA, many projects are difficult to bring into fruition because of the lack of funding. In many cases, projects have been blocked by the lack of municipal funding because of the recent economic crisis. This is particularly evidenced in Dublin in terms of accessing land and securing resources for UA. So whilst there *appears* to be a degree of policy intersectionality at work, these are not always explicit or considered in a strategic way, by either national or local governments, and other bodies in cities of the Global North. Hence, it could be argued that the potential of UA is not fully realised, since it is viewed by both national and local governments as marginal, as other policy goals tend to take precedence over those that could directly address issues of sustainability and food production in and around cities (COST.eu, forthcoming). Hence, whilst there *appears* to be a degree of policy intersectionality at work, they are not always explicit or considered in a strategic way by either national or local governments and other bodies in cities of the Global North.

2.9. **Conclusion**

Urban agriculture is a complex system encompassing a spectrum of interests from a traditional core of activities associated with the production, processing, marketing, distribution and the consumption of food in and around cities, to a multiplicity of other benefits and services *that are more or less historically acknowledged*, *but less widely acknowledged and/or documented* (Brown & Carter, 2003:3 *my emphasis*).

Initially a rural phenomenon, UA emerged from the British system of allotment gardening, providing a means of subsistence for disenfranchised labouring poor and landless serfs. With the pressures of enclosure, the extension of industrial towns and concerns over the health of the nation's urban poor, allotments played a crucial role in stabilising urban households and economies in many cities across the global North, particularly during times of war and economic adversity. In Ireland as in Britain, allotments served to protect the civilian population from potential starvation during two world war periods, and were extolled for the virtues of hard work, industry, thrift and resourcefulness they generated.

In Dublin, allotments flourished throughout the first half of the twentieth century and provided a means of subsistence during two world wars, but declined in their aftermath. From the 1960s onwards, urbanisation began to swallow up residual pieces of land available for agriculture and the majority of allotments were uprooted to make room for urban development. Despite considerable interest down through the years, allotments were met with resistance by local authorities to making them a permanent feature of the urban and suburban landscape, and by the turn of the twenty-first century, allotments in Dublin virtually disappeared.

By contrast, British legislation has ensured the provision, promotion and maintenance of allotments in Belfast to the present day. However, as in other cities across the global

North, the attraction of UA is gaining increasing attention in Belfast. Allotments and community gardens are emerging in the city and on its perimeter. Whilst allotments in both Dublin and Belfast date back to the first decade of the twentieth century, community gardens are a more recent addition in both cities and are often implemented by municipalities to meet the current rise in demand (this is more so the case in Belfast than in Dublin). Equally, as in other cities across the Global North, projects promoted by single individuals, community organisations and cooperatives are harvesting plants in public spaces (from roadways, to un-used and interstitial spaces in both cities). Whilst efforts have been made to meet the rise in demand for UA through both public and private provision demand currently outstrips supply.

Today, UA practices range from 'urban farming' to 'gardening activities' but are often juxtaposed to the global food industry, which has brought with it, industrialisation, intensification and the commodification of food production (for a detailed analysis see chapter 7). Whilst the rising interest in UA has been partly driven by a flourishing civil society sector committed to promoting sustainable forms of production, greater food awareness and better strategies for health, well-being and food sovereignty, *and* social and environmental issues have appeared (or re-appeared) on municipal agendas (for example, climate change, urban health, urban biodiversity and civic engagement), this chapter argues that there appears to be a significant gap in the policy framework on UA. Indeed, policy areas are complex because they are often cross-sectoral or because there are few policy roadmaps to follow, and/or regulatory tools to support their implementation. In Dublin in particular, the hegemony of property ownership, urban restructuring and the extensive privatization of public space during Ireland's period of economic boom has led to an extensive erosion of public space in the city to meet the rise in demand for sites for UA (see chapter four). Furthermore, Ireland's current situation of austerity, a continued focus on residential and commercial development *and* strategies

aimed at fuelling economic growth have put increasing pressure on local authorities to make public land available for UA. Whilst UA can be linked to concerns about food quality, traceability, sustainability, environmental awareness and ancillary benefits associated with UA (ecological and social), *and* national governments and city burghers are cognizant of the potential benefits of UA in terms of achieving sustainable development objectives, planned projects are often difficult to bring into fruition because of the lack of funding. Moreover, the absence of policy or regulatory tools to support the implementation of policy has meant that the provision of allotments is highly circumscribed, administrative regimes are inconsistent and extended waiting lists remain.

As this chapter illustrates, in Dublin, there are two types of conventions being employed to meet the current demand for UA. However, the absence of policy on UA has meant that the onus is largely on communities and civil society actors to acquire land, seek help and support. A key link in this process is the Key Champion, whose involvement in UA pays extraordinary dividends within communities, in terms of influencing, transforming and advocating specific forms of social action and cultural practices, facilitating the construction of a new type of public space, fomenting social levelling, social integration and social cohesion, *and* in generating alternative forms of sociality, practices and worldviews. They pave the way for greater collaboration and coordination among executing institutions in terms of accessing land, information, support and assistance, *and* in highlighting the fully realised potential of UA as a policy field in its own right.

3.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

"The fundamental objective of sociological research is to study the character and patterns of human behaviour, the social world and social divisions and commonalities, in discovering the truth about the world we live in … It can improve our understanding of empirical reality – the reality we encounter first-hand"

(Schutt, 2006:19-25)

3.1. Introduction

To generate an abstract theoretical understanding of UA that is both shaped by, and potentially shaping lives requires a particular methodological approach. The research must consider social actors not simply as subscribers to universal laws that govern human behaviour or an objective reality that exists apart from the perceptions of those who observe it, but as *active* and *creative* agents who identify, interpret, evaluate, define and map out their own actions and construct social reality. An empirically grounded approach using ethnographic methods of data collection allows research to see things in context rather than imposing on the social world a set of variables, which quantitative research seeks to correlate. As Schutt (2006) argues, qualitative methods are more concerned with capturing 'naturally occurring' data and provide a deeper understanding of social phenomenon than would be obtained from a purely quantitative methodology. They aim to capture social life as participants experience it, give voice to respondents and find the sequences by which meanings are deployed. Therefore, the goal of the researcher must be to capture *how* social actors construct social reality and grasp the subjective meanings people give to that reality in a systematic way that reduces over-generalisations and supports logical reasoning (Bryman, 2001; Schutt, 2006).

Whilst methodologies can be best described as complex frameworks used to investigate and analyse the logic, potentialities and limitations of particular research (Grix, 2002) they greatly impact on research methods and forms of data analysis when planning and executing a research strategy. Therefore, the fundamental starting point of all research

concerns a researcher's ontological position, as it affects the whole research process, impacting on *what* and *how* a researcher decides to study the social world (Maykutt *&* Morehouse, 1994; Grix, 2002). Setting out this interrelationship is crucial as it shapes the very questions asked and the methods of data analysis. The approach taken in this study is based on a particular belief in the nature of human beings and the social world. The methods and concepts used are all social constructions and outcomes of specific social practices.

This chapter provides a journey through this qualitative research project, which employs a set of heuristic devices and specific principles that place particular emphasis on the analytic aspects of inquiry, *and* recognise the importance of having a solid foundation in the data. The study, which employs 'grounded theory methodology' is presented here as a method of *choice*, as it provides a valuable set of tools for developing an analytic handle on the research "taking into account the data gathered to their logical extension, and constructing theory from it" (Charmaz, 2006:2). The chapter begins with a brief examination of the specific paradigm underpinning the research. It examines *how* the research was designed and executed, and elucidates how the research design profoundly shaped and informed the knowledge gathering process. Through a systematic account of the research process itself this chapter explains *how* specific paradigmatic approaches profoundly shape and inform *how* social scientists formulate methodologies and view and interpret the social world. In particular, the chapter illuminates how specific approach employed provided an analytic handle on the research, and helped develop an abstract theoretical account of UA.

3.2. **A qualitative methodology**

To identify whether or not UA can contribute to and facilitate and engender social integration and social cohesion in these diverse urban locales this research explores *how* knowledge and meanings of UA are attained using a *constructivist* ontological approach. This approach is predicated on the view that social phenomena and their meanings are not only produced through social practices, but are in a *constant* state of revision by social actors themselves (Bryman, 2001). Therefore, the research must consider *how* social actors involved in UA access, construct and pass on knowledge and create meaning using a flexible research strategy that yields data for interpretation and grasps "the subjective meanings of social action" (Schutt, 2006:12-13). An *interpretivist* approach enables a view of social reality through the eyes of participants and *their* reasoning with the social world. It helps elucidate actors' motivations for investing in UA, assess *how* meanings and knowledge of UA are constructed, managed and performed by the various stakeholders involved *and* assess the potential of UA to facilitate and promote social integration and social cohesion between diverse class and ethnic groupings in Dublin, and diverse ethno-religious/national groupings in Belfast.

3.3. **Research Design**

Whilst no research methods come without their criticisms, decisions had to be made over the strengths and weaknesses of particular methods when planning and executing the research strategy. Considerable attention had to be given to a host of factors. Whilst research designs provide a framework for the collection and analysis of data, the *choice* of research design reflects decisions made by the researcher, in terms of the priority given to a range of dimensions. In this case, particular attention had to be given to how the methods '*fit*' with the research aims and objectives. As Glaser (2001) points out, deciding what methods to use *must* be guided by the *needs* of the research. In a similar vein, Wisham (2006) argues that there must be a 'fit' between selected methods *and* the

phenomenon under inquiry, and that researchers must *choose* a method they enjoy and *can* engage with so that the product of the research is reliable and credible *and* allows the researcher to convince others of the justification of their methods (in Jones and Allony, 2011:95). It is this convention which drove the research methods in this study.

To conduct a rigorous assessment of UA required a *flexible* research strategy that yields data for interpretation. An empirically 'grounded' approach using ethnographic methods of data collection was identified as the best possible means to access details of the specific practices plot-holders engage in, assess *how* urban dwellers make knowledge of and sense of the social world, explore practices and interactions between diverse groupings investing in UA and to capture the *subjective* experiences of UA across diverse locales in both cities. However, if the goal of the researcher is to give voice to respondents a specific group is chosen, but when the goal is to *advance theory*, cases can be chosen because they present special opportunities for the elaboration of new ideas, and allow particular methodologies to be used (Ragin, 1994).

3.3.1. Grounded theory

An empirically 'grounded' approach using ethnographic methods of data collection allowed this research to develop a theoretical account of the general features of UA whilst simultaneously *grounding* the account in empirical observations of the data. Grounded theory was employed as a method of *choice* as it provides systematic yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing data, taking into account the data gathered and expediting the research through successful levels of analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Employing grounded theory provides greater freedom to explore various dimensions of UA, allows various issues to emerge and reserves the need for a preliminary hypothesis. By being open to what is happening in the field, the researcher can learn about participants' lives starting with the data, constructing data through observations, interactions and materials

gathered, studying empirical events and subjective experiences of UA, or by pursuing hunches and potential analytic leads.

Whilst most qualitative methods allow researchers to follow up on interesting data, grounded theory has an added advantage as it allows the research to gain a clear focus on what is occurring in the data, and increases flexibility using the constant comparative method. Using the constant comparative methods allows data to be constantly compared with data throughout the data collection process, compare codes with cases, and extract some core principles of convergence and divergence within and between data sets. Categories can be defined and redefined to explore the relationships between them (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Charmaz, 2006). In addition, grounded theory allows for the development of specific concepts through close examination of the data, by thinking about the data through successive levels of analysis. As a method of choice, grounded theory would enable an examination of the complexity of factors giving rise to the demand for UA in both cities, allow for a rigorous examination of areas that were relatively unknown to the researcher, and allow the researcher to follow up on interesting data. It would allow the researcher to define categories, shape the ensuing analysis, make analytic sense of the data, develop abstract ideas, interpret the data as it is gathered, identify certain actions that are central to the analysis and explain *and* provide reasons for certain social actions. Hence, grounded theory would allow the research to identify the *specific* factors and knowledge systems underpinning practice, assess practitioners' *subjective* experiences of UA and gain an *in-depth* understanding of *how* social actors construct meaning, knowledge and make sense of the social world. As an inductive theory and discovery methodology, it offers many unique benefits which facilitated an abstract theoretical account of UA.

However, when developing any research design it is important that the research takes into account that social action *cannot* be seen in isolation (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, the

research needed to contextualise the study, keeping in mind the specific social and political contexts within which UA takes place. Since the aim of this research is to understand meaning and social action in two diverse urban contexts (both of which have faced particular localised challenges), a case-study research design using ethnographic methods of data collection was chosen.

3.3.2. An ethnographic case study approach

Case study research is concerned with complexity and the particular nature of the cases in question (Schutt, 2006). Hence, a case study research design allows the researcher to see the social world in context at a particular moment in time, and enables an understanding of UA from the stand-point of participants. Case studies get to the heart of what exactly led to the decisions or choices that were made "and how these choices came to take the form that they ultimately did" (Hogan et al, 2009:3). Therefore, a case study design was adopted as an optimal means to engage in an intensive analysis of UA using ethnographic field research methods, which encouraged the researcher to be more innovative when in the field.

Ethnographic field research, which involves the study of groups or people as they go about their daily lives, and allows the research to employ methods that best 'fit' the research aims and objectives. As Emerson et al, (2011) illustrate, the methods which fieldworkers employ make up a key part of ethnographic research and determine *what* the researcher sees, experiences and learns. Consequently, "*what* the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with *how* he/she finds it out" (Gubrim & Holstein, 1997, in Emerson et al, 2011:15).

Since "research on diverse groups contributes to social scientists understanding of social life in general" (Grix, 2002:43), it was also important that the research strategy was flexible enough to obtain knowledge of important and interesting exceptions, *particularly*

when exploring diversity and particularities in localised cases on UA. Therefore, the methods employed *had* to explore *how* this social phenomena is locally constituted, taking into account various factors that affect individuals' lives so that an in-depth understanding and theoretical account of UA could be obtained. Hence, an ethnographic case study approach using methods of triangulation (interviews, participant observation and visual representation), were identified as the best possible means to obtain a richer and deeper understanding of UA, since data remains at the level of words and images, and permits a view of UA from the stand-point of participants.

Ethnographic field research comprises two distinct yet interconnected activities: participant observation and writing field-notes (Emerson et al, 2011). Participant observation' which characterises ethnography's most basic but *central* approach, refers to the process in which the fieldworker enters a social setting, gets to know those involved, participates fully in daily routines, and develops on-going relations, observing all the while what is going on (ibid:3). However, it was important to note when designing and executing the research strategy that participant observation must *not* be reduced to mere physical or social proximity to those who inhabit that world. Rather, participant observation compels the fieldworker to become *fully* immersed in the everyday lives of others, subjecting themselves to the exigencies of that world, sharing subjective perceptions and interpretations, collecting narratives and 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) and experiencing for themselves what is required to become a member in ways that approximate its members' (Wax, 1980; Reeves, 2010; Emerson, 2011).

Field-notes, which constitute a crucial ethnographic activity (Maanen, 1988; Wolfinger, 2002) also needed to be considered. Since ethnographers must create an accumulating written record of what is seen, witnessed and observed, it was important to recognise that writing field-notes is not simply a process of passively copying down facts in an attempt to capture as closely as possible, the observed reality (Wolfinger, 2002; Emerson 2011).

Rather, the ethnographer must write down in systematic ways various features and properties of what is observed, experienced and learnt from their intense involvement and participation in the lives of those they study (Spradley, 1979; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992; Emerson et al, 2011). Although they may appear deceptively straightforward, field-notes provide an important insight into the social world being investigated, and enables an 'emic approach': that is, 'a view of UA from their perspective' (Wax, 1980; Wolfinger, 2002; Silverman, 2006; Till, 2009). They provide inscriptions of social processes which can reduce the complexities of that social world, which can be reviewed, thought about, studied and (re)consulted time and time again (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1992). They are both a product *of* and conventions *for* transforming events and social practices which the fieldworker witnesses and encounters.

To add an additional dimension to the research, visual representation would allow the research to see things in context, capture symbolic representations that cannot be recorded or retrieved, supplementing data collection. Photographs would provide a useful resource from which I as a researcher could capture, read, deconstruct and denote connotations people give to the social world, and identify any underlying ideologies underpinning practices on sites. Semiotic analysis, which refers to the study of images and signs (Lavers, 1991) would help the researcher make connections between social practices, meanings deployed and understand practitioners' subjective experiences of UA.

However, it was important to note that when deciding which methods best 'fit' the research aims and objectives, that ethnography is not simply a matter of employing distinct yet interconnected research methods to elicit holistic analyses of societies. Whilst there has been a growing interest in ethnography amongst researchers spanning many different fields in recent years (both theoretical and practical), across the numerous fields in which ethnography has come to be proposed, considerable diversity in both prescription and practice have reduced ethnography to a certain mode of qualitative research or type

of 'hanging-out' exercise, creating the notion that all one has to do is to learn how to conduct research. However, ethnography comprises a whole mode of conceptualisation that requires a rigorous assessment of *how* the issues with which the ethnographer is concerned can be operationalised. Therefore, to develop and *operationalise* the research strategy required a whole thought process that takes into account various factors which can assist fieldwork, guide the research to new questions, new areas of observation and data collection techniques, and make the fieldwork more appropriate and effective.

3.4. Considerations

When designing and executing the research strategy, considerable attention was given to particular aspects of the research. Issues such as selecting sites suitable for data collection, negotiating, gaining and maintaining access, identifying potential respondents and ensuring that the sample population was representative of the demographic profile engaging in UA across both cities, and other potential issues were addressed. Questions were asked, thought about and teased out concerning how best to develop and expedite a research strategy that would yield an in-depth understanding of UA. Issues concerning the quantity of case-study sites, the quantity of interviews required, how best to choose the target population, accessing and securing potential respondents, establishing and maintaining good relations based on trust and cooperation when in the field, building rapport, applying the methodological approach systematically and vigorously, pre-empting potential issues *and* constraints and developing strategies to deal with of any ethical issues that may arise had to be given considerable consideration. Particular consideration was given to the potential impact these issues could have in determining, controlling and structuring the research and its success, and the ways in which I, as a researcher could observe, participate and obtain data.

Decisions had to be made about locating and gaining access to sites in both cities. Whilst each local authority in Dublin has data sets on their own individual sites, no statistical data set on allotments as a whole (public, private or philanthropic) or on the demographic profile engaging in UA is available. In terms of the Belfast case, considerable attention had to be given to locating and gaining access to sites given the political landscape *and* the potential location of sites across diverse ethno-religious/national communities in the city. The research design had to take into account how I, as a researcher could gain access, build rapport, establish myself as a researcher and become a member in a way that approximated members. Complying with ethical standards, maintaining anonymity, deciding in advance whether or not to remain overt (particularly in certain situations such as social gatherings), and having strategies at hand to overcome difficulties when interviewing, particularly if dealing with sensitive data for example, had to be considered.

The research design had to take into account how to structure and conduct interviews and devise strategies which could be drawn upon to secure interviews particularly if respondents were to be selected on the basis of informal approaches. How to pursue and expand on particular aspects raised and examine the potential effect, I as a researcher may have on the research whilst considering how best to deal with sensitive data or specific case-related data that may emerge were considered crucial.

Whilst the aim of the research is to gather rich insights and subjective experiences of UA, particular emphasis was paid to how interviews would be conducted. Whilst the aim was to gather rich insights and subjective experiences of UA, it was important to note that "interviews also reflect what researchers *and* the participant brings to them *and* the relationships constructed through them" (Charmaz, 2006:25-6). Therefore, the research strategy had to take into account that both the researcher's and participant's identities can influence the character and content of the interview itself. Hence, *how* a researcher

conducts themselves can inform discussions and greatly impact on the knowledge gathering process, and the quality of data obtained.

Employing a grounded theory methodology meant that interviews had to be more like directed conversations. When deciding how to structure and conduct interviews, attention was given to the phrasing of questions and pursuing particular topics or experiences raised. As Charmaz (2006) points out, "the interviewer is there to listen, observe with sensitivity and to encourage the person to respond" (p: 25-6). The goal of the researcher is to obtain accounts from particular points of view "that serve specific purposes, including assumptions, and one should follow tacit conversational rules during the interview" (ibid:27). Since interviews are contextual, they have to be negotiated, which requires researchers to be attuned to how participants perceive them *as* a researcher, participant and observer.

Issues such as avoiding dichotomous questioning, being mindful, aware and reflexive, convivial, open and *listening* to respondents *while* keeping in mind *how* the research could extract core principles of convergences and divergences through naturally occurring talk (within and between cases or interviews) to expedite the research findings through successful levels of analysis, were factors that had to be given considerable attention.

Dealing with culturally patterned 'meta-communicative repertoires' (Briggs, 1984:1) that is, - socio-linguistic norms and culturally patterned meanings, were factors that were also given considerable attention when planning and executing the research strategy. Given the political landscape in Belfast and the diverse socio-linguistic norms for example, considerable attention had to be given to how I, as a researcher would deal with or grasp the subjective meanings of specific phrases or speech patterns. If misinterpreted, these issues could yield negative consequences, jeopardise access, trust and rapport, the data collection process, alter the analysis, the researchers interpretation of particular practices,

and greatly impact on potential analytic leads. As a researcher in diverse ethno-religious/national communities in Belfast, I had to be intensely aware of such issues, particularly if instances relating to inter-ethnic/national divisions and cross community relations were raised. The issue of how to approach and access these dimensions in a sensitive manner was considered crucial.

Since speech is punctuated with social and cultural cues or stylistic features such as accent, rising inflections, rhythm, tone, speed and other sociolinguistic norms, the research design had to consider an appropriate method of data collection and decide on particular methodological tools which if necessary, could be modified in response to these components. Aware of the likelihood of such issues and speech inflections occurring, and their potential impact on data collection (for example, difficulties/challenges that may ensue should the researcher request respondents to repeat phrases or narratives), it was decided that a voice recorder would be used to record interviews and if necessary, episodes of participant observation. Using a tape recorder would dictate the flow of interviews and conversations, permit fluidity during interviews and an in-depth exploration of particular topics or experiences without interruptions (i.e. had the researcher decided to write notes *during* interviews).

If the research was to elicit deep insights into experiences of UA, the research strategy had to take into account these issues prior to entering the field, and develop a research strategy that was flexible enough to adapt accordingly. Using the above approach and particular research strategy allowed the research to explore the nature of UA, work with unstructured data and investigate each case and particular aspects in detail. This research strategy would ensure that the research obtained extant theoretical codes, culminate the findings and allow for the constant comparison of data, which would generate an abstract theoretical understanding of UA that captures social life as participants experience it.

3.5.   **Executing the Research Strategy**

Fieldwork was conducted in two phases between 2011-2013, across seven sites in Dublin and six sites in Belfast. In total, forty eight interviews with plot-holders were conducted in Dublin, and twenty-seven in Belfast. Data collected on public sites was supplemented by data collected on private sites in and around the two cities. Whilst I was fortunate in the timing of my study given the demand for in UA in both cities, preliminary stages of the research process led me to many individuals investing in various UA initiatives in both cities, and resulted in more interviews being conducted than originally projected. Moreover, initial stages of the research process brought me into contact with many individuals I may not otherwise have had access to. Interviews and participant observation were conducted at various municipal and UA advocacy meetings, organic networks, food cooperatives, garden and various community development schemes keen to integrate and promote UA and sustainable urban development, formed an important part of the research and knowledge gathering process.

Fieldwork commenced with a broad sweep of practices in both cities to contextualise the study. Since there were no statistical data sets available of allotments in either city at the time of this study, I expended over two weeks in each city locating and visiting various UA sites, identifying and contacting UA providers (both public and private), gate-keepers, members of UA advocacy groups, identifying sites suitable for data collection, scheduling meetings and meeting with relevant members of local authorities and prospective respondents in both cities. Having access to gate keepers was crucial and proved invaluable when commencing the data collection process. It enhanced my credibility as a researcher in terms of gaining access and when informally approaching practitioners' for the first time.

(1) The first phase of fieldwork commenced in Dublin in 2011. A key informant (and local authority and UA advocate) proved invaluable: identifying sites, highlighting various issues concerning UA and data relative to the current provision of UA in the city and some of the potential constraints I may face. In terms of spatial distribution, allotments in the city are frequently located in interstitial or peripheral areas. Whilst nominally public in terms of location (generally provided on public lands), their weak visibility to the public-at-large, difficulties of access and security concerns meant that to expedite my research strategy and achieve my research aims and objectives, multiple field-trips were necessary. Issues of security whilst particularly evidenced in Belfast, were also evident in Dublin as most sites are locked and are accessible only through plot-holders, who are issued with keys and expected to secure access at the point on entry and egress. As a result, multiple field-trips were conducted to locate sites, assess accessibility, choose sites suitable for data collection and identify potential respondents, all of which helped me establish myself as a researcher, build trust and rapport. Settings for fieldwork were chosen to reflect the provision and distribution of allotments (both public and private) across the city and the current demand for UA. Sites suitable for data collection were located on greenbelts adjacent to built-up areas, on private land parcels located in the hinterlands, and on vacant sites previously zoned for development, (many of which shared similar characteristics). In and across the city, sites were located in interstitial areas enclosed by commercial and residential development in heterogeneously populated locales. Private sites were located on private land parcels in the city, on land previously zoned for development and private land in the hinterlands.

Given the nature of UA practices (fluidity in attendance on sites), regular fieldtrips were necessary to locate and identify sites suitable for data collection, secure access, broaden my acquaintances, interact with members, secure potential respondents and gain a purposive sample. Although I made contacts and secured access to some sites during this

initial phase, in the majority of cases securing access and respondents was based on informal approaches on sites. Once access was gained, sites were mapped and photographed, and extensive field-notes were compiled. Specific dimensions and characteristics were noted. Data was compiled on each case, coded and sorted and compared using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Conducting multiple fieldtrips during this initial phase provided an insight into various dimensions of UA and an opportunity to gain credibility, and integrate my role as a researcher, practitioner and observer.

In total, forty eight interviews were conducted in Dublin, selected through purposive sampling. Interviews were drawn from the ranks of plot-holders, UA activists and relevant members of local authorities. In total, forty plot-holders, 19 men and 21 women were conducted (Table 6) with additional interviews with key local authority figures and members of various UA advocacy groups supplemented data collection. Several members of UA advocacy groups and allotment members proved an invaluable source of information and advice, and brought me into contact with a whole segment of my target population whom I may not otherwise have had access.

I attended various UA, ecological and environmental advocacy group meetings, and various social and pedagogic events across the city (an organic coop, harvest festivals, workshops, seminars, advocacy group monthly meetings and AGM's, seed swops and so on) which resulted in additional interviews, conversations and participant observation amongst the broader UA 'community'(which was later drawn upon to test categories, and codes with categories, and broadened my understanding of UA).

Several members of UA advocacy groups and allotment growers themselves proved to be an invaluable source of information and advice. For example, on one particular occasion,

a plot-holder informed me of an upcoming social gathering being held by a particularly active UA advocacy group in the city, the aim of which was to promote UA, environmental and ecological sustainability, disseminate knowledge of the UA agenda and foster social integration in one particularly heterogeneously populated city locale. Attending this event proved invaluable, and I gained access to key informants promoting UA in the city and data that I may not have otherwise obtained

>25 years	1
26-30 years	7
31-40 years	6
41-50 years	13
51 – 60 years	4
60 years plus	9

Figure 33.Allotments Dublin City Centre

Figure 34. Allotments: Dublin Periphery

Table. 5   Demographic   Profile   of respondents: Dublin

On another occasion when conducting an interview with a local authority official, a discussion about this and similar events across the city arose. Again, this proved invaluable, and resulted in an invitation to attend a meeting organised by the municipality, the objective of which was to develop and implement strategies that would better facilitate the rise in demand for UA in their jurisdiction. Aware of the challenges I faced in terms

of accessing individuals on waiting lists, my attendance at this meeting brought me into contact with individuals to whom I had no access, and provided data sets I may not have otherwise obtained. I gained access to a whole population on waiting lists in this region, on plot-holders currently investing in UA, data on the constraints and challenges urban dwellers face when seeking land for UA, on municipal strategies and various conventions being employed in this region, a deep insight into the subjective experiences of current conventions, and subjective experiences of both practitioners and prospective practitioners, which added a new dimension to the study. This meeting also provided an opportunity to establish my role as a researcher interested in practitioners' subjective experiences and particularities of UA, an opportunity to build trust and rapport, secure access, and potential respondents. As a result, I gained access to key informants and secured access to one site I had previous difficulties accessing. Once I had established my role a researcher interested in practitioners' subjective experiences of UA, I secured more interviews with a whole segment of my target population, access to additional sites I had not previous knowledge of or identified and developed strong relationships with respondents. Following subsequent visits to sites, I was invited to attend various social and pedagogic events promoting UA across the city.

I conducted multiple fieldtrips to a variety of UA initiatives across the city (community gardens, a roof top gardening initiative, organic food market/cooperative, attended an urban food cycle, and various harvest festivals, networking events and workshops). These fieldtrips proved invaluable and helped develop a deep insight into UA, knowledge of UA networks in the city and access to key informants, adding rigour, breadth and knowledge on particular aspects of UA.

Whilst many contacts had been made through participant observation and at various social and pedagogic events across the city, the majority of interviewees were selected on the

basis of informal approaches on allotments during fieldtrips. Respondents chosen for the study differed in terms of a range of variables including their social class origin, professional status and length of time investing in UA. The sample reflects the demographic profile engaging in UA and socio-economic demographics residing in diverse locales across the city. For example, the sample included university professors, individuals from middle-class, working class, urban and rural backgrounds, various members of UA advocacy groups, organic networks and environmental organisations, unemployed and men and women, retired and semi-retired professionals, immigrants (the majority of whom were Eastern European), marginalised youths, university graduates, and individuals who for the purposes of this study were classified as short-term economic migrants (residing in the city for less than 5 years).

Interviews were largely conducted on allotments and ranged from a half hour to two hours, with additional interviews held in local authority offices, and at various social and pedagogic events beyond the boundaries of allotments; in civic offices, city parks, walled gardens, schools, open public spaces, (city thoroughfares and squares) and at a variety of public events. In each interview I covered the same core topics. Interviews aimed to capture practitioners' motivations for investing in UA, identify if and how relationships, knowledge systems, meanings and new forms of sociality are generated through UA and capture practitioners' subjective experiences of UA.

Interviews were informal and casual in nature and questions were carefully chosen. Being receptive, convivial and open to narratives and practitioners subjective experiences allowed the research to explore rather than interrogate, helped build trust and rapport and allowed narratives to flow, producing rich, textured and insightful data and narratives from practitioners' points of view. Interviews were recorded, and memos were handwritten following each interview detailing nuances, hunches and particularities

observed in each instance. Throughout each stage of the fieldwork, photos were taken, numbered, coded, sorted according to various categories, analysed and themes assigned.

As a point of analytic departure, interviews and field-notes were transcribed, coded for their analytic import, and analysed in detail, with similarities and differences noted from the beginning of the research process. When coding, I adopted 'gerunds' that is:- codes that dig into the data and convey tacit meaning and action, to build categories, foster theoretical sensitivity and develop emergent theory (Charmaz, 2006: 45-48). Demographic data about each interviewee was grouped, assigned preliminary themes and transferred on to excel sheets, detailing initial codes, themes, and detailing similarities, inconsistences and ambiguities. Interviews were read and re-read, gaps were identified, and any similarities and differences noted informed subsequent data collections, and provided the basis for constructing analytic categories. The data was cut and filed into thematic folders which allowed for a preliminary categorization of the data and allowed the research to examine the relationships between categories, test codes against extensive data to strengthen and refine emerging categories, gain an analytic grasp on the data and culminate subjective experiences of UA. Multiple notes were made on potential analytic leads, and all data was assigned general themes and grouped accordingly. Analytic memos were written and data was compared using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). Analytic categories were then used to frame the data and provided a conceptual handle on the study. Analytic memos were written throughout this stage, and as additional data was gathered about events and different cases in the city. Data was constantly compared on a case-by-case basis within and across cases, and questions emanating from thinking about and analysing the data shaped further data collection.

All photos were sorted and grouped accordingly. In total, over 2,780 photographs were taken in Dublin 1,833 of which were taken on selected site and 948 capturing various dimensions of UA across the city. All photographs were categorised according to their location, and general themes and notes on focused codes assigned as analysis ensued.

Whilst it is often difficult or even impossible "to enter the field without preconceived or *apriori ideas* of the subject area, of what may be discovered or where it may lead" (Jones and Allony 2011:102), employing grounded theory facilitated the direction of subsequent data collection, as questions were raised and gaps were identified. Extensive handwritten field-notes were written throughout the data collection process, and additional photos were taken at meetings, social and at pedagogic events, using the same research strategy. On almost all occasions during fieldwork, participant observation was conducted and analysed using the constant comparison method, ranging in duration from hourly sessions to full days. In total, over 530 single-typed transcript pages, 250 pages of memos and an additional 200 pages of field-notes were written, coded and analysed. The accuracy of my analysis was checked with key informants and when interacting with members at various networks social and pedagogic events throughout the research process (including the Belfast case). Attendance at various COST Action.eu meetings, conferences and training schools throughout this phase of the research facilitated data analysis, and supplemented the data collected, as data from Dublin was compared with data against a wider European context.

(**2**). The second phase of fieldwork was conducted in Belfast in 2013 using the same research strategy. Data was collected across various sites (public and private) supplemented by data on private sites in the hinterlands, *and* data gathered at a community garden site in West Belfast which is located in an *interface area* where Protestant and Catholic communities remain almost wholly segregated (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015) (Fig.

35). Sites were chosen to reflect the distribution of allotments in each community in the city, and to reflect the diverse populations investing in UA across both communities. Whilst issues of security were evidenced in Dublin, issues of security were particularly evidenced in Belfast, where strict rules apply to ensure everyone's safety. Sites have to be locked at all times because residual conflict and tensions remain high (ibid). As in Dublin, entry to the majority of sites is only accessible through plot-holders who are issued with keys and they are expected to lock gates at point of entry and egress. Whilst allotments are located in the city, suburbs and hinterlands, the majority of sites selected were located in diverse urban locales *in* the city. Sites were located in both Protestant and Catholic locales, each demarcating their own territory through their respective flags, wall murals and other emblems.

Settings for fieldwork were chosen to reflect the provision and distribution of allotments, and the ethno-religious/national populations engaging in UA across the political landscape in Belfast. As fieldwork had already commenced with a broad sweep of practices in the city (which resulted in sites being identified and many contacts being made), I had not successfully secured access to all sites at that time. However, a key gatekeeper proved invaluable when I commenced the second phase of fieldwork: securing access to one site in particular, which brought me into contact with a whole segment of my target population and directed ensuing research.

On commencing data collection, I met my gatekeeper; a key figure in a distinguished advocacy group in Northern Ireland, whose aim is to promote the interests of mutual cooperation through projects such as allotments, community gardens, city farms and similar organisations. Our initial meeting resulted in a visit to one allotment site in a middle-class Protestant locale. Slightly apprehensive about how I would be received as a researcher from Dublin and indeed, as a Catholic in a Protestant region of the city, my apprehension was quickly replaced by a sense of ease, gained through the conviviality I

experienced as I was introduced to practitioners' on site. I was warmly welcomed by both Protestants and Catholics alike, and was brought into contact with a whole segment of my target population I may not have otherwise have had access to. Having access to this gatekeeper helped me establish myself as a researcher, gain credibility and provided an opportunity to integrate my role as a researcher, practitioner and observer. I felt confident that I had secured access to a target population which would prove invaluable throughout the course of data collection, and, had a profound impact on shaping how I would gain access to sites in similar jurisdictions and secure respondents, build trust and rapport.

During this fieldtrip, I was afforded an opportunity to engage with plot-holders from both communities, where I mapped and photographed the site, spoke with a wide variety of practitioners', identified potential respondents and scheduled interviews and participant observation. I was directed by my gatekeeper to another site in the locality, but given that it was relatively late in the day, I did not manage to gain access, establish my role as a researcher and/or identify potential respondents. However, over the course of my research, I developed strong relationships with respondents on this site, which provided a base from which I knew I could draw upon, should I find myself in a difficult situation in similar locales, or should the need arise. Relationships based on trust were crucial to the success of the research, and influenced my strategy throughout the research process. Having access to key informants and gate keepers was crucial when commencing the research, and gaining access, and enhanced my credibility amongst the allotment 'community', some of whom may have otherwise been reticent or hesitant to engage with a researcher from the Republic of Ireland.

Whilst I had conducted research with a broad sweep of practices in the city the previous year, identified sites suitable for data collection, established contact with and met gatekeepers, I had not secured access to all identified sites in other regions of the city, particularly Nationalist and Loyalist strongholds. As a result, I conducted multiple

fieldtrips to identify and familiarise myself with these sites and regions and to try and secure access, and meet with and identify prospective respondents through purposive sampling. Contacts I had made through the initial stages of the research and subsequent invitations to various pedagogic events held by UA advocates and municipalities brought me into contacts with a whole segment of my target population. For example, during the initial stages of data collection, I received correspondence from a gatekeeper with an invitation to a one day seminar on UA to be held in Armagh. There, I was introduced to a variety of members from different UA networks from both Belfast and beyond. I obtained data on a wide variety of UA and community initiatives from both the North and the South of Ireland in attendance, and took part in workshops and fieldtrips. I gained invaluable data on both public and private sites in the city, on additional avenues to pursue, and made contacts with key informants who secured access to various sites I had previously identified but had no means of access, particularly those located in Nationalist and Loyalist strongholds. For example, I gained access to allotments in Stormont Castle, and had an opportunity to meet members of a national volunteer development agency in attendance would prove invaluable in terms of shaping the course of the research and the data obtained. I obtained insightful data on their network, their aims and objectives and secured access to a variety of sites in which they were involved. However, having gained access to one particular site in an interface area of the city was to prove invaluable, as it shaped the course of the research and allowed me secure access to similar sites and respondents I may not have otherwise have accessed. Over the course of the research, I conducted multiple fieldtrips to this site, where I mapped and photographed the site, taking note of its various characteristics, meeting with plot-holders, conducting participant observation and interviewing respondents on site. However, before securing interviewees, a considerable amount of time was spent building trust and rapport, engaging, participating, socialising and sharing meals with others on site. I conducted

multiple fieldtrips, wrote extensive field-notes and conducted participant observation which afforded an opportunity to meet a wide variety of groups and individuals from both communities investing in UA.

Having access to and participating with individuals on this site was a pivotal point in the research process, and was perceived by gatekeepers on other sites (particularly in Loyalist and Nationalist strongholds) as a sign of trust and rapport. Whilst interviewees were selected on the basis of informal approaches, having secured access and conducted interviews in this site secured access to a particular UA site located in an interface area which has been at the epicentre of the 'Troubles', and witnessed "some of the worst sectarian violence, experienced the mass movement of people, street rioting, clashes with security forces, shootings and intimidation" (Leonard, 2006:2) where high levels of deprivation, sectarian division and unemployment levels remain high. There, I met with and gained access to a variety of respondents: from community volunteers engaging in bridge-building initiatives to members of the local community, municipal employees and gardeners ranging in age, class and ethno-religious categorisations. I mapped and photographed the site, spoke to respondents, made key contacts and conducted participant observation within and beyond the boundaries of this site.

On one occasion, members brought me out in their vehicle to help me contextualise the study and to demonstrate how, despite the ceasefire in Northern Ireland, that ethno-religious/national divisions and conflict remain high. I was shown particular aspects of the area, and was introduced to various members engaging in UA whom I would otherwise not have not have had accessed. By conducting multiple fieldtrips to this and other sites, I selected respondents through purposive sampling, conducted interviews and participant observation. I obtained an abundance of rich and insightful data, a deep and valuable insight into UA and the contexts in which UA takes place, knowledge of how individuals

construct and make sense of the social world around them, and a real insight into UA through *their* eyes. In total, twenty-seven interviews with plot-holder were conducted, (21 men and 6 women) (Table: 7). Whilst interviews were primarily drawn from the ranks of plot-holders, an ethnographic approach resulted in more interviews being conducted than originally projected. An additional twelve interviews were drawn from the ranks of UA activists, members of philanthropic groups and community organisations committed to bridge-building across the community divide and relevant members of local authorities.

>25 years	2
26-30 years	4
31-40 years	2
41-50 years	6
51 – 60 years	5
60 years plus	7

Table 6 Demographic Profile of respondents on Allotments: Belfast
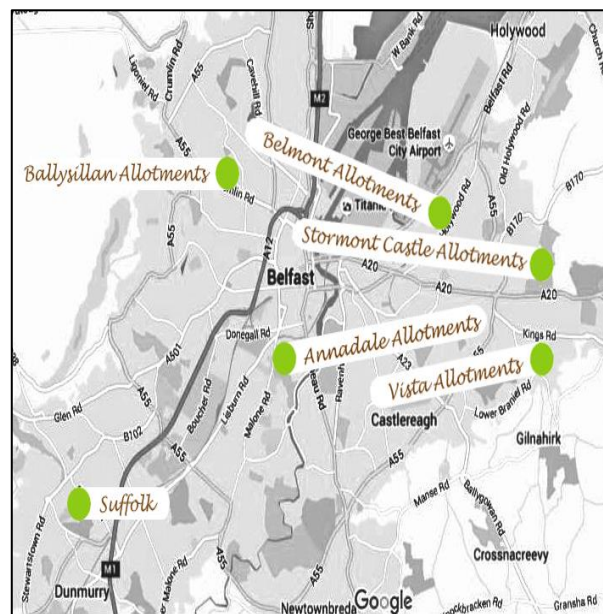
Figure 35.Research Sites: Belfast

The sample reflects the demographic profile investing in UA, the socio-economic diversity residing in each locale, and members of both communities investing in UA across the city. The sample includes, retired professional, middle and working class men and women, members of UA advocacy groups, university graduates and the unemployed. However, unlike Dublin, no immigrants were included in the sample. Interviews were conducted on sites and were informal, casual and fluid in nature, ranging from an hour to two hours in duration. In each interview, I covered the same core topics explored in Dublin. Interviews aimed to capture practitioners' motivations for investing in UA, data

on practices they engage in, with particular emphasis placed on capturing their subjective experiences of UA.

 As in Dublin, questions were carefully chosen. However, given the political landscape of Belfast, being cognizant of and sensitive to practitioners' biographies and histories was crucial, particularly when following up on data relating to their experiences of conflict and the impact that had on their lives.   During interviews I explored key topic areas. However, employing grounded theory meant that my main role was to follow up on interesting events and or probe explanations, meanings and experiences of key aspects raised.

Attention to my research strategy paid dividends in terms of being aware of the potential challenges involved when interviewing practitioners', particularly when sensitive issues concerning ethno-religious/national divisions arose. Being mindful of how to conduct myself, and remaining sensitive to how I structured certain questions elicited rich and deep insights into practitioners' lives in diverse locales in the city. Listening to respondents, taking into account the nature in which interviews were conducted, being sensitive toward practitioners and convivial, following tacit conversational rules while carefully observing practitioners' responses and attuned to particular aspects pursued, had a profound impact on the quality of interviews and the richness and depth of data obtained.

As in Dublin, interviews were recorded, but in some instances, practitioners' requested that the tape recorder be turned off, which was perceived as a means of protecting their own anonymity. In such cases, I made short-hand notes during interviews, which along with memos constructed following each interview helped me reconstruct notes into transcripts and capture nuances and observations I needed to further explore. Whilst the majority of practitioners' were content with recordings, some practitioners' requested that immediately upon transcription tape recordings be destroyed. However, I found the use

of a tape recorder invaluable, particularly as I adapted to particular socio-linguistic norms and speech patterns I had no previous exposure to. Furthermore, recording interviews allowed me to capture speech inflections upon transcriptions, pursue the meanings of particular phrases, and follow up on particular analytic leads. Whilst in the majority of cases, I attuned to specific phrases and speech patterns, my lack of knowledge of particular labels used to describe me as 'the other' led to one instance where a practitioner labelled me repeatedly with a term '*Taig*' and immediately withdrew from my presence. Whilst unaware of its meaning at the time, I was later to discover the derogatory nature of his language, which heightened my sensitivity and awareness of how, I as a researcher from 'the opposite side' was perceived.

Since speech is punctuated with social and cultural cues or stylistic features such as accent, rising inflections, rhythm, tone and speed, using a tape recorder proved invaluable upon transcriptions and analysis. Following each interview, memos were hand written to capture nuances, particularities and observations made. Recording were transcribed, coded and analysed in detail noting their similarities and differences. As in Dublin, demographic data on each interview was grouped and data assigned analytic themes. Interviews were read and re-read, gaps were identified and gerunds were adopted to form initial codes to capture tacit meanings, social action and allow an analysis of any social processes and categories to emerge. Data was cut and filed into thematic folders which allowed for a detailed categorization of the data.

As recordings were transcribed, data was italicised to highlight emphasis made by respondents during interviews. Furthermore, I found particular instances which I had not picked up on during the interview process because of speech inflections and/or socio-linguistic norms. As a result, gaps were identified and followed up on. Similarities and differences that emerged as interviews progressed were noted and followed up with

subsequent interviews. By reading and re-reading the data, thinking about and analysing the data in systematic and successive manner shaped further data collection, and subsequent participant observation and interviews. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Charmaz, 2006), data was constantly compared on a case-by-case basis, within and between cases in Belfast, and with the findings from Dublin.

Throughout the fieldwork process, over 1,800 photos were taken, grouped and analysed using the same methodological approach. Participant observation and interview transcripts and memos culminated in over 500 single-typed pages which were analysed to examine extant theoretical codes. Core convergences and divergences were teased out and then compared with the findings from the Dublin case.

3.5.1. Reflections and Limitations

Looking back, certain factors contributed to and influenced the data collection process. Having access to gatekeepers and establishing myself as a researcher interested in practitioners' subjective experiences of UA granted me unconditional access to sites in both cities, and allowed me obtain an in-depth understanding and theoretical account of UA. Insights by various UA advocates and networks keen to promote a UA agenda, and foster ecological and environmental and sustainable urban development added rigour, breadth and knowledge on particular aspects of UA. Developing a robust research strategy that took into account various issues that may emerge allowed me to approach my respondents in a confident manner, and deal with issues if they arose. Whilst my research strategy was crucial in terms of organising, structuring and expediting the research process, I felt that my interest in gardening, and how I presented myself in particular when participating and interacting on site were key factors that helped build trust and rapport, and obtain a rich and in-depth ethnographic account of UA. Presenting

myself as apolitical in particular, when conducting fieldwork in Belfast was critical to the successful execution of my research strategy, when collecting data and particularly in terms of developing strong relations with practitioners' Moreover, on reflection, my nonthreatening status as a woman in the field, my willingness to participate in all aspects of allotment life and having a warm and convivial approach always ready and willing to 'muck-in' and integrate with practitioners', allowed me to assimilate into the allotment culture and be treated as 'one of their own'. I made every effort to participate and engage with practitioners, and share my own experiences, knowledge and passion for gardening, and truly felt like a member of their world. Never at any time, did I feel under pressure or conscious of my role as a researcher. In fact, I consciously made an effort to play down my role as a researcher, by dressing in 'allotment' attire, by always willingly offering assistance: (weeding and helping dig plots, being present at and participating in social events) and generally participating in allotment life helped create some common ground.

On arrival at sites (in both Dublin and Belfast), I was always warmly welcomed which made me feel like a member of their world. I was frequently invited to private social events, and always given gifts of vegetables on my departure. In Belfast, I felt particularly welcomed and truly immersed in their world to the extent that I was constantly reassured that should I ever require assistance in any event, that I could call upon and rely on them. My willingness to immerse myself in their world and my warm approach allowed me to become a member in a way that approximated others on site.

However, when conducting research, unexpected incidents can (and indeed, did) occur. On one particular occasion in Dublin, when entering a site I left my car to lock the gate behind me, and was stung by a swarm of honey bees, having to quickly abandon my car and seek help. A senior plot-holder quickly came to my aid, pulling an onion out of the ground and rubbing it furiously on my arms and neck. I was in no doubt that I was viewed as one of their own, as several plot-holders came to my aid on that occasion. Whilst I

never felt any animosity towards me as a researcher from the South of Ireland, or threatened in any sense on any allotment site in Belfast only on two occasions while locating sites did I ever feel threatened and anxious.

Upon taking a wrong turn into a Loyalist stronghold; a specific locale where bitter loyalist protests over the flying of the Union Flag at Belfast City Hall heightened tensions in the area in the preceding weeks, I was pursued by a car and subsequently questioned by its occupants of my intentions Due to the political geography of the area, and that bitter loyalist protests had increased tensions in that area, I became extremely aware of my identity as 'the other,' given that I was driving a Southern-registered car. Aware that tensions in the area remained high (and somewhat apprehensive) I decided to use my contacts in the area to verify my presence. On learning that I posed no threat, the gentleman in question retreated. However, in the immediate few minutes after exiting the area, I remained extremely wary about the potential dangers in the city. This experience made me extremely conscious of the particular context in which the research was being conducted.

On another occasion, when locating a site in the hinterlands, I was pursued by a car but on finding my location, the car stopped, watched me enter the site and then moved on.

area, I remained extremely wary about the potential dangers in the city. This experience made me extremely conscious of the particular context in which the research was being conducted. On another occasion, when locating a site in the hinterlands, I was pursued by a car but on finding my location, the car stopped, watched me enter the site and then moved on.

On reflection, having a strong flexible research strategy, adhering to ethical protocols and being mindful that I was obtaining an insight into social actors personal worlds, sensitive narratives (particularly in the case of Belfast) and of the potential risks (as a researcher and for respondents, potential risks particularly during interviews, (and conscious of maintaining anonymity), were clear priorities in order to mitigate and avoid potential harm. Hence, all materials related to the interview process were stored in secure locations. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, and all participant's names were replaced with pseudonyms. Maintaining anonymity when disseminating my findings was crucial, particularly in relation to the data from the Belfast case. To reduce the likelihood of exposing participant's identities all identity markers, (no matter how small) had to be removed, particularly when providing vignettes in the research findings. To remove any ethno-religious/national markers, respondents were given generic pseudonyms that bear no resemblance to their names or indeed, duplicate any respondent in the research.

3.6. Conclusion

Qualitative research is a craft that requires social scientists to formulate a research design, choose research methods that best fit the research, secure research participants, collect, analyse and interpret data, and disseminate findings that convey a view of the social world through the eyes of participants. Grounded theory adds an additional dimension, as it allows the research to direct, manage and streamline data collection, and construct an original analysis of the data in a systematic way using the constant comparative method.

Generating an abstract theoretical understanding of UA demands a concise and defined methodology that allowed the research to see things in context, rather than imposing on the social world a set of variables. Hence, grounded theory best suited this study as it allowed the research to capture naturally occurring data as participants experience it by becoming immersed in participant's worlds. Using ethnographic methods of data collection allowed the research to give voice to respondents and helped the research find the sequences by which meanings of UA are deployed. The research could remain open to what was happening in studied scenes, pursue hunches and follow up on any potential analytic leads. Thus, employing grounded theory methodology added rigour and versatility, and allowed the research to generate an abstract theoretical account of UA in an organic and holistic way. Whilst the findings of this study may not be generalizable beyond the cases studied, they do shed light on structures, and practices as they would operate in similar case settings.

4.
A TYPOLOGY OF ALLOTMENT GARDENERS

Figure 36.Why grow your own?

4.1. **Introduction.**

As alluded to earlier, Dublin has witnessed a demonstrable rise in urban agriculture (UA) initiatives. Allotments and community gardens are emerging in abundance in the city and on its perimeter. Whilst community gardens are a more recent addition to the urban and suburban landscape, allotments in the city date back to the first decade of the twentieth century, flourishing during two world war periods and declining in their aftermath (see chapter one). Traditionally, allotments were associated with older men and lower socio-economic groups (Bell & Watson, 2012; Forrest, 2011; McClintock, 2010; Buckingham, 2005; Crouch & Ward; 1997). However, recent practices indicate a significant shift in the traditional demographic profile. Those investing are increasingly younger and from the middle classes, and more and more women are investing. But what is motivating practice? What has caused this shift? And why are individuals in an advanced capitalist society choosing to cultivate food in and around the contemporary urban metropolis?

The renewed interest may be attributed to a variety of factors including; rising unemployment, the retrenchment of the welfare state, growing concerns over health, food provenance and environmental concerns, or a growing awareness of how the globalised

food industry has made the ways in which food moves from the farm to the table more complex and opaque (Mead 1943; Sexton 1996; Weis 2007; Counihan and van Esterik 2008; Carolan 2012). To understand the marked upturn in interest in allotments in the city in recent years *and* the significant changes in the traditional demographics engaging in practice today, some attention must be paid at the outset to the primary motivating factors prompting investment, and to the composition of gardeners investing in allotments in the city today. This chapter presents a typology of urban gardeners, and argues that motivations for investing in UA today are directly framed by certain dis-embedding social processes associated with post-modern lifestyles. The revival of the urban allotment in Dublin after many years of abeyance I argue, represents an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to (re)connect with traditional forms of knowledge, the land, and practice (food production systems), but primarily to (re)connect with others, to (re)generate a sense of community, and to restore a sense of belonging in the city.

4.2. **The revival of the urban allotment: A Dublin Case Study**

Allotment cultivators constitute a diverse population who have restructured the allotment landscape, social relations and the allotment culture in the city. My analysis reveals that there is not one typical allotment holder. Rather, motivations to cultivate on allotments vary across the sector. Here, I categorise allotment holders according to five unique categories. The distinguishing characteristics of each of these form the substance of this chapter, with typologies structured around primary motivations. The terms I use to differentiate the different types of gardeners merged out of an inductive analysis of the data, which induced a classification system that identified commonalities amongst respondents according to their primary motivations for investing in UA:(1) The Practical gardener, (2). The Idealist/Eco-Warrior, (3) The Socio-Organic Gardener, (4) The Gucci Gardener, and (5) The Non-Gardening gardener. This categorisation suggests that the

urban gardener can be located along a continuum (ranging from primary concerns with food to primary concerns with social needs) (Figs. 37, 38). Let us now examine each of these in turn.

Food   **Social**

Practical G.   Idealist/Eco Warrior   Socio Organic G.   Gucci G.   Non-
                                                                                                                              Gardening G

Figure 37.Typology Continuum
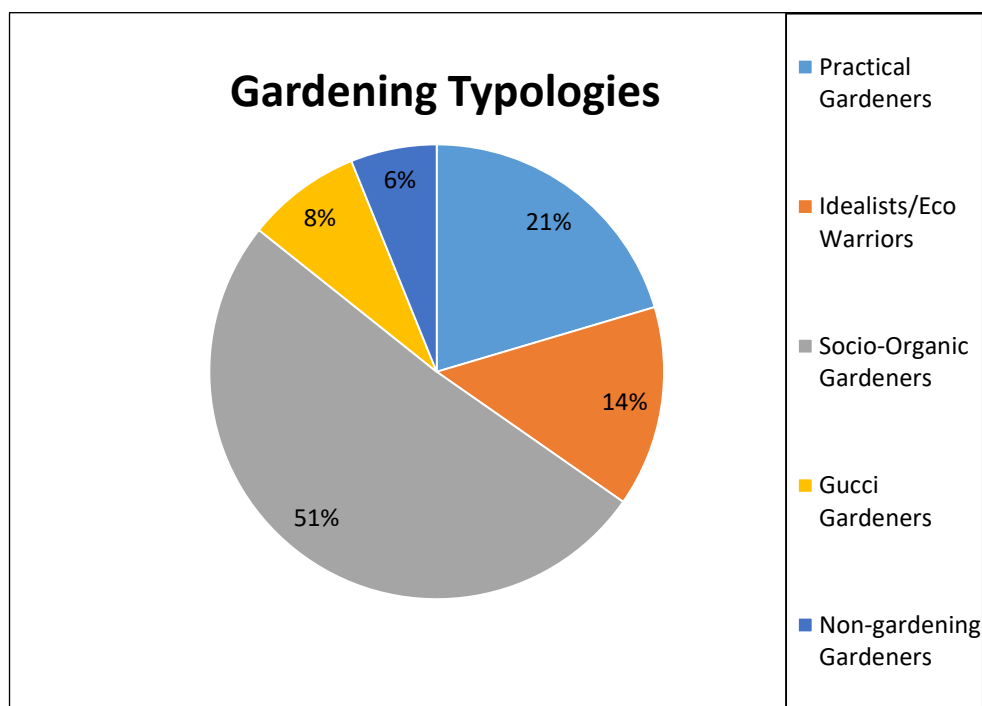
Figure 38.Gardening Typologies

4.3.   The Practical Gardener: "The Agri Expert"

Figure 39.The Practical Gardener

"Those like me, who have done this before and know how it works, do that. They harvest all year because they have the knowledge, they have it planned out, and know when things will be ready to harvest and therefore have a supply of vegetables all year. That's what the plot is for. That's why I utilise the whole plot. I don't go in for all these divisions. It, well, it just wastes the growing area.... You have to have a path and so, I put that in along the edge here, but everything else gets tilled ... the older men, like myself, they till every bit of the plot. Every bit is used, every bit you can grow on, you use it to grow"

Bill. Practical Gardener: Dublin. Feb, 2013

Practical gardeners are motivated by self-provision, food production, and inter-generational connections to UA. They generally comprise older men and women from working class backgrounds, who possess an 'agrarian habitus', where 'habitus' according to Bourdieu (1977), refers to a system of internalised structures strongly shaped by our earlier lives which generates practice. The Practical gardener sees the allotment landscape as functional, for the purpose of growing food and self-provision. They express concerns over the sources and content of food, over changes in food production practices, and express an explicit desire to reinvigorate 'traditional' methods of cultivation, knowledge and practice into the contemporary urban metropolis.

Bill, a native of Dublin, has been growing his own food since early childhood. As a man in his mid-seventies, he is a keen and avid allotment gardener who acquired his passion, knowledge and cultivation skills from his father as he tended the family plot in the city as

a young child. However, as urbanisation began to swallow up residual pieces of land for urban development, their investment came to an abrupt end, forcing them to continue practice in a small corner of their back garden. Despite their displacement, Bill actively pursued his passion for growing vegetables and made various adaptations to his home to accommodate his passion for food cultivation down through the years. As news of the provision of allotments by his local council emerged (some six years ago), Bill actively pursued a plot and became one of the first members to secure a plot in the hinterlands. He is motivated by his desire to cultivate food, his desire to maintain 'traditional' methods of cultivation and sees the allotment as functional, for the purpose of growing food and self-provision.

"I want to be able to grow my own food that's why. I used to grow my vegetables at home and everything I learned, I learned from my father. Because he, he had a system, as he used to say, you can't learn it out of a book. If someone hands you a plant, or a leaf, you have to know what it is. The only way to learn is to garden. You have to know what you're doing. You have to know when to transplant and so-forth and that's, well, that comes with years of experience. And, the older men, that's Peter and Dick, they're older men and they're like myself, they till every bit of the plot. Every bit is used, every bit you can grow on, you use it to grow. … you have to use the whole space, that's what it's for"

Bill. Practical Gardener: Dublin. 2013

Jim has also been growing vegetables for over 29 years. A native of the South East, Jim spent his working life in Dublin as a gardener in a stately-home on the periphery of the city. Like Bill, Jim possesses inter-generational connections to UA, expresses concerns over the sources and content of food, and is motivated by his desire to produce his own food, and know its source.

"knowin where the stuff is comin from , sure ya know what your eatin. The best thing is that you know what you're growin, your own is, and you're sure it's safe … sure 'tis the best. No muck in it. The stuff you get now is muck, pure muck. Full of water. People now don't know what they're eatin. This, it's the proper stuff and it won't cost you a fortune like the stuff in the shops. That's why. Years ago, sure everyone worked on a farm…me father worked all his life on a farm. That's the way me father showed me how to do it, and I still do it that way"

Jim. Practical Gardener: Dublin. 2012

Practical gardeners also express their distrust in contemporary food production systems, and see UA as a means of reconnecting with 'traditional' forms of knowledge and food production systems.

"it's important to teach the younger generation what we know, otherwise the old skills will die out. It'll just be the farmers who know … more people are, well, will be brought up in cities and the old ways will fade out if we don't share what we know. That's important to us"

Michael. Practical Gardener: 2012

They are seen by others as keen and dedicated members of the allotment culture. They are passionate about growing food, see practice as a means of maintaining and reinvigorating 'traditional' methods of cultivation, and enjoy the physical nature of practice. They place a high value on practice, in terms of the land, maintaining 'traditional' (or what some refer to as 'conventional') cultivation methods (also see chapter 7, Fig 40 a & b) diffusing knowledge to others, and maintaining connections to the 'means of production' (Marx, 1979; Foster, 1999).

Practical gardeners' plots are distinguishable through the methods they employ. They are well structured. They utilise the entire plot to maximise food production (also see chapter 7, Fig.126), and employ 'traditional' cultivation methods such as drills and lazy-beds, to grow food staples conducive with the indigenous Irish diet. They are keen to demonstrate their knowledge, and display 'traditional' cultivation techniques, reflected in the layout of their plots. Their desire to grow food and be self-sufficient is evident in their plot layouts where they subscribe to a code of practice which is implicit rather than explicit. They have high standards in relation to cultivation and are intolerant and dismissive of those who don't maintain their plots. They view others irregular attendance as a lack of commitment, a lack of knowledge, and primarily as a lack of respect for the value they themselves place on the land, on practice, and on the produce.

"That's a thundering disgrace. Look at that turnip there coming out of the ground?....They were beautiful two months ago, now they're a thunderin' disgrace. Now here all along here with all these one's are not bothered with it, or don't know how, or just aren't

bothered, they just leave that... You'd be better to give it all away rather than leave it there and useless. You couldn't eat that now even if you wanted to, it'd be too ropey"

Jim, Practical Gardener: Dublin. 2013

While Practical gardeners cite the desire to grow food, to be self-sufficient and reinvigorate 'traditional' production methods as their primary motivating factors, they benefit greatly from the landscape itself. They see the allotment as affording an invaluable opportunity to interact with others and disseminate knowledge, exchange experiences and skills, which facilitates the construction of bonds of friendships and networks of support in the city. They are seen by newcomers as an invaluable source of knowledge, and as avid and dedicated members of the allotment culture. They are receptive to being part of a convivial environment where they can share their knowledge, forge friendships and generate a sense of community within their locales. Practical Gardeners therefore, perceive their plots as the next best thing to participating in the rural-cultivatable landscape, and the outdoors. They express and explicit identification with freedom and being back to the land, in a way that it represents everything the city is not.

Figure 40 (a & b) Traditional cultivation techniques

4.4. The Idealist/Eco-Warrior"

Figure 41.The Idealist/Eco Warrior

 "We're all here together helping to make our lives better, making the place better, the environment. As I say, it's not just about growing, there's a whole rake of things there that are to be learned in many many different ways, ... and the constraints of wind, soil, all those things too"   *Pat. Idealist/Eco-Warrior. Dublin. 2012*

The Idealist "Eco-Warrior" reflects new middle-class practitioners investing in allotments in the Dublin today. Their motivations are part of wider concerns for the environment and ecological sustainability. They are motivated by a desire to grow nutritious chemical-free food while achieving environmental, ecological and sustainable objectives. They see UA as an important resource in the city, and believe that cities can be transformed into important resource conserving, health-improving, sustainable generators (Smit & Nasr, 1992). They are keen and active members of the allotment culture who adapt their whole-food approach to cultivation (Crouch, 1989; 1992). They express concerns over changes in consumption and production practices and are committed to educating others about environmentally friendly sustainable methods of food production. The Idealist/Eco-Warrior believes that debates concerning genetic modification of food and an omnipresent dependence on global food economy have disconnected urban dwellers from nature, the environment, knowledge and food production systems.

John is a young architect and a fervent environmentalist. Determined to generate awareness of the environment and encourage bio-diversity (ecology), John's motivations for investing in UA are primarily driven by his desire to consume chemical-free foods and educate others *while* contributing to, and encouraging sustainable urban development within his locality. His interest in allotments stems from his membership of environmental awareness groups in the city, and is an avid member of his local food coop, which he sees as a better alternative to the supermarket. He is keen to integrate UA into the local environmental and ecological systems, and believes that cities can be transformed into sustainable urban generators.

"well, I'm a member of that, the co-op, which is commemorating its 30th anniversary this year. I'm a member of various groups. We're basically a bunch of animal rights people, environmentalists, vegans and vegetarians, but I think people are more interested in the health aspect of it than the environmental aspect. *I* want to promote that side of it because I see it as *important* to sustaining the environment, the eco-system and so, promoting bio-diversity and all that is important for us. Educating people about GMO's, the likes of Monsanto and that. People need to be educated about that, to know what's going on. To be aware of those things and the harm pesticides are having on the environment … it's just lack of education. People need to be educated about this, that's all"

John. Idealist/Eco Warrior: Dublin. 2013

The idealist/Eco-Warrior, also sees UA as central to increasing awareness and progressing sustainable urban development. However, they represent a small number of practitioners investing in allotments in the city today. They see education as crucial to achieving sustainable urban development, and actively seek ways to educate others. Their foray into UA provides a means of educating others about sustainability[11], environmental and ecological awareness.

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[11] The concept of sustainability emerged in the 1960s in response to concerns about environmental degradation resulting from poor resource management (McKenzie, 2004:1). As the environment became increasingly important as a world issue, the term 'sustainability' was adopted as a common political goal. In 1960, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was created to promote policies that would achieve 'the highest sustainable economic growth and employment in Member countries in order to stimulate employment and increase living standards' (ibid:2). Hence, 'sustainable development' became a term which was defined as "the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life support systems, including those of humans" (ibid:2). The United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) (which came into fruition in the late 1980s) defined sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'(McKenzie, 2004:8). However, this definition has been widely critiqued for presupposing the necessity of development rather than focusing on strategies for the maintenance of current

"For me, it's about passing on the knowledge, making people aware of their environment, encouraging bio-diversity and eating healthy organically grown foods that are free from artificial chemicals. I pass out leaflets to encourage people to be aware of bio-diversity, to educate and encourage awareness of it, to protect the environment…..and learning to do it. Protecting and enhancing our environment is essential. Sprays are not good so you need to have the knowledge if you introduce a plant or a bug that's native here as an alternative to spraying, it's better for the soil you know?…. so, say if you need to find out about seeds or what potatoes you can grow, the soil types, what works, doesn't and all that you need education, and I am fairly keen to pass on that knowledge to others, to teach them, and make them more aware of the harm being caused, to make them more conscious of it"   *Pat. Idealist/Eco-Warrior: Dublin 2012*

However, their involvement in community groups throughout the city suggests that they

are actively promoting social sustainability as part of their environmental and ecological

remit. Bernard, a retired working class man is keen to educate others on his site about the

importance of encouraging bio-diversity (eco-systems). Bernard returned to education

after retiring from work and enrolled on a local horticultural course. Through education,

Bernard has become actively involved in a variety of groups promoting environmental,

ecological and sustainable objectives:

"... I am involved in all sorts of stuff there, and I'm getting other people to get involved with them as well, educating people about all the benefits and the things they can bring as individuals that will benefit the environment. Did you know that 3 metres of grass

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conditions, and consequently concentrating on areas in which development is most important. Hence, converse arguments (for example, 'The Brown Agenda') promote economic development *and* the fostering of 'social capital' as a key means to control environmental destruction. As many of the worst excesses of environmental degradation occur in areas of high poverty and low social cohesion (McKenzie, 2004), it is argued that an increase in social capital through development will lead to an improved environment. Hence, the interrelationship between the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability is commonly represented by one of two models: the first featuring three concentric overlapping mutually-dependent spheres: economy, society and environment, and secondly, the 'Triple bottom line' model, developed by environmentalists and economist, John Elkington (1997). The latter has fast become an international commonplace term used to describe a mode of corporate reporting that encompasses environmental *and* social as well as economic concerns. It is said to have crystallised the increasingly widespread view that 'we need to bear in mind that it is not possible to achieve a desired level of ecological or social or economic sustainability (separately), without achieving at least a basic level of all three forms of sustainability, simultaneously (McKenzie, 2004). Whilst many communities and organisation tend to adopt the former approach, which includes social sustainability as a concern equal to the environment or economy, in practice this has not been the case. Conversely, others argue that despite the inclusion of 'society/social' factors, that the role played by the 'social' is rarely equal to economic and environmental concerns, Indeed, it tends to be seen as subordinate to the economic or environment, and hence, tends to "fall off the sustainability agenda" (ibid: 8). Hence, the stumbling block in defining sustainability (economic, environmental and/or social) is that the context in which the definition is applied is viewed as more important than the wording itself. Hence, inclusive definitions call for *interdisciplinary* input and a cohesive view of the interrelation of nature, society and the economy. Accordingly, social scientists have re-evaluated the concept to include social and cultural, as well as economic and environmental elements.

provides enough oxygen for one adult per day? So grass is actually a good thing. We see people taking out all the grass....You don't need to do that, it's actually a good thing to have a bit of grass there in the plot … We should be sharing the knowledge and ideas and making the city better for residents"

Bernard. Idealist/Eco-Warrior: Dublin. 2013

While Idealists' objectives may be personally fulfilled in terms of growing chemical-free foods and enhancing the ecological and environmental quality of their locality, their endeavours have yet to be acclaimed by other practitioners who often ridicule the Idealists approach to practice. The Idealist is in some ways similar to the Practical gardener, though their relationship to the land is mediated through different knowledge systems. Both are eager to share and educate others about the benefits UA generates. However, Idealists are often misunderstood by new members to UA, who see their approach to their plots as challenging the 'traditional' aesthetic associated with allotment gardening (Fig 42). (For a detailed analysis, see chapter 6 & 7).

"…ah they're the hippy ones … one woman had a no-dig policy … she wouldn't dig. So if weeds came up, she'd pluck them. She wouldn't dig anything……you'd see some of the lads [older] out breaking their backs digging, eighty square metres and the idea was… I don't need to do that, I just put the seeds in the ground [laughs] you know? I suppose it's fairly similar to the concept of guerrilla gardener …"

James. Socio-organic gardener. Dublin 2013

However, as knowledge is shared and objectives understood, their approach to UA is accepted by others.

"Ah once you know what they're at, *why* they are doing it that way I think everyone gets it. If you didn't you'd think it was just a dump. They don't look pleasing to the eye, but *they're* the ones who are *always* here. They've all the knowledge, … there's not that many of them but say for example, there's John's plot there, and to anyone who didn't know what he was at, they'd think it was a disgrace, an absolute tip, but he knows more than any of us"   *Samantha. Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2013*

While Idealists/Eco-Warriors are dispersed across allotment sites in the city, they are more likely to be involved in local community garden groups promoting ecological *and* social sustainability. Their plots are distinguishable through the methods they employ. They devote the entire plot to cultivate food, and remain steadfast in protecting the micro-eco-system. These plot-holders fervently express their desire to integrate UA into the urban

ecological system and to improve the aesthetic, ecological and environmental quality of their locality. They are keen to enhance knowledge by educating others, and display their specific identities through the methods they employ: re-using urban waste and resources found in and around the local area, adding purpose built compost bins, whilst showing displays of experimentation with new cropping methods (Crouch, 1989) , such as water harvesting systems and/or re-using urban waste (Fig 43 a & b). They generally grow specific plant species to improve bio-diversity and the aesthetic quality of the city. (For a detailed analysis, see chapter 6).

Figure 42. Challenging the traditional allotment aesthetic.   *Figure 43 (b & c above):. Re-using urban waste*

The Socio-Organic gardener: "The Socially Dis-embedded"

Figure 44.The Socio-Organic Gardener

"it's not really about the food for people … it's really a social outlet … a social thing more-so than it is about the food. Like I did veg a few years ago and like, there's only so much veg you can grow or use, or force down any child [laughs]. So like, it's not about the food. Yes, that's the benefit but no that's *not* what makes people do it. Sure you can buy the veg as cheap. Like you have your organic people who are into all that, but even they like the social side of it, they are often the first to instigate an event, or a get-together, so ... no, it's not about that, that's not what drives people into it. It wasn't about that for me, that's not why I decided to do this, .. and I know others who are the very same"

Freda. Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2013

Socio-Organic gardeners largely comprise the new middle-classes investing in allotments, and represent the largest number of practitioners' in my sample of growers**.** However, they also comprise a diversity of social groups who no longer see education or socio-economic status as a barometer on which to gauge environmental concerns, or as a barrier to consume organically grown food. For them, being aware of the source and content of food, and having an opportunity to cultivate organically grown food *were* factors motivating investment in UA. However, it was their desire to reconnect with others, forge friendships and networks and generate a sense of belonging to community that provided the impetus to invest.

Sarah represents many socio-organic gardeners investing in allotments across the city today. As a professional woman, and a mother of two young children, the demands of her occupation leave little room for recreation. Prior to her investment, Sarah lived in the

suburbs but felt isolated and disenfranchised. The lack of recreational sites available and long hours commuting, left Sarah with little leisure time and little opportunity to meet with others in her locale. The decision to relocate closer to the city was primarily driven by a need to combat anomie. Like her neighbouring plot-holder, Sarah explains how her motivation to invest in UA was not primarily driven by food or because of concerns over changes in the food production systems, but rather, by a desire to forge friendships and locally bound networks while engaging in a healthy recreational activity.

"I don't believe it's mainly about the food. No. I do think the food part of it is much appreciated, very much appreciated and certainly I plant things I very much like to eat or which are hard to get, but no, it's *definitely* a social thing for most people … I think it's definitely fulfilling a social element in people's lives … it's a focal point for people to meet others, to interact about all sorts of things. It gives people an excuse to interact and engage with others… it's mostly about meeting others and bonding. Getting to know your neighbour, making connections, creating a community spirit, a nice safe environment for you and your family"

Sarah: Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2012

Similarly, Lisa's motivations resonate with Sarah's, and other Socio-Organic gardeners investing in UA in the city today;

"yes the organic is great and I think a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise be able to well, afford it perhaps in the shops ... it might be an incentive but I don't believe it's the primary cause for the recent interest, no. I really think that people are fed up with feeling that their lives revolve around work, mortgages, and all that. I really believe that people are in real need to connect to other people … mothers are working all-hours, dads are too, people spend half the day commuting, flying back home, looking after the family and then spending half the evening preparing for the next day. When we lived in the suburbs, we hardly knew the neighbours. Sure you didn't see them and as for the people a few doors down, you *never* met them. We were all like passing ships. People aren't getting the time to meet their neighbours anymore. Well, not like before. I think people really miss that and want it, they want to know who they're living beside. ....That's why I think people are so interested. Doesn't it tell you something about our lives today?

Lisa. Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2012

For most Socio-Organic gardeners, the pressures of contemporary life and the desire to engage in an activity where they could 'de-stress' and meet others in their locality were cited as factors providing the impetus to invest. They see their foray into UA as a source of freedom and escape from the pressures and exigencies of contemporary urban life. They see the allotment as a 'leveller' where everyday reality is separated from the

divisions of consumption and status in any familiar or social sense. The allotment offers them opportunities to meet and interact with others while engaging in a healthy recreational activity in a convivial and supportive environment. The absence of physical boundaries, (walls), (See chapter 4 & 6), and the construction of the landscape by practitioners themselves, facilitates the construction of 'a peopled-landscape' (Viljoen et al, 2012), which provides an opportunity to meet with and interact with unknown others, and generate a sense of belonging in the city. Moreover, the allotment can be seen as a leveller away from the divisions of consumption and status. As Deirdre explains;

"We've got guards [police officers] here...We've civil servants. You've bank managers. You've people unemployed, from all walks of life. And when you're up here in your wellies full of muck it doesn't matter who you are. You're the same. Everybody's the same. When we walk in that gate, we're all the same…. it gives you the excuse to come out and meet others without havin' to prove yourself, explain yourself, what you do for a living. It doesn't matter what car you drive, what kind of home you have, and what you do for a livin'. When you come in that gate, you're the same, we're all the same and everyone treats each other that way … it's a leveller that's what it is, and you can come up here and de-stress, lose yourself for hours and meet wonderful, wonderful people you wouldn't've ever met out on the street"
Deirdre. Socio-Organic Gardener: Dublin 2013

Socio-Organic Gardeners, see their foray into UA as an opportunity to meet with *and* interact with others, forge friendships and generate a sense of belonging to community.

As Adam explicates:

"I'm definitely conscious that I live in an apartment which is a squared off box raised in the air....I come out of a box of an apartment and I get into the 'Luas' [city's new tram], which is a box. So you sort of live in a box, you commute in a box, your work in a box, and ... then you go home the same way in the box, n' live in the box ... So here, [allotment site]...you're getting to know people n' interacting with people you'd never meet in your everyday life, livin' in your little box....So, for me, it was really about meetin' others"
Adam. Socio-Organic Gardener: Dublin. 2012

Their plots are distinguishable through the methods they employ. Quite often, they are very structured. They are constructed to maximise social interaction, and these gardeners are occasionally referred to as 'concept gardeners' by others because of the methods they employ (See chapter 6). They integrate seating, patios, barbeques, parasols, brightly coloured sheds. They plant flowers to create a convivial environment, and they generate

a sense of home-from-home by transforming shed interiors which in turn, generates a sense of belonging and attachment to place (for a detailed analysis, see chapter 5) (Fig. 45-46).

They integrate recycled materials to improve the aesthetic quality of their plots, which also act as markers of their (new) 'organic' identity, and they employ contemporary methods of cultivation such as raised boxes and poly-tunnels (see chapter 6). Socio-organic gardeners are keen to experiment and grow a wide variety of organic food. They are viewed by others as keen and dedicated members of the allotment culture, who are eager to enhance the social and aesthetic quality of their plots, and the allotment landscape itself. They often initiate social events to encourage and maximise social interaction, and generate a sense of belonging to community (for a detailed analysis of forms of sociality, see chapter 8). While they exhibit a wide variety of organically grown food, Socio-Organic gardeners see the allotment landscape as a means of generating a sense of belonging in the city.

Figure 45. A Social & Convivial Space   *Figure 46.Home-from-home*

4.6. **The Gucci Gardener**

Figure 47.The Gucci Gardener

The Gucci Gardeners represent a very small minority of allotment plot holders investing in UA in the city. The term 'Gucci Gardener' derives from others perceptions of the approach taken by some new members. In this regard, they resemble the Idealists in terms of challenging the 'traditional' aesthetic associated with allotment practices.

Gucci Gardener's largely comprise the new middle-class female practitioners living in apartments and small dwellings with little or no access to a garden or private green space. They see the allotment as an opportunity to construct a landscape that facilitates interaction and fulfils their desire to engage with nature, *and* others within their locales. They are generally *not* motivated by a desire to cultivate food. They are often viewed by others as 'gardeners' rather than 'growers' who's motivations for investment are a direct consequence of the Celtic Tiger era, where media programmes promoted 'designer gardens', and where the desire for 'organic' food reflected an insatiable appetite for newness. They are often viewed by others as 'superficial' practitioners whose investment is the latest commodity, and a means of displaying a particular social identity who tend to be very competitive in terms of plot layout and design. As one provider commented,

"ah you should see them, and they want, want, want, want, want. She, well, the Gucci Gardener ... eh, the Gucci doesn't know *how* to garden. They've no interest in gardening.

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She or he just wants to be seen up here in their Jaguar/Merc and in their Gucci diamanté bloody wellies. Now, they are pretty unique"

Allotment Provider. Dublin. 2013

Gucci Gardeners in all probability are (or were) a passing trend. For those who remain on sites today, it is the absence of a garden, the desire for access to a private green space, their need to interact with others, and desire to (re)generate a sense of belonging that constitute their primary motivating factors. For them, the allotment landscape acts as an important resource in the city that facilitates social interaction. Their foray into UA is a consequence of contemporary urban life and a consequence of high density urban development which for them, is experienced as a *disconnect* (for a detailed analysis, see chapter 8). For Gucci gardeners, the spatial layout and in particular, the absence of physical boundaries (omission of walls) facilitates, promotes and enhances interaction and the construction of a sense of belonging to community and place. As Kate and Georgina both note;

"Well I bought my apartment in the height of the boom and paid a fortune for it, and although I have a balcony, it's really not enough. I grew up here [in the area] and my parents had a large garden and I didn't realise how much I'd miss having a garden until I bought my own home.... I like coming here and a lot of the time I'd sit and read or potter around in the shed, tidy it up and do little odd jobs....oh I love the company here. I absolutely love it. There's x down there, and y here beside me and we're all great buddies"

Kate. Gucci Gardener: Dublin. 2013

"Well I just had to have one. The minute I saw this [site] opening I was down in a shot.....you've no room in the new apartments and like you've the park there for a walk and that's ok if you've a dog and you'd go walking regularly, but it's pretty lonely going on your own all the time. I do go, and I love it, but here, here I can have a chat, do a few bits and basically just enjoy the open air. I'll grow herbs and little bits but I'm no expert, I'm not really a gardener ... I put all those stones in to save me weeding the place you know? I don't fancy having to look at a mess and have to weed constantly. God no. Yeah, I spent a lot putting them in, but I think they're nice. They're very decorative"

Georgina. Gucci Gardener: Dublin 2013

The Gucci Gardener's plot is visibly distinguishable from other allotment growers. Their plots are extremely structured. They employ particular design principles, and considerable consideration is given to the maintenance needs of the garden/plot (Fig. 47). They incorporate water features, sheds, and some integrate poly-tunnels (as a social space) and

they take into consideration how the garden will be used (for a detailed analysis, see chapter 6). They generally incorporate a small lawn, seating, lights, and display a high material investment, but the majority display little food cultivation. (, see chapter 7). Practical gardeners' who see the allotment as functional, unequivocally express their aversion to contemporary plot layouts and designs, and in particular, the '*aestheticization*' of the allotment landscape by the new middle-class practitioners, and in particular, Gucci gardeners.

"…all the younger gardeners, the new ones, tend to have these patios and seating areas, all these fancy well, boxes, umbrella's. Sure you'd think they were going for a picnic, a day out for god's sake, and, well you wouldn't think there were here to garden at *all*, … but no, no, that's not what allotments are for, that's *not* what they're about at all at all. *No. No* … it's the nearest thing to being in the country and we need to protect that"
William. Practical Gardener: Dublin 2012

However, for the Gucci Gardener, the aesthetic plays an important role and they occasionally express envy at other's knowledge, practice and skills. Although they are viewed as competitive practitioners' keen to adhere to contemporary 'design principles', many are beginning to incorporate more cultivation, and are enhancing their knowledge and skills by experimenting with small crops in raised beds similar to Socio-Organic gardeners who employ concept gardening methods, or by incorporating small drills and lazy beds similar to those displayed by Practical gardeners (obtained by interacting with others on site) (see chapter 6 & 7).

"It's not competitiveness in the normal sense. It's more envy. I didn't know a thing but I suppose talking to Y there like, he was telling me and showing me how to do it 'cos I really didn't have a clue. But now I'm starting to grow a bit, a little bit and like this year, I'm trying the tomatoes and they're growing. I'm thrilled. I never thought I'd be able to get it right, to grow a thing. I was nervous I must admit, but sure Y there, he was fab. He told me how to do it and that's how I learnt. But then, like I was saying there about x's onions compared to mine, ... I just want to know why theirs grows like that and why mine wouldn't, you know? ... Like I don't know what 'y' does, but it bloody-well works ... But even just to see the soil. It's incredible. And even like the paving he's done, is incredible. It's really nice. It's just beautiful. It must be one of the best"
Georgina. Gucci Gardener: Dublin. 2012

It seems that over time, the Gucci gardener may undergo a transition as knowledge and skills are disseminated and diffused among plot-holders within the allotment landscape (see chapter 8). Although their foray into allotments was driven by a desire to access their own 'green' space, through practice, they re-connect with food production systems and acquire 'food empathy' in terms of developing a deeper appreciation for food, it's source, content and 'organic' taste. Furthermore, they are beginning to modify their consumption practices, recycle more, become more resourceful and conscious of food waste. As a result, they are cognizant of their actions and practices, and tend to waste less food at home. As Ruth was keen to point out:

"to be honest, I really became aware of how much food we were wasting at home.... I suppose we just became complacent when there was a lot of money floating around. You'd do your weekly shop and like I was throwing anything into the trolley without thinking twice about it, where it came from, and the effort that went into to growing it and getting it to the supermarket. And sure if there was food left over we'd just chuck it in the bin. What a waste!. Now I'm more conscious of that, especially when you see how much time and effort it takes to grow it. ... Now I'm definitely more resourceful and conscious of that, absolutely. I suppose I respect food more, I appreciate it, I'm careful about what I buy, more conscious of what we waste ..."

Ruth. Gucci Gardener: Dublin 2012.

4.7. **The Non-Gardening Gardener**

Figure 48.The Non-gardening Gardener

"there's no-where to go. You're stuck in a small house with a postage stamp of a back yard with walls all around. You see no-one, and the kids, well, there just isn't enough room to play.....Someday I'll learn. It's a bit of a mess but sure once the kids are happy that's all I care about."   *Joan. Non-Gardening Gardener: Dublin. 2013*

Like Gucci-Gardeners, the Non-Gardening Gardeners are a minority group on allotment sites. They comprise a diversity of social groups whose investment in allotments is primarily driven by changing social, economic, and cultural conditions in the city, who cited anomie[12] and disenfranchisement as primary motivating factors for investing in allotments today. They express an explicit desire to access green and 'open' landscapes, and as 'gardeners' see their investment as a means of forging friendships and networks, and (re)constructing a sense of community within their locales. They suggest that the pace of change in the city and intense urban development in recent years has generated a fundamental qualitative change in the character of the urban and their socio-spatial worlds. They express concerns over a growing disconnect between social actors' and nature, and particularly, others in their locales. They place a high value on allotments for facilitating interaction with others, and for affording opportunities to (re)generate

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[12] Anomie is a term coined by Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1897) meaning 'norms' and to describe interpersonal relation to society in which there exists little consensus, lack of certainty on values or goals, and a loss of effectiveness in the normative and moral framework which regulates collective and individual life.

friendships and locally bound networks and social ties. Roy, a non-gardening gardener explains:

"Well my father had a plot when he was young, ... There were 8 or 9 allotments in X [city centre] then, and he loved it.... he made so many pals there. But they were closed up when all the building started. That was way back. ... the city, look at it, it's so dense now"
Roy: Non-Gardening Gardener. 2013

Situated on the periphery of the city, Roy's site gives a magnificent panorama of the city. His investment in UA was driven by his desire to retreat from the city, reconnect with nature and the natural environment, and in particular, to form friendships and networks, and generate a sense of belonging to community. Like other Non-Gardening gardeners, Roy believes urban locales are being dispossessed of common resources that sustain lives in the city, and that public interests are being made subservient to the needs of global capital, urban regeneration, and commercial and residential development (Hackworth, 2007; Eizenberg, 2011). Like others, Roy's motivations reflect a desire to restore connections to nature and the land, *and* to (re)generate friendships and networks evidenced in the approach to his plot. For him, the allotment provides an invaluable opportunity to meet with and interact with others, and restore a sense of belonging in the city.

"The city has changed so much ... people don't know half of their neighbours anymore ... the gardens in the houses are now tiny... you could be there all day and not see a sinner. ... Why would I want to do this in my back yard? Sure I wouldn't see anyone there. Here ... it's just great. Where we are here, ... you are just looking out at the fields, ... It's just fabulous being able to be out here in the air instead of down there in that [housing developments]... It's the company ...yes, the company here, it's just fantastic. It's like a little community ... not like down there [city]. I come up here regularly, most days actually ....but I spend most of the time talking, not working [laughs]. I suppose you could say it's obvious because my plot's not great, but that doesn't matter really ...... it can be very isolating if you're stuck in the house all day. Here, you're guaranteed to meet someone ... and have a chat"   *Roy: Non-Gardening Gardener. Dublin 2013*

Non-Gardening gardeners' plots are distinguishable from others' by the lack of cultivation (Figs. 49 – a, b & c). Quite often they appear neglected or abandoned when in fact they play an important social role for them, and in particular, their children. The majority

incorporate seating, toys, sandpits, and play areas, and these plot-holders place a high

value on the social and pedagogic value of the allotment landscape in terms of

reconnecting with nature and others. They often use the allotment as a pedagogic tool for

informing their children of the inherent value of being (re)connected to nature, and like

Socio-Organic gardeners, with others within their locales. As a neighbouring Gucci

gardener and Socio-Organic gardeners comments demonstrate:

"Well, they [non gardening gardener] live in an apartment and she just wanted toys for
the kids, a space for them like a garden ....dig and that, ... and she was saying 'well I've
no intention to grow anything ...it's for the kids". She spends half the time having a chat
and a cup of tea with other plot-holders, and the kids are playing away in the plot, digging
away and being out in the open, it's about being close to nature for her ... socialising "
Georgina, Gucci Gardener, 2012

"Well it's good for the kids too 'cos it keeps them interested in something, in the
community here, and others living here … and to learn a lot from others we meet here.
We've a small window to get them interested, to teach them how they benefit from the
fruits of their labour … in terms of investing in their neighbourhood. It's good socially
and for the community"   *Robert. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013*

However, they are perceived by others as lacking knowledge, having a lack of interest,

and similar to Idealists, who challenge the 'traditional' *and* 'contemporary' allotment

aesthetic and design.

Figure 49. (a,b,c) Non-Gardeners' Social & Pedagogic Space

Their approach to their plots in terms of layouts, designs and lack of cultivation reflects

their desire to combat anomie and disenfranchisement, reconnect with nature, and in

particular, to (re)connect with others and (re)generate a sense of belonging to community

and place.

4.8. **Conclusion:**

Neo-liberal processes intent on extending market competitiveness and commodification throughout all sectors of society (for example:-. deregulation, privatisation, tax incentives, and policies designed to enhance profit making capacities, consumerism and to attract international capital) (Brenner, Marcuse et al, 2010), transformed the material, economic, cultural and social fabric of the city, and the pace and quality of urban dwellers everyday lives. During the boom years those forces intensified through the implementation of strategic policies aimed at bringing in foreign direct investment. A property boom transformed the face of the city, incomes rose significantly and a collective consumer exuberance was evidenced in the high prices paid for modest homes, the rise in international travel and spending by large swathes of the populace on a range of leisurely pursuits (dependant on credit rather than savings). As the form and structure of the city changed, global forces generated a new momentum to everyday life. Life has become busier, more anxiety ridden and more uncertain. The sense that there is a standard timetable shared by society no longer holds (O'Carroll, in Corcoran & Share, 2008; 254). Expectations of how time is spent have changed. The tempo of the working day has increased, and time outside the workplace is spent on other unpaid work (DIY, childcare, synchronising daily schedules) and less time is spent on leisure. With the economic collapse in 2008 resulting in Irelands' EU/IMF bailout, austerity policies meant that incomes dropped significantly, unemployment rose (although it is now declining), consumer spending contracted, and emigration rapidly replaced immigration. The evidence from Dublin suggests that the current crises in capitalism (spike in oil and food prices, economic retrenchment), is giving rise to a growth in interest in UA, shifting discourse from one of recreation and leisure to urban sustainability and economic resilience, placing UA in the same category as the global South (McClintock, 2010).

Indeed, it can also be argued that the current rise in interest in UA represents a systematic challenge to the concentration of land and other inequities embedded in the food system (Tornaghi, 2014:2). However, this chapter demonstrates that motivations behind urban cultivation must be understood not simply in terms of macro global forces, but in terms of the various dimensions provoking investment in UA, the socio-political and geographical contexts in which UA initiatives emerge, and in particular, to the social dimensions giving rise to UA in the city. This chapter has examined the dis-embedding social processes of modernity (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 2000), and explicates how modernity is creating conditions that challenge the individual to seek alternatives as a form of resistance to modernity, by investing in UA.

To understand the various dimensions giving rise to UA in Dublin city, this chapter developed a typology of five gardening ideal-types; (1). The Practical Gardener (2). The Idealist (3). The Socio-Organic Gardener (4). The Gucci Gardener, and (5). The Non-gardening Gardener. This typology grows out of a textured analysis of individual motivations, and demonstrates the complexity of factors implicated in urban agriculture practices. Class, gender, age, socialisation, political orientation, living conditions, the changing pace of life and quality of the urban all play roles in shaping motivations and practices. The particular constellation of these factors creates different types of gardeners and practices. For Practical gardeners, working class backgrounds or rural childhoods (agrarian habitus) are clearly implicated in their motivations and approach to UA, whilst Idealists are first and foremost political and ideological in their motivations and approach to the task. However, for Socio-Organic, Gucci and Non-gardening gardeners (who comprise the majority of practitioners' investing in UA), the commodification of the urban, changes in new housing tenure (apartment living – a relatively new phenomenon), the absence of green or private space, the changing pace of life and the desire to 'escape' the pressures and exigencies of contemporary urban life (commuting, work-life balance,

financial pressure, consumption practices, disenfranchisement and anomie) are clearly implicated in their motivations and approach to the plot (for a detailed analysis, see chapter 5). In particular, the feminisation of professional work has produced a generation of women who seek an 'escape' from the stresses and strains of balancing work and family life – a way of de-stressing which is not centred on 'cultivating' children, but food. Whilst each type of gardener may appear distinct in character, typologies of gardeners are however fluid in nature. Whilst represented along a continuum ranging from primary concerns with food – to primary concerns with social needs, the practices associated with allotment gardening may have an effect on shaping individuals' motivations, practices and experiences of UA, and in generating a shared politics place, strengthening a collective sense of belonging and restoring a sense of attachment to place. The next chapter examines the physical design, construction and management of allotments as a 'new' form of urban public space, to demonstrate *how* urban dwellers are generating re-embedding social processes to improve the quality of life in the city, and foment and restore a sense of belonging amidst immense economic, cultural and social change.

5. .
CONSTRUCTION, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT OF ALLOTMENTS

Figure 50.(re)constructing insurgent, liveable and 'people'd landscapes'

"…. I'm happy here *because* of the allotments, … but that's because they're something *you* are making, doing yourself… what I mean is, that they're a result of the work *we* do here that makes it;…. making them, producing them ourselves, that makes it. … and because of that, it helps you get to meet everyone and you build up a community, relationships and just generally feel settled. …. You feel you belong …."

Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener. 2012

5.1. **Introduction:**

Places are not merely spaces, or a setting or backdrop in which specific practices take place, but rather, are interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood and imagined through a collection of stored memories, practices and traditions that take place there, and persist as a constituent element of social life and historical change (Werlen, 1993; Soja; 1996; Gieryn, 2000; Corcoran, 2000). As Jane Jacobs (1961) contends, the nature of cities is best examined through its public realm and public spaces (such as sidewalks, parks and neighbourhoods), all of which she viewed as sites of 'civil interface'. Moreover, Jacobs (1961) contended, that the well-being and liveability of a city is connected to levels of diversity, which she understood not so much as a characteristic of demography, but rather, in terms of the different types of economic functions, the mixing of cultural groups and tolerance of diverse cultural practices *within* public space (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015).

Similarly, Sennett (2011) described the 'multi-functionality' of city spaces as essential for provoking the 'vivacity in public spaces" (p. 395). He argues that cities which lack a natural and casual public life (one that is serendipitously produced rather than engineered) are more likely to engender social isolation (ibid).

This chapter examines the construction of allotments as a 'new' (and revived) form of urban public space and illuminates the potential of the urban allotment for improving the well-being and liveability of the city, provoking the vivacity in urban public space and the quality of urban life. The chapter takes as its point of departure, an examination of the socio-spatial implications of the recent reconfiguration of urban public space which I argue, has had a profound impact on the quality of everyday life in the city and the potentiality and pleasurable use of urban public space. Through a textured analysis and visual representation of how urban dwellers collectively appropriate, design, construct, govern and manage this 'new' form of urban public space, this chapter elucidates how urban dwellers are resisting the dis-embedding social processes generated by modernity and (re)conceptualising and (re)constructing a new form of urban public space to generate (re)embedding social process to improve the quality of life in the city and restore a sense of identification with and belonging. I examine the various conventions underpinning the construction, governance and management of allotment sites across the city today, which, have a profound impact on the quality of allotments in the city, and by extension, the dividends UA generates. By engaging in specific practices and collectively constructing a shared resource which facilitates individual and collective needs, this chapter illuminates the potential of urban allotments for making possible, alternative frameworks for social relations, social practices and a shared politics of place. Urban dwellers I argue, are constructing a more *inclusive* notion of the public by constructing vibrant, productive 'people'd landscapes' (Viljoen et al, 2012) to (re)connect with others, build positive relationships between different communities and improve the quality of urban life.

5.2. The changing nature of urban public space and the quality of urban life

> Little boxes on the hillside,
> Little boxes made of ticky-tacky
> Little boxes, Little boxes,
> Little boxes all the same.
> There's a green one, and pink one,
> And a blue one, and a yellow one,
> And they're all made out of ticky-tacky,
> And they all look just the same …
> And the people in the houses …
> All get put in boxes, little boxes all the same…"
> *Recited/Sung by Margaret: Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013*

Capturing the homogeneity and aesthetic of (sub)urban Dublin, Margaret is not alone in her assessment of the changing character and quality of Dublin city in recent years. These lyrics, popularized by folk singer and activist Pete Seeger during the 1960s, epitomise the homogeneous nature of the cityscape and the intensification of suburban sprawl that proliferated during Ireland's period of economic boom. The image conveys a quintessentially modern urban metropolis sprawling outwards, with endless rows of houses mushrooming up across the city, tied together by a network of roads and motorways, shopping malls, retail parks and a fast-paced car dependent society. It is an image which epitomises the preconditions of the boom, the central role of economic policies aimed at bringing in foreign direct investment, the expansion of domestic credit and the steady expansion of the financialisation of everyday life (Wickham, 2008, in Lehndorff, 2012). Together, these forces accentuated an extensive property boom and generated ostentatious consumption, reconfigured urban space, transformed individual and collective identities and the pace and quality of everyday urban life. As Jane Jacobs (1993) eloquently captured in *"The death and life of great American cities"*, "the city character is blurred, until every place becomes more like every other place, all adding up to No-Place" (p. 440). Such change is borne out in James Wickham's (2006) examination

of the rationalisation and reconfiguration of the Dublin's cityscape during Ireland period of economic boom. The testimonies of my respondents bear this out in the analysis. As this chapter illustrates: the he physical reconfiguration of the city and the extensive privatization of public space had a profound impact on the quality of the urban and the potentiality and pleasurable use of public space. Such change I argue, had a profound impact on the city's public and parochial realms: - the city's quintessential social territory which influences how urban life is organised and perceived (Loftland, 1998).

During Ireland's period of economic boom, urban space was reconfigured primarily to accommodate development, movement and flows, which transformed the material, spatial and social organisation of the city and the pace and quality of everyday urban life (Wickham, 2006). The car became was one of the most important influences in the reconfiguration of urban space, and roads and commercial and residential developments the principal material of the built environment (ibid). This, in conjunction with the development of retail financial services and the availability of cheap credit generated a particular type of 'residential capitalism' (Schwartz and Seabroke, in Lehndorff, 2012), and led to what Wolfgang Sachs (1990) calls 'an exploding radius of activity' (ibid). Home ownership became an obsession and private property was used as a leverage for further consumption and led to the intensification of suburban sprawl (Moore, 2002; Chari & Bernhagen, 2011; Lehndorff, 2012). Spaces once shared by pedestrians, cyclists and the wider community at large were swallowed up to make room for development, and to facilitate movement and flows (Calthorpe, in Freund and Martin, 2007:112; Slater, 2008), and public space was sacrificed to accommodate residential and economic growth. The physical reconfiguration of the city had a profound impact on the quality of the urban and the meaning, potentiality and pleasurable use of urban public space, which had a significant impact on the quality of urban life. As Andrew, a Socio-Organic gardeners comments demonstrate:

"… just look around you … it's all out of proportion …there's not enough spaces for the amount of people living here. The proportions are all wrong. … it's just full of buildings and cars. The infrastructure is there for them alright… but just look at the lack of space in this immediate area alone, where you can *actually* meet the locals. There *isn't* anywhere. … Everywhere you look there's buildings, cars, apartments … there's no-where to go … This [allotment] is the only space available for everyone living here …. And there's a lot of people living here …"

Andrew, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

Similarly, Pat, an Idealist/Eco-Warrior reiterates:

"… apartment living has taken off … but I don't believe they're working … Apartments were built for developers purely for profit, *not* for the people. They weren't designed properly and didn't take into account different aspects of people's lives. There's no facilities, sheds, gardens, … there's no-where to go, to grow and do things like this"

Pat. Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2012

The built environment that resulted was highly decentralised and homogeneous with sprawling suburbs, scattered privatized spaces (such as shopping malls and retail parks) which has impacted on the forms of sociality in the city and the pace and quality of everyday urban life. The physical reconfiguration of the city widened the commuter belt and increased the distances travelled to work. Activities associated with the daily rounds of life like shopping, living and work became more spatially dispersed, making the car a necessity to synchronise everyday urban life (Wickham, 2006; O'Carroll, 2008). Pavements which were once conducive to sociality witnessed the slow decline of their public and social life (particularly in suburban locales). For example, in many suburban locales pavements no longer extend beyond urban dwellers immediate environs. The testimonies of respondents show the impact such change has had on the quality of the urban, and community and social life. Edward, an Idealist/Eco-Warrior explains:

"… well everywhere you want to go now you need a car …especially if you live in the suburbs. … if you need something in the shopping centre or in Woodies [DIY store] or the garden centre you need to have a car to get there … you don't see people walking around estates really either …even bicycles … you can cycle around estates but you can't go on motorways on them … Everyone uses cars now, you *need* a car to get there… so you don't' get to meet half the people that live near you. If you go into any housing estate around here, [in suburbia] the only one's using them [pavements] are kids"

Edward. Idealist/Eco-Warrior, 2013

Similarly, a young mother living in suburbia who is new to UA reiterates:

"….. I'm living here in [her locale] almost five years now and I wouldn't see another adult from the time my husband goes to work in the morning until he comes home at night. … You could be out walking with the baby in the buggy and you'd see no-one at all. There's been many a day that I'd walk around the estate and wouldn't see or even meet a single person. It's not what I thought it'd be like … then my husband got me this [allotment] …"

Elaine, Socio-Organic gardener, 2011

Cars now dominate spaces once shared by pedestrians and cyclists, and the wider community at large and spaces once used by pedestrians were increasingly replaced by accoutrements to facilitate 'hyper auto-mobility' and the changing momentum and pace of life (Calthorpe, in Freund and Martin, 1993; Wickham, 2006; Slater, 2008;,). Interestingly, many respondents believe that such change led to the (extension of) privatization of 'space' (both private and public), and causing a retreat into more privatized worlds. Andrew's comments resonate with many respondents, particularly those living in the suburbs:

"people just get into their cars, go to work, …. And you don't see them. When they come home, they just get out of their cars, go in and close the door. They don't talk to you"

Andrew, Practical gardener, 2013

Similarly, Elaine, a young mother residing in the suburbs also explains:

"you don't know anyone in housing estates. People are in and out in cars all day. When they come home from work, they get out of their cars, run into their houses and close the door. You don't see anyone. …"   *Elaine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011*

The homogeneity and uniformity of the city particularly in suburban residential locales, has created barriers of interaction between urban dwellers, generated a sense of placelessness, hindered the development of meaningful interactions and the construction of a sense of belonging. Moreover, like the car, *walls* have created obstacles of interaction and enabled the extension and "privatization of space" (Wickham, 2006) a decline in civic engagement, hindered the construction of a sense of community and a sense of neighbourliness in many suburban locales. Andrew explains:

"It's an awful lot to do with the way the estates are now … the houses are all blocking people off because of the walls … that's a lot to do with it [decline in civic engagement/sense of community] … people don't mix like they did before … You don't see anyone 'cos of the walls between the houses …Years ago you'd see the women out talking across the walls … you don't see that anymore at all …People don't really have

anything in common … so you don't feel part of a community … they aren't neighbourly like before, like it was years ago in the city"   *Andrew, Practical gardener, 2013*

Pressure on public land and the virtual dominance of the private sector in terms of new home construction led to a decline in focal points in locales, and decreased the average garden plot size. This, in conjunction with changes to the material fabric of the city and the increased pace of everyday life transformed the meaning, symbolic value and use of urban domestic garden space. Scholars concerned with the contemporary urban environment argue that the changing use of domestic garden space (many of which were transformed into 'outdoor rooms') is linked to changing work patterns and household structures because of the rise of dual-earner households (Bhatti and Church, 2001). Such change is borne out in Slater and Peillon's (2008) examination of the changing nature, use and meaning of the (sub) urban front lawn in Dublin. Their findings parallel with findings from this study in terms of the changing conceptualisation, nature, meaning, value and use of domestic garden *and* 'public' space. As Sarah observes:

"well the gardens at the front you wouldn't use them for growing veg, or to grow anything, they're too small …people mainly grow flowers or have a small patch of grass …or concrete… and …, the gardens at the back are tiny, absolutely tiny"
Sarah, Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Fred and Deirdre reiterate:

"My garden's too small at home … There's no room … I paved the entire thing in because you couldn't do anything with it… it's too small for this kind of thing … you wouldn't grow anything in it … we just use it for barbeques, family occasions and that .. and you certainly don't see people out talking across walls … That day is gone"
Fred. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

"You pay a fortune for a house, and you get a postage stamp of a garden … the gardens are tiny now compared to years ago, they're ridiculously small … and it's rare to get a house with a garden in the heart of the city …but like in the outskirts they're tiny too … I believe that they reduced the size of them to fit more houses in ... they're just aesthetic really, designer gardens …. You don't see people, … out talking to their neighbour…. Around here, no-one does that"   *Deirdre. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013*

As in suburbia, inner city neighbourhoods also witnessed a dramatic change and a decline in public space, as areas were increasingly developed (commercial and residential), and gentrified by the new middle-classes seeking to reside in the city to reduce work-time

constraints. New modes of housing tenure (apartments and duplex housing) coupled with old housing stock generated a fusion of styles in many inner city locales, which reflected changing consumption patterns, individual and place identities and changing class and lifestyle cultural practices and tastes.

As public space was increasingly privatized to facilitate residential and economic growth, areas began to lose their distinctive (and emotional) features, which provided a sense of identification with and belonging to community and place. Pat, an inner city senior resident and plot-holder explains:

"Ah the area has changed hugely over the past few years …I'm living here forty-seven years and … it's not the same at all anymore…. The whole place has changed…. All the old houses were bought up by young people and completely renovated. All these young people and foreigners have moved in. All these apartments and everything …. There's no locals left … the place is just not the same anymore ... Sometimes I feel I don't belong here at all … it's not the same"   *Pat. Practical gardener. 2012*

Similarly, Bernard, an inner city senior resident and Key champion reiterates:

"Oh there's been a *huge* change in the area, *huge*. … kids who grew up here all moved on and got houses in the outskirts … a lot of young professional people who work in the IFSC n' that [the city's financial district] have moved in ... … the area has changed a lot, a *huge* amount. It's not the same at all anymore …even the pubs that people would have gone to have all changed. … the pubs that older men here would have gone to meet and that they've all changed to suit the younger ones … there's nowhere for the older residents now. Even the land here behind us is up for redevelopment …there just isn't enough [space], things for people to really get involved in, meet and that, that they can call their own … the whole place changed to suit developers … even the younger lads in the area who wouldn't be working or anything, there's nowhere for them to go ….people are isolated, they only have the local shops and that, but that's not enough … all those things that created a strong sense of community here in this area have all gone now…everything has changed"
                      Bernard. Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2013

Given the significant changes to the material and social fabric of the city and the changing pace and momentum of everyday urban life, urban dwellers see allotments as affording an opportunity to (re)shape their immediate environs and (re)construct a new type of urban public space. Moreover, the construction of allotments provide an opportunity to generate platforms to disseminate knowledge, (re)connect with the land, practice and particularly others and combat the dis-embedding social processes associated with modern life Let us

now examine *how* urban dwellers are (re)constructing this new (and somehat, revived) form of urban public space.

5.3. Constructing vibrant, liveable, people'd landscapes

Figures 51 (a & b). Constructing the landscape- DeCourcey Square Allotments, Dublin, 2009. Images courtesy of Ralph Bingham.

"People want somewhere they can be part of and to really *live* in a place … to be part of the community. Together, we went out … calculated all the plots... departed them … added in a few communal areas, two seating areas and some communal borders so that *anyone* who doesn't have a plot can still come in and use the space*"*.

Sarah, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

The construction of allotments in Dublin is determined by a variety of factors including; their forms of tenure and administrative models/regimes, access to/available resources and key champions, providers and practitioners' principles, motivations and needs. As alluded to earlier (chapter 2), the city boasts public, private and philanthropic allotments, which emerged in response to civil society actors committed to sustainable methods of production and awareness raising of the benefits (ecological and ancillary social benefits) of UA. As a result, UA in the city largely reflects a bottom-up approach. However, as alluded to earlier (chapter 2), the absence of policy has meant that the provision, construction and governance of allotments are influenced by a variety of factors, which impacts on the quality of allotments in the city and by extension, practitioners' experiences of UA.

5.3.1. Publicly Provided Sites:

As alluded to in chapter 1, the absence of state or national policy directed at UA has meant that there is largely an ad-hoc quality to UA in Dublin. As a result, the provision of allotments is highly circumscribed, administrative regimes are inconsistent, security of tenure is tentative and extending waiting lists remain. Whilst many projects have been difficult to bring into fruition or even blocked because of the lack of municipal funding, local authorities are employing specific and diverse strategies to make provision for the rise in demand for UA. In Dublin, the provision of publicly provided allotments is organised into two main models/types: Cooperative Partnerships and Centralised Governance regimes.

5.3.1.1. Cooperative Partnerships

The majority of public allotments in the city are underpinned by a cooperative partnership approach, which provides municipalities a means to fund, develop and manage allotments and facilitate the rise in demand for UA. Cooperative partnerships allow urban dwellers to join in concert and contribute to their immediate environments, construct and manage urban public space, but this approach largely emerged in response to key champions and civil society actors advocating for the provision of land for UA. This model has enabled urban dwellers to work with and alongside local authorities in the development, construction and management of (this new form of) urban public space, despite the lack of funding, and/or policy directed at UA. They allow urban dwellers to develop spaces in the city which facilitate individual and collective needs, and have a profound impact on the quality of allotments and by extension, the dividends UA generates.

Municipalities executing cooperative partnerships tend to do so to encourage active participation in 'greening the city' and create a sense of civic responsibility to place, *and*

to dismantle public perceptions of and dependency on municipalities, as the main care takers of public space. One e city officials' comments illustrate:

"There's a lot of red tape setting up allotments. What we want to do, is to devolve them to the people … We're trying to use London model… and if you look at the London model, it works. They're the most successful ones…the trick is to devolve them to the people. Psychologically you see, people in Ireland, well in the city, think that if the council have let it, they should provide everything and should maintain the sites, but if they're devolved to the people to manage, they take responsibility for them and they've been proven to be more successful. But it's not as easy as you think … but by devolving them you're ensuring that sites are maintained ….it helps us keep sites maintained too because of the lack of resources to maintain sites"

Local Authority official, 2012

In that sense, cooperative partnerships provide a means to implicitly achieve sustainable development objectives despite the absence of policy or strategies explicitly addressing UA. Hence, this approach demonstrates how the provision, construction and management of allotments are subsumed within policy briefs and *other* urban policy domains rather than policy explicitly addressing UA (as eluded to in chapter 2). As a local authority officials comments illustrate:

" …there is a policy for culture and recreation, and a remedial department which would have a reference probably to allotments and community gardens … and that department looks after libraries too. They look after parks and rents and a whole range of issues ….They would have a policy document that they would amend and go through what they call a strategic policy committee which is made up of councillors, local authority officials and the private sector, and they would probably have allotments is a sub-section in that … But my view is that just because it isn't included in policy doesn't mean that you can't do it. So a policy is something that you kind of have an official commitment to, but its early days to make an official commitment [to UA]. …We as a local authority develop corporate plans and we develop and change the corporate plans … we include this and exclude that, and that's part of a fluid process …"

Local authority official. Dublin 2013

Local authorities who employ cooperative-partnerships play an active role in the design, construction and initial development of allotment sites, but devolve the governance, development and maintenance of sites to practitioners', thereafter playing an advisory rather than a 'hands-on' management role. However, cooperative partnerships largely emerged in response to key champions and civil society actors pushing to have UA incorporated into the policy repertoire and urban regimes (see chapter 1), and they play a

direct role in acquiring land for urban citizens, *and* promoting new models for the

construction, governance and use of urban public space. Bernard, a Key Champion, and

Eoin a young Socio-Organic gardener both explain:

"Effectively we set it up … it's a cooperative between the council and ourselves. We talked to the council at the time … for about two years in fact … We had regular meetings … yes they were slightly [resistant] at first. … but we had the support of x [local authority key champion] who was very positive towards the whole idea and he worked with us all the time, …Once we had our meitheals[13] [going and people committed to it, eventually we convinced them [municipality] to go with the idea"

Bernard. Key champion. 2013

"…I suppose we should say too that the council were slow …were very slow to get involved and support us .. but what happened was, x and y [key champions] were the ones who really got it going … it's a cooperative really… but they were one's who organised a group of people to come … We invested in it ourselves, …. got quotes and planned the site and that, … and started the whole thing [cooperative partnership] off… so I suppose, we kind of forced it"

Eoin. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

However, practitioners are required to meet certain criteria to secure access, obtain the

support of their local authority and secure a licence/lease to construct, develop and

cultivate on sites. A local authority official explicates:

"…we very much have a light touch approach. … . They [plot-holders] must form themselves into an entity. They must establish a bank account. They must form a committee. We're not asking them to become a limited company but they must have some structure that we as a local authority can give a licence to. If we don't do that we end up dealing with a number of individuals, and if they fall out for whatever reason, then suddenly we become involved and there's an issue of liability"

Local authority official. Dublin 2013

Sarah, a 'key champion' reiterates:

"Well we met with the council beforehand. They had a questionnaire already drawn up for everybody asking what we wanted to do. Did we want seating, benches, whatever. … what way the site was going to be … Then there was an election where people were asked to put their names forward for a committee … The council stipulate that you have that. …then they got their people out to get the site ready once that was in place"

Sarah. Socio-Organic gardener/Key Champion, 2013

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[13] The word 'Meitheal' denotes the co-operative labour system used in Ireland when neighbours help each other in turn with farming work such as harvesting crops.

In other urban locales urban dwellers formed a limited company to secure access, obtain

licencing agreements and the support of their local authority to construct and develop

sites: As Bernard explains:

"well we've an association. It's a limited company, and limited by guarantee and not by
any share of capital … We've a chairman [x] and a treasurer [y]. Once we had that in
place we got our meitheals [cooperative] going, fifty people here and developed the site
… it's what builds the community spirit really"

Bernard, Key champion, 2013

Whilst there are prerequisites to form governance structure to secure access, construct and

develop sites, cooperative partnerships enable urban dwellers to employ a more

democratic model of governance in which all practitioners have an equal stake. This

approach to governance and the construction and management of sites engenders more

cooperative forms of activity, provides the foundations for the (re)construction of a

shared-in-common space and engenders a sense of responsibility *and* ownership of and

sense of place (albeit in the public realm). Sarah explains:

"people are afraid of the word 'committee'. It automatically denotes a divide in people's
minds of an 'us' and 'them' scenario, so we didn't want that. Even though it was stipulated
by the council that we had to have a committee, we explained to everyone it's function
and to overturn that mentality we felt that everyone has a part to play ...but the council
have been really great … it's not like it was years ago … we have a part to play …that's
what makes it a community too"

Sarah, Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Denise, a Socio-Organic gardener also explains:

"Everybody's voice counts and it's a different approach and that's why it works because
it's … based on a cooperative form of agreement between the people and the council, and
people feel connected because of that. You don't feel like you're an outsider and it's a
'committee' versus 'us' type of approach … so we don't have any kind of such
government structure like that here, … which I think is better. I mean I don't think there's
ever been a need for it … everyone has a say … it's a structure that I'm part of too … its
way more democratic …"   *Denise. Socio-Organic gardener. 2013*

Once requirements have been met and governance structures are in place, local authorities

and practitioners collectively plan and develop sites, which allows urban dwellers to give

shape to their immediate environs which fosters a sense of belonging to the place (for a

detailed analysis on sociality and identity, see chapter 8) .

Collectively they engage in dialogue, seek the advice of specific social actors and obtain ideas from all interested in cultivating the land to ensure that specific resources are integrated to site layout, designs and plans. .Considerable attention is given to the layout, design, development and future use so that sites are available and accessible to all (in particular, elderly, children and individuals with special needs) (Fig.54, a,b & c) and they obtain ideas of all to ensure they facilitate individual and collective needs practice . They consult social actors (civil society groups) who have knowledge and experience of UA, to ensure that specific resources are integrated into site plans *before* construction even begins. As Sarah notes:

"It was important that this was designed with the idea that … it is a space for all and so it was important that it maintained an open feel to it .. so that everyone has access to it … If the elderly people in the area want to come in and just sit they can too … and we also wanted to include communal areas and borders so that people who don't have plots can come in and use them"   *Sarah. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Nick, a key champion's comments demonstrate:

 "Well it was important that the site was built with everyone's needs in mind. We certainly didn't want to exclude anyone ... we wanted to make it accessible to all, especially those with disabilities in the community who are at the risk of being more isolated. We built these raised beds here, and they're high enough so that they can work on them. They were designed for them and located near the entrance and toilets. ... it was that guy x [civil society advocate] who advised us on that, so that was good. He was brilliant. Someone else suggested a composting bay and a course on composting too, … [we] got advice on composting and had an expert come in .. and also to teach us about it too"
                                                                          Nick. Key champion. 2012

Whilst local authorities view the notion of sustainable urban development as something to be encouraged and acclaimed, it is largely practitioners' (particularly Idealists), Key Champions and UA advocacy groups who actively encourage and promote the notion of sustainable development objectives by advocating for the inclusion of specific resources on sites (Fig.55, a,b & c). They are keen to use natural resources to ensure that sites promote and encourage particular cultivation techniques, and advocate for the inclusion of facilities to promote particular principles of practices on site (for a detailed analysis on cultivation practices, see chapter 7).

"...on this site we formed a steering committee … but everyone's opinions and ideas were taken into account … I'm keen to improve biodiversity and to educate others about the environment and to improve the city that way. … so I was asked about things like that … I did out a drawing of what we could do, …. I even tested the soil … it's important to teach people about those things … to make them more aware of the environment"

Pat. Key Champion 2012

Plans are drawn to promote specific practices and to generate platforms for the dissemination of knowledge, ideas and skills, and specifically, to promote social and civic interfacing, so that a shared resource is created from which positive interactions are developed and sustained. Whilst sites retain the archetypal rectilinear layout and s engineered to facilitate and promote particular practices on site (Fig. 52 a & b, 53 a,b & c), there is a strong emphasis on the social elements of the landscape when planning and constructing sites. Key features of the landscape are viewed as integral so that a convivial 'open', multi-functional landscape and 'shared-in-common' space is constructed to facilitates practitioners' motivations and (social) needs. They draw on and make use of local resources, knowledge, physical labour, experience and skills. However, social areas are considered integral to site layouts and designs, and practitioners' unwaveringly support the inclusion of social spaces to promote interaction and generate a sense of communality to combat the social dis-embeddedness associated with contemporary urban life. They ensure seating areas, communal areas and pedagogic spaces are integrated into site construction, future development plans and designs to facilitate interaction, promote the (re)construction of a sense of community on site (Figs. 58, 59, 60): As Lisa explains:

" .....it was important that this [site] was designed with the idea that it is a space for all, people who are working the plots *and* local residents. So we decided to have a reflective area over here. Anyone can come and sit there and reflect and just be at peace, enjoy the fresh air and not do any gardening. We have a communal herb area, communal borders where anyone, even people who don't have a plot can access. We've a children's area where the children can come and dig to their hearts content. These communal areas were *very* important … Older people can use them, come in and sit and take it all in, watch people working and it's somewhere everyone can go and use and be part of the community. It was important for us that it was open to everyone … Some people have no family here in the city, like some of the new residents and older residents too, they're at risk of being isolated, … so that was considered very important when we decided on how to lay it out"

Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener. 2012

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Figure 52 (a & b). Archetypal rectilinear ground pattern: Dublin

"… I think it's good to have a biodiversity agenda but ….that's not *really* what is at the heart of the whole concept of the allotment …. It's mostly social, a social thing so that was a *very* important part of it [layout and construction]. We were clear about what we wanted included;- seating, communal areas and that… so that people can just come sit there with your cup of tea, your bottle of wine or …. just hang out and chat to people. Those elements were a *crucial* part of the planning … Actually, they were one of the first things people wanted on the plans"

Sarah. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

To combat the lack of municipal funding many practitioners/key champions apply for and secure philanthropic funding (for example; The Mount Street Trust, EU Leadership Funding, Agenda 21), to ensure they can facilitate construction and the future development of sites. As Bernard and Eoin, two practitioners from diverse sites in the city point out:

"well the councils don't have any money left because of the economic crisis so we applied to the Mount Street Trust and got funding and that's how we got the wind turbine in. We used the money on that … We were keen to conserve our resources and use what nature gave us… it's powered by a solar panel there, and it's fantastic"

Bernard. Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2013

"well we were really keen to use what we had and wanted to put in a solar powered watering system … We went and got the estimates and worked out the whole thing ... it wasn't the council that paid for them though…it was the leadership crowd that paid for the posts and the watering system … you couldn't do it without it really"

Eoin, Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Once site designs and layouts have been agreed upon, local authorities clear and level sites, erect perimeter fencing and provide a range of resources and services to facilitate construction, their development, management and use (portable lavatories, communal

storage, water supply, composting bays) (Figs. 53 a,b & c). In the majority of cases, local

authorities collaborate with practitioners and collectively delineate and construct the basic

ground pattern of sites, but in some instances, practitioners' form meitheals, and

collectively prepare and construct their sites (Figs. 55 a,b & c). As Eoin explains:

"X & Y [key champions] and a few other people organised a meitheal [cooperative] of people to come down here and we actually laid out the plots … we put grass seed down the lane way and that and we took the stones off the lane ways, stuff like that …We put posts down where things should be and that, we invested in that ourselves …"

Eoin, Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Similarly, Sarah explains:

"the council suggested that we make the paths this way and … they levelled the site and cleared it and put in the gates … ….but they [local authority] are *very* understaffed … They have a lovely gardener but there was no way they could measure out all the allotments, plant, and do the hedging, … so we helped out… together, we went out and calculated all the plots, spray painted the lines ... We departed the plots...and added in a few communal areas, measured all the plots, slotted in and designed the spaces left over for the allotments "

Sarah. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Key features are considered integral and sites are collectively constructed to promote

recycling, encourage bio-diversity and to facilitate pedagogic and social practices on site

(Fig 61a & b): Bernard explains:

"… we used teams of people to prepare the ground, line out the plots, … [and] we're going to build a communal cabin there with a veranda at the front. We'll use it for showing our produce and for classes, for teaching people and for general use if people want to go somewhere to sit and chat, that sort of thing … We'll have seating areas and barbeque areas there too for people. …it's very socially oriented definitely … a positive thing for the wider community"

Bernard, Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013
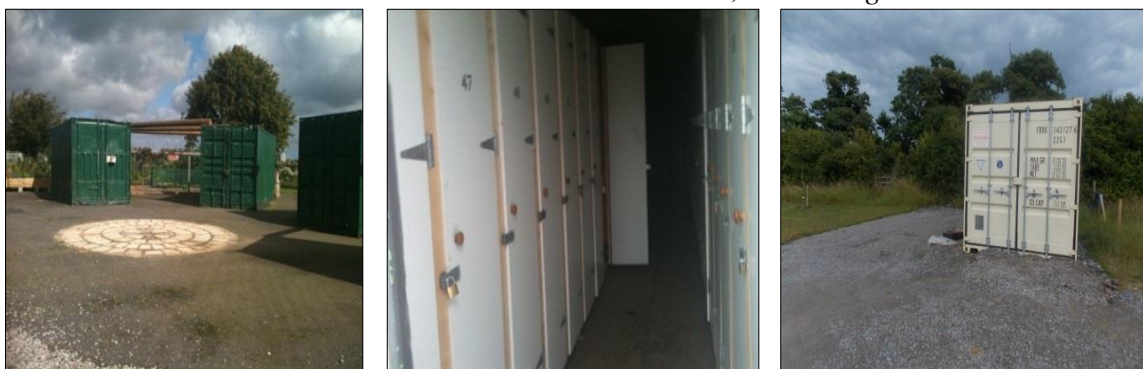
Figure 53 (a,b,c) Storage provided by local authorities

Figure 54 (a,b,c).Perimeter fencing, pathways, storage, & accessibility

Figure 55 (a,b,c).Improving biodiversity, encouraging specific practices and principles

Key champions ensure specific resources are drawn upon and integrated into sites to

ensure that sustainable development objectives are met (Figs 55-57). Brian, a key

champion explains:

"We've a river going through and the water comes from a kind of well. We dug a large
sump ourselves about fifteen feet down and put it full of shale and we've a pump in it and
the pump is driven by a solar panel which goes right over there, up the roadway on the
plot to that 50,000 gallon tank. That water supplies the whole site ...the water comes down
to each one [pathway departing plots] on the site and each road has service tanks placed
every four to five plots".   *Brian. Key Champion. 2012*

Similarly, Pat, an Idealist/Eco-Warrior explains their approach to construction:

"we started off with one section … sunk a well for water because we wanted our own
water supply ... We had to comply with planning so that [water well] came later of course,
but it was important that it was included in the design, where it would be [located] and
that ... So that's how the idea of the wind pump came about. I felt we needed to avail of
the resources around us... The wind pumps the water and it overflows and goes straight
back into the ground and you've no waste. This area here is a wildlife corridor which was
important too to attract butterflies and insects and things ... to improve biodiversity, and
educate people about it.... so improving the environment was important … so that was
my contribution"   *Pat, Idealist/Eco-Warrior, 2012.*

They are keen to use local resources and promote particular principles of practice to transform practitioner's practices, actions and worldviews by re-using urban waste (Figs.55 a & b, Figs, 58,59). As David, a Key Champions comments illustrate:

"it's important to conserve the environment and to be resourceful, so we built an eco-toilet there on the site. It's a great idea. It's all made from recycled materials. We put a bottle shed there too to propagate plants. It's basically a green-house made out of old recycled plastic two-litre bottles"   *David. Key Champion and Idealist. 2013*

As a result, key features are integrated so that a shared resource is created for *all*, so that sites promote inclusion, and ensure particular principles and values can be encouraged, practiced and sustained (Fig 57 a & b).

"We got everyone that was originally involved in campaigning for the site involved.   X [key champion], and lots of the members came in and they all mucked in. Everyone had a say and it was done in different stages ... and the site was developed to suit everyone. Everyone's needs were taken into account, what people wanted out of it and that you know? That's basically how we have such a strong community here
Bernard. Key Champion, 2012.

"You see we got meitheals going, to get the site ready for plot-holders. We worked with x [local authority]... we have plans to develop the site alright. …a communal cabin over there, and that will be used for classes and teaching people and if people just want to come and sit and have a chat ... We have a poly-tunnel and we propagate plants for people too, ... All those things were important. They were all considered while we designed it ... where they would be [located] and that. That's how it's so good, we've a strong community spirit here *because* our approach is that it's a space everyone has an input in. Everyone mucks in … all these people come together to form their ideas and come up with new one's so it's been marvellous, marvellous for the community here. ..and we do it together"
Brian: Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Figure 56. Composting and children's area   *Figure 57 (a & b). . Seating/Social/BBQ areas*

Figure 58. Recycled Bottle Greenhouses.   *Figure 59.Eco-Toilet*   *Figure 60.Wind Turbine.*
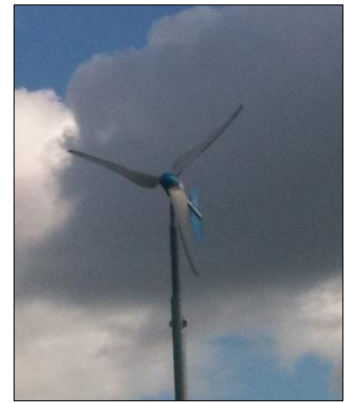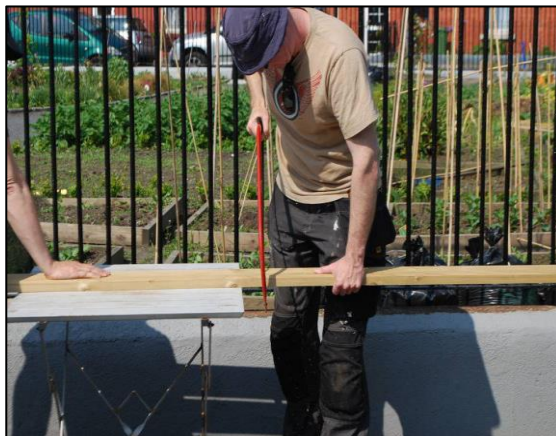
Figure 61 (a & b) Collectively constructing the landscape

Once sites are designed and the basic ground-patterns are complete committees work with local authorities to ensure sites are managed, developed and maintained. Sarah, a Socio-Organic gardener and key champion explains:

"well the railings and walls and pavements are maintained by the council and the money [rent] from the allotments goes towards the allotments, their maintenance … the committee do that"

Sarah, Socio-Organic Gardener/Key Champion, 2012

And, Bernard, a Key champion reiterates:

"well they're not policed per se. There's a check on the plots every three months to see if people are managing or still interested. We do that with them [the local authority]… but we generally work together to keep the plots, help people who may be finding it difficult, ….they have come on board [municipality] it's great to have that but we [committee members] go around …We take a look at the plots and make a note of any that aren't being looked after. It's very amicable. …. People get a letter from us [committee] to see if they are still interested and then in another three weeks they'll get another letter. We basically do that [governance] with them [local authority], but it's largely the committee and the people here to maintain the site*"*

Bernard. Key Champion, 2012

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By participating in the planning, design and construction of allotments and cooperating with practitioners' in these diverse urban locales, local authorities have fostered cooperative forms of activity, and facilitated the construction of a more 'democratic' landscapes, which engenders and promotes a sense of responsibility, ownership and belonging to place. Bernard, a committee member/key champion explicates:

"......it's definitely *because* we played an active role in the site and *because* we have an active committee here who work with the council, that's why it's so successful**.** They [plot-holders] know that we have all their interests on board and we want to make it a nice, comfortable and good place to come and grow and meet others. Everyone's opinion here matters …everyone has a stake in it. They [local authority] came on board and … it's great to have that. ... and it's very amicable. … everyone has an input. It's more democratic. … we've great plans …"

Pat, Key Champion, 2013

Similarly, Eoin explains:

"well it's a kind of a collective effort sort of mentality really. Everyone is trying to improve things for people. …. Everyone has a say. That forms a community in itself. There's none of that nonsense of 'us' and 'them'. It's a community and people take care of it together. …*they* maintain the site … and because of that, they have a sense of ownership and responsibility to it. …[and] you're working together. It's nice to be part of that"

Eoin, Socio-Organic gardener. 2013

Whilst practitioners' investing in cooperative partnerships play an active role in the construction, development and management of sites, the absence of national policy and ad-hoc quality to UA has meant that the prerogative is retained by local authorities in terms of making provision, allocating resources and the levels of commitment they are willing to devote to UA. As a result, other local authorities across the city employ diverse approaches to meet the demand for UA.

5.3.1.2. Centralised Governance

In some regions of the city, local authorities have employed a centralised governance approach to facilitate the current demand for UA. Although they provide sites, erect perimeter fencing and provide a range of services and resources to facilitate practice on sites (Figs. 62a, b & c), the construction, development and management of sites is retained

by local authorities rather than by urban dwellers participating in or contributing to their construction which has had a profound impact on the quality of sites in these regions and practitioners experiences of UA. As a result, key features evidenced on sites employing a cooperative partnerships are omitted or in many cases, not even considered or integrated into site layouts or development plans, which has had a profound impact on their quality, management and use (Figs. 62a, b & c).

The most common forms of complaint have to do with inadequate facilities, poor management structures and the use and maintenance of sites. This has resulted in low occupancy rates, overgrown or abandoned plots, and tensions between practitioners and local authorities in terms of their response to meeting the demand for UA. A plot-holder on one site explains:

"Look at the state of some of those plots …the state of the site … the toilets for god's sake… There's no space like a communal area …. the grass has gone all that high, the machine came in and cleared them … and then they were just left like that and it's all grown up again. They [municipality] put in new fencing and then left it like that so what are they going to do now? Are they going to have to pull all that fencing back to get the machine in and clear it again? … It's such a waste of resources … There wasn't enough thought put into it and we certainly weren't consulted, that's the problem … It just doesn't make sense. I have fought for so long to get things done but it's still the same"
Stephen. Practical gardener. 2013

On another occasion, the following comments were noted by one plot-holder during participant observation, when a group of practitioners were discussing the governance, lack of maintenance and general development issues concerning their site:

"Since 2008 – 2011, I've been in touch with them [local authority]. Nothing's been done … and then I got in touch with x [local councillor] and I was promised that work would start soon… …but nothing….. so what did I do? I flooded every computer in the local authority with A4 pictures of every allotment that wasn't looked after…and *then* they came up here and were all, "oh that's terrible" as if they didn't know. I have fought for so long and it's *still* the same. There's so many people waiting for plots and you have sites lying here idle, poor toilets …. It's terrible … the place is being let go astray and there's people sitting looking out their windows waiting for these when they could be doing this … it's wrong, it's all wrong"
Stephen. Practical gardener. 2013

Similarly, at a public meeting held by one local authority in response to increased pressures by plot-holders to solve issues relating to the development and governance of

their site (and in an effort by the local authority to resolve particular issues raised by practitioners to improve the quality of their site, secure resources and investment and provide additional support), two practitioners' comments reflect the general consensus held by current plot-holders in areas employing a centralised governance approach:

"… it's like this, there's just not enough money being spent …. They [local authority] keep saying there's no money but what I'd like to know is where's our rent money going? Why aren't they putting that back into the site?… They just did the bare minimum when they set it up, ... There's inadequate facilities, no proper toilets, and they're miles away anyway …it's just not right. they're [local authority] talking about improving things, putting more into it, getting funding … sure they're saying they've all these plans to do this that and the other, but I've been hearing that for years, and nothing's changed. … sure look at some of the plots? They're a disgrace … and nobody is doing anything about them being left like that. People just don't bother anymore …they've given up fighting for it. …"   *Pat. Practical gardener. 2013*

Similarly, Michael's comments elucidate:

"we didn't get a say with the layout and you can see the result [smirks] … There's no social area either, there's nowhere to go even go to get out of the rain and we're so exposed there … You can't even have a shed on your plot cos it'll attract anti-social behaviour ...oh there's [storage] containers alright but sure you can't stand in there, they're full of stuff and they're away from you, … there *is* a little building there but that's always locked and anyway, we don't have a key. …They just didn't plan it right, it's not being done right, it's as simple as that"   *Michael. Socio-organic gardener, 2013*

Figure 62 (a,b,c).Storage and resources/services

Whilst efforts *are* being made to meet the phenomenal rise in demand for UA, and key features are being integrated to facilitate practices on site (biodiversity, water) (Figs. 63a & b) many sites lack basic services and resources needed to sustain sites, practice and interest in UA.

As a result, some sites exhibit high levels of abandonment, low occupancy levels, even though extending waiting lists remain. A local authority official explains:

"yes the waiting list is quite high   …there is a turnover in allotments alright … plots aren't being maintained and …a lot of people [plot-holders] … are complaining about abandonment of plots … there's really poor storage and no communal area, and poor toilet facilities too ….it *is* something we have to tackle …but there's little we can do about some of the plots because people have a lease on them for a year too"

Local authority official, 2013

Figure 63 (a, b). Integrating features to improve bio-diversity

Unlike cooperative-partnerships which encourage cooperative forms of activity and engender a sense of ownership and responsibility to place, this approach has meant that plot-holders rely on and expect local authorities to provide and develop services, secure funding, develop, maintain and improve sites, which by extension maintains a dependency on local authorities as the main care-takers of public space.

"In 2006 there might have been only 30-40 Council allotments and there was no great shakes to them … but the demand is *phenomenal* at the moment. … there wasn't really a plan … the allotments emerged purely *because* of demand and the council responded we [department] worked to get it into the development plan … but there isn't really committees [on sites]. We just presumed people were members of the allotment association….but we are making efforts to deal with the demand but as I say, it's phenomenal … But there's a mentality that the council will do it. *We've* built up this expectation in people that we, the council, will do everything …instead of building up a responsibility"

Local authority official, 2013

Although many sites display high levels of material investment, evidenced in their size, basic infrastructure and the services provided to meet practitioners' needs (storage, water supply, fencing and delineated plots), interdepartmental and structural deficiencies within and between local authorities have greatly impacted on the quality, development and management of allotments in these regions, and their future sustainability. This, in conjunction with the lack of municipal funding arising from Irelands recent economic

crisis (see chapter two) has had a profound impact on inter-personal relations between local authorities and urban dwellers (some of whom are on waiting lists) and practitioners experiences of UA. As one local authority official explicates:

"…there is a huge division, tell me about it, they're not interconnected. So what's happening is that every council operates slightly differently … Structures everywhere are different. And, there's an amalgamation of departments currently going on. …Our allotment sites were originally under development. Then there was a change. Everything is getting changed at the moment. … Now, the Development Department are supposed to promote economic growth and development … it's a 'land management agency' if you like. So the responsibility went to the Environmental Services Dept. …but now the Environmental Department are regarded as a section …which is aligned with the Community Department and under 'Environmental Services', so that's why we are working with them on the allotments. …but the money we get in doesn't cover the cost of maintenance …the waiting list is quite high, …and there is a turnover in allotments …A lot of people [plot-holders] … are complaining … It *is* something we have to tackle. We can do it, provided that there's money there to do it. We would get money from the council, but there is no money left, there's no resources for it so even if we wanted to supply them, they cost a lot to set up … That's the problem. The monies we get [rent] it gets caught up in the system and is spent across the area …and people are complaining, about the abandonment of plots …and poor services"

Local Authority Official. 2013

To combat the constraints generated by this centralised governance approach,(the lack of municipal funding, inter-departmental and structural deficiencies) which are greatly impacting on the quality and management of sites in these regions, local authorities are beginning to adopt cooperative strategies and are seeking the advice of civil society actors, liaising with key champions and conducting research to improve resources, services and facilities to reduce waiting lists, encourage a sense of civic responsibility and dismantle public perceptions and dependency on local authorities as the main caretakers of public space.

Key champions within local authorities are particularly cognizant of the potential dividends UA can generate. They see UA as a means of engendering a sense of civic responsibility and a sense of civility between diverse class groupings residing in these regions, and means of achieving sustainable development objectives outlined in the city's development plan, and are actively promoting cooperative strategies by encouraging

practitioners to apply for philanthropic funding and collective redevelop and extend sites.

However, the absence of policy directed at UA and the continuous focus on development (economic, residential and commercial) has meant local authorities are constrained from being able to facilitate development, and deal with current issues and constraints:

"nobody is downplaying the thing at all … but the problem is there's *no* resources … even though this is pittance compared to some of the stuff we do … there just isn't enough money to maintain them [sites] and we have a duty to provide social housing too … but I know they're [allotments] doing a lot of good. Allotments may be about food but I think they're mostly about bringing people together ….and I do think that they [plot-holders] get *great* incentive out of the allotments … but there's an expectation there that needs to change, that the council will do everything too ….People *need* facilities like this. Its facilities like this that bring communities closer together … perhaps they'll create more responsibility for their environment too … So we're trying to improve sites … so we're we're going to have a meeting with the x [advocacy group] and then have a meeting with all the allotment holders …. and try and get people who have skills (carpentry, building and electric skills etc.,) to come on board and help out … improve sites"

Local Authority Official. 2013

Later in the same interview, this official notes:

"I think that the only way is a bottom up approach with the support from the top down … if you are to change that mindset and create a sense of responsibility. We want to have a communal building with a little kitchen area and then they can use it for meetings, for demonstrations, displays. We can use it and bring school children up there and teach them … that's one of the things we should do which someone mentioned …. So we're going to apply for 'Leader funding' …. That's an EU program for rural areas … and we're just about rural … The leader Fund is a project which is designed to bring people together. I think it would be well worth it … if we could secure funding ….If you can get people involved, get them to share their skills, gather resources or research … then it works well. People feel a sense of ownership I believe if they are involved in it, rather than us just going out and doing it ..."

Local Authority Official. 2013

Whilst local authorities are cognizant of the potential social and civic dividends that extend from UA, they continue to retain the current model of governance and need to implement more cooperative forms of activity to deal with the adverse effects of their approach and current response to the demand for UA.

5.3.2. Private and philanthropic allotments

Private and philanthropic allotments are entrepreneurial in nature which impacts on their construction development, and practitioners' experiences of UA. Like Centralised Governance regimes, practitioners have little or no influence on site layouts, development and designs. Their construction and development is determined by proprietors' available resources, their knowledge, ideologies, experience, and motivations for investing in UA. The majority display high levels of material investment evidenced in the range of resources and faciliates provided on sites (Figs 64, 65 & 66) which are integrated to faciliate cultivation whilst additionally serving plot-holders social needs. All sites retain the architypal rectilinear ground pattern of allotments evidenced in the past, which are employed to make the best use of available space, ease access and generate a particular appeal (Fig. 52 a & b).

The majority boast an array of services and resources to facilitate practice and engender a sense of community, maintain interest and their appeal. For example, they provide communal areas, social spaces and provide technical instruction and horticultural advice and support, to facilitate practice, and in particular, to encourage active participation and ensure interest is maintained. However, the construction, development and governance of sites remains within the sole remit of proprietors who employ specific rules of practices to maintain interest, the aesthetic quality of sites and generate a particular appeal. Whilst pricing structures are normally higher and not always in direct relation to the facilities provided (see chapter one), the majority provide a wide range of resources which reflect annual payment/fees (Figs 64-69) (for pricing structures, see chapter 2). Some proprietors have no previous experience, knowledge or cultivation skills, however, the majority possess knowledge, an 'agrarian habitus', and execute particular strategies and promote specific (social) practices to achieve sustainable objectives on site.

"… I have a background in horticulture so I knew what was needed … we did it all ourselves and used local guys to help out with the fences and things like that … We provide a range

of services and supplies … we have wheelbarrows there and anyone can use them, you just have to make sure they're put back there, …. We put in the shop there and supply seeds, netting, organic feeds and other supplies, and of course, a friendly smile and advice, and you can have a cup of tea and a chat. …"   *Derek. Provider, 2013*

Raymond, a provider in the hinterlands also explains:

 "Well, we're a charity and the whole idea is to provide respite, education, and facilities to people with disorders [disabilities] – raising funding. We provide plots for people with disabilities free …and others pay… We provide a range of training as well … It gives people something to do- retirement, people living in apartments with no gardens and families is the key thing …"   *Raymond, Provider. 2012*

Figure 64.Wheelbarrows and supplies

Figure 65.Cultivation Supplies

Figure 66.Cultivation supplies & advice.

Figure 67.Communal Spaces

Figure 68.Cultivation supplies

Figure 69.Canteen services

Whilst their construction, development and governance remains with providers, in the majority of cases, providers are keen to use local resources, knowledge and skills. However, the construction, development and governance of these sites influences their development potential, the sustainability of sites and practitioners' experiences of UA.

In the majority of cases, specific rules are implemented to maintain interest, the aesthetic quality of sites and to encourage active participation, yet providers are nevertheless keen to construct a shared-in-common landscape from which ancillary social benefits can emanate. They integrate communal areas and a range of services and provide advice, knowledge and technical instruction particularly to faciliate those new to UA. Moreover, the majority arrange social and pedagogic events to facilate practice and construct a strong sense of community on site. However, in some cases, providers are keen to maintain a particular aesthetic which impinges on plot-holders ability to freely express and display what the plots mean to them, and facilitate their motivations for investing in UA. As Derek and Raymond's comments illustrate:

"Plots are back to back, that's the way allotments have always been and people can drive their cars right up to their plots so they don't have to be lugging tools and things across the site. We also put in a training plot there, and provide training for people to teach them the basics … We rotavate plots for people if they want … and we have a chap who will make the raised beds … we sell plants … provide classes … organise events and that throughout the year, … and plenty of advice is always on hand… we provide plot-holders with a licence, not a lease, but a licence to grow … Anyone can come and rent a plot here … we've all types of people renting plots here. ….it doesn't matter who you are or what you do for a living"
Derek. Provider, 2013

Similarly, Raymond's comments explicate:

"We have rules, a set rules. Everybody signs a lease for the year, called an 'Agri-Con lease' and it's 11 months, but they've got plants growing so we don't say close it for a month or anything like that. … The lease contains quite a few rules, there are clauses in it. … all the sheds have to be the same colour … they have a choice of three shades of brown they can use … You must keep it a timber colour … we don't let them paint them other colours because we don't want it looking like a shanty town …… We've a range of supplies, we grow plants and that, people buy them… We've a canteen … and there's an honesty box there where people pay for their coffee or anything else from the shop … we don't man it … it's a community here … People are not allowed barbeque on their plots….we have barbeques for everyone and harvest events … We arrange them … they're very successful … we've people from all walks of life here "
Raymond, Provider. 2012

5.4. **Conclusion:**

This chapter explicates *how* urban dwellers are (re)conceptualising and (re)constructing a 'new' form of urban space, to generate *re-embedding social processes* to (re)connect with the land, nature, knowledge and practice and particularly, to others in their locales. The chapter provides a textured analysis and visual representation of *how* urban dwellers are appropriating, designing, constructing and governing a 'new' form of public space, which provide a platform for the dissemination of knowledge, a means to (re)connect with others and foment and restore a sense of belonging to place. The chapter examined the various factors and conventions underpinning allotment construction, governance and design, which I argue, greatly impact on the quality of allotments in the city and by extension, the experiences UA generates.

As demonstrated, UA facilitated and supported by local authorities provide the essential building blocks for reinvigorating the public and parochial realms, and promote a sense of civic responsibility and a sense of ownership of place, albeit in the public realm. They allow urban dwellers to join in concert, give shape to their immediate environs and construct a 'shared-in-common' ground, which affords an opportunity to improve the quality of the urban and the quality of urban life. By engaging in specific practices and constructing a 'new' form of urban space, urban dwellers I argue, are constructing *inclusive, democratic, productive, multi-functional people'd spaces* in which all practitioners' have an equal stake.

Whilst some conventions (centralised governance, private/philanthropic) prevent urban dwellers from contributing to the design, construction and governance of sites, plot-holders nevertheless contribute to the material and social fabric of the landscape by creatively designing and constructing their plots. The following chapter extends my analysis and examines *how* urban dwellers contribute to the construction of this new form

of urban space to explicate *how* they make knowledge of, and sense of the world around amidst immense economic, cultural and social change. Collectively and individually, their practices I argue, are invaluable in terms of provoking the vivacity in urban 'public' space (Sennett, 2011:395), and for improving the well-being and liveability of the city and the quality of urban life.

6.
CONSTRUCTING A SENSE OF PLACE

Figure 70. The ' Productive' Landscape

"...You have to have structure. .... if you use the raised beds system and proper pathways, that makes the work easier ... You enjoy it more, it's easier to manage ... we would encourage that"

Bernard: Socio-Organic Gardener: 2012

6.1. **Introduction**

Once sites are designed, layouts complete and access to plots has been gained, practitioners are free contribute to the landscape, indulge their individual idiosyncrasies and construct their plots in creative and innovative ways. Whilst plots display similarities in that practitioners are cultivating the land, plot-holders tend to prioritize particular aspects and implicitly reveal their motivations for investing in UA. That is, they plan, design and construct their plots with creative and holistic ideas in mind, but their approach to construction reveals that their designs and layouts are underpinned by diverse knowledge systems and motivations for investing in UA. Through the creativity associated with designing, constructing and managing one's plot, and engaging in specific practices on site, this chapter argues that urban dwellers are producing *inclusive, vibrant, productive, multi-functional, 'people'd landscapes'* (Viljoen et al, 2012), to improve the quality of the urban, well-being and liveability of the city, and the quality of urban life. The chapter provides a textured analysis and visual representation of *how* urban dwellers design, construct and contribute to this new form of urban public space which will enrich our understanding of

how urban dwellers make knowledge of, and sense of the world around them amidst immense economic, cultural and social change. Crucially, it illuminates the importance of space, place and place-based practices for improving the well-being and liveability of the city and provoking the 'vivacity of urban public space' (Sennett, 2011:395), and the important contribution urban dwellers proffer in the construction of urban public space.

6.2. Constructing the 'metabolically sound' landscape

"... the soil, preserving it is crucial….. it's imperative that you improve the soil .... "

Edward: Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2013

Practical gardeners and Idealists share similarities in terms of the value they place on the land. Their approach to construction and practice is underpinned by particular knowledge systems that focus on preparing, replenishing and improving the quality of the soil. Their approaches to construction are mediated through different knowledge systems which impacts on their methods, plot aesthetics and designs.

For Practical gardeners, intergenerational connections to the land and the desire to reinvigorate 'traditional methods' of cultivation guide their approach to plot construction, development and design (See chapter 5 for a detailed analysis of cultivation practices). A considerable amount of time is spent preparing and planning the plot to facilitate, enhance and maximise cultivation and they take into account the resources required, and pre-empt future cultivation. Construction begins by vigorously digging, aerating and preparing the soil using a range of age-old cultivation techniques (Figs. 71 a,b,c,72), by adding a range of farmyard and green manures and nitrogen fixing plants which they often procure in advance. Their plots are designed to maximise cultivation using lazy-beds and drills, and they add purpose built compost bins, water harvesting systems, sheds and poly-tunnels but which are integrated purely for their functional use (Figs. 71-74). They see the allotment as functional for the purpose of growing food and self-provision, and they

maintain the 'traditional' allotment aesthetic by omitting the inclusion of a social space

(Figs. 71-72). Bill, a Practical gardener explicates:

" ... the very first thing you have to do is prepare the soil, that's the most important thing. If you don't' get that right, you won't be successful, nothing will grow properly. You'll have forked carrots and all sorts of problems. You need to dig it and remove the stones ... The soil has to be rich ... so you have to prepare it before you do anything ... I dug it all up, the entire plot. I got rid of every single weed, every stone I came across, I took it out...and I dug in a tonne of manure to get it ready to sow. That was the first thing...then you have to leave it for a while ...then I dug it again, then I put in a grass path there at the edge … then I planted all the veg .... . But you *need* to know what you're doing too because you *have to* rotate the veg next year. You can't grow the same thing in the same place twice ... I put that compost bin in there too ... but the first thing I did was prepare the ground. You *have to* do that, otherwise it's a waste of time. I do have my little plastic chair there [at the fence], ... I put that table there attached to the fence ... it folds down against the fence so it's not in the way. .. the whole plot is for growing veg "

Bill, Practical Gardener: 2013

Figure 71 (a,b,c). Constructing functional and productive spaces

Figure 72. Lazy Beds and Drills and Traditional cultivation techniques

Figure 73.Functional Space   *Figure 74 (a & b). Water harvesting systems*

Whilst the majority of Practical gardeners employ 'traditional' methods and cultivation techniques some Practical gardeners attempt to integrate 'contemporary' methods others employ and advocate (see chapter 7). However, their 'agrarian habitus' influences their approach to construction and as a result, they tend to revert back to 'traditional' methods to (re)construct a sense of belonging and a sense of attachment to the place. Margaret a Practical gardener explicates:

" Well I decided to use the methods my parents used, so I made up a lazy bed there and started with that, and I made up a compost bin and I got going and sowed my seeds … but I did *try* the raised beds that everyone is using but I just couldn't do it. I prefer the drills, the old ways are best, so I got rid of it and just used the old ways. They work best for me. There's more room to grow instead of putting in loads of paths and that. That's what you end up with, with those boxes. But doing it the way my parents did was just something natural. I couldn't do it any other way. That's what came naturally to me"

Margaret. Practical Gardener, 2012

Whilst Idealists share similarities with Practical Gardeners, their approach to construction is underpinned by wider ecological and environmental concerns which influences their approach to construction, aesthetics and layouts and reflects their knowledge, ideologies and worldviews. Their focus is on conserving and restoring the soils' micro-eco-system, and 'closing the nutrient cycle' (McClintock, 2010), which they achieve through soil preservation and restoration. However, their principles of practices means that they differ from Practical gardeners' because they employ low levels of soil intervention. Rather, they take a random, unstructured and naturalistic approach to their plot which generally evolves over time, which creates a particular aesthetic that challenges the 'traditional'

allotment aesthetic and 'contemporary' allotment design (Fig, 75 c & d). As Eugene

comments explain:

"... the soil ... preserving it is crucial. There's a natural membrane under the soil which you have to protect. That contains all the natural bacteria plants need. You don't want to disturb that. If you break that, the root systems can't get the nutrients they need. .... you have to be careful and know what you're doing. You see a lot of people digging the hell out of the earth ... whereas there's really no need ....If you do dig like that you're destroying the whole molecular structure of the soil. It's important to maintain that.... [I] didn't really dig it like others here... [I] just turned the surface lightly where I needed to, and added in manure to feed it"
Eugene. Idealist. 2013

Seamus, a Practical Gardener, explains the differences taken by his fellow plot-holder (an

Idealist) when he constructed his plot:

"When I got my plot it was up to my waist in weeds and I spent absolutely ages with my scythe clearing it, digging it and getting it ready, digging in manure, and putting in 7:6:17. It's a fertiliser we would've used at home. Basically its nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. It's what you need for leafy growth and cell formation. I'm from a farming background and that's what we'd do. But he [Idealist] *didn't* dig like me ... Did you see what he's done? ... he has a *no dig* policy. He didn't dig. He grew his potatoes on straw [laughs]. The entire plot was covered in straw. He just got a load of … mushroom compost, … and covered the entire plot with it, … and he literally fired the potatoes in all over the place. Then he covered it with the compost again and then covered the entire thing with straw. You can see the wheat coming up there in-between, .. It's not the normal thing you'd expect ... it's not like the other plots here... It looks a bit wild, but it works. It's just as productive as mine"
Seamus. Practical Gardener, 2013

Like all gardeners, Idealists integrate sheds, compost bins and water harvesting systems

to facilitate and enhance cultivation. Their principles of practice become infused in the

landscape, evidenced in the way they construct their sheds entirely from re-used urban

waste (Figs. 75). Like Practical gardeners, Idealists construct their plots to maximise

cultivation and display their knowledge and organic identities (For a detailed analysis on

identity construction see chapter 8) but differ in that they integrate habitats for wildlife,

and take into account specific plant species to generate a higher biodiversity metric (Figs.

75 b & c).Their desire to grow nutritious, chemical free foods and educate others about

environmental, ecological and sustainable development objectives means that like

Practical gardeners, they too see the landscape as functional and omit the inclusion of a

social space.

Both sets of gardeners' motivations are underpinned by a desire to disseminate "lay knowledge's of, and connections to nature" (Bhatti & Church, 2001:366), practice and the land, which fulfils their principles and motivations for investing in UA.

"That's why the organic guys do it because they have the knowledge and are interested in using techniques that complement the soil, … that benefit the food grown and the soil. This is why some of the plots appear hap-hazard or wild looking when in fact, they're planted in such a way as to maximise growth and to allow nature do what it does best *without* interfering ... All you need is the know-how, and this is why allotments are important because they allow that. I can share my knowledge with others too"

Mick. Idealist, 2012

Similarly, William, a practical gardener explains:

 "I get a lot of people coming to me. The chap that got that plot there, when he got it he told me they knew nothing ... and he came into me and said, '*I want you to come in and look at this'*. So I said '*ok, I'll take a look and help you start off and give you a few plants to get you going*'. … Then he came in one day and said, " *x there [plot-holder] gave me cabbage plants but they seem to be growing too tall*". And I said I'd go and take a look. So I went over and I said "*yes, that's because they're Brussels sprouts*" [laughs]. So for fella's like me, you get a lot of people coming along and asking you for advice which I don't mind giving them... I was lucky, because I learnt it since I was that height. . ... but that's the one thing about the allotments, you can teach people...., spread the knowledge, and teach them how to grow food".   *William. Practical Gardener: 2013*

Despite their varying approaches to construction, their aesthetics, plot layouts and designs, both sets of gardeners are keen to restore specific values and principles which they believe both material culture and technological developments in agriculture have replaced. The allotment provides an invaluable opportunity to construct a landscape where they can employ 'organic' and 'traditional' principles and techniques, and they both see the allotment as an important resource in the city where particular principles and values can be (re)generated and restored. However, their approach to construction and the future development and design of their plots like others, represents an explicit attempt to (re)generate a sense of community and belonging and a sense of ownership and attachment to the place (Figs. 75). Margaret, an elderly Practical gardener explains:

"I made that [poly-tunnel] myself ... the entire thing basically. The only thing I didn't do was drive the posts into the ground. I did the rest, the whole lot myself. Everything is recycled out of skips . ….the poles are old Ariel poles and the wood is recycled ....it's all out of skips. Years ago we knew where everything came from. We were resourceful. I suppose we grew up in a time where things weren't like today, things weren't plentiful

and you were conscious of what you did with things. You didn't waste things and I suppose that stays with you…..People waste *too* much today. I am conscious of that, ... I like to know really where things come from. ... I really enjoyed doing it because it was done on the cheap... If a woman my age can do it, it might make people more conscious and more resourceful"   *Margaret, Practical Gardener, 2012*

Figure 75 (a,b,c,d). Re-using urban waste

Figure 76 (a,b,c,d).Biodiversity, displaying identity, values and ideologies

6.3.   **The *lure* of the aesthetic.**

"I planned it all out. I put in the poly-tunnel instead of a shed. I've all my bits n bobs in it. It's my living room [laughs]. It feels really snug. I put a lot of thought and careful planning into it [plot]. I decided to have a structure, it's the architect in me, measurements and all that.... I decided to put the flags up there, I thought they'd be very decorative... I just thought it would improve the aesthetic"   *Georgina. Gucci Gardener: 2013*

For Socio-Organic, Gucci, and Non-Gardening Gardeners other factors are given priority. Their approach to the plot is very strategic and largely guided by shared motivations, principles and needs. The majority of these practitioners construct their plots with creative, innovative and holistic ideas in mind, and they share similarities in terms of their motivations for investing in UA. However, their approaches to construction are determind by varying degrees of knowledge, diverse principles, practices and ideologies which fulfill their individual motivations and needs, which by extension, impact on their experiences of UA.

For Socio-Organic gardeners, the desire to (re)connect with others, forge friendships, networks and (re)generate a sense of belonging to community *and* produce organically grown food underpins plot layout, construction evidenced in the way they take into account specific practices (promoted by others), that centre on employing specific (organic) cultivation techniques (for a detailed examination of organic cultivation practices, see chapter 7). A considerable amount of time is spent on planning the layout, aesthetic and overall plot design, but whilst they aim to cultivate their plots 'organically' paradoxically, *all* elements of the plot layout are considered and configured *before* construction even begins. The majority of these practitioners' prefigure a three-dimensional effect to create a particular appeal, but their lack of experience and knowledge of organic cultivation and principles of practice means the majority tend to draw on others knowledge and the landscape to obtain ideas which they are keen to/tend to integrate.

They take into account the dimensions of the plot and consider how the plot will be used, and pay considerable attention to social areas, sheds, cultivation areas and resources required to achieve the desired effect (Figs. 70, .77a, b, c, 79, 90, 81). In many cases, the location of sheds and social areas are often the first aspect considered in design, the majority of which are strategically placed to provide the best vantage point from which to interact with neighbouring plot-holders, and those even passing by (Figs. 77-78). In fact, a tendency to locate sheds in close proximity to pathways is a characteristic shared by almost all (Fig. 78) and whilst they comprise a range of sizes, styles and designs, the majority are painted brightly and adorned with cultural artefacts, symbols and eclectic signs to aestheticize the plot to lure others to stop, consume the landscape and interact for a while (Figs. 77 a,b,c). Their gates tend to be creatively and ornately constructed and decorated using colour and innovative designs, giving plots a somewhat feminized and/or 'private' feel (Figs. 79 a,b,c). Like others investing in UA, their plots reflect their individual identities, principles and motivations for investing in UA:

"I would be a very spiritual person, a very sociable person and would do a lot of arts and crafts ... and just thought the sheds'd be better there beside the gate …[and] we put in a little patio as well. They were the first things we did. ...and we painted them with old paint we had left over at home .... That one even has a ceramic floor in it, from tiles we had left over... and we turned it into a little tearoom.. see the sign there '*D'Caf*' ? I put little gingham curtains up just to add a little touch. It's like a little house ... As women we put all the finishing touches to our plot. We added the signs and things like that to make it a bit of fun you know?..... People have great curiousness though ... This lovely lady came and she was saying "when I pass here I always stop and read your signs" so I said "come on in and have a look", so she went and had a little wonder around … we also have a visitor's book which everyone visiting signs after having a cup of tea ...."
Grainne. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

Many gardeners possess knowledge and intergenerational connections to the land, but the majority rely on others knowledge, experience, and on the landscape itself to obtain and develop ideas which they integrate to fulfil their motivations, interests and needs (Fig.80 & 81). Sharing knowledge is viewed by all as central to construction, practice and design, and the absence of walls facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and the

(re)construction of a landscape that is produced as well as exchanged (for a detailed

analysis, see chapter 8). Fred, a Socio-Organic gardener explicates:

"I knew nothing about gardening ... I didn't rotavate or anything like that. I didn't have a
clue, so I walked around and got ideas from everybody else and I just put it all together
myself like that. It's a very structured look alright ..."
Fred. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

Similarly, Alex, explains:

"... I knew nothing before I rented my plot ...so I'd go for a walk around ... getting ideas,
trying to pick up ideas and that you know? I'd talk to them [plot-holders] and I'd say, 'Oh
that's a brilliant idea', and he'd say 'I got that in such and such a place' or 'this is a better
way" and that kind of thing you know?', and then I'd ask them how they made things and
that, like the raised boxes, and then I'd come back and do exactly the same thing myself"
Alex. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

Many gardeners new to allotment gardening rely on others knowledge to facilitate

construction and plot design. They tend to integrate specific methods designed by

advocacy groups which aim to promote particular principles of practice and transform

urban dwellers practices, actions and worldviews, which are explicitly designed to

promote organic principles and ease maintenance for those constrained by time (see

chapter 7). They integrate raised beds and construct their plots symmetrically to enhance

the aesthetic, which give a sense of uniformity, homogeneity and a somewhat

domesticated effect. Moreover, this approach to construction facilitates gardeners'

motivations for investing in UA by transforming the work on the plot to leisure which

frees up time to interact (Figs 80 & 81) As Eithne explains:

"Well the ideas of boxes, raised beds that idea was to save time. You don't have to do
everything. You can just do it bit by bit. My X [husband] wanted drills for the potatoes,
he's from a farming background but then x [organic gardener] … said "*I wouldn't be
bothered with all that. Just do the raised beds and boxes, put in raised beds so you can
work on one bed at a time*". So that's how that idea came about. You don't have to be
doing everything. ...It's neat and easier to maintain ... You're not coming up and looking
at a pile of weeds and saying to yourself,' *Oh God look at all the work I've to do'* ... the
raised beds give you more time ... some days I'd come up here and do a bit and I'd spend
half the day chatting"   *Eithne. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2012*

Figure 77 (a,b,c). Innovative and creatively designed sheds

Figure 78. Sheds in close proximity to pathways to facilitate interaction

Figure 79 (a,b,c). Ornate/creatively designed gates

The majority of gardeners see 'organic' practices as integral to practice and plot design, but their lack of knowledge means they rely on the landscape *and* on interactions with others to (re)construct and perform an 'organic identity' and learn the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1977). Like the majority of gardeners investing in UA today, they use a range of recycled materials and old items found at home, which enables them to (re)construct,

manage, (re)negotiate and perform their new 'organic' identity, which becomes infused

in the landscape through their plot aesthetics and layouts (Figs, 81,a,b & c).

"Well it's what I call 'upcycling' really. It encourages you to think of that, especially if you're focused on being organic ... which is about protecting the environment and using things to make other things.... upcycling, that's what I call it, .. I encourage people to use old things you know, bits and bobs they might have at home for example. That's the beauty of the allotment … . you can do it cheaply, recycle things, and that's good for the environment. You can see everyone does that. People use all sorts of stuff on their plots, they find a different use for them. Like that counter in my shed was a piece of a kitchen counter-top I had at home".   *Fred. Socio-organic gardener. 2013*

Similarly, David, a provider demonstrates during a walk around his allotment site:

"See those wavin pipes there? … He's re-using them for growing carrots because they're high enough off the ground so the carrot-fly can't get them.… then you have others like Jim … [he] uses those old posters [local candidate election posters] as windbreakers to protect his veg. There's lots of things like that, … another person might come up with another innovative idea and people get ideas from others that way … it's an organic way of doing things. … you just have to look across the plots and you can see all the things people are doing. It's a great way for people to learn about all those things, the environment, protecting and preserving [it] … taking care of it, growing organically. Things like that you know? … if they don't know, they'll learn from others. Everyone gives tips and shares what they know"   *David: Provider. 2013*

Despite their varying levels of knowledge and in many cases, lack of experience and/or

skills, the majority of practitioners' perceive their practices as a means to restore particular

values and principles they believe, material culture has replaced. Margo and Dan, two

Socio-Organic gardeners explain:

"… money has destroyed old values that's what I think. Over the past twenty-odd years or more, … when people got money, they … got caught up with their own little worlds … Money has destroyed people. They were more interested in material things … portraying a particular lifestyle. Some haven't let that go … Those who come in with that mind-set soon learn it's not that way in there … but a lot of the people here are beginning to recycle more now. They see others here doing it. I am very focused on that side. It's an organic way of doing things, you're conscious of the environment and doing things a particular way. You recycle things and re-use things on the plot. Some people spend an absolute fortune on their plots, but that's not the done thing here, … . Some are beginning to recycle too which is great. … I suppose it makes people more conscious, more aware of that, and they think of that when they're doing their plots"
                                                                    Margo. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

"we decided to use the wine bottles to edge the patio area. It's an environmentally friendly way of doing it I suppose. I got the idea at Bloom [garden show] ... That inspired me really to do this organically, and become more recycling and organically minded....This

area here is organic and that's what a lot of others do too, so I thought it was important to consider that element … besides, it looks good too"

Dan. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

Figure 80 (a,b,c). Contemporary principles and designs
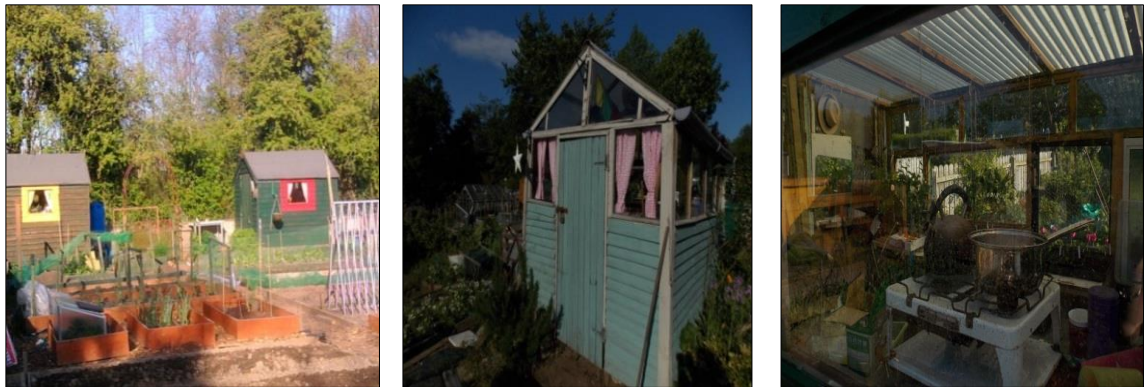
Figure 81 (a,b,c). Feminizing the plot and creating a sense of home

Figure 82 (a,b). Sense of Home   *Figure 83. Making bread in the shed*

These methods provide a degree of flexibility which many practitioners new to UA embrace, and many are keen to reconstruct and alter their plots aesthetic to reflect their new 'organic identity' which recycling and low levels of material investment facilitates. Although the majority of Socio-Organic gardeners visualize, explore, and construct alternative styles, layouts and designs, and are keen to employ a structured approach to

the plot (Figs. 80 a, b & c), cultivation and cultural artefacts are considered *integral* to achieve the desired effect. Vast awnings of foliage, clouds of colour, structural supports and imagined displays of horticultural stock are considered, envisioned and integrated through formal plans, layouts and designs, which has transformed the 'traditional' allotment aesthetic and generated a 'contemporary' allotment design (Figs. 94).

"I'd these little barrotti-beans or something like that I bought before we even started. They were a white bean with all red speckles on them. They looked absolutely fantastic on the packet and I wasn't sure if they'd grow ... They were very colourful, very striking, so we decided to put the beans in there and the climbing frame for them to climb up, and it looked great, and I decided that strawberries and roses would look lovely there at the gate too... they looked beautiful when they grew"

Eithne. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

"I decided that I'd put sunflowers there [at the gate]. The hope is that when people walk in they just see these amazing sun flowers ... sort of hanging sunflowers for people to walk under as they walk into the plots ... I put them there before we even had a vegetable in the ground"

Karen. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

They are keen to construct a convivial landscape and personalise their plots by adding a range of memorabilia and integrating symbols and signs (Figs. 90-93). That is, they tend to display what the plot means to them by using items which give meanings to their lives, and are keen to display their (new) organic identities, their knowledge and the skills they have acquired (to both practitioners and non-practitioners passing by). They integrate specific artefacts and place names which act as significant markers of place attachment, identity and in some cases their inter-generational connections to the land, which transforms the landscape into something that is socially experienced (Duffy, 2007) and helps bridge the rural-urban divide (Fig. 93a). For some practitioners, these practices engender a sense of belonging and help generate a sense of place and 'home-from-home' (Figs 85, 86, 90-92). Grainne explains:

"All the signs and all that have meanings, and the other stuff, the veggie signs and funny bits n bobs really make it I think, and the shoes, there's a story behind them ... I'll never be let forget the shoes. ... it just tells the story of a part of our lives at home. I love it here though. ...this *is* like home to me, in some ways I suppose it *is* home, even though my house, my home is in [locality], this really makes me feel good. I just feel really happy here"

Grainne. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2012

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"I put that turf in there as a border around the beds because it reminds me of home. It's a piece of home right here with me in Dublin. The whole thing is bordered in turf ... it's suppose to be aesthetic. I'm originally from the country and when I look at that it brings me back home ... so that's why I put it there"

Catherine. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2012

Alexy explains how he constructs a sense of belonging to place:

"I put that 'kuchenka' [cooker] in here because in this is what we have on 'Dzialka' [allotments] in Poland. .....It's what you call ''powolne kuchenka', it is slowly cooking. It's part of Poland on here.... This is what we do at home"

Alexy. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

Figure 84 (a & b). Aestheticization & The lure.

Figure 85. Displaying knowledge

Figure 86 (a & b). Constructing Cooking (Kuchenka') and Social Spaces

Figure 87. Re-using urban waste

Figure 88 (a,b,c).Re-using items found at home/urban waste

Figure 89 (a,b,c).Transforming the 'Traditional' Allotment Aesthetic

Figure 90 (a & b). The Pedagogic spaces

Figure 91.Place-naming

Figure 92 (a,b,c). Naming place - (re)constructing a sense of place

Figure 93 (a,b,c).Displaying and attributing meaning and creating convivial spaces

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Figure 94 (a,b,c). Integrating cultural artefacts - creating a sense of home from home

Like Socio-Organic gardeners, Gucci Gardeners' and Non-Gardening Gardeners' desire to reconnect with others and generate a sense of belonging to community underpins their approach to plot construction, layout and design. However, both sets of gardeners design and construct their plots with diverse principles and ideologies in mind. However, there is an inherent contradiction between Gucci Gardeners practices and their motivations for investing in UA, since their designs are clearly influenced by contemporary design principles and ideologies generated by the financialisation of everyday life. In fact, their social class, status and conspicuous consumption patterns (Veblen, 1899; Bagwell & Bernstein, 1996) are largely displayed and embedded in the landscape, evidenced in the materials they use integrate and use (Figs. 80, a, b & c.) As Bernard, an allotment provider explicates:

"...The vast majority of them [Gucci Gardeners] would be apartment owners, yeah. They'd be in their 30s, professional young people I suppose … . It's a class kind of thing ...you can see the way their plots are designed ... very retro, very defined … a lot of money has been poured into them"   *Bernard. Allotment Provider. 2012*

However, like Socio-Organic Gardeners, their focus is on the aesthetic and the social dimensions of the plot, but they tend to create 'gardens' rather than allotments (Figs 95 & 96) which reflects their desire to access a 'private' 'green' space. Like Socio-Organic gardeners, they consider social areas, sheds and specific resources integral to plot construction and design, and take into account the dimensions of the plot, its structure, and future use. However, unlike others, the 'idealised lawn aesthetic' (Byrne, 2005), asymmetry and uniformity are deployed to generate a particular effect. They display

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similarities with others in terms of their desire to create a particular aesthetic which they and others can consume, and their designs reflect the restrictions they experience from the growing monopolisation and privatization of urban space. As Kate, a young professional woman residing in a nearby apartment comments illustrate:

"Well I don't have a garden. I live in an apartment so for me, this was about making a little place that I can use, that I can enjoy ... I wanted a little lawn, so I put a little lawn in, and I thought the stones and slabs would be nice. It's neat and easy to maintain ... . [I] put in the shed there ... I spent a lot of money on but it [plot] but it was worth every penny. I decided on this layout because I like clean lines, structure, no clutter ... and I can come down cut my little patch of grass, potter around and enjoy it, chat to people and that ... it is like a little garden … it's *my* little garden"

Kate. Gucci Gardener. 2013

Similarly, Sarah reiterates:

"... you see some of them here like my neighbour here, literally making gardens because they've no gardens, some of them only have a balcony. There's only a couple of that type of plot but it's obvious by the way their plots are designed that you know where they live"

Sarah: Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

They also spend a considerable amount of time on planning, construction and design and display high levels of material investment which for many others, demonstrates that the hegemony of consumer culture prevails (Figs. 95 & 97). Whilst many plot-holders admire their plots for their innovative and creative designs, there is a certain tension inherent in their approach to their plots evidenced in the way construct 'gardens' rather than a 'productive' space. In fact, Practical gardeners' explicitly express their aversion toward their plot layouts, aesthetics and use which display the inherent tensions in allotments, even though they are not overtly expressed on site. As Margaret explains:

"Well we've a culture of well, everything has to be manicured. You see it in some of them [plots]. You'd see the show houses and landscaped gardens, everything is pristine and landscaped, manicured ... and I think some people still think that way ... you can see it where they've these perfect looking plots, measured out precisely. They're very manicured and they've spent a fortune, an absolute fortune on them. So there's still some evidence of display, but they soon learn that, that's not the norm here"

Margaret. Practical Gardener, 2013

Nevertheless, Gucci gardeners see social areas as *integral* to their designs, but tend to draw on consumer culture to develop ideas and achieve the desired effect. Whilst the majority display high levels of material investment to reflect contemporary principles of

design, their class, lifestyles and tastes, the majority display little, if any cultivation space.

As Kate notes:

" ... I know nothing about gardening and I did put in a box there … . I got the idea from just looking at what others' were doing. I thought I might be able to grow a few herbs to start off because they'd be easy to grow ... Others here give you tips though which is great so I'm going to start, well try and grow a few onions and things in it this year... I suppose it's not really geared to growing"   *Kate. Gucci Gardener. 2013*

However, as knowledge is disseminated and experiences are exchanged, Gucci gardeners are undergoing a transition. New ideas and practice are disseminated through interactions with others on site (see chapter 8). They see the construction and maintenance of their plots as an opportunity to (re)connect with nature, knowledge and the land, and many are beginning to employ particular principles of practice advocated by others on site.

Figure 95.Contemporary Designs   *Figure 96."The Garden"*

Figure 97 (a & b). High levels of material investment

However, in the majority of cases, these principles of practice are employed to enhance the aesthetic of their plots, (re)construct a sense of ownership and belonging to a particular community and place (Figs. 97a & b).

"Well I decided that I'd try and recycle more …. I used that old barbeque there and put flowers in it. It looks really nice, and plus, I'm recycling, which is good. I'm going to try do that a bit more. I've put in a few raised beds this years too and …..when I'm out

shopping I'll pick up odd bits and bobs for my plot that might be damaged like pots, or things at home that I wouldn't need and I'd find a use for them here. So that's good. Everyone here is keen to do that"   *Georgina. Gucci Gardener. 2013*

6.4. **The Pedagogic Landscape**

Whilst Non-Gardening gardeners approach their plots with similar motivations and needs, they see the landscape as an opportunity to construct a pedagogic space through which alternative lifestyles can be (re)generated and sustained. They display similarities with Idealists in terms of their approach, their aesthetics and designs because their random, naturalist approach also challenges the 'traditional' allotment aesthetic *and* 'the contemporary' allotment design (Fig. 98). In many ways they display similarities with Socio-Organic and Gucci gardeners since their focus is on the social dimensions of the plot and how the plot will be used. However, their focus is on (re)connecting with nature, knowledge systems and having access to an open and accesible 'green' space. Some display high levels of material investment (polytunels) to achieve the desired effect (Fig.99a) but in the majority of cases social areas, sheds and poly-tunnels are the *only* aspect considered to achieve the desired effect (Figs 98-99). Their approach to their plots is underpinned by a desire to (re)invigorate particular principles, values and ideologies and (re)construct a space through which alternative ways of relating to others, nature and the natural environment can be (re)generated and maintained (particularly those with children).

They share with Idealists (particularly those with a political-organic habitus- see chapter 5) a desire to achieve the idyll and view their approach as representing a 'radical gesture of reconciliation with nature" (Vos, 2000:146) a means to (re)connect with the land and bridge the rural-urban divide. In that sense , like Practical they view the landscape as a space that represents everthing the city is not.

Figure 98. The Social Space　　　　*Figure 99 (a & b). Pedagogic Space - challenging the aesthetic*

6.5. **Conclusion:**

Allotment landscapes are visually, geographically, and socially distinct. Though situated in the urban, they stand in stark contrast to the prevailing landscape that surrounds them. Urban landscapes conjure up images that constitute the built environment; with unique skylines, landmark buildings, streets and neighbourhoods and the social relations that make those places significant (MacLaren, 2003:1-2). By contrast, prevailing images of allotments tend to evoke scenes of solitude, poverty and struggle; a landscape on the margins, home-made by cloth-capped elderly men. Today however, allotment landscapes defy conventional connotations. They are arenas for socialising and sociality, for the individual and collective cultivation, exchange and the dissemination of knowledge and skills. They are vibrant, animated and profoundly personified and creatively designed and constructed to facilitate individual and collective motivations, interests and needs. They display an aesthetic exuberance evidenced in their colourful displays of ornamentation, aestheticization and cultivation, and have distinctively social feel.

Characterised by their special land requirements, the panoptic is open and flat. Rows of plots lie side-by-side and back-to-back, separated by walk-ways that provide an intricate almost repetitive rectilinear archetypal ground pattern. Clothed in low picket fencing, poly-tunnels, wooden, steel and off-the-peg sheds, they take on a vernacular appearance that epitomises the urban back garden tradition. They are landscapes that are imbued with

meaning which gives *new* meaning to plot-holders socio-spatial worlds, and facilitate the (re)construction of a sense of personal identification with and belonging to community and place.

Plots provide the main fabric of the landscape and their arrangements offer a panoramic that can't be simply grasped in one view, yet tease the flâneur[14] into feel, grasp and consume them. They comprise a range of creative, innovative and eclectic styles and designs and big ideas which practitioners refine to scale. Some are dominated by unregimented, wild, naturalistic, random planting styles and designs but the majority display ambitious, whimsical and abstract ideas, diverse structures and planting regimes that comprise a range of age-old practices mixed with contemporary principles and designs. Indeed, many display a sense of playfulness and adventure and have a somewhat hypnotic appeal. The majority comprise a range of brightly painted sheds and ornate gates creatively designed to be admired by their owners and those even passing by, giving plots a somewhat domesticated and privatized feel. Hence, allotments are landscapes that convey a sensory presence with nature and a sense that they are a haven from the public world of work and sounds of home. However, plots are strategically designed and constructed to lure others to stop, consume the landscape and interact, to (re)generate a sense belonging and a sense of 'home-from-home'. They are landscapes constructed by ordinary people which provide an opportunity to contribute to the fabric of the city and engage in creative/social bonding practices with unknown others on site, which facilitates the (re)construction of a sense of personal identification with, and belonging to a particular group and/or place.

By uncovering the iconography of urban allotments and revealing the various practices that contribute to the creation of this 'new' type of urban public space, this chapter

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[14] The flâneur is an emblematic archetype of a man of leisure, the urban explorer, an independent voyeuristic individual/connoisseur idly walking the street embracing images of a new and changing world (Benjamin, 2006).

enriches our understandings of *how* urban dwellers make knowledge of, and sense of the world around them amidst immense economic, cultural and social change.

The chapter stresses the importance of understanding the *genius loci* or spirit of a place, and the importance of capturing all the elements of it –it's built and social character in an image - "that projects the subjective relation of place to the people who move through it" (Bounds, 2004) to illustrate *how* urban dwellers regenerate a sense of belonging. Moreover, it illustrate how the self if situated within a spatial environment, which lies at the root of a sense of place attachment and belonging (Cuba and Hammon, 1993; Soja, 1996, Corcoran, 2002). In turn, this enriches our understandings of the social construction of place and the importance of 'place-based' practices in terms of understanding *how* individuals engender and restore a sense of place by moving through a place, constructing and getting to know it *with* others. Hence, through the creativity associated with designing, constructing and managing one's plot and engaging in specific practices on site, this chapter argues that urban dwellers are constructing ***socially*** *inclusive, vibrant, productive, multi-functional, 'people'd landscapes'* (Viljoen et al, 2012), to transcend the dis-embedding social processes generated by modernity, (re)connect with knowledge, practice, the land *and* others in the city. Crucially, the chapter illuminates the importance *and* potential of the urban allotment for (re)invigorating and provoking the well-being and liveability of the city and the 'vivacity in urban public space' (Sennett, 2011). Imperative to our understandings of how urban dwellers are re-connecting with knowledge systems, practice and others in their locales requires an examination of *how* urban dwellers cultivate the land.

7.

THE ALLOTMENT FIELD OF ACTION: HABITUS, CULTIVATION AND THE ORGANIC PROBLEMATIC

Figure 100.Habitus and Taste'. Images taken by author. 2013

"Yes, everything I grow *is* organic. You know it's fresh, where it came from, and know what went into it and that's great, … but it's not really about the organic, I mean if you *really* wanted organic food you could grow organic food in a black sack, on your window ledge, in your back-yard, in pots, tubs, anywhere …"

Robert. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

7.1. Introduction.

Cultivation practices permeate the data collected on allotment gardening in Dublin. Interactions, images and allotment activities are underpinned by cultivation and reveal much about allotments: their fabric, the allotment culture and the social world of plot-holders, and are significant in helping shape its nature and the particular form it takes. Practitioners discuss cultivation during interviews and when casually interacting with (unknown) others on site. They are keen to share their knowledge, produce and experiences and motivations for investing in UA. Their practices give shape to the material and social fabric of landscape, the allotment culture and plot-holders practices, actions and worldviews. They have a profound impact on transforming the urban, practitioners' experiences of the urban and by extension, restoring a sense of belonging to place.

Traditionally, cultivating an allotment was predominantly a male preserve; the provenance of a hardy band of retired males eagerly working the land, manuring the soil and engaging in ritual activities that represented a different form of cultivation from the home garden. Displays of straggling rows of carrots, sprouts and prize leaks for example were cultivated purely for subsistence and arranged for ease of cultivation, *and not for the aesthetic, pedagogic or social value they provided* (Crouch and Ward, 1997, *my emphasis*). Keeping a fine tilth[15] was often considered the most important part of allotment gardening, and plot-holders prided themselves for their workmanship in terms of their produce and for transforming land seldom chosen for its horticultural potential (ibid). Their practices represented a return to the land, a connection with nature and provided a refuge from the world and sounds of home, and the tasks of cultivation were underpinned by 'traditional' forms of knowledge and biologically sound agricultural practices. Today however, cultivation practices on allotments convey a different story: they convey a story of resistance to the disconnection, distrust and disenchantment with modern food systems, to hegemonic ideologies and the disconnection from the land, nature, knowledge and practice and in particular, from the social relations inherent in the production and consumption of food. They also convey a story of (re)connection, reconciliation and counter-hegemony, and an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to (re)connect with the land, nature, knowledge and practice, and particularly others. Whilst much literature today tends to focus on contemporary food production systems through the lens of economic rationality (Carolan, 2012) (see below), this chapter attempts to re-balance current debates by bringing a sociological perspective to light. As a point of departure, the chapter examines *why* an increasing number of urban dwellers want to produce and consume their own locally grown

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[15] Tilth: is a descriptor for soil that combines the properties of particle size, moisture content, degree of aeration, rate of water infiltration, and drainage into abbreviated terms in order to more easily present the agricultural prospects of a piece of land.

food. The evidence suggests that changes in food production systems have created a dependency on the global food industry, subjugated food production systems, created an antithesis between rural and urban, town and country and humans and nature, *and* generated hegemonic ideologies which have disconnected urban dwellers from the land, nature knowledge and practice and in particular, from the social relations inherent in the production and distribution of food. Moreover, such change has fostered growing concerns over the provenance, quality and content of food, environmental and health concerns and a growing awareness amongst the urban citizenry (and a new found interest) of the value of engaging in local food production. The chapter then examines *how* urban dwellers are resisting these dis-embedding social processes by engaging in the practices associated with cultivating urban land. I examine the various factors underpinning practice, and provide a detailed sociological analysis of the various approaches being employed.

In terms of cultivation practices, the chapter identifies three growing cultures, or what I refer to as '*Fields of Action*': (1) Organic Cultivation, (2) Conventional/Indigenous Cultivation and, (3) Transitional-Organic Cultivation (see Fig. 7.2). I discuss each category, and offer a textured analysis and visual representation of the cultivation practices being employed. Building on Pierre's Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1977), the chapter provides a '*habitus continuum*' to illuminate the complexity of factors underpinning cultivation practices and the various strategies being employed. By engaging in the tasks of cultivation and employing specific practices on site, this chapter argues that urban dwellers are transcending the disconnections generated by modernity, and (re)connecting with the land, knowledge, practice and others. They are generating an understanding of food production, which is wrapped up in a particular set of relations which involves people being in intimate contact with *what* they eat, *how* it is produced, distributed, prepared and consumed (Carolan, 2012, *my emphasis).*

7.2. The Industrialisation of Food: Hegemony, Disconnection and Distrust

Figure 101.Image courtesy of project.nsearch.com

Accessing, producing and a desire to consume 'organically' grown food were factors that provided the majority of practitioners' the impetus to invest in allotment gardening in the city (See chapter 3). Changes in food production and consumption practices and the problems of conventional industrialised food systems have fostered growing concerns over the source, content, quality, changing taste and nutritional value of food (Fig 101). Indeed, such change has generated growing environmental and health concerns over the ways in which food is being produced, distributed, marketed and consumed (food scares, declining nutrition and taste, growing levels of obesity, food poverty, environmental degradation; soil erosion, excessive nutrient loading, food miles, loss of biodiversity). As a result, food has taken on new meanings, new values and new ideologies. Two plot-holders explain:

" … these pesticides and everything, sure 'tis destroying the food we're eating. We don't know what we're getting, what's gone into it … there is so much cancer appearing … I think that it has to be in some way connected to the food chain. …the food we're eating is full of all sorts … There's no taste off it. Any time you get talking about the veg [on the allotment], that's the first thing that comes up. Everyone talks about the difference in the taste. … The stuff you buy in the shops doesn't taste as good as the stuff you get here … There's no smell or taste off veg you buy at all now. This is definitely better, it tastes better, it's organic"

Margaret. Practical Gardener. 2013

"Farmers are pouring all sorts into the ground and it's going into the soak ways … and it's having a knock-on [environmental] effect … It's associated with … fertilisers … It's all about production, not really about the quality of the food …the land, the soil, … the harm its doing … sustainability … It'll be soil poverty not food poverty we'll be facing"

John. Idealist/Eco-Warrior, 2012

How food is produced, where it is produced and how it is consumed have altered the meanings and symbolic value of food, detached food from time, space and cultural traditions, generated hegemonic ideologies and disconnected individuals from the land, nature, traditional forms of knowledge (food production systems) and practice. Significantly, changes in food production have effectively effaced the complex web of social relations that run through the production, distribution, preparation and consumption of food. Andrew and Caroline, two Socio-organic gardeners explain:

" … my neighbour only buys frozen veg 'cos the ads on the telly say that only the best vegetables are frozen, therefore the rest then must be rubbish ... that's the way a lot of people are … and my wife minds a little lad and she had him up here last year on the plot and she was giving him peas off the pods there, and he said 'I thought peas grew in tins" [laughs]. Sure X [neighbouring plot-holder] was only telling me about a young lad he knew who thought carrots came in a bag [laughs]"

Andrew. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

Caroline, a Socio-Organic gardener reiterates:

"From the time we were very young you'd be sent out to water the veg, put it into the tunnel, cover them if it was going to be frosty, or get it for the dinner… it was very much part of growing up, part of what we did … you'd pick the cabbage … you'd prepare it, … … Now, everything is bought, it's ready to cook, frozen or it's already cooked. You don't even have to bother doing any of that anymore"

Caroline. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

Indeed, conventional industrialised food systems have created an antithesis between rural and urban, producers and consumers and humans and nature. They have 'aestheticized', 'domesticated' and 'standardised' food, and generated hegemonic ideologies around it's character, quality and taste which is compounding *further* individuals disconnections from the land, nature, knowledge and practice, *and* from the social relations inherent in food production and consumption. Pat and Andrew, two practitioner's comments illustrate:

"... even the carrots in the supermarkets are clean, presented nicely with no muck, no dirt, not a trace of soil, nothing that shows they even *came* from the earth. ... There's no smell off them ... and as for the taste, there're full of water, there's no taste off them. The veg you buy now is …well, it's perfectly shaped, no flaws in it, no evidence of where they came from … except for a small label, and sure what does that tell you? Some people think that that's the way food *is* ...because some of the people in here throw *out* their veg if it doesn't look right!… We don't know *half* of the ingredients in the food were eating … *what's* in it"

Pat. Idealist/Eco Warrior. 2013

And Andrew reiterates:

"If you grow up in a house where everything is bought you wouldn't know how to grow. Now everything is bought in shops and people don't know how to grow their own food. Years ago everyone worked on the land, or grew something. Now the general perception is that the ground is dirty and if there's muck on it then it must be bad, … oh, and if you mention the word manure people are disgusted … that's seen as dirty. The changes in the way food is grown has *done* that. Everything has become sanitised, politically correct and all this malarkey about health and safety has changed people's attitudes to food…"

Andrew. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

Technological developments in agriculture, the commodification and growing monopolisation of food have meant that food now reflects "an embodiment of corporate-led dietary convergence" (Weis, 2007:15). Long distance sourcing, sophisticated processing and packaging systems designed to prolong shelf-life and forge consumer loyalty reflects a global food system which claims to meet the needs of individuals living fast-paced fragmented lifestyles (ibid). Consequently, what is being produced is fast becoming characterised by distance and durability, convenient and cost. Bobby, a Socio-Organic gardener and Margaret, a Practical gardener's comments explain:

"….if you buy tomatoes in the supermarket they're all imported from Holland. They're grown on water culture, so really what you're getting is water and chemicals essentially. They're fed with chemicals and stuff is put on them to preserve the colour of them when they're transported. You don't know what you're eating and it's dreadful. It doesn't taste right. The tomatoes before tasted like tomatoes. Now all you're getting is a tomato full of water"

Bobby. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

"People have been removed from it [practice]… all these jars and stuff, … it's [food] mass produced, … Their stuff [Global Food Industry [GFI]] is in the market before *my* stuff, *the same veg* is grown in *half* the time. They're using methods now to mass produce food [GFI] and it *can't* be good for you. Nature didn't intend it that way"

Margaret. Practical Gardener, 2013

Such change has generated growing concerns over the way food has been reduced to another commodity and another chore in the general "commodification of everyday life" (Sage, 2014). Indeed, some respondents believe such change is breeding inertia. They are keen to disseminate knowledge and generate a more transparent, trustworthy (localised) food production system that enables urban dwellers to (re)connect with knowledge, practice the land, *and* to the social relations inherent in the production, distribution and consumption of food. Pat and John, two Idealists, whose motivations for investing in UA are primarily underpinned by a desire to disseminate knowledge, transform current models of food production, re-localise food systems and practitioners' (and public opinions), actions, practices and worldviews explain:

" I worked in a garden centre for years and I saw people spending an absolute fortune on a Christmas tree yet they didn't know anything about growing food. Like, during the Celtic Tiger garden centres were focusing on making everything look nice, they certainly weren't focusing on growing your own, that's for sure! … and as for the programmes on the telly they were showing what it was like to have a nice garden, …a garden *wasn't* about growing food ... Years ago everyone knew where their food came from*, everyone* grew, *even* in the city. They knew *how* to grow, … *Now*, now people *don't know* how to grow their own food … they don't *have to* grow it, … that change came when food companies started mass producing"

Pat. Idealist/Eco-Warrior, 2012

*"*people aren't aware of what's going on, that harm that's being done … We're not clued in. … they don't see the changes"

John, Idealist/Eco-Warrior, 2013

Whilst many plot-holders believe that individuals have become increasingly disconnected from knowledge systems and the practices associated with cultivating the land (food production systems), current literature suggests that the rise in interest in organic food represents a growing disenchantment and distrust with modern food systems, and a growing awareness amongst the citizenry at large in terms of the value of producing and consuming organic 'chemical-free' food (Sage, 2014). Indeed, urban dwellers investing in allotments see the cultivation of an allotment as an opportunity to engage in more transparent, localised, trustworthy food production system, an opportunity to and improve the ecological and environmental quality of the city and their nutritional status and health.

Moreover, the *majority* of practitioners see UA as a means of combatting the social dis-embeddedness generated by modernity, and an opportunity to (re)connect with nature, knowledge, practice, the land, *and* others in their locales. Three plot-holders comments explain:

"I wouldn't even trust the organic food you buy in Aldi or Lidl, … you don't' *really* know how it's been grown .. and also, the food miles too … I grow my own organically … that's important to me … knowing where it's from, what's gone into it … and I know it's better … better for your health … and the food miles too."

Martha. Socio-Organic Gardener 2013

" … I'm growing organically because I *want* fresh, quality food…. and knowing *how* it's grown, what's going into it really … and to improve biodiversity, … to make the city a better place to live too. That's really important to me"

Pat. Idealist/EcoWarrior. 2012

"With all the [food] scares in the past few years I don't trust *what* they're [GFI] doing to food. This is *definitely* better, it tastes better, it's organic"

Margaret. Practical Gardener. 2013

Whilst the majority of respondents express a desire to produce and consume 'organically' grown foods and identify their practices as '*organic,*' the evidence suggests that practitioners' approach to cultivation is underpinned by their '*habitus*', which influences their approach to cultivation, their practices, actions and lifestyles and overall worldviews.

7.3. The Habitus

The habitus is a system of internalised structures, of durable dispositions which manage the strategies of action individuals engage in during the course of their everyday lives (Bourdieu, 1977). It is shaped by experiences within particular 'fields' or particular social contexts in which individuals find themselves, and ensures individuals act relatively consistently in a wide variety of social contexts (ibid).

On entering a given field or particular social context, the habitus helps individuals decide on appropriate behaviour but it *must* recognise the 'rules of the game' to be able to use strategies of action in order to act accordingly (ibid). The habitus is also strongly shaped by structures in our earlier lives, available resources, past and present contexts, and

especially by class (ibid). However, class for Bourdieu (1984) is more than just an economic category. Rather, a class is a group of people at the same level 'in the game' of fields, that is, "of individuals with the same habitus, the same dispositions, the same interests or same way of playing the game' (ibid:101). This illustrates how the habitus provides consistency in terms of individuals' life choices, actions and worldviews; - it "is a past that survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured to its principles" (Bourdieu, 1977:82).

The habitus also manifests itself in taste; in terms of individuals' taste for cultural texts as well as their taste in food (Bourdieu, 1984). Pointing to class based differences in *French* diets, Bourdieu (1984) contends that working class tastes are characterised by a 'taste of necessity', of an 'appreciation of what is functional', by a 'rejection of what is out of reach', but also by 'participation and creativity'. By contrast, bourgeoisie tastes he argues, are characterised by 'disinterest', 'distance' and 'the pursuit of distinction'.

If one's background predisposes an individual toward particular practices, lifestyles, tastes and worldviews, the habitus *should* characterise practitioners' cultivation practices and their rejection of particular practices [GFI]. Indeed, plot-holders should display similarities in terms of their approach to cultivation, their practices, actions and lifestyles, their produce, tastes and worldviews. Hence, I found that the habitus is a useful heuristic device for exploring and gaining an understanding of the complexity of factors governing relationships to food *and* cultivation practices on allotments across Dublin city today.

Categorising practitioners' approaches to cultivation requires an examination of *similarities* and *consistencies* between practitioners' in terms of their methods, practices and actions, their produce, lifestyles and worldviews.

By finding similarities and consistencies between practitioners' who identify themselves as 'organic', we can assume this reflects an 'organic habitus'. Hence, an examination of

their practices and understandings of organic practices can help measure the extent to which they subscribe to an organic ideology and comply with organic principles and techniques. However, finding consistencies and similarities in the data on what it means to be 'organic' reveals many inconsistencies, ambiguities and contradictions. Whilst the majority of practitioners subscribe to an organic ideology and identify their cultivation practices as 'organic', the evidence suggests that the majority of practitioners use an 'organic identity' to serve other interests, motivations and needs.

Hence, I have found that cultivation practices on allotments comprise three growing cultures, which I refer to hereon as '*fields of practice*': (1) Organic Cultivation, (2) Conventional Cultivation and, (3) Transitional-Organic Cultivation which are underpinned by practitioners' *core* habitus. These categories can be located along a continuum, ranging from practices that are underpinned by a political-organic habitus – to those underpinned by an agrarian habitus. (Fig. 102).
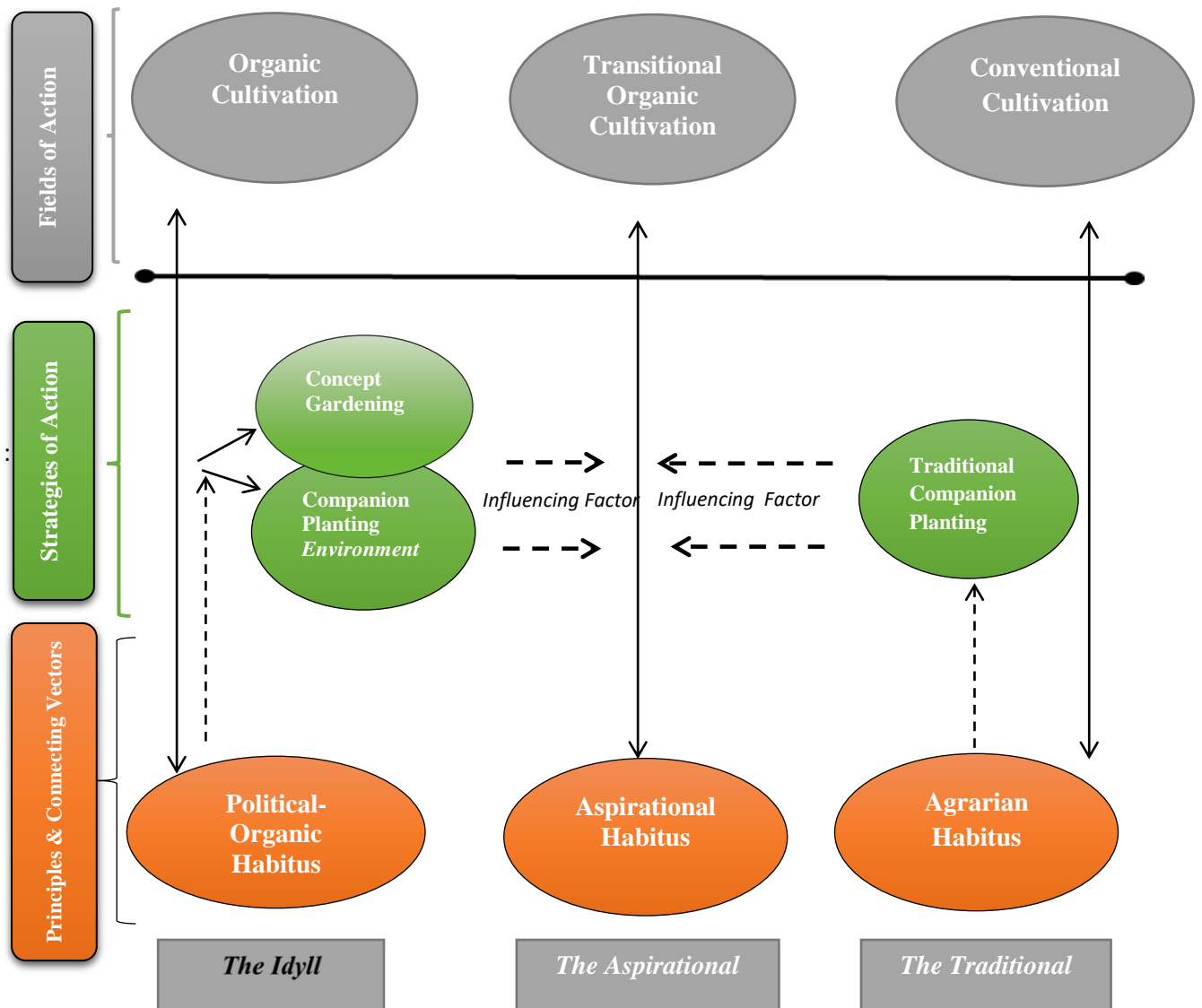
Figure 102.The Habitus Continuum

The three growing cultures on allotments in Dublin (denoted as 'fields of action above) can be located along a continuum, each of which is influenced and underpinned by practitioners' principles, knowledge systems, worldviews and core habitus (denoted above as 'Principles and Connecting vectors'). Hence, each identified habitus on allotments provide strategies of action, which facilitate and determine cultivation methods being employed. Gardeners whose practices are underpinned by a political-organic habitus and an agrarian habitus greatly influence practitioners' who are new to UA (an aspirational habitus: whether aspirations to engage in organic cultivation or to re-invigorate conventional/indigenous cultivation techniques.) Together they influence and shape others practices and experiences of UA, particularly gardeners new to UA.

Whilst each approach to cultivation is unique in character, the boundaries between them are fluid. By engaging in the tasks of cultivation, interacting and participating with others, and employing specific practices, methods and cultivation techniques, practitioners alter their position along the continuum to reflect their knowledge (changing/acquired) and practices, their (desire to generate) alternative lifestyles, actions and (changing) worldviews. Together they shape the fabric of the landscape, the allotment culture and by extension, practitioner's experiences of UA. Let us now examine each of these in turn.

7.4. Organic Cultivation

Figure 103.Generating alternative systems of production and exchange

Practitioners who engage in '*organic cultivation*' largely comprise the new middle classes. However, they also comprise a diversity of social groups who no longer see education or socio-economic status as a barometer upon which to gauge environmental concerns or as a barrier to produce and consume organic 'chemical-free' foods. Plot-holders who engage in '*organic cultivation*' reveal their commitment to an organic ideology which is underpinned by practices that challenge the material issues around food production, distribution and consumption, the cultural assumptions and meanings of food

and the ways in which social actors relate to nature and the natural environment (Vos, 2000; Jorgensen 2009).

An organic ideology challenges the hegemony of industrialised food systems and seeks to reorganise food production and consumption practices, by addressing the way humans treat nature and the natural environment (*human-nature relations*), and the social relations through which food is produced, distributed and consumed (*inter-human relations*) (ibid). Plot-holders who subscribe to an organic ideology *must* comply with organic principles of practice, which are underpinned by an understanding of the soil, plants and animals and our responsibility towards them (Vos, 2000, Jorgensen, 2009; Soil Association 2014). They must comply with specific land husbandry techniques such as inputs and outputs which may or may not be used (using non-synthetic fertilisers, rejecting the use of chemicals, herbicides, growth hormones and pesticides, and the genetic modification of food), and by focusing on alternative ways of relating to the various actors involved in the food system (ibid). Instead, cultivators must use certain methods during cultivation, such as crop rotation techniques (based on a 3/4 year cycle) (Fig. 103), cultivating plants for weed and pest control, growing seasonal foods which do not require chemicals or growth hormones for successful cultivation, and by participating in local food systems (ibid).
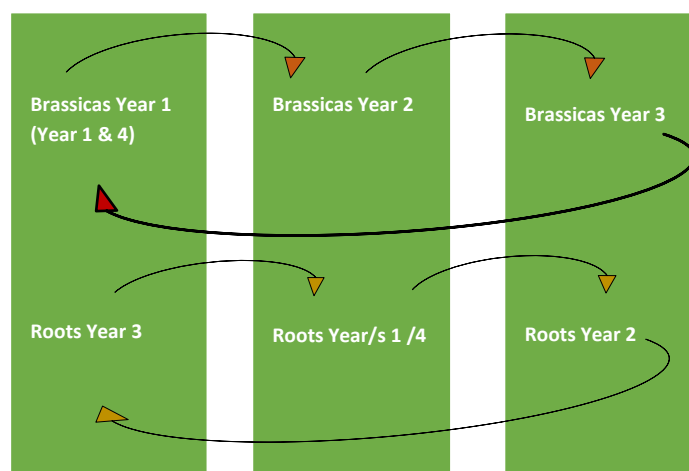
Fig. 103. Crop Rotation System (based on a 3/4 year cycle)

All who engage in organic cultivation subscribe to and comply with organic principles of practice. However, their approach to cultivation reveals that their practices are underpinned by a '*political-organic habitus*' which influences their whole lifestyles, practices and worldviews. They have a profound impact on transforming 'others' (practitioners' and public) opinions on issues that relate to food: of the value of engaging, participating in and promoting more localised systems of exchange, and of the benefits to the ecological and environment quality of the city, on urban dweller lifestyles, and generating alternative actions and worldviews.

7.4.1. The political-organic habitus

Figure 104.Cultivating and nurturing patience, faith and …. change

 "it's like garlic. It takes a long time to grow … it requires patience and faith … that's what it takes to change people"

Michael: Idealist, 2012

Plot-holders who possess a '*political-organic habitus'* comprise a relatively large number of practitioners' investing in UA. Their habitus is evidenced in their practices, actions, and lifestyles, and desire to generate alternative systems of exchange. They subscribe to an organic ideology and *fully* comply with organic principles and techniques, and reveal their commitment to an organic ideology by focusing on alternative ways of relating to

nature and the natural environment, and by promoting (and engaging in) alternative systems of exchange.

Their habitus is evidenced in how they consistently think, act and relate to the world around them which influences their whole lifestyles and worldviews. It reflects, shapes and is shaped by experiences in different social 'fields' (Bourdieu, 1977). Their habitus provides them with strategies of action to engage in the tasks of cultivation and knowledge to recognise the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1977). That is, their habitus is shaped by structures in their earlier lives, and experiences in different social fields, and they have a profound impact on transforming others practices, lifestyles and worldviews (see below).

They are drawn from Idealists and Socio-Organic gardeners' who favour a decentralised grass-root model of food production, which takes into account the environment, promotes sustainability and (re)connects social actors with knowledge, practice, others and the land. They aim to replace long anonymous food chains with more transparent, trustworthy models of food production, and generate (or engage in) more localised systems of exchange. However, in their application of organic practices they employ diverse strategies to help them achieve their aims, which have transformed the traditional allotment aesthetic, and others approaches to UA.

Some gardeners are *explicitly political* in their approach to the task. Their habitus is *unbounded,* as it permeates the boundaries of the landscape, evidenced in their lifestyles, how they think, act and view the social world and through their membership of various networks and UA advocacy groups. They aim to transform the entire food system and practitioners (and public) opinions on issues that relate to the production, distributions and consumption of food and their habitus provides them with knowledge of organic principles*, and* a means to interact with others "at the same level in the game' (ibid). They

draw on their habitus to interact with others, display their knowledge and promote and organic ideology when in different social 'fields'(Bourdieu, 1990)[16] and are eager to transform prevailing dichotomies generated by capitalist modes of exchange.

They are keen to address the way humans relate to nature and the natural environment *and* the social relations through which food is produced, distributed and consumed by encouraging practitioners (and the public) to develop a 'partnership with nature'*,* subscribing to an organic ideology, and promoting *alternative* systems of exchange. In fact, many of these gardeners express an explicit desire to make organic 'chemical -free' food available and accessible to all. Pat and Deirdre's comments demonstrate:

"I try to promote the organic, being bio-diverse, … and promote environmental awareness. I'm conscious of the environment, I'm pro-active in terms of making people aware of the environmental benefits of this [UA], especially in the city. … [I'm] an active member in x [advocacy group] and am involved in all sorts of stuff there, and I'm getting other people to get involved with them as well. Educating people about all the benefits and the things they can bring as individuals that will benefit the environment … and learning about the environment and bio-diversity issues"

Pat, Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2012

Similarly, Deirdre, an Idealist reiterates:

"Organic would be an issue for me. I would have concern about food provenance, … the whole agricultural structure …the whole food question, I'd be *extraordinarily* conscious of it. I mean, it *is* a class thing … if you don't have the income, the resources to buy organic produce you are automatically forced to buy the cheaper end of the market. Not everybody can afford to buy that end. … and I feel that it's important to support that [organic food systems]. There's enough people supporting the other kind of systems …"

Deirdre. Idealist. 2013

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[16] A field is defined by Bourdieu (1994b) as a sort of a game with its own rules and regulations, in which participants seek to gain various forms of capital. Encounters between actors in different fields can be economic, cultural or social. An individual's experience in different fields contributes to the shaping of their habitus, which guides their behaviour, that is, 'things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say' (Bourdieu 1990:53). The 'fit' between the field and the habitus comes from similarity between the structures in the field an individual enters, and those of the field which shaped their habitus. Within fields, individuals can bend the rules, assert one's power by drawing on experience in the field or convert different forms of capital into the kind that is accepted in that particular field. Each field has its own stakes and own type of capital to be accumulated. Capital gained can be exchanged for different kinds of capital, and is legitimised, and/or can be converted into symbolic capital, and represents 'power over that field' (p. 112). Experience in particular fields is what shapes habitus, and in turn, effects future practices, and is reinforced by other agents who have similar dispositions and experiences. Together, field, habitus and capital generate practice. As Bourdieu (1977) contends, shared experiences lead to shared practices.

However, the majority of practitioners with a political-organic habitus are more *implicit* in their approach to the task. Whilst their habitus is consistent with others who are more explicitly political in their endeavours (in terms of their desire to desire to generate alternative lifestyles and engage in more localised systems of exchange) they tend to lead by example through the practices they employ on their allotments, rather than explicitly promoting organic principles, or subscribing to various networks or UA advocacy groups.

Like others, they express concerns over the environment and the provenance, quality and nutritional value of food, but see UA as a means to implicitly challenge the hegemony of food production by *participating* in more localised systems of exchange. They are keen to improve the environment and generate more sustainable methods of food production through the practices they employ on site.

Unlike others who possess a political-organic habitus, their habitus is bounded *within* the boundaries of the landscape and they are *inwardly* political in their approach to the task. They see UA as a means to generate alternative lifestyles and improve their (and their family's) nutritional status and health. They comply with organic principles in practice and employ organic land-husbandry techniques but in practice, their practices produces a particular allotment aesthetic, gardeners new to UA are keen to replicate. Their approach to cultivation is *inwardly* directed, rather than explicitly directed towards others investing in UA. Nevertheless, they have a profound impact on others, particularly those new to UA. That is, they comply with organic principles and implicitly encourage others to employ similar practices through casual interactions with unknown others on their sites, since their application of organic principles produces a particular allotment aesthetic others which lures others to stop, consume the landscape and engenders interaction on their organic land husbandry techniques. In that sense, their approach to cultivation is a symbolic expression of their desire to generate alternative lifestyles, and generate (and promote) alternative systems of exchange. They largely comprise Socio-Organic

gardeners who share their knowledge, produce and experiences of organic land-husbandry techniques, which impacts on others approach to practice, particularly those who are new to UA (See Transitional-Organic below, and Chapter 8). Their habitus is *bounded within* the boundaries of the landscape evidenced in their motivations for investing in UA, but they implicitly encourage others to employ organic principles in practice and transform their practices, actions and worldviews. They see UA as a means to improve human-nature and inter-human relations which an organic ideology advocates, but their core habitus underpins their motivations for investing in UA. Like the majority of practitioners whose motivations are underpinned by a desire to (re)connect with knowledge, practice, the land and particularly, others in their locales, they see UA as a means to (re)connect and participate with others, and generate more localised systems of exchange. Indeed, like the majority of practitioners their motivations are underpinned by a desire to (re)connect with others, (re)generate a sense of community and belonging in their locales, and they see UA as a means to reinvigorate specific values others new to UA are keen to reinvigorate. In fact, their habitus is underpinned by a system of internalised structures strongly shaped by practices they were predisposed to in their earlier lives. In that sense, their *core habitus* underpins their practices and motivations for investing in UA. As Sarah and Lisa, two Socio-Organic gardener's comments demonstrate:

"It's a combination really. The food is great. You know what you're eating. You know it's good because you know what's gone into it, but it's not really about the food. I always loved gardening. I'm from x [South West]. As kids we would have been sub-let out to all the uncles for help. We were the free labour [laughs]. I'm a country girl … In the country you knew everyone. Everyone knew everyone. The organic *is* really important to me, everything I grow is fully organic, no chemicals, nothing. It's great, but it's also about bringing some of the old ways back. Working together, that kind of thing … to feel like you belong"

Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener. 2012

"It gives you an excuse to meet other people … It's about being connected, building up relationships … a sort of family thing. Like I'm from the country [rural] where you knew everyone. So it's about bringing people together, a tightly-knit community. You're growing healthy organic food *and* it makes you feel like you belong"

Sarah. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2012

Whilst their approach to cultivation reflects, shapes and is shaped by experiences in different social 'fields' (Bourdieu, 197) their *core* habitus underpins their practices and motivations for investing in UA. Their political-organic habitus recognises the 'rules of the game' that is, 'organics' and provides them with strategies of action to engage in the tasks of cultivation and act accordingly when in 'the field' (Bourdieu, 1994:b:112), but their *core* habitus is evidenced in their life choices, actions and their desire to (re)invigorate *particular* practices, values and worldviews.

The majority possess knowledge, previous experience and/or inter-generational connections to the land, and their *core* habitus provides them with knowledge of the material *and* ancillary social benefits of working alongside others who share an interest in cultivating the land. In that sense, their *core* habitus is "a past that survives in the present, and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured to its principles" (Bourdieu, 1977:82).

Their approach to cultivation represents a return to the land, a connection with nature and an escape from the exigencies of contemporary urban life. They employ *organic* principles of practice to generate alternative lifestyles, improve their health and nutritional status and health and see their practices as a way of improving the ecological and environmental quality of the city and transforming how they (and others) can generate an alternative quality of life. As Lisa observes:

"… even though I'm doing what I did for my uncles when I was a child living in the country but doing it organically, I love this because it's nature in the city. You need time out of your busy life, that time when you're a busy mum; - to mix with other adults in your own environment, where you live. … You know, it's just freedom you know? It gives you a bit of space from the everyday work thing … to free the mind you know?. It's a better quality of life, connect with other people, create a community *while* you're growing [organically], improving the environment while you're growing … it's a great way to get meet people, reconnect people"

Lisa. Socio- Organic gardener, 2012

Sarah, reiterates:

"I don't think it's primarily based on ecological awareness … even though it's good to do that and you're improving biodiversity … you're growing organically … that's not entirely, or *really* what is at the heart of the whole concept of the allotment really. I do think the food part of it is much appreciated, … you're getting healthy, …. We planted a few native species there … it's good for the environment … and it's good food, knowing *where* it comes from, the pleasure of growing it too … it's escapism. I don't think it's *primarily* ecological awareness …. it's mostly the social … it's a focal point"

Sarah. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Their 'field of action' is identified (and spoken of) as a 'lifestyle (choice)' that is connected to how they think, act and relate to the world, and allows them to (re)construct an alternative identity, (re)connect with others and restore a sense of belonging to place. Their approach to cultivation reflects, shapes and is shaped by experiences in different 'social fields' (Bourdieu, 1977), but their *core habitus* underpins their practices and motivations for investing in UA. So whilst there is a biographical dimension to their habitus in terms of the values they are keen to (re)invigorate, being 'organic' is a way of being in the world which allows them to construct an alternative identity and reconnect with others, and restores a sense of belonging to place (see chapter 8). Their investment in UA allows them to engage in practices that reflect their values and overall worldviews, and in that sense, they use an organic identity to serve other interests, motivations and needs.

Gardeners with a political-organic habitus are often referred to by others as 'alternative lifestyle types' or 'hippy dippy' gardeners whose practices, actions and lifestyles represent an attempt to achieve the idyll, who are keen to generate alternative lifestyles by promoting organic principles and producing/consuming organic 'chemical free' food. Whilst they display similarities with the majority of gardeners in terms of their concerns over the provenance and quality of food, they see UA as a means to employ organic principles, improve the ecological and environmental quality of the city and the quality of everyday urban life. Jan, an allotment provider explains:

" … ah they're the alternative lifestyle ones who want to save the planet and all that. They're very dogged and determined in terms of their ideas. But they're terribly easy-going at the same time too. They're the ones who use bicycles because they don't want to use cars. … They're extremely conscious of the environment and all that. They're the ones who won't use fertilisers because it's bad for the planet. Like I've war going on at the moment because there's bind-weed down there and some of them want to zap it, and they're going mad. They're saying no because of the harm it will do to the environment, that sort of thing. They won't dig either because it'll hurt the plants … They're very idealistic"   *Jan: Allotment Provider 2013*

Some gardeners' employ a *companion planting* approach which they unequivocally advocate and use, but the majority employ a *concept gardening* approach, which gardeners new to UA replicate. The former reflects an explicit attempt to improve biodiversity, the ecological and environmental quality of the city, the quality of the soil, land and food produced, while the latter tends to be employed to ensure organic principles of practice are encouraged, practiced and maintained (explicitly and implicitly (see below)**.**

Whilst gardeners who are explicitly political in their endeavours engage in both conventions to promote organic principles of practice within *and* beyond the boundaries of allotment sites, those who are inwardly political tend to favour *concept gardening* to (re)connect with the land, nature, knowledge and practice and particularly, to others in their locales. Although their application of organic principles differ, and impacts on the aesthetics they generate (see below), both applications have a profound impact on transforming practitioners (and public) practices, actions, worldviews and lifestyles, and by extension, the traditional allotment aesthetic. Let us now examine these in turn.

7.4.1.1. Companion Planting

The majority of gardeners who employ a *companion planting approach* are Idealists/Eco-Warriors who are (explicitly) political in their approach to the task. They are keen to emphasise the importance of improving biodiversity, the ecological and environmental quality of the city and the metabolic quality of the soil. Like Practical gardeners they place a high value on the land and practice, and the quality of the soil, but reveal their commitment to an organic ideology by stringently complying with organic land husbandry techniques. They oppose the use of chemicals, propose alternative ways of relating to nature and the natural environment and identify themselves as more 'organically' focused because they employ *companion planting* techniques. As Pat, an Idealist/Eco-Warrior explains:

"Companion growers are more organically focused. … You see the organic guys doing it [companion planting] because they have the knowledge … They are more interested in using techniques that *benefit* the soil, and the food grown in that soil. … We would encourage people to do that [companion planting] because of its benefits. It's not just about growing food. It has environmental benefits, educational benefits … it has endless scope … [and we] try to encourage people to change, … demonstrate and teach people about the importance of it for the environment, the soil and the food we're eating … that sort of thing"   *Pat, Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2012*

They see themselves as knowledgeable gardeners who can empower others and engender symbolic change, and offer in-depth explications of the benefits of *companion planting* particularly to those who are new to UA. They are keen to disseminate knowledge, interact with others' and encourage practitioners to cultivate a diversity of flora and foods, which they believe provide a better alternative to mono-cropping methods which industrialised food systems advocate (Figs. 101, 105-106). They facilitate others' practices and explicitly impart their knowledge, experience and skills but see *low levels* of soil intervention as *crucial* for improving the environment, the metabolic quality of the soil and the quality of food produced.

Their habitus is evidenced in their rejection of particular practices (global food production systems), their planting styles, plot layouts and the diversity of flora and foods they produce, *and* is particularly evidenced through the materials they integrate, and encourage others to integrate and use (composting, water harvesting, recycled materials) (Figs. 107-108). They integrate crop residues, cultivate nitrogen fixing plants and grow crops for weed and pest control, but view *companion planting* as a better way of improving bio-diversity, the quality of food and replenishing urban soil. They rotate their crops to close the nutrient cycle (McClintock, 2010), are keen to maximise cultivation but tend to let nature do most of the work, which produces a particular and somewhat *naturalistic* aesthetic which more orthodox practitioners reject (Figs.105-106, 108, 112c, 113a, 114b). Hence, there is an inherent tension in allotment gardening in terms of the methods they advocate. Jan's comments explain:

"… [he] came in and picked up a load of spuds. He cut his plot down to grass and then went along with his spade, dug up a bit of it and whooshed it down on top of the spuds. Others were looking at him and he said "*why would I waste my energy and break my back digging it out, sure the spuds will do the work*? … and another chap brought a whole lot of soil in bags instead of digging the soil that was there … and the rest of them were saying "*someone else had to dig that soil you're bringing in, so that idea doesn't work*". They just have a particular mind-set …"   *Jan. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013*

Similarly, Jim, a Practical gardener's comments reiterate:

"…… just look at that plot, it's a disgrace … There's weeds coming up through the entire thing, all sorts of stuff… and all that is blowing into my plot … I'm here killing myself trying to stop weeds and you've that going on … it's a fuckin disgrace …"
Jim. Practical Gardener. 2013

They view their cultivation practices as instrumental to improving the ecological and environment quality of the city and for transforming practitioners' practices, lifestyles and worldviews. Politically, this results in transcending prevailing dichotomies generated by capitalist systems of exchange. In fact, their approach to cultivation in many ways

represents an explicit attempt to heal "the metabolic rift"[17] (Marx, 1976; Foster, 1999, 2009).

Like all gardeners whose practices are underpinned by a political-organic habitus they aim to create a paradigmatic shift by promoting organic principles and introducing specific land husbandry techniques. They are keen to cultivate a diversity of flora and plant species to attract wildlife, and improve the 'aesthetic quality' of their plots, and tend to grow a *range* of produce entirely from seed which reflects their middle-class tastes. (Fig. 109-111). Michael and John, two Idealists explain:

" … It mightn't be as neat … but … I won't use any pesticides or things like that, never. Everything is natural, nature supplies everything, so … making my own feed, even nettles, nettles are fantastic. You see people pulling them out but they're full of iron, they make a fantastic feed, … So [I] would hone in on that and use organic methods for growing, or not even digging the soil too much. [you] don't want to disrupt the natural elements in the soil"

Michael. Idealist/Eco Warrior, 2012

"... the idea is to put wildflower mixes in between other varieties … to support a greater number of species, attract butterflies, bees and that … I live for the middle of July when the whole plot comes alive with plants, insects and colour … there's an abundance of crops … I actually like the fact that its natural, full of colour and texture … Everything is natural, nature supplies everything … nature has a way of looking after everything …"

John, Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2013

Their habitus is characterised by 'distance' and 'the pursuit of distinction'[18] (Bourdieu, 1984) evidenced in their produce and taste for particular foods, which represents their

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[17] Marx's metabolic analysis of the political economy saw capitalism as generating a form of industrialized agriculture that industrially divided nature at the same time that it industrially divided labour. He determined that an economic system premised on the accumulation of capital led to intensive agricultural practices to increase yield of food and fibre for markets. Marx lamented how capitalism degraded labour and nature under these conditions (Marx, 1976, in Foster, 2009: 315). In other words, it created a metabolic rift in the nutrient cycle, squandering the riches of the soil (ibid: 315).

[18] Pierre Bourdieu (1984), in his famous ethnographic work *'Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste'* dissects the bourgeois mind. His subject is the study of culture, and his objective is most ambitious to provide an answer to the problems raised by Kant's *Critique of Judgement* by showing why no judgement of taste is innocent. He proposes that social actors with high volumes of cultural capital (non-financial assets such as education) promote social mobility beyond economic means, enabling them to distinguish themselves from others via specific cultural practices and in particular, their tastes. Certain tastes (influenced by the upper classes) become legitimized, thus determining what constitutes taste in society. In turn the aesthetic and cultural choices of particular 'classes' create class divisions, as individuals actively distance themselves from other social classes or groupings through their practices and legitimised (cultural) tastes. Hence, predispositions for certain tastes (food, music or art for example) guide, maintain and reinforce one's appropriate or acquired class position.

class position, knowledge, and desire to transform practitioners' (and others) lifestyles and overall worldviews. Eddie's comments illustrate:

"I would grow *everything* from seed …now the artichoke, they're very invasive … Then you have the bok-choi, the leafy brassicas, … they replace the nutrients that say cabbage takes from the soil …There's gurd, curcubits, they're your butternut and that kind of thing and well you can see, there's loads of things …." *Eddie. Idealist. Eco-Warrior. 2013*

However, some gardeners practices are rooted in a sense of nostalgia for past connections with nature, the land and practice *and* the social relations inherent in the production and consumpton of food. Their practices represent a desire to (re)invigorate specific values other gardeners new to UA are also keen to (re)invigorate. They are keen to express their knowledge of the ancillary social benefits of cultivating alongside others in this designated space, and see UA as a means to restore human-nature *and* inter-human relations which an organic ideology advocates. Whilst many gardeners express an aversion toward the aesthetics their practices generate, paradoxically their practices stimulate interactions which facilitates the dissemination of organic principles, knowledge and skills. As Caroline observes:

" … they're very similar to the guerrilla gardeners … They're not like the other lads out breaking their backs digging 80sqm … The idea is '*I don't need to do that. I just put the seeds in the ground*'…but I've actually started doing a few bits the same way on my own plot"

Caroline. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

As knowledge is disseminated and their principles become better understood, they are viewed by many as 'gifted gardeners', revered by others for their displays of experimentation, attracting wildlife and for producing abundant displays of colour, gardeners new to UA are keen to generate (Figs. 111a,b,c). Indeed, some practitioners' have adopted their approach to cultivation and rely on their knowledge to facilitate practice on site, which has transformed their practices, actions and lifestyles, overall worldviews. Seamus' comments demonstrate:

"When I saw what he started doing I thought now this fella hasn't a clue. I never saw anybody growing the way he does …even back home. In all the years we farmed, I never came across the likes of it. But I'll tell ya, as sure as I'm standing here, that man is a mind

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of information. Anything there is to know, he's your man. He can tell you absolutely *everything* about this [organic cultivation],…. about the different particles in the soil … he's into this whole eco thing … He's the lad you'd go to if you want to know anything … he'd be the lad to give you a few tips 'n that which'd cut down on something …"

Seamus. Practical Gardener, 2013

As Christina also observes:

"Shay [pseudonym] up there now he's the man to ask if you want any advice. See that plot there … the wild lookin one? … He can tell you *anything*, *everything* you need to know. His [plot] is gorgeous. It's like a meadow with all these wild flowers and things …. and there's always butterflies hovering around it … it's just so natural …*so* colourful. It's stunning…It's given me food for thought …. I decided to have a wildflower bed too … it's good for biodiversity too so I'm doing my bit for the environment too"

Christina. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

Figure 105 (a,b,c). . Companion planting aesthetic

Figure 106 (a,b,c).Companion Planting strategies, styles, layouts and designs

Figure 107 (a,b,c).Materials integrated and used - displaying a political-organic habitus

Figure 108 (a,b,c). Materials integrated to display a political-organic habitus

Figure 109 (a,b,c). Produce and Flora

Figure 110 (a,b,c). Produce : Diverse Varieties.
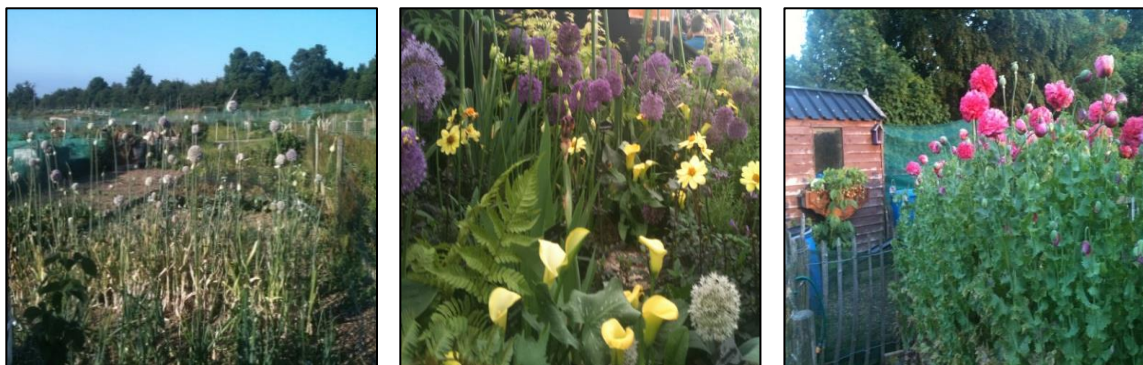
Figure 111 (a,b,c).Flora, colour and biodiversity

Figure 112 (a,b,c).Aesthetics and layouts - displaying companion planting and an organic identity

Figure 113 (a,b,c). Displaying companion planting and an organic identity
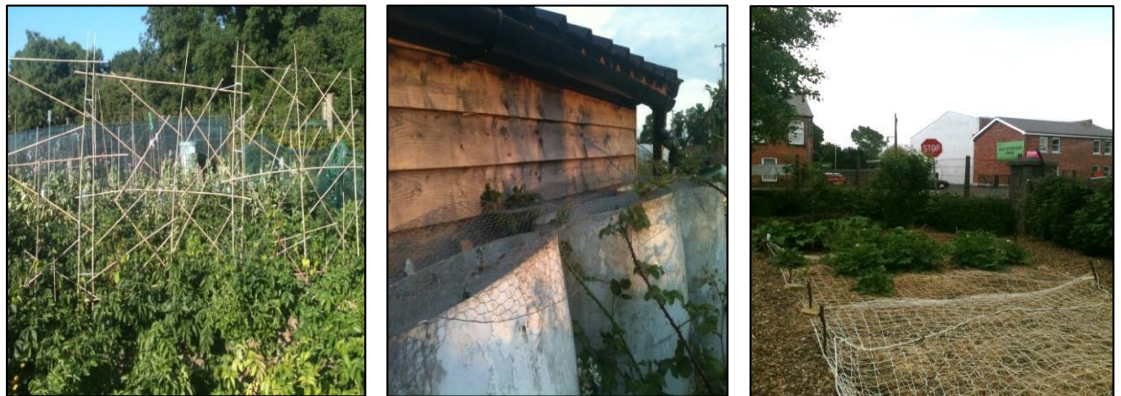
Figure 114 (a,b,c). Materials, layouts and companion planting layouts/designs

7.4.1.2. Concept gardening

"The one thing I say to people coming in here is that if they come in here with the idea about creating food, it's not about growing food for the body, it's about what I call growing food for the soul" *Bobby. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013*

Not all who possess a political-organic habitus employ a companion planting approach

(Figs. 115a,b,c). In fact, the majority of these gardeners who are explicitly political

advocate and favour *concept gardening* methods to expedite knowledge of organic

principles and ensure organic practices are encouraged, practiced and maintained. Their

approach to cultivation has transformed the traditional allotment aesthetic *and* practitioners' actions, practices and worldviews, and helped weld an allotment culture that generates alternative forms of sociality and alternative systems of exchange (for a detailed analysis of sociality, see chapter 8).

The majority are Socio-Organic gardeners who (whether outwardly or individually political in their approach to the task) advocate and/or employ concept gardening techniques to address human-nature *and* inter-human relations and generate alternative lifestyles and more localised systems of exchange. Whilst those who are explicitly political see concept gardening methods as a means to address human-nature *and* inter-human relations which an organic ideology advocates, the majority who employ concept gardening methods employ these techniques to generate alternative lifestyles, improve their (and their family's) health and nutritional status, and in particular, to interact with others and restore a sense of belonging in their locales.

Whether their habitus is unbounded or bounded within the landscape, or advocates and/or promotes these cultivation techniques (explicitly or implicitly) all are keen to explain how they allow urban dwellers to develop 'a partnership with nature' and foster more transparent, cooperative (and localised) forms exchange. That is, they are designed to facilitate practice and urban dwellers work-time constraints but generate a particular allotment aesthetic which lures others to stop, consume the landscape and interact, which provides opportunities to disseminate knowledge, promote alternative practices, actions, lifestyles and specifically, new forms of sociality and worldviews (Figs, 115-116, 119, 121,122-124). Hence, concept gardening takes into account the aesthetic of the plot and considers how the plot will be used and the effect they will generate. (Figs.115-116). Raised beds, boxes and symmetrical planting are a particular characteristic of a concept

gardening approach, which gardeners new to UA integrate to facilitate their motivations

for investing in UA (Figs. 115-116). Jan, a provider explains:

"The GIY (advocacy group) they're the type who measure out everything and put boxes
in and that sort of thing. Their boxes are *full* of veg. … They're the ones with … structure,
order. It's about organic food with a modern twist. Promoting organic food … Very often
the new younger ones, [new practitioners'] would be into the raised beds, the concept
layout …You see, they're [GIY] promoting it, for organic food production"

Jan .Organic habitus, 2012

However, gardeners who are explicitly political offer in-depth explanations of the benefits

of employing a concept gardening approach. They actively encourage new practitioners'

to cultivate a diversity of flora and foods to improve biodiversity, the ecological and

environmental quality of the city, and the quality of the soil, land and food produced. They

aim to transcend mono-cropping systems industrialised systems advocate and use. Bobby

explicates:

 "we'd encourage organic … because of its benefits to the environment, and your health
too. We would encourage people to feed the soil not the plant … If you used the raised
beds system and proper pathways that make it accessible then it's easier. But if you have
what I call 'an *extensive operation'* with *no* structure the weeds take over and it all
becomes too much. That's why it's important to know what to do. You must have
structure, a plan and work towards it, otherwise it just becomes higgildy-piggildy and you
come up against problems and don't know how to solve them. Organic growing is labour
intensive so this, [concept gardening] well, it's easier … If you do the raised bed system
then it's much easier to manage and grow organically. Some plot-holders have even used
wine bottles, they're recycling them and use them to divide one area from another… I
myself use the pallets here that basically fold down, I use them as raised beds. The great
thing about them is that you can move them wherever I want to over time …it's promoting
that mindset, … organics*"*

Bobby: Organic habitus.2013

Like gardeners who advocate companion planting, they reveal their commitment to an

organic ideology by rejecting the use of chemicals, growing a range of seasonal foods and

cultivating plants for weed and pest control (Figs. 116b, 118b, 122c), but their application

of organic principles differs greatly. They are keen to share their knowledge with others,

particularly in terms of how they (and others can) integrate and use recycled materials, a

range of organic matter and green manures to ensure successful cultivation which they

believe allows urban dwellers to engage in practices they may not otherwise have

embraced (Figs, 118c,119a, 122a, 123 124b). In fact they differ greatly since they explain

how their approach (and successful cultivation) is complemented by actively digging,

preparing and nurturing the 'virgin' earth. Bobby explains:

"you need to prepare and feed the earth, nurture it … I make my own feeds and they're
the best … they're purely organic, …. Nature provides everything"

Bobby, Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Similarly, Brian's comments explain:

"I'm more focused on the composting, using the right stuff, planting the right things
together, making my own feeds n' that, n' growing my own fertilisers. Even nettles like.
They're great … So I'd be more focused on organic… Encouraging people to do it that
way, to do things the right way … you have to dig that into the ground, and really get it
in"

Brian. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

As plot-holders stop and consume the landscape these gardeners disseminate their

knowledge, share their produce, experience and skills. They address human-nature

relations by encouraging practitioners' to develop a '*partnership with nature*' by

explaining the benefits of employing similar practices on site. However, whether they are

outwardly or inwardly political in their approach to the task, they all emphasise the

ancillary *social* benefits of working alongside other who share an interest in the soil, food

and the land. They see concept gardening as a means to specifically address the inter-

human relations which an organic ideology advocates. They are all are influenced by

practices and experiences they were predisposed to in their earlier lives, which underpins

their approach to cultivation and desire to (re)invigorate specific practices, values and

worldviews. Whether explicitly or implicitly political in their approach to the task, the

means by which they address inter-human relations are underpinned by a system of

internalised structures strongly shaped by experiences in their earlier lives. The majority

possess knowledge, previous experience and/or intergenerational connections to the land,

and they express particular concern over the changing forms of sociality generated by

capitalist modes of exchange. That is, they employ concept gardening as a strategy to

(re)invigorate particular values from their past. They see and use concept gardening methods to disseminate knowledge *while* (re)invigorating similar practices, ideologies and worldviews they were predisposed to in their earlier lives.

In that sense, their *core* habitus is evidenced in their desire to (re)invigorate particular practices, (re)connect with others, foster better social relations and social integration in their locales, to (re)generate a sense of belonging to community and place. They draw on principles, practices, values and experiences they were predisposed to, to promote more transparent, localised, cooperative forms of activity and alternative systems of exchange.

As Margo observes:

"when we were kids we used to weed in the fields for the farmers for a penny a row … we'd grow veg … everybody did then … but it's [organic practices] also about the food miles, knowing where you're food comes from …so it's about the food, social, the sustainability as well the organic food, organic ways… knowing it's *actually* organic . Like, tomatoes that are coming from Spain for example, you don't *really* know if they are *actually* organic, … and the food miles as well, the harm that's doing to the environment But it's *also* about helping people …to learn about their food and nature, sustainability … becoming more aware of food miles, and what it's doing to the planet … but it's also the social too … doing things like people did [in the past], together, meitheal's, that sort of thing… This [concept gardening] is better. It's a better way of doing it [organic growing] … it's easier for people to maintain because organic growing is quite demanding. It requires a lot of effort … this makes it easier for people"

Margo. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Damien and Bobby's comments reiterate:

"Years ago, well let's say, people were more in tune with it and they'd a better quality of life because they were in touch with nature … more connected. They knew how to grow food, and they'd strong communities … .That was the way people did things, they shared and helped each other out … that was the way of life. … but the organic that's the way to go, it's better for the soil it's better food…it's the best way"

Damien. Socio-Organic gardener. 2012

"My father taught me everything really about growing and then I learned about it [organic production] from studying it, reading books and that … I'm a member of that [advocacy group] too. We try to encourage organic … to connect to nature. There's nothing like it. You can't beat it. It's there all around us and those who tap into that get so much pleasure from working with the soil. People have been removed from it. The country has to function and you need industry and that but you need a balance of the two. We need to reflect and look at what's around us, to look and use nature to *heal* ourselves, we need to come *back* to nature a bit more. …but it's also about doing things *together*, … getting people *involved* in their community. Here, people can grow organic food …. enjoy nature, work hard on growing , learn, de-stress and make friends, work together … ….and meet others *while* they are working hard on growing, and learning how to grow here.   It gets

people involved in their own community, working together … doing things right … Its food for the soul"

<div align="right">*Bobby. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013*</div>

They focus on alternative ways of relating to nature and the natural environment by promoting concept gardening techniques to exhibit *and* implicitly encourage a sense of responsibility toward nature and the natural environment, generate alternative lifestyles, display their organic identity, habitus and overall worldviews. They see concept gardening methods as a better way to expedite organic principles, values and worldviews.

Whilst their approach to cultivation shows consistency in terms of their habitus and reflects a particular way of being in the world, their approach to cultivation, and in particular their motivations (like the majority of practitioners) are strongly shaped by a system of internalised structures they were predisposed to in their earlier lives. Hence, it is their *core* habitus which influences their motivations and worldviews. Although they challenge the hegemony of food production systems by employing (and/or advocating) concept gardening and organic land husbandry techniques, the see *organic* cultivation as a means to (re)connect with the means of production, to transcend prevailing dichotomies and bridge the rural-urban divide**.** As Margaret's comments elucidate:

"I do grow organically … it's easier alright if you used the raised beds system … it's so much easier than coming down and looking at a whole pile of weeds. You can simply do one box at a time. It's more manageable too … you also have more time to do other things … sometimes I'd come here and only get one box done and spend half the day talking [laughs]"

<div align="right">*Margaret. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*</div>

Sarah's comments also demonstrate:

" … in the suburbs, you're not in the county [rural], you're not in the city, you're in a bit of limbo in a way… but where I grew up in the country [rural] I knew everybody and … that fact that was people around too was great, like here. It's kind'a like the country [rural] and that's another thing I really like about it. The organic is great, … it's also the community, the community really. Getting that same spirit that people had back … like working on the land …knowing how to and watching your vegetables grow from the time you plant them, nurturing them to harvesting them … It's a bit of the country in the city really"

<div align="right">*Sarah. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*</div>

Significantly, their practices represent an explicit attempt to mitigate the 'individual rift' (McClintock, 2010) generated by capitalist modes of exchange (alienation from nature, labour and the land), *and* an explicit attempt to alleviate the 'social rift' (ibid) (commodification of food, labour and the land) evidenced in their desire to engage in alternative systems of exchange.

Despite their diverse approaches and the aesthetics their practices generate, together these gardeners have a *profound* impact on shaping the material and social fabric of the landscape and they play a *crucial* role in transforming practitioners' practices, actions, lifestyles, their habitus and overall worldviews.

Figure 115 (a,b,c).Concept Gardening Techniques: Uniformity and Structure

Figure 116 (a,b,c).Concept gardening layouts, aesthetics and designs

Figure 117 (a,b,c). Symmetry

Figure 118 (a,b,c). Symmetrical planting, diverse varieties and (changing) tastes

Figure 119 (a,b,c).Disseminating & displaying knowledge, and encouraging change through practice

Figure 120 (a,b,c).Encouraging specific practices and cultivation skills to improve biodiversity & food quality

Figure 121 (a,b,c).Foods, Flora and improving biodiversity

Figure 122 (a,b,c). Integrating and using recycled materials to exhibit habitus and worldviews.

Figure 123 (a,b,c).Recycling urban waste to facilitate practice, display habitus and organic identity

Figure 124 (a,b,c).Integrating materials to facilitate practice, displaying habitus and worldviews

Figure 125 (a,b,c).Diversity of Produce/Blooms

7.5. **Conventional Cultivation & The *Agrarian* Habitus**

Figure 126.Companion planting conventional style

"You never lose the country [rural]. You can take the man out of the country, but you can never take the country out of the man"   *Jim. Practical Gardener. 2012*

A small number of Practical gardeners (who, like gardeners with a political-organic habitus) possess intergenerational connections to the land engage in conventional cultivation. Their approach to cultivation is underpinned by an *agrarian habitus* evidenced in their desire to (re)invigorate specific practices, values and a lifestyle that reflects their past lifestyles and worldviews. They see their approach to cultivation as 'organic' but employ '*conventional/Indigenous'* cultivation techniques, which have been strongly shaped by a system of internalised structures and practices they were predisposed to in their earlier lives.

The majority comprise older men and women from working class backgrounds who see the allotment as an important resource in the city to (re)invigorate 'traditional' practices they associate with cultivating the land. Their habitus provides them with strategies of action to engage in the tasks of cultivation, and ensures they act relatively consistently when in the 'field' (Bourdieu, 1977, 1994b). In many ways they display similarities with gardeners who possess a political-organic habitus who employ a companion planting approach, as they too place a high value on the land, the soil, practice and the quality of

food they produce. They see the allotment as functional for the purpose of growing food and self-provision, and identify their practices as 'organic' despite contravening 'organic' principles and techniques. Like the majority of practitioners, they express an explicit distrust in contemporary food production systems and concerns over the changing character, taste and quality of food and identify their practices as 'organic' and as complying with organic principles and techniques. However, in practice they do *not* comply with organic principles, nor do they *fully* comply with organic land husbandry techniques. Their approach to cultivation is shaped by knowledge systems, practices and experiences they were predisposed to in their earlier lives, and see their investment in UA as a means to cultivate their own 'organic' 'chemical-free' food. Michael's comments explain:

"I've always grown veg. You can't beat the stuff you grow yourself. …sure the stuff that muck you get in the shops, its pure rubbish, utter rubbish. You don't know where it comes from, what way it's grown, what artificial chemicals they've been spraying on them ….. I wouldn't trust any of that muck. You could be eatin' all sorts. …. You don't know what you'd be eatin', what people are putting into their bodies. When you grow it yourself, you know what's been used on them. You know what's safe to use and what not so that's why I grow my own"

Michael. Practical Gardener. 2012

Their *agrarian* habitus is characterised by a taste of necessity, an appreciation of what is functional and by participation and creativity (Bourdieu, 1994b) evidenced in their practices, their choice of produce and the materials they integrate and use (Figs.127a, d & e,,129, a & b). It provides them with knowledge of the soil, plants and the land, facilitates interactions with others and helps them mitigate and (re)invigorate 'traditional' practices and values they associate with the past. Jim and Margaret's comments explain:

"I'm from the country. We'd a full acre at home and grew all sorts of vegetables, potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage, onions, cabbage, parsnips and that … When I got mine [plot] I didn't have to ask. I didn't have to ask anyone how to do it. Everything I knew, that I'd learnt growing up came back. I knew automatically. Even though I haven't done it in years …there [points to his drills], I'm ready. So since I was a child I did it. It all came back to me once I started … I use the traditional methods, the drills and lazy beds. It's like riding a bicycle. You never lose it" *Jim. Practical Gardener. 2012*

"years ago you'd no choice. You'd no choice back then. You had to help. It was expected. You learnt that way. You were taught by doing it. But it never left me. I never forgot the things my parents taught me. I decided that I'd use the methods my parents used, what we would have done down home … the conventional way …and years ago like, we knew where everything came from, … and how things were made or grew should I say, where they came from…We were resourceful and I suppose we grew up in a time where things weren't like today, things weren't plentiful and you were conscious of what you did with things, you didn't waste things…..We just made do with what we had and found a new use for something. I do that here … see my compost heap? That's made from wood I found in skips, someone was throwing out. That's what you did back then"

Margaret. Practical Gardener. 2012

Their habitus is also characterised by 'a rejection of particular practices' and 'what is out of reach' (Bourdieu, 1984), evidenced in their rejection of others' practices, aesthetics and the produce they cultivate. Jim's remarks explain:

"oh you should see what some of them are doing, it's a f*** [expletive] disgrace. They don't know what they're doing. …like this lad here [points to neighbouring plot] and that man there [plot opposite] they planted fuckin everything and fuckin left it. They're just wild weeds now, and he's a load of other stuff in there, veg I don't know what it is, what the hell he's growin. It's f*** [expletive] overgrown, … that's not what allotments are for. I wouldn't be bothered doing all these fancy things … I don't know what the hell some of them are at… I grow my spuds, cauli, cabbage, a bit of broccoli, turnip and the tomatoes and that"

Jim. Practical Gardener. 2012

Similarly, Bill's comments reiterate:

"For some … it's not about the gardening at all, because the majority of people here haven't a clue, as you can see. Look at what I have there. All these one's who do these boxes from timber, sure there's no need for them at all. You'd think it was a building site with all the timber and that going into the plots."   *Bill. Practical gardener, 2012*

Their habitus reveals a commitment to '*agrarian*' principles of practice they associate with cultivating the land in their past, and they are keen to promote and disseminate knowledge of 'agrarian principles', practices and values they believe have been dismantled by capitalist modes of exchange. In that sense, there is an inherent tension in allotment gardening in terms of the methods these practitioners use, since their *core* habitus underpins their approach to cultivation, their practices, lifestyles and worldviews. It is "a past that survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured to its principles" (Bourdieu, 1977:82).

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Their habitus is evidenced in their practices and particularly in the aesthetics their cultivation practices generate, which exhibit salient features of the 'traditional' allotment aesthetic and 'conventional/traditional/indigenous' cultivation techniques (Figs. 126, 127, 128, 130, 131 a & b). Their habitus is further evidenced through their produce and the materials they integrate and use, which reflects their class positions, their knowledge and taste for particular food.

They pride themselves for their workmanship and for transforming land seldom urban land into cultivatable and productive land, and are viewed by others as keen and dedicated members of the allotment culture whose knowledgeable proves invaluable, particularly for practitioners' new to UA. They share their knowledge, produce and experience and offer in-depth explanations of the benefits of cultivating an allotment using 'traditional' cultivation techniques which they see as a better alternative to mono-cropping methods and industrialised food production techniques. Bill elucidates:

"a couple of the young lads got the plot behind me here, ... they didn't know what to do. .....I showed them how to make drills, I said to them anytime you want to know anything you can ask me.....you can read all the books you like but it's only when you get in to growing the stuff you learn. I get a lot of people coming into me and saying like.... the chap that got that plot there, when they got it they told me they knew nothing. So that chap came into me and said, I want you to come in and look at this. So I said 'ok' I'll take a look and help you start off and give you a few plants to get you going". You get a lot of people coming along and asking you for advice which I don't mind giving them because everybody has to learn"

Bill. Practical Gardener. 2013

Similarly, as Margaret observes:

"There is so much cancer appearing in people like I think that it has to be in something or in some way connected to the food chain .. they must be doing something to it …. The ones [veg] from the shops have been tampered with or what do they call it, genetically modifying them? That's what people are worried about too you know? … here' the [veg] tastes different than what you get in the shops, Oh definitely, definitely, the food is different and I'll tell you, the carrots or parsnips that you get in the shop don't even smell or taste like what you grow here …. There was always poverty or people with poor diets but equally there were a lot of people who ate better years ago than some do now with all these ready-made quick meals and jars of stuff, processed and the like, … my belief is that all this is connected to the food chain like with hormones, processed E's and all that lark, sure it has to have an effect on you. I mean they're mass producing food. …If you

were to use what nature gave us, like the seaweed sure that has iron and everything in it and that's good for you, it's natural and that has to be better than what they're doing to"

Margaret. Practical Gardener. 2012

They integrate specific materials (composting bays, water harvesting systems, recycled materials) and employ 'conventional/traditional cultivation techniques which are underpinned by knowledge of the soil, plants and animals and particular principles and values they associate purely with their *agrarian* past (Figs. 128-130). William explains:

"I till the soil to a very fine tilt, … very fine. Everything I know I learned from my father because he, he had a system, as he used to say, you can't learn it out of a book. …The only way to learn is to garden. You have to *know* what you're doing. You have to know when to transplant and so-forth and … that comes with years of experience. I showed a couple of young lads behind me here how to make them [drills] .. I lime the soil to get the acidity right … it rectifies it….. I've the water system there … that compost heap … all the bits there are bits I had at home or were given to me. I found a new use for them "

William. Practical gardener, 2012

They are keen to maintain salient features associated with 'traditional' agricultural practices they associate with allotments by integrating lazy-beds and drills, and are aware of the benefits of developing 'a partnership with nature' which gardeners complying with 'organic' principles advocate (Figs. 127a-f) Whilst they identify themselves as 'organic', paradoxically they express an aversion towards the aesthetics gardeners with an 'organic' habitus generate. In fact, they identify their practices as organic and refer to 'companion planting techniques' which suggests similarities with gardeners who are explicitly political and comply with organic principles in practice who advocate 'companion planting techniques. However, their approach to cultivation greatly differs in terms of the knowledge systems and ideologies underpinning their practices and worldviews, and emphasise how their practices require high levels of physical investment and by contrast, necessitates actively digging and nurturing the earth. As Jim and Bill's comments demonstrate:

"… the older ones use the drills, the traditional methods. Like you need to maintain it to stop the weeds taking over. Others do the beds to cut down on the work, but that's not what allotments are for. When you know how to grow, you use the whole plot. You use all the space. It's what you learned to do. .. I grow cabbages, potatoes, turnips, peas, leeks, …and you feed the ground by doing that [integrate crop residues] . The reason you do

that, say the old cabbages and that left over, you bury that in drills because … it'll make the compost quicker. If you do that then you don't have to dig in dung. That becomes the fertiliser. You're making an organic feed"

Jim. Practical Gardener. 2012

"you have to put back the nutrients into the soil too …. You do certain things for that … Everything gets tilled. Every bit of the plot is used to grow. … none of these divisions everywhere like you see the younger ones doing. I've prided myself in never having any weeds and this is the first year I've come up and found weeds so I decided that rather than just hoeing them, I'd deep dig them. This road here is the best for tilling the plots and for keeping them. That's the way they should be"   *Bill. Practical Gardener. 2013*

Whilst they subscribe to an organic ideology, identify their practices as organic and challenging the hegemony of current systems of exchange, in practice they *adapt* organic principles and contravene organic principles and techniques. Although they rotate their crops, grow a range of seasonal foods and specific plant species for weed and pest control, they tend to contravene organic principles in terms of the inputs they use. As Jim and Margaret's comments demonstrate:

"Yes, I am completely and utterly organic. I grow everything from packages of seeds… Every single thing … well I would use *a bit* of fertiliser [synthetic], that stuff there [growth hormones] to bring them on alright, …. …Oh you *have to* spray them [potatoes], especially if there's blight. You can't put tomatoes and potatoes together because if the potatoes get blight they'll wipe out an entire crop just like that [clicks fingers]. You have to spray them [pesticides] to stop them getting blight … otherwise the whole crop will be lost"   *Jim. Practical Gardener. 2013*

Margaret's comments reiterate:

"We always put manure down before putting the potatoes in … Like you dig it in before Christmas … it's going back to the generational ways of doing it. I put a trailer load of manure down. We only ever used horse manure at home and sure it was the right way. The stuff was better and the vegetables well, you could taste a vegetable that was grown using the old ways. There's nothing like the organic veg …. The old ways of doing it ….. growing in drills are best. … You can grow a wide variety of vegetables in them. Even though most of us here do [cultivate organically] up that end they don't use *anything* like tomato feed or fertilisers or that, whereas this end we *would* use fertilisers. But you'd use seaweed too, the natural stuff aswell, … Years ago they covered the fields in seaweed … it's like what others do … others do the same"

Margaret. Practical Gardener. 2012

Figure 127 (a,b,c,d). Lazy-beds & Drills – Displaying an agrarian habitus

Revealing a commitment to an organic ideology requires practitioners to reject the use of chemicals, synthetic fertilisers and growth hormone and have knowledge of inputs which may/may not be used and *must* (fully) comply with organic principles in practice (as alluded to earlier, see 7.4). However, whilst these gardeners identify themselves as organic in practice they adapt organic principles to facilitate, enhance and ensure successful cultivation and combat the constraints of nature, and (re)connect with practice and the land. In that sense, it could be argued that like gardeners whose practices are underpinned by *both* organic *and* agrarian principles and techniques (transitional-organic gardeners- see below), they use an 'organic identity' to serve other interests, motivations and needs.

Their *core* habitus is visibly evidenced in their plot layouts and through discourses with others who are at the 'same level in the game' (Bourdieu, 1977). They are keen to

maximise cultivation by using the entire plot, and exhibit their *agrarian habitus* in particular, by promoting cooperative forms of activity and reciprocal forms of exchange (see chapter 8). Their approach to cultivation produces a particular (and 'traditional' allotment) aesthetic and creates a somewhat 'domesticated' affect, which is underpinned by similar values and ideologies many gardeners new to UA are keen to generate.

Their habitus provides them with knowledge *and* experience of the ancillary social benefits that emanate from cultivating the land. They see UA as a means to generate more localised systems to transcend prevailing dichotomies (rural-urban divide) generated by capitalist modes of exchange. In that sense, their *core* habitus reflects, shapes and is shaped by practices and experiences in similar 'fields'. It provides them with strategies of action to engage in the task of cultivation and ensures they act accordingly and consistently when 'in the field' (ibid). Consequently, their core habitus allows them to (re)connect with others "at the same level in the game" (Bourdieu, 1984:101) which (re)generates a sense of belonging and restores a sense to place.

"those who are like me, who have done this and know how it works do that [maximise cultivation] . They harvest all year because they have the knowledge, they have it planned out, and know when things will be ready to harvest and therefore, have a supply of vegetables all year. There's Bill's plot [pseudonym], his plot is like mine. He likes to till the whole lot too. He has it all ready too. Paddy [pseudonym] here, he's a pensioner too and he's been digging away at his. It's only when you go into the younger lot that you see all these divisions and everything. They don't seem to know or see it as we [do], well, you have to use the whole space, that's what it's for. …but it's a bit of social as well. When I come here I can talk to Bill there and I can talk to Paddy there. They're like me. So it's a bit of camaraderie … a social thing as well as well as everything else"
William. Practical Gardener, 2012

Figure 128 (a,b,c). Traditional/Conventional Cultivation techniques, aesthetics, domesticated layouts

Figure 129 (a & b). Practices associated with an agrarian past

Figure 130 (a,b,c). Conventional companion planting domesticated affect

Figure 131 (a,b,c). Produce, digging 'spuds' and materials to facilitate practice

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7.6.   Transitional Organic Cultivation: *The Aspirational Habitus*.

Figure 132. Learning to cultivate, nurture and 'grow', and displaying the habitus.

Practitioners who engage in *transitional-organic cultivation* comprise the majority of practitioners investing in UA. Their approach to cultivation is underpinned by an *aspirational habitus* evidenced in their desire to generate alternative lifestyles, their practices, actions and (changing) worldviews. They see UA as an invaluable resource in the city to (re)connect with knowledge, practice and the land but although they identify their practices as organic, the majority use an organic identity to serve other interests, motivations and needs.

They largely comprise Socio-Organic, Gucci and Non-Gardening gardeners who, like others, share concerns over the provenance and quality of food. They favour a decentralised grass-roots model of food production and more localised systems of exchange. They express a desire to alter their consumption practices by producing and consuming 'organic' 'chemical-free' food, and see 'organics' as a particular way of thinking, acting, being in and relating to the world. However, the majority lack knowledge and/or experience of cultivating the land and/or food.

Others refer to them as '*transitional-organic*' which reflects their (changing) practices, actions and worldviews. Whilst they subscribe to an organic ideology and express a desire

to produce and consume organic food, their lack of knowledge and/or experience means

they contravene organic principles of practice and use a combination of organic and

conventional land-husbandry techniques. Whilst some gardeners possess knowledge

and/or intergenerational connections to the land, their knowledge and practices tend to be

based on childhood memories and their understandings of acting, thinking and a particular

way of being in the world. Sam explains:

"it goes back to my childhood and that. I wouldn't necessarily say that I knew a lot about gardening but I remember I was always happiest, or had happy memories, especially at my grandparents garden, … I remember sitting in their garden amongst the currant-bushes and eating all the stuff like that [laughs] …it was a happy time and I think you, … you associate it with that …"   *Sam. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Georgina explain how her approach to cultivation is underpinned by childhood memories:

"I had grown stuff with my dad alright … as a child. He loved gardening … My parents have a huge big garden and my dad would always be there pottering around, trying different plants and, he just loved it. … he grew quite a range of vegetables and as children we'd do it with him. …, I suppose I did do a bit, but I'm not sure how much I learned [laughs] … Now that he's gone [deceased], it's like I can feel him here with me, in a funny sort of way. … I like to think of him when I'm here …I kind of feel close to him when I'm here … I come up here some days and not even to work or anything. Sure I have my book and radio, I have my iphone and I'll just sit in here and relax…"
Georgina. Gucci Gardener: Dublin 2013

Their lack of knowledge and/or experience means they rely on others knowledge, on the

landscape *and* on their experiences of practice to learn 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu,

1984). As Adam and Andrew observe:

"I grew up in Dublin … in the South East area. I'd never grown before in my life. I didn't have as much as a window box before this. I mean, I knew *nothing* about gardening, I didn't even know anything about weeds [laughs] and I thought I'd lose interest very quickly. We [partner and himself] said if we're going to do this, we'd try go organic … but it's our first time doing it … and we want to keep everything organic …When we started we just put everything into the ground. … but we're learning an awful lot of stuff as we go along. It's all trial and error too… and people share what they know, give you tips n that … but we're getting there"
Adam. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

Andrews comments elucidate further:

"well over there, they're transitioning to organic. It's kinda well, 'do what you want' like. We don't interfere or make people do organic but we like to encourage it. But we're all going towards organic. Like here [section] we wouldn't be spraying any kind'a weed-

killers or that, whereas over there [section] they would use stuff [synthetic fertilisers/pesticides] … they're learning to become organic"

.   *Andrew Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013*

Whilst they subscribe to an organic ideology and express a desire to produce and consume 'organic', 'chemical-free' food, their approach to cultivation reveals that they employ conventional *and/or* a combination of both organic and conventional land husbandry techniques. Their approach to cultivation is shaped by their experiences and others' habitus', depending on who they interact with both within and beyond 'the field', which can determine the extent to which they comply with organic principles, generate an *organic habitus* and transform their practices, lifestyles and worldviews. That is, their habitus is shaped by their experiences, available resources and both past and present contexts within which they find themselves in. Their approach to cultivation reflects how they think, act, view and relate to the world around them and in particular, their motivations for investing in UA.

Some gardeners employ organic principles of practice and are learning to rotate their crops, grow a range of seasonal foods and plants for weed and pest control, to comply with organic principles and to learn *and* play by 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1977). Their approach to cultivation exhibits similarities with the majority of gardeners who engage in organic cultivation employing a concept gardening approach. Whilst their habitus reflects their aspirations to (re)connect with knowledge, practice and the land, the majority employ organic principles to serve other interests, motivations and needs. Their approach to cultivation represent an explicit desire to (re)connect with others in their locales. Fred's comments resonate with many practitioners' across the city:

"You're not doing it for food. People here who grow are probably vegetables eaters anyway. They'd have a relatively good balanced diet … most people are driving nice cars, they can afford to buy organic food. You're not going to suddenly start growing carrots, sweetcorn, peas and start eating them if you've never eaten them before, are you?
Fred. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

Adam, a young Socio-Organic gardener new to UA reiterates:

"… as a young couple living in an apartment like, … you didn't really feel like you were part of the area. We didn't know anyone around. Like, I spend almost every day of my life in a landscape in the sky. I'm definitely conscious that I live in an apartment … a squared off box in the air, … and I work in an office which is in the sky too [laughs]…. . Deep down I felt I have to go back to it, to be and feel connected to it, I mean, to the earth. I suppose it's a primeval sort of thing inside me which perhaps is in every person which at some point they have to get back to. Maybe we all have that in us. Growing things 'n getting to know people n' interacting with people you'd never meet in your everyday life living in your little box … Really it's the social thing. I mean, with your Lidl, your Aldi [supermarkets], you could buy food as cheap. It's more for the social really"

Adam. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012

They identify their practices as organic, but contravene organic principles and land husbandry techniques, and like gardeners who engage in conventional cultivation, they adapt organic principles to facilitate their motivations for investing in UA. As Deirdre's comments elucidate:

"We try to grow organically but it's not the main thing. Like we try to do it organically but we wouldn't be overly stringent on things, …yeah, [cultivating organically] it makes you more aware of the freshness of it, the taste of it and how much food has changed, what it should taste like, … how it's all force grown with fertiliser, but like … the only thing we use really is a bit of spray for blackfly and greenfly so we wouldn't be totally organic … it wouldn't be about the environment either …. the main thing for us is it's great for meeting people really"   *Deirdre. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2012*

Similarly, Maria explicates:

"Well we do the raised beds. We did them cos x [gardener with political organic habitus] said that they'd be much easier to manage especially since we'd never grown organically before like. Like they were easier and that because you could come up here after a week and the weeds'd have taken over, so this way you can just do one bed at a time, and you don't have to be getting all stressed thinking that you have to weed the whole place. … we've the spuds there in the drills at the end cos x [gardener with conventional habitus], he's from x [West] and he was saying you have to grow them like that because they need space n you've to pull the soil up around them as they're growing"

Maria. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

Whilst they express concerns over the changes in food production and see practice as a means to alter their consumption practices to improve their nutritional status and health, their approach to cultivation represents an explicit attempt to resist the dis-embedding social processes generated by late and post modernity rather than to improve the environment, their consumption practices, nutritional status or health. Fred, Deirdre and Steve, three gardeners new to UA explain:

"… even the whole environment thing, that's not it either. You wouldn't be super healthy all of a sudden or start thinking I'm going to save the planet because you've been digging an allotment or anything like that. Yes there is that side of it .Yes your diet will improve. … it's a way of de-stressing and switching off. It's just to have a place to go, n get out … it's mostly because of the social side, that's what is … meeting people ... . The difference here is, there's somebody up there, there's somebody over there. There's somebody passing by. You stop and you're chatting to people all the time. … In [home] you don't see anyone, whereas here, you're amongst others … you're chatting to people all the time"

Fred. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

As Deirdre also observes:

"… I love cooking, so it's a way of getting fresh veg but it wasn't for practical reasons, for food. It was a social thing. It gets you out. And like, there's more interaction here than there is in my [housing] estate. …. I mean, in a housing estate people don't talk to you. …But here, it's just great. You meet loads of people here. We've met a whole range of people"

Deirdre. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013

Steve, reiterates:

"You say it's for the organic food, but it's for the social, and the sheer escapism of it. Sure I give most of what I grow away to other people"

Steve. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

Similar to gardeners with a political-organic habitus, the majority employ a concept gardening approach, to facilitate their lack of knowledge, ease maintenance and work-time constraints (Figs. 133-134b). They cultivate their plots symmetrically, integrate recycled materials and cultural artefacts and grow a range of produce, colourful flora and blooms which reflect their motivations, habitus, tastes and (changing) worldviews. However, the majority aestheticize their plots to improve the plot aesthetic and lure others to stop and interact for a while (Figs. 135-137, 138, 140 140b-144b). Some of these gardeners are influenced by an 'agrarian habitus' evidenced in their desire to (re)invigorate particular values, practices and ideologies they associate with their earlier lives (past connections to the land), which they are keen to relay to others and display through various symbols and signs (See figs 146 a, b & c). Others however, employ a combination of both organic *and* conventional cultivation methods but which they employ to facilitate similar motivations and needs. Their approach to cultivation contributes to and shapes a 'habitus' that reflects their aspirations and motivations for investing in UA.

"We'd use the drills alright *and'd* do the old traditional ways there that she'd [wife] would've learnt… but we also have the raised beds there too. Everyone seems to use them"   *Andrew. Socio-Organic Gardener. 2013*

Whilst they employ diverse approaches, collectively their practices reflect how they think, act, view and relate to the world around them, and desire to generate an alternative quality of life. Through practice and interactions with unknown others on their allotment sites, they learn the 'rules of the game' which help shape a habitus which facilitates interactions (and helps generate an alternative lifestyle) within *and* beyond the boundaries of their allotment sites. Their habitus helps them (re)connect with others who are at the 'same level in the game' which many tend to see as transformative, in terms of their lifestyles and worldviews. Their approach to cultivation produces a particular habitus which, on entering a given field (organics, UA, agrarian), helps them (re)connect with others who share similar habitus, lifestyles and worldviews. That is, their 'transitional-organic' habitus recognises' the rules of the game' which they draw on as a resource to transform their lifestyles and (re)connect with others and restore a sense of belonging to place. Other gardeners who possess an 'organic habitus' are aware of the potential their habitus has in terms of transforming the quality of the urban and everyday urban life.
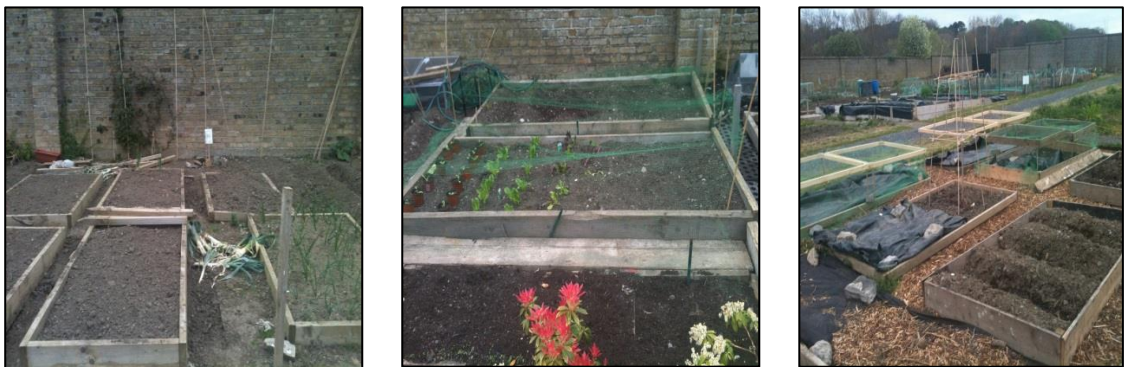
Figure 133 (a,b,c). Replicating the 'concept gardening' approach

Figure 134 (a,b,c).Replicating concept gardening and using recycled materials

Figure 135 (a,b,c).Employing concept gardening & displaying changing principles and worldviews

Figure 136 (a,b,c).Integrating water harvesting systems and urban waste to facilitate/enhance practice

Figure 137 (a,b,c). Using concept gardening methods, displaying a 'new organic identity' and knowledge

Figure 138 (a,b,c).Concept Gardening & Displaying a 'new' organic identity/transitional-organic habitus

Figure 139 (a,b,c).Concept gardening & displaying transitional-organic habitus & 'organic 'identity'

Figure 140 (a,b,c).. Displaying 'organic identity & habitus

Figure 141 (a,b,c). Integrating blooms, companion 'and' concept gardening techniques
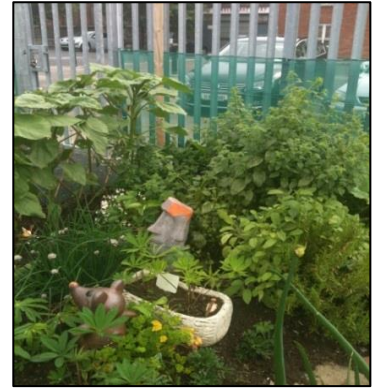
Figure 142 (a,b,c). Symmetrical layouts, planting styles and designs

Figure 143 (a,b,c). Symmetry, colourful displays and.'the lure of the aesthetic'

Figure 144 (a,b,c).Poly-tunnels and diverse produce- (changing) consumption practices and tastes

Figure 145 (a,b,c,d,e,f). Displaying changing principles, ideologies, produce and worldviews.

7.7. **Conclusion**

Food touches everything important to people; it marks social difference, and strengthens social bonds (Counihan & van Esterik, 1997). What we eat, where we get our food, and who we share it with are central questions that structure human life (Kortright and Wakefield, 2011:39). However, the production and consumption of food has changed radically in recent years, as food has become bound increasingly tightly within an integrating and uneven global food system (Weis, 2007). Changes in food production have meant that food has taken on new meanings, new values and new ideologies. How food is produced, where it is produced and how it is consumed have altered the meaning and symbolic value of food, detached food from time, space and cultural traditions and generated hegemonic ideologies around its character, quality and taste. Scholars concerned with the political economy of food suggest that such change is convincing individuals that the existing order of things is either right, inevitable or irresistible (Sexton, 1996; Weis, 2007). However, such change has raised growing concerns over the economic, environmental and social costs of current food systems (food provenance, content, quality, character, changing taste & nutritional value of food, food miles, food insecurity, ecological footprint, declining bio-diversity, growing levels of obesity and growing health concerns) (Madoff, 2000; McMichael, 2001; Weis, 2007; Carolan, 2012).

Industrial food systems have aestheticized, domesticated and subjugated food production systems and created an antithesis between town and country, rural and urban and humans and nature by obscuring the links between them. Moreover, compelling evidence suggests that the world's agricultural food system is in the midst of rapid change, that food and farming have become two radically different worlds, and that agriculture is losing its place as an 'anchor in societies' on a global scale (Madoff, 2000; McMicahel, 2001; Weis, 2007; Carolan, 2012). Technological developments in agriculture have meant that diets have converged on a global scale and that rows of crops have been replaced by aisles and shelves and weekly shopping trips (Carolan, 2012:2). Moreover, agri-transnational corporations (ANC's) are gaining increasing control over the types of food being produced, the content, provenance and quality of food and the means by which food is being distributed, marketed and consumed (Weis, 2007; Carolan, 2012). In that sense, food, like urban public space, has been reduced to another commodity on a global scale. Moreover, such change has created a dependency on global food systems and disconnected urban dwellers from the land, knowledge, nature and practice, and is effectively effacing the complex web of social relations that run through the production, distribution and consumption of food (McClintock, 2010). However, as the economic, environmental and social costs of the global food system become better understood, many urban dwellers are taking strategies of action as a form of resistance to the disconnections, distrust and disenchantment with modern food systems, and seeking alternatives by cultivating their own 'organic', 'chemical-free' food on allotments.

By engaging in the tasks of cultivation, interacting with others on allotment sites, sharing knowledge and experiences of practice, and employing particular principles of practice on site, urban dwellers are generating (re)embedding social processes and (re)connecting with the land, knowledge, nature and practice and in particular, to others in their locales. Their practices I argue, represent a form of resistance to the disconnections, distrust and

disenchantment with modern food systems and provide a means of (re)generating alternative lifestyles, more transparent trustworthy models of food production, and provide a means of combatting the social dis-embeddedness generated by contemporary urban life.

To understand cultivation practices on allotments and identify *how* urban dwellers are (re)generating (re)embedding social processes, (re)connecting with the land, knowledge, nature and practice *and* to the social relations inherent in food production and consumption, this chapter presents three growing cultures or what can otherwise be referred to as 'Fields of Action': (1) Organic cultivation, (2) Conventional cultivation, and (3) Transitional-Organic Cultivation which explicate the complexity of factors governing cultivation practices on allotments and practitioners' relationship to food. Building on Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concept of '*habitus*' this chapter argues that cultivation practices on allotments are underpinned by practitioners' *core* habitus, which influences their approach to cultivation, their actions, practices and worldviews. Whilst each is unique in character, the boundaries between them are fluid. Through practice and interactions with unknown others and by employing specific principles of practice on site, plot-holders alter their position on the continuum to reflect their desire to generate alternative lifestyles, and their (changing) practices, actions and worldviews. However, despite their diverse approaches, their ideologies and worldviews, their approaches to cultivation I argue, are underpinned by a desire to (re)invigorate *similar* values and practices to alter the quality of everyday urban life. Whilst the majority of practitioners' identify their practices as 'organic' and are keen to employ 'organic' principles and techniques, the evidence suggests that the majority of practitioners' use an 'organic identity' to serve other interests, motivations and needs. Their practices I argue, represent an explicit attempt to resist the dis-embedding social processes generated by modernity, to (re)connect with others and to foment and restore a sense of belonging by cultivating

alongside others who share an interest in cultivating the land. In that sense their practices can be understood as '*restituitive practices'* (McClintock, 2010), in terms of their attempt to reduce the *metabolic* (ecological and environmental), *social* (de-commodification of land, labour and food) and *individual rifts* (alienation/individual connections to labour and nature) (McClintock, 2010). By cultivating alongside unknown others in this designated space (albeit in different ways), urban dwellers identify themselves as belonging to a community of users who share an interest in cultivating the land. The allotment provides an arena for socialising and sociality and helps urban dwellers move beyond the constraints and social divisions generated modernity (insufficient land/space, the homogenisation/subjugation of food production, *and* social dis-embeddedness) and improve the quality of urban life. The following chapter uncovers the potential and significance of urban allotments for improving the well-being and liveability of the city and the quality of everyday urban life.

8. .
CULTIVATING SOCIALITY, COMMUNALITY
& A SHARED POLITICS OF PLACE

Figure 146.Cultivating Communality. Image courtesy of Ralph Bingham.

"You get to meet lots of different people and that's what I love about it here …and, when you walk in that gate everyone's the same, everyone's an allotment grower. You're growing a community *while* growing veg"

Deirdre, Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

8.1. **Introduction**

Urban dwellers value their time on the allotment. They provide an arena for socialising and sociality, for the individual and collective cultivation, exchange and the dissemination of knowledge and skills. They are creatively designed, constructed and functionally adapted to facilitate individual and collective needs (see chapter 5 & 6), and provide a focal point to meet and interact with unknown others, where community can (re)generate and coalesce. Their value is *in* their sociability and the *experiences* interactions generate, which facilitates the (re)construction of a 'sense of community' and restores a sense of belonging to place. Not only do allotments provide a range of therapeutic (and ecological) functions (both in a direct and indirect sense) but I argue, constitute important sites of 'civic engagement'. They are sites of 'civil interfaces', where barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed by engaging in similar

activities in this designated space (Corcoran & Kettle, 2015). They provide a means to practice cooperation, promote social levelling, mutual respect and tolerance of diversity for friend and stranger alike. They are I argue, *spaces of potential* that improve the well-being and liveability of the city and the quality of everyday urban life.

This chapter examines the various forms of sociality generated by engaging in UA, and illuminates the *potential* (and significance) of allotments as a new (and somewhat revived) form of urban public space. The chapter takes as its point of departure an examination of *how* modernity has impacted on (the quality of) urban public life through a textured analysis of plot-holder's experiences of the urban, and contemporary urban life. The chapter examines various forms of sociality generated on allotments through activities practitioner's engage in on site, and illuminates *how* allotments facilitate and promote social and 'civil' integration (Vertovec, 2007) and a shared politics of place. It examines the various factors that facilitate interaction and illuminates *how* urban dwellers are generating resisting the dis-embedding processes (generated by modernity) to restore a sense of belonging to community and place. Crucially, the chapter illuminates the importance of allotments for improving the vivacity in urban public space, and reveals how they provide a means to engage in "everyday practices for getting-on with others, in the inherently fleeting encounters that comprise city life" (Vertovec, 2007:3). The are, I argue, important *spaces of potential* (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007) that proffer a template for reform, which provide a means to promote (and engage in) principles of civility (common courtesies, simple forms of acknowledgement and indifference towards diversity), which Vertovec (2007) contends, are necessary pre-requisites for getting along with others, engendering social integration and improving the quality of contemporary urban life.

8.2. Dis-embeddedness, Re-embeddedness and the magic of ordinary interactions

A strong feature in all interviews was that respondents tended primarily to describe allotments in terms of their social value rather than their cultivation value. Regardless of age, gender, class, ethnicity or motivations for investing in UA, plot-holders identified allotments as a principle source of sociality and a space to (re)connect with others in their (sub)urban locales. Unlike the world beyond its boundaries, which has had significant impacts on community and social life (see below), plot-holders value their time on the allotment for (re)generating a sense of togetherness through which the dis-embeddedness associated with contemporary urban life can be resolved. They are sites conducive to lingering where urban dwellers can engage in creative/social bonding practices with unknown others in their locales, which facilitates the (re)construction of a stable harmonious self-concept (Schouten, 1991), and restores a strong sense of belonging to place. They are important *spaces of potential* that transform the quality of urban life, since they allow urban dwellers to join in concert and give shape to their immediate environs, and provide opportunities to mingle and interact. Indeed, plot-holders value their allotments as a new (and somewhat revived) form of public space which restores a sense of personal identification with and belonging to a particular group and/or community and place. Lisa and Sarah, two Socio-organic gardeners explain:

"It's definitely a social thing … a place to meet people … It's not even a health thing 'cos we'll still go and have a burger, …you'll still have your fag [cigarette] and your bottle of wine. It gives people an excuse to meet others and chat …and create a community"

Lisa. Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2012

Similarly, Sarah reiterates:

"They're definitely a social thing. It gives you an excuse to interact and engage with each other… It's getting out, meeting others and bonding, getting to know your neighbours, making connections, creating a community spirit … and a nice safe environment for you and your family. … It's the social side *definitely,* that's why people do it… Cultivating your plot and that is great and the food is very much appreciated … but it's about creating a community spirit more-so than it is about food"

Sarah: Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2012

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Similarly, Pat, an Idealist explicates:

"It's not just about growing food. It has environmental benefits, educational benefits, social benefits. It regenerates communities and areas that have become eyesores. It has endless scope. It has completely transformed the place [locale] … I mean, because you have all these estates, people feel disconnected (dis-embedded). They're so busy working and that they never have time to know their neighbour. Here, people are out in the fresh air, meeting people, … there's a *huge* social end-part of it. It's one way of bringing people together. It's an alternative way of life, a good one. It has transformed *my* life"

Pat. Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2012

Significantly, the majority of practitioners report that interactions on allotments have helped them move beyond the constraints and social divisions generated by contemporary urban life (insufficient land/space, the homogenisation/subjugation of food production, *and* social dis-embeddedness/disconnectedness). Their responses suggest the promotion of 'civil interfacing', social integration and a sense of attachment and belonging, which transforms the quality of urban life. As Adams comments illustrate:

"it's phenomenal what this does for you. It gives you what you kind of strive to have in life, what you expect life to be. It's the ideal. We've met people we'd never have met …never had met them had it not been for the allotments. It's something that makes you connect to other people. … and gives you a space in the city you wouldn't normally have. But there's definitely a *huge* social benefit to it. I can't *believe* how much this has changed my life. Like it might look from the outside that you're growing veg but you're growing a whole lot more; your self-esteem, relationships and growing a community … You feel part of the area you live in having this … it's just fantastic"

Adam. Socio-organic gardener, 2013

Similarly, Deborah, a young professional living in an apartment in the city explains how her investment in her local allotment has helped her (and her partner) combat the social dis-embeddedness generated by modernity, and engender a sense of belonging in their suburban locale:

"…It's just brilliant . … we've met people we'd never have met here, *never* have met them had it not been for the allotments. …Like, there's more interaction here than there is in the estate where we live and that's what I love about it here. …People [beyond the boundaries] don't have time anymore .Everyone's rushing around, …You don't get to meet or chat to your neighbours … I mean, you're on your own even though you're surrounded by people. Whereas here you get to know *loads* of people. You're meeting lots of different people from the area, from all walks of life, that's the beauty of it. It's something that makes you connect with other people … you're growing your *own* food in the city … *and* you're part of a community"

Deborah. Socio-organic gardener, 2013

Indeed, plot-holders are keen to differentiate between forms of sociality on allotments as distinct from those beyond the boundaries of allotment sites. They see modernity as having altered individuals' responsiveness towards others in terms of how they listen, converse and respond. They see modernity as having disconnected urban dwellers, devaluing traditional' values, practices and ideologies that provided a sense of belonging to community and place, and identify forms of sociality on allotments as distinct from those evidenced beyond the boundaries of allotment sites. They see contemporary forms of sociality as increasingly individualistic, narcissistic and instrumental and largely dictated by functionality, rather than being based on common values of cooperation or solidarities evidenced in the past. They explain how recent changes in the city have transformed individual and place identities and the quality of urban public life. They explain how modernity has created a utilitarian ethos and cultivated a culture of individualism, narcissism and greed which they believe, has led to a decline in a sense of community, solidarity and social cohesion many associate with the past. Martha, a Practical gardener explains:

"It's not like it was years ago where everyone helped each other out … That's all gone now … people have just got caught up in their own little worlds, and they don't bother with you anymore. … they don't speak to you. People are all out for themselves. Money has done that – greed. Now people hardly give you the time of day"

Martha. Practical Gardener, 2013

They see the proliferation of commercial and residential development, the gentrification of city neighbourhoods and the extensive privatization of public space as having a profound impact on the pace, tempo and quality of life in the city and the general conduct of everyday life. Certainly, they attribute the decline in a sense of community with the extensive privatization of public space, and explain how recent developments have led to a decline in focal points in the city where urban dwellers can mingle and interact and where community can (re)generate and coalesce. As Lisa observes:

"yes, there's greens [small parks], but no-body uses them except for the odd kid playing football for an hour or two. You certainly wouldn't meet adults on them. There's nowhere

for adults to get together really …. Houses were built on every bit of available land and there isn't enough resources for people to do things together as a community… sure there's not even seating there [greens] because they'll attract anti-social behaviour, so you don't get to meet people"   *Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Similarly, Adam reiterates:

"we're living in that apartment for over five years and we don't know anyone there, not a single person. You're boxed in. You've no-where to go, there's no garden, no space at all … You'd meet people going in and out and you'd say hello n that, but that'd be about the sum of it. … We don't feel there's any kind of community. ….It's no wonder cos the city and the apartments certainly don't facilitate it. … Just look at the lack of space in this immediate area alone where you can *actually* meet the locals. There isn't anywhere! ... Every bit of space has been taken up for buildings, carparks, offices, shops …You *don't* meet people … You don't *really* get to know your neighbours, …We didn't think we'd stay [residing] here*"*   *Adam. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Some plot-holders believe cars have created barriers of interaction and enabled the

extension of 'the privatization of (private) space' (Wickham, 2006), and hindering the

construction of a sense of community and locally bound networks and social ties. For

others, increased residential mobility during Ireland's period of economic boom

transformed social relations and generated a loss of sense of belonging, and a tenuous

attachment to place. Elaine and Andrew also explain:

"well [beyond the boundaries] people don't stop and talk like they did before … .When people get home from work they get out of their cars, run into their houses and close the door … You don't see them … it might be days before you'd meet them. They're so busy … Everyone's juggling work, families n' all that"
                                                    Elaine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011

 "That connection between people … well, it's gone. People don't talk to each other now like before. They're too busy … people don't know where they belong anymore"
                                                    Andrew. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Increased levels of residential mobility during the boom years have meant that primary

ties have become spatially dispersed, and that intimate social relations now tend to be

organised on differentiated social networks rather than on community bonds or

solidarities evidenced in the past. Life has become busier, more anxiety ridden and

increasingly pressured, and the sense that a standard timetable shared by society no longer

holds (O'Carroll, in Corcoran & Share, 2008; 254). Everyday life has become increasingly

determined by global forces, hyper-consumerism and competitive practices. More time is spent commuting, less time is spent on leisure and individuals are retreating into more privatized worlds. In fact, the evidence suggests that more time is spent moving on what Putnam (2001) refers to as 'a triangle of movement' between work, shopping centres and the home. As Séan, a young Socio-Organic gardener explains:

"it's crazy, crazy stuff. Like I was doing a seventy hour week … You don't see anyone, anyone when you're working like that …. I was running on reserve … you've no time at all. You're going to work, back home, eating, sleeping and then get up the next day and join the rat race all over again … Its crazy stuff, crazy. You don't *see* people [in locale] when you're going at that pace. You don't *have* any time "

Séan, Socio-organic gardener, 2013

Interactions are largely fleeting, momentary and in many cases, hardly every extend beyond a smile or a polite word exchanged in passing. Everyday interactions are largely based on functionality rather than being based on common values or cooperation. However, plot-holders view allotments as an invaluable resource in their locales which provides and a means to restore the social relations and a sense of community in their locales. Andrew a Practical gardener whose motivations for investing in UA are underpinned by a desire to (re)invigorate traditional practices, values and ideologies he associates with the past, resonate with the majority of practitioners investing in UA today:

"Things have changed … people want a bit of what we used to have back. Years ago everyone looked out for each other. Where I grew up the women would be out talking all the time on the street or they'd be talkin' across the fence n' even chattin' when they'd be hanging out the washing …Everyone looked out for each other. It was like a big family really. Everybody watched everyone else's kids and you knew that if you stepped out of line there was a granny in a bedroom window watching you. … There's none of that now, that's all gone. Nowadays, people don't want to talk to you …People have no time …People don't know where they belong anymore …and they want a bit of what we used to have back. Allotments allow people to do that …"

Andrew Practical Gardener, 2013

Equally, Elaine explains how such change has had an impact on individual and collective identities and the general quality of urban public life:

"People don't stop and talk like they did before … There's no time anymore. Everyone's busy … working, running around. …*everyone's* rushing around. …It's no wonder that there's no sense of community spirit"

Elaine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011

And Elaine's comments resonate with Bob's, and the majority of practitioners' investing in UA today:

"Life has changed so much … it has become more complex …With my job, I didn't have *any* time … Everyone's so busy between work and raising families that there's little time left for them [urban dwellers] to get to know others well"

Bob. Key Champion, 2013

However, urban dwellers see their foray into allotments as a means of resistance to those processes. The allotment provides an opportunity to (re)generate friendships, networks a sense of community and locally bound social ties. They are keen to illuminate the social dividends that flow from UA, and are particularly keen to explain how the landscape provides opportunities for social mixing with individuals they may not otherwise (have an opportunity to) interact with or meet.

In fact, a patch of ground re-grounds individuals, particularly urban dwellers living fast-paced compartmentalised lives. It provides an opportunity to generate elective affinities with unknown others, particularly for urban dwellers who feel socially isolated residing in heterogeneously populated locales. They see UA as a means to integrate with others and restore values, practices and ideologies they associate with the past, which they also believe provide a better notion of what provides a sense of community and engenders a sense of belonging to place. In fact, some see UA as an opportunity to garner support from other local residents to regenerate a strong and cohesive notion of community in their urban locales. As Sarah a young professional middle-class practitioners comments illustrate:

"Even though you're surrounded by people, the city can be extremely lonely … that's why there's such an interest in this [UA]… It's for social reasons *really*. People just want the same thing, … that sense of community spirit. Sure you can buy veg cheaper if you really wanted veg. It just gives you that excuse to be able to meet people. We are *always* bringing people in [onto site] that show an interest in it. We'd invite people to come in and take a look and you know … they're delighted to be asked. People are particularly keen to come

in. Initially conversations are based on the produce, but you *always* end up talking about the community here, *always.…* And they would *always* comment on how nice it would be to be part of it … There's a lot of conversations about … how much things have changed …generally you would start chatting about the allotments, how long they're here and then you might have another resident who could be working on their piece who would look up and automatically say hello to that person too, so it welcoming for people

Sarah: Socio-Organic Gardener. Dublin 2012

In many ways allotments serve the same function as social clubs which provide a personal sense of identification with and belonging to place. However, they stand in contradistinction to other forms of recreation, as there are no prerequisites to practice such as possessing knowledge, previous experience and/or skills. Rather, a *key feature* of allotments is that they facilitate the striking up of easy interactions and allow urban mingle and interact with unknown others while (re)connecting with knowledge, practice and the land. They are particularly keen to express how they provide a focal point to meet and interact with unknown others and see allotments as an invaluable resource in the city which facilitates the (re)construction of a sense of community and engenders a strong sense of belonging and attachment to place. As Lisa observes:

"…it's not really a club but in a way it is if that makes sense? I wouldn't think of it in the same way because you don't have to be an expert or anything. Anyone can do this. You're meeting people, doing the same thing and you're part of it …. but you *don't have to* know anything to be able to do this. Plus, you're freer to come and go as you please, use the plot in your own time … they're a focal point for people to meet"

Lisa. Socio-organic gardener, 2012

And Deirdre's comments reiterate:

" … everyone and *anyone* can do this. Like my parents never did anything like this so I'd no experience *at all, nothing* before getting this… You don't *have to* know anything. That's the great thing about this. You learn from others. People can learn from others if they don't know much because *everyone* is willing to give a hand. Everyone helps each other …and anyone can use a spade or fork … you feel part of the community. It's a strong community and everyone is part of it"

Deirdre, Socio-organic gardener, 2013

Adam and Clare, a young professional middle-class couple living in an apartment in the inner city, and Grace, a middle-aged practitioner' residing in a large (and relatively new) residential development in the suburbs see their local allotment as an invaluable resource in city to meet and interact with others, generate friendships and locally bound social ties.

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Prior to their investment in their local allotment they felt socially dis-embedded and disenfranchised with city life. However, they are keen to explain how their investment in their allotments provided opportunities to meet and interact with others on their locales and how they in turn have engendered and restored a strong sense of belonging, which has transformed their quality of life: Adam explains:

" … well before [renting allotment] I'd say that I felt stuck, like it was a temporary move … that we wouldn't stay here [residence] because you didn't really feel like you were part of the area … part of the community. This wouldn't be seen as a great area in Dublin to live in either … people I suppose would've kept to themselves when they moved in ….but now [since investing in UA] I have to say, …. I never thought I'd feel this way. There's a lot of work but the reward justifies the work in every aspect, from growing your own veg to meeting all these people, … .It's hard to explain. It's a wonderful feeling. It has been life-changing. It's changed my life like I never thought possible … you're growing food *and* you're growing a community if you pardon the pun …"

Adam. Socio-Organic Gardener: 2012

Clare, expands this and says:

" …yes, this has *definitely* brought people together … it's just brilliant, and such a simple thing when you think about it. We've met people here we'd never have met here [locale] had it not been for the allotments. … I mean, there's more interaction here than with people where we live, and we're there almost four years … It's definitely made us meet people in the area"   *Clare. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Similarly, Grace explains how her investment in her local allotment has helped urban dwellers generate a common ground, which restores a sense of belonging and transformed her quality of life:

"Well there [in her residential locale] it's not really like home compared to this. This is more like home. I feel more at home here than I do at home [residence] if you know what I mean? They're all lovely people here. It has rejuvenated us [herself and her spouse]. It's a common ground that's what it is, and it's lovely to have that sort of feeling in a place … that you belong"   *Grace. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011*

Moreover, allotments provide a means to practice co-operation and opportunities to (re)invigorate particular values such as responsibility, civility and trust. They promote social levelling, engender social integration and a 'shared politics of place'. As Andrew observes:

"Well it'd remind you of years ago, when everybody knew everybody on the street … Like years ago when you'd see women talking across walls and the kids running around …

Having an allotment is the same as back then. Even though you're all doing your own thing you're friendly with everybody … and you trust 'n help each other … Everyone looks out for one another …People work together. It's great. It's just fantastic"

Andrew. Practical gardener, 2013

In fact, Key champions stress the potential of allotments for promoting social levelling and engendering a *new* type of politics of place, which facilitates *and* promotes social integration in many urban locales. The landscape provides opportunities for social mixing between diverse class and ethnic groupings plot-holders may not otherwise interact with and/or meet. They provide a means to practice cooperation which facilitates the (re)construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground. As Bob, a Key Champions comments demonstrate:

"That's the thing about allotments. It doesn't matter what your class background is or where you're from. That doesn't come into it. Your class doesn't matter here … That's the beauty of allotments. When you walk in that gate you're the same …. *everyone's* an allotment grower.   … no-one is any different here …"

Bob, Key champion, 2013

Similarly, Bernard's comments illustrate:

 "That's the thing about allotments. It doesn't matter what your class background is or where you're from. That doesn't come into it. Your class doesn't matter here … That's the beauty of allotments. When you walk in that gate you're the same …. *everyone's* an allotment grower.   … no-one is any different here …"

Bob, Key champion, 2013

In fact, Bernard is particularly keen to point out the social dividends flowing from UA .Like others, he explains how social categorisations are parked at the point of entry which promotes social levelling and a new kind of politics of place. As a Key Champion keen to improve the ecological and environmental quality of the city and the general quality of urban life, and explains how the allotment provides opportunities for social mixing between diverse class and ethic groupings in his inner city locale. He is particularly keen to point out how allotments facilitate *and* promote the (re)construction of a sense of *communality*, tolerance, diversity and a sense of responsibility to, community and place. He explains how they provide a means to transcend social cleavages generated by modernity and contemporary urban life (see chapter 4). As Bernard explains:

"Allotments aren't just about growing, it's about participating as well. You're learning …improving the environment and passing on knowledge *by* participating. They're about being *more* responsible, .They definitely promote that. There's a *huge* part of it that's social;- including people, bringing people together, working together in communities, building stronger relationships *between* people in communities, integrating people, particularly those who are socially isolated … lonely, and the socially marginalised..."

Bernard, Key Champion. 2013

He is particularly keen to illuminate the benefits of allotments have generated in his inner city locale and particularly how social marginalised groups have engendered a sense of responsibility to others, their communities, actions and worldviews. By engaging in similar activities in this designated space, he explains how allotments provide a means to practice cooperation, engender social levelling and restore bonds of solidarity and trust. He illuminates the potential of allotments for improving social relations, engendering social integration and a more public politics of place. By interacting, participating and engaging with unknown others and similar activities on his local allotment, Bernard illuminates the potential of allotments as a new form of urban public space:

"…those lads [marginalised youths] … they are working on the plots and growing stuff. It has *completely* transformed them … They're more responsible … . The lads [older plot-holders] have been giving them tips, showing them the ropes … Its remarkable the change, remarkable. Since then, there's been no windows' broken, the drug dealing has stopped. It gives people the freedom to choose a different path of life too, and not just repeat the same patterns. … what it does is, it instils responsibility … They feel they belong … it's remarkable, remarkable the change"

Bernard, Key Champion. 2013

Indeed, Key champions and UA advocates are particularly keen to focus on the social dividends flowing from UA. They explain how allotments engender a sense of local solidarity, promote 'civic engagement', and what is commonly known as social capital[19]:

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[19] Social Capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986) refers to networks of relationships which constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, providing members with "collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit in the various sense of the word" (Bourdieu, 1986:249). Much of this capital is embedded within networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition, the benefits of which are mediated through extra-familial relationships (for example, durable obligations arising from feelings of gratitude, respect and friendship) The concept has become a popular export from sociological theory into everyday language, with recent writings extending the definition to include features of civic consciousness, and communities. For example, for Putnam (2000), social capital refers to the acquisition of civic consciousness nurtured by networks, social ties, trust and mutual support.

. By participating and engaging in similar practices, and interacting with unknown unknown others this designated space, urban dwellers (re)invigorate traditional values, practices and ideologies and transform their lifestyles and quality of life. Jan's comments also demonstrate:

 "Well, the theory is, if your daddy's growing his onions or your granddad is growing his carrots here you're not going to do a drug deal beside him. It's a theory, but it *does* work. I think it creates that sense of responsibility to the area too. ….You're never going to get rid of anti-social behaviour completely …but it [UA] has *definitely* helped this community in an *enormous* amount of ways, … . They [socially marginalised] won't destroy an area they've an attachment to. I've seen them here, …the young fella who would have been creating a stinker [before participation in UA] and before you know it they [plot-holders] have them over and he's helping him do the veg … The plot-holders are very good at bringing the lads in, getting them involved …. It's *remarkable* what people have done, *remarkable* … The allotments have facilitated that … They should be made available to everyone, in all areas"   *Jan. Key Champion, 2013*

Indeed, across all sites in the city plot-holders eagerly explain how UA facilitates and promotes social integration, tolerance of diversity and a sense of mutuality and trust, since interactions are inspired by what urban dwellers 'have in common, rather than by what divide them' (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007; Vertovec, 2007). There is a general willingness to eschew difference and interact with unknown others on site, which generates a sense of responsibility, solidarity and trust, which restores a sense of belonging to community and place. As Bob's comments demonstrate:

" ... it's not about growing food for the body, it's about growing food for the soul. …. It's all about doing things *together, … improving* things, … talking to people, … *including* people … Then there's the extra benefit of the veg … . It's about getting people involved in their own community and doing things *right*. It's about pooling and getting people involved, bringing people back together to support each other … and making things better, … It doesn't matter *what* your background is because here, everyone is doing the same thing. Everyone's just growing food together. They've a common interest. We've all sorts of people here, people from *all* walks of life are growing food here together … there's *no* difference … .*Everyone's* an allotment grower here …and they spend time getting to know people *through* growing food"   *Bob, Key Champion. 2013*

Similarly, Bernard reiterates:

"it's not *just* about growing, it's about participation as well. …passing on knowledge *through* participation …. including people - people working together in communities, building stronger relationships between people. It gives people a chance to communicate their ideas … helping them how to conquer social problems, bringing people together … People can mix with others and be educated about the benefits to the environment and the

social benefits at the same time. It gives people the freedom to choose …and not repeat the same patterns … There's a *whole range* of things to it that people can benefit from. The range is *endless*. The potential of this is *huge*"

Bernard, Key Champion. 2013

There is a palpable sense of connectedness, a general willingness to interact, participate and engage with unknown others (despite difference). Plot-holders regularly stop and interact with unknown others, disseminate knowledge, exchange produce, their physical labour, experience and skills, which provides the basis for friendships, networks and a sense of community and generates a *new* kind of politics of place. In fact, one of the most significant features of allotments is that they facilitate the striking up of easy interactions *and* allow urban dwellers to (re)connect with knowledge, practice and the land, which provides the basis for friendships, networks and a collective sense of identification with others, and a sense of mutuality, solidarity and trust. Their value is *in* their sociability and the experiences interactions with 'strangers' generate, which illuminates *the potential* of allotments for enhancing social capital, engendering social integration, and facilitating (and promoting*)* a new kind of politics of place.

8.3. **Cultivating sociality, social levelling and a 'shared politics of place'**

As we have seen, a strong feature of allotments is that they afford urban dwellers an opportunity to generate elective affinities[20] by engaging in activities that focus purely on cultivating the land. There is a palpable sense of connectedness with others, and a general willingness to eschew difference when engaging in similar activities in this 'shared-in-common space'. By interacting with unknown others urban dwellers transform their *habitus*, lifestyles and worldviews, and generate new forms of sociality that stand in contradistinction to those beyond the boundaries of allotment which transforms the quality of urban life.

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[20] Collective affinities refers to a sense of belonging to a group formed around a shared/common goal and a sense of likeminded-ness.

Interactions vary from intimate social ties between neighbouring plot-holders to less intimate, weaker social ties between less familiar practitioners' and strangers passing-by. A premium is placed on a willingness to interact with 'strangers' and engage in reciprocal forms of exchange. There is a general sense of fellowship and mutuality which welds an allotment culture that promotes tolerance of diversity and a different kind of politics of place. Interactions are informal, organic and serendipitous rather than being formal or engineered. They are largely convivial, amiable and jovial and predicated on a willingness to interact, participate and engage with friend and stranger alike. Andrew and Catherine elucidate:

"You're having the craic [fun] while you're working away. Like Paddy hasn't been up in a while but like he'd come over and he'd say 'How have you been? I haven't seen you in ages" and I'd say … 'I've been in jail….I got 6 months' [laughs] …and then I'd be sayin " I see you've put a new shed up, I hope you've paid your council tax on that" [laughs]. …it's a bit of banter, a bit of slagging and that … It goes on all the time. … .The women can be just as quick too. They've the craic and they'd be quick to join in [laughs]"

Andrew. Practical gardener, 2013

"…Here you're friendly with everybody …. Say like Joe up there, if you saw blight say on his potatoes and you knew he was away on holidays, you'd go up with sulphox and sort it for him. If Mary wanted to go away, … they'd go up and water her stuff. .. You look after each other here …It's like leaving your key with your neighbour. You trust them in the same way, that's how it is …that's how it was years ago … and it's the same here … Everyone helps each other here … you belong to the community"

Catherine, Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

However, there is a certain tension inherent in allotment gardening that centres on maintaining the aesthetic, evidenced through comments made about practices others employ on site. Bob, a key champion explains:

"The point is that if you've a plot and someone has one with loads of weeds and they're blowing onto your plot that's not fair. When you think of all the hard work and investment people put in. That's what we do [committee] … If people have a problem with that [weeds] they generally come to x [committee member] or myself and we try and resolve them. Like if there's a problem with water or with somebody who has too many weeds in their plot n that sort of thing. So that's what we do there and it's very amicable. People generally accept that, and it sorts those things out without hassle"   *Bob, Key Champion. 2013*

Nevertheless, the opportunity to engage in casual interactions with unknown others was one of the most valued aspects of engaging in UA. Plot-holders value the informal, organic

and casual nature of interactions and value their allotments for facilitating the (re)construction of loose bonds rather than deep or lasting attachments with others on site. Casual interactions comprise two main types: *Routine/regular* interactions and *Chance/Serendipitous* interactions.

8.3.1. Routine/Regular interactions

Routine interactions occur on a regular basis and provide the basis for the (re)construction of a sense of mutuality, solidarity and trust. They are largely mediated by practitioners *and* more or less anticipated by practitioners who tend their plots at regular times (Fig 149). However, pre-existing group affiliations and circuits of sociability remain relatively separate from those generated on allotment sites.

Eilish, like many retired plot-holders is keen to (re)connect with others in her locality and regularly tends her plot on specific days when interactions with 'familiar strangers' are more or less guaranteed. She explains how regular interactions with others have forged a sense of mutuality, solidarity and engendered bonds of trust. However, like others, she values the landscape for the casual nature of interactions they generate (Figs. 151a & b, 152 a & b, 153a & 158d), and is keen to explain how group affiliations and circuits of sociability remain relatively separate from those beyond the boundaries of her allotment. :

"I got to know Tess here through the allotment … We really only see each other here … Ted and Chris, [two senior practitioners- pseudonyms] would always be here any time you'd come down … So you're never really here on your own. Most of the time there'd be someone here … I've made some great pals here … but people don't' meet outside of here. It's only really on the allotment that you'd meet"

Eilish, Socio-organic gardener, 2011

Similarly, Andrew, a senior male practitioner explains how, over the past two years he regularly saw the same plot-holder tending his plot at the same time during the week. He explains how regular interactions provide the basis for friendships but like others, he values

his allotment for generating *loose* bonds rather than creating deep or lasting attachments with others:

"… see that guy there? I'd never spoken to him until we started here …but because I always come here early and he comes early too…I'd always meet him. Any morning I'd be here, he's here … that's how I got to know him … we just got to know each other through the allotments … and now we're great pals … There's a few other people that'd come here in the mornings too … they wouldn't be as regular but you'd see the same faces in the mornings … No, I'd only ever meet them down here …that's the nice thing about allotments. You're friends here but you come and go too"

Andrew, Practical gardener, 2013

Senior, retired and unemployed practitioners tend to benefit mostly from regular interactions, particularly when occupancy rates are low. Though their focus is primarily (re)connecting with knowledge, practice, the means of production and the land yet regular interactions help them become more familiar with others in their neighbourhoods and help combat the sense of isolation they feel beyond the boundaries of their allotment sites. Yet, they value the landscape for generating *loose* bonds rather than deep or lasting attachments with unknown others on their allotments. When on their allotments, they regularly meet, interact, and exchange knowledge, their physical labour, experiences *and* their produce which allows them to generate elective affinities with others, and fosters a sense of belonging to the place. As Harry explains:

"Well I'm retired now and I come here most mornings …. There's a couple of retired people here … I mostly come during the week when it's a bit quieter … You see, allotments suit retired people … I'd see Pat, he's a regular here, … and there's a few new lads that have joined too. I think they're out of work … we all chat … sometimes we chat too much [laughs]. I mostly come to work, but some days we could spend all our time talking [laughs] … I chat with that man there a lot, he's retired too"

Harry, Practical Gardener, 2012

The allotment provides a ritual and rhythm to the everyday which senior residents and recently unemployed embrace (Fig, 152 b). Unemployed practitioners in particular, explain how regular interactions have restored a stable harmonious self-concept (Schouten, 1991)[21],

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[21] Schouten (1991) contents, one of the defining characteristics that makes humans unique among living creatures is our ability to examine ourselves, to find ourselves lacking, and to attempt to self-betterment. This sense of incompleteness drives us not merely to create but also to self-create (by either consuming goods and/or services, or engaging in specific practices and behaviours in the process to maintain or reconstruct the self-concept. As a term, the self-concept is defined as "the cognitive and affective

and helps them combat the sense of alienation'[22] associated with the loss of employment and which they associate with contemporary urban life.

For example, Eoin is a middle-aged practitioners who represents many male unemployed practitioners' investing in UA today. Like others, he explains how, prior to his investment in his local allotment he felt disconnected from others, from the means of production, and somewhat disenfranchised with life. By cultivating his allotment and interacting with others who share this designated space, he has restored a stable harmonious self-concept and transformed his quality of life:

"well I'm in between [jobs] at the moment …. But allotments are great because you get to meet so many people, … . You generally meet the same lads here during the week. …. I like the social aspect *very much*. …that's the upside of it all really. I mean, the growing is very rewarding and you know where your food comes from, …*and* you can see the progress in your work too which today is not really the norm …*plus* it gets you up and out and concentrating on something else rather than your [employment] situation, … It saves you going to the doctor and stops you feeling depressed. It's difficult when you suddenly find yourself out of work … Here, everyone will stop and chat to you here …it's great … it's been fantastic … Also you're extra supportive and make more effort with those [unemployed] because you understand … The best things about it is meeting people and that and that forms a community in itself. It's easy to talk here … it gives you a focus … Meeting people here regularly is the best part of it really"

Eoin. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

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understanding of who and what we are. Self-concept is thought to encompass such things as the role identities, personal attributes, relationships, fantasies, possessions, and other symbols that individuals use for the purposes of self-creation and self-understanding (p. 413).

[22] Alienation, is a key sociological concept used by Karl Marx (1976) in reference to the core relationships of capitalist production and their human and psychological effect. Alienation is used by Marx to denote feelings of estrangement from a situation, group or culture. Whilst Marx gives several meanings and nuancs to the term, he uses it primarily to emphasise the importance of the relationship between human beings (in their social relations of production), and nature for social development and hence, individual development. In empirical research (for example, that of Blauner (1964), it is operationalised to demonstrate comparisons in work conditions and work satisfaction. Hence, as Marx (1976) contends, within capitalism workers do not work to express themselves to develop their interests or for intrinsic satisfaction. In effect, they produce products for a class which oppresses them. In that sense, capitalism estranges (alienates) workers from their 'species being' (those characteristics which are specifically human and distinguish human beings from other animals). These human attributes develop socially through relationships of production which according to Marx (1976) have the potential for unlimited development in a favourable system of social relationships. Hence, he sees the process of production as central to human development. It follows that a system based on exploitation (one in which workers are estranged from the act of productions and from the products which they produce) dehumanize and alienate human beings from their 'species being' in the sense that it denies any possibility of the development of human potential or creativity, except for a privileged few. Alienation is thus analysed in terms of the social structure of capitalism.

Men who found themselves recently unemployed (since Ireland' recent economic collapse) are particularly keen to emphasise the social dividends UA generates. They benefit greatly from regular interactions with others and by participating in specific practices on site (Fig, 158).

Aidan's narrative is particularly poignant, and illuminates the specific social dividends UA generates. As a young Socio-organic gardener who, with his partner recently invested in UA, is eager to explicate some of the specific social dividends UA generates. He explains how his father recently found himself unemployed which had a profound impact on his 'self-identity' and mental health. He explains how his father quickly became disenfranchised with life but explains how their allotments provided a resource from which his father could interact with others (particularly men) and the means of production which restored a stable self-concept and transformed (and improved) his life and mental health.

As Aidan explains:

"well there's definitely a *massive* social thing to this. Like my dad would come here to work the plot. He recently became unemployed and for him it's just been *amazing*. It's amazing what it's done for him. He just *loves* being able to come down here. He meets people. it gets him out and it has *really* helped him you know? … It's very difficult for a man who's worked all his life to find himself out of work, *very* difficult. ..this [UA] has had an *enormous* impact. It's given him a focus,... to see the product of his work … he's getting out, meeting people, … It' had an *enormous* effect. To all of a sudden to find out you're out of work with no purpose can destroy a man you know? So it's [UA] been. *massive* for him in that way… It's been his saving grace"

Aidan Socio-organic gardener, 2012

Equally, plot-holders who are restricted by work-time constraints benefit greatly from regular interactions with unknown others on allotments (Figs. 147-150) allows for social mixing and helps them become more familiar with others in their locales. They draw plot-holders into circuits of sociability and provoke impromptu/extemporaneous interactions/events, which facilitates the (re)construction of an incipient *social identity*, promotes social levelling and engenders a sense of belonging to the place.

Figure 147.Social interaction & civic engagement

Figure 148.(re)connecting with others

Figure 149. Regular interactions

Figure 150.Impromptu events

8.3.2. Serendipitous interactions & Social Integration

As we have seen, allotments are landscapes that allow urban dwellers to casually linger and interact. They facilitate chance interactions and allow urban dwellers to generate elective affinities with unknown others in their (sub)urban locales (Figs.149 b & c, 152 a & b, 153a & c, 157b 158a-f). Indeed, the salience of chance/serendipitous interactions is a defining feature of allotments and one of the most valued aspects of UA, and plot-holders value the landscape for facilitating chance interactions and combatting the social dis-embeddedness associated with contemporary urban life. They explain how they allow urban dwellers to become more acquainted with less familiar strangers residing in their locales, and provide the foundations for the (re)construction of an incipient social identity and a collective sense of belonging to community and place, They share their knowledge, produce and physical labour, exchange ideas, experiences and skills which promotes

social levelling, fosters a sense of mutuality, solidarity and social integration in many

(sub)urban locales.. As Robert's comments illustrate:

"Here everyone talks to each other. You don't *have to* know people to talk to them or know anything about gardening for that matter either [laughs]. Sometimes I'd take a walk around and … hours go by and you're not aware of it because you spend your time chatting. …. *Everyone* says hello to you … It's just something people do. …. People automatically talk to you …You might stop and look at someone's plot, admire it and the next thing you know, you're chatting away about whatever"

Robert, Non-gardening gardener, 2013

Similarly, Georgina reiterates:

"Well everybody passing by says hello … and you pass people and you get to know faces and that, so stuff like that you know? That's how you really kind of get to know people here. It's great because before you know it, you're having tea with people you barely know or only met. People here are great. They're so obliging and welcoming. These are people you've never met before and they chat to you like you already know them. It's just wonderful …"

Georgina. Gucci gardener, 2013

Figure 151 (a,b,c). Chance/Serendipitous interactions and pedagogy

Chance interactions generate what Robert Putnam (2004:3) refers to as 'bridging social capital', that is: weak or thin ties of loose networks that cut across various lines of social cleavages or networks between people who are socially distant. Additionally, they promote (and restore) 'principles of civility' (Vertovec, 2007) and foster social levelling (that is, the conditions under which a shared social identity and sense of community are constructed, nurtured and maintained,) which Vertovec (2007) contends, are necessary prerequisites for engendering social and 'civil' integration[23]. Hence, allotments facilitate interactions that

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[23] Civil integration, is a term coined by Steven Vetovec (2007) to describe the acquisition and routinization of everyday practices for getting-on with others in the inherently fleeting encounters that comprise city life. These include simple forms of acknowledgement, acts of restricted helpfulness, types of personal consideration, courtesies, and 'indifference to diversity'(p. 4)

allow urban dwellers to move beyond difference and the effects of an impoverishing public realm, by providing the means to "engage in the everyday practices for getting-on with others, in inherently fleeting encounters that comprise city life" (Vertovec, 2007:3).

Significantly, chance interactions prove invaluable in terms of generating a more cohesive notion of the public and generating a more integrated society, which as Lownsbrough and Beunderman (2007) contend, is based on solidarity, equality of opportunity *and* inspired by what individuals have in common rather than by what divide them, rather than by one's faith, race or social cultural background. In that sense, chance/serendipitous interactions on allotments foster, promote and support better social relations between different social groupings in diverse (sub)urban locales. They provide the means to engage in everyday practices for getting-on with others and generating a well-functioning public realm. Hence, allotments, and indeed, a shared interest in cultivating and maintaining this new form of public space, provide the conditions under which social and *civil integration* (ibid) can be generated and sustained. In that sense, they can be/are viewed as a valuable resource in the city from which urban dwellers (can) draw on and invest, and integrate with others in their locales.

For example, Aardash, a native of India has been living in his suburban locale for almost seventeen years. Despite efforts to generate friendships, networks and locally bound social ties, he, like many others ethnic minorities investing in UA in the city today, feels socially disconnected from others and somewhat socially polarised. He sees UA as a means to integrate with others in the city to generate a sense of belonging. He explains how the landscape facilitates chance interactions with others, engenders social integration and fosters a sense of belonging to community and place:

"I am living here maybe sixteen, seventeen years … and my neighbour probably I meet once in a month only when he comes out for a smoking. … and then the lady coming out for a walking with a dog. Maybe if I am going at the same time, she wave the hand and that is all ….But since taking this allotment we meet more people here probably in the last year than in the place where we are living …We are networking, making connections to others,

…We are human beings but we also social beings. We need to integrate, to interact with other human beings, belonging, it is about belonging to the community too. … but my initial experience is that it is difficult to making networks, integrating "

Aardash, Non-gardening gardener, 2013

Significantly, chance interactions promote social levelling, tolerance of difference and a *new* kind of politics of place, since interactions are inspired by what plot-holders have in common rather than by what divide them (Vertovec, 2006). Over time, chance interactions become regular interactions and provide the basis for the (re)construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground, (premised on a shared interest and common cause: land cultivation), (fig 147a, & 147a) which engenders social integration and foments a new kind of politics of place. As Aardash elaborates:

" … it [allotment] is also about engaging with people … the people, the lady there came and talked and she gives us things … I did not know her … but the people here come [walking past], and they talk to you. It is helping us to making friends and networking … For example, I met a couple of people … and realised I am his customer in my job .. .It is really good for networking … and outside [beyond boundaries] I am recognising them …. And we are talking. It [UA] is good for meeting, for integrating. We are *very very* happy here …We are meeting all these different people, and networking. Our identity [ethnic] is our identity but here, we are all the same, we are all people on the allotment …. We are belonging to the community too. Now I am very happy"

Aardash, Non-gardening gardener, 2013

Similarly, Denise, a young professional middle class practitioner residing in a recently gentrified locale[24] explains how chance interactions with others on her allotment have helped her integrate with others and generate a sense of belonging in her gentrified locale. Prior to investing in her allotment, she faced many barriers to interaction when trying to integrate as a 'gentrifier' in her neighbourhood, which generated feelings of social isolation exclusion, social polarisation and a tenuous attachment to place. She explains how her local allotment affords opportunities to engage in chance/serendipitous interactions with others she may not otherwise interact with/meet, which has helped generate a sense of personal identification with and belonging to place:

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[24] Coined by Ruth Glass (1964), the term 'Gentrification' refers to a process of 'urban renewal', particularly of lower/working-class neighbourhoods, which over time, results enforced displacement of original working-class inhabitants, as property prices soar and the social character of a district changes,

"There's a huge social division here [locale], *huge,* totally. There's a *big* division between people here …It's an 'us' and 'them' scenario. Like my, my closest experience would be… the flats … I got *loads* of hassle last year, loads, especially from the kids, teenagers. One evening, I was coming home on the bike … and I got a rock, it wasn't even pegged [thrown] at me, it was *fired* at me …another night they were throwing stones at my window …. And I went out said … 'what are you doing? I'm your neighbour' and they said, 'you're not our xxx [expletive] neighbour" … and I said, 'I live here, you live there, that makes us neighbours"…It's an 'us' and 'them' … I mean, you can *feel* it, .. you can *feel* it. …Even on my street, it's like the valley of the squinting windows … I tried to [integrate]. I was going around knocking on doors asking anyone if they wanted to come down to the allotment and they weren't interested. But here, you meet people. They just stop and chat. It's fantastic"   *Denise. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

However, since the majority of sites are located in interstitial areas beyond the public gaze, casual interactions are largely confined to those directly investing in UA. However, there *are* sites in the city which provide opportunities for casual interactions between practitioners and the wider public at large (Fig 151a). These types of interactions prove invaluable, as they provide an opportunity to integrate with diverse class and ethnic groupings which engenders a more *public* politics of place. As Sarah notes:

"people walking by the fence generally say hello. They ask you what you're growing, comment on your produce and that … Anyone who shows interest we'll invite them in … it's definitely helped people in the wider community … you talk to each other … this gives you an excuse … it's a focal point"
                                                         Sarah, Socio-organic gardener, 2012

Lisa's plot is located in one such locale. As a young professional middle-class practitioner, she explains how the location of her allotments provides invaluable opportunities to interact with diverse class and ethnic groupings in her heterogeneously populated inner city locale. She is particularly keen to explain how the location of her allotment allows for chance interactions between long-term residents and plot-holders who are relatively new to the area. Furthermore, she explains how these chance encounters/interactions provide a sense of security for urban dwellers, particularly senior residents who may be at risk at being socially isolated or socially polarised. Through chance interactions they have generated bonds of trust, a sense of solidarity and a strong sense of community and belonging to place:

" well here, there's a good mix of people … There's a lot of new people who've moved into the area …professional people, … a lot of different ethnic groups in the area. …but there's also people who are old and their families grown up and gone …and they're more

at risk of being isolated … But because of where this site is, now they'd come here [to allotment] and sit and that and chat to people … It's brilliant for young *and* old, … it's gives them a sense of security. They feel safe and know there's always someone around … because of that, people here would keep an eye out for them … Like if you didn't see them for a couple of days you'd knock on the door to see if they were ok …"

Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Similarly, Séan and Aidan explain how the location of their allotment facilitates chance/serendipitous interactions with 'others' they may not otherwise interact with or meet, which has helped them become more *familiar* with diverse class and ethnic groupings in their neighbourhoods, and fostered social integration in their locales:

"… because of where we are the locals stop and chat to you ….they often stop… tell you about the history of the area and what it was like, what was on this site and that before the allotments … It has definitely helped meet people in the area you'd have walked past and never spoken to before like …that makes you feel part of the local community too"

Séan. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

And as Aidan also explicates:

"I've met *so* many people from the flats there but just digging here. There's a lot of different groups [ethnic] in them… Like before, I felt stuck … but now even the local kids will come up to the fence and chat to you. They'd ask you what your name is and what you're growing. People chat to you … tell you about the area … They all tender a bit of advice [laughs]. But it's been great, a great way of getting to know people in the area … not just think of us at 'them one's' living in the apartments …. This has helped us become known as locals too, as residents who share the same streets, the same shops and I suppose, in a way, it has helped bring the whole community together"

Aidan Socio-organic gardener, 2012

Overcoming problems of how to interact with others are largely resolved by focusing on the practices and experiences associated with cultivating the land (Fig 147 & 149, 151c, 152a, 153c). In fact, one of the most notable features of forms of sociality on allotments is that plot-holders regularly share, taste and exchange (often the same) produce, their physical labour, experiences and skills (Fig 153a)A premium is placed on the capacity and *willingness* to engage in reciprocal forms of exchange with friend and stranger alike. Hence, interactions largely centre on a 'gift relationship' (Mauss, in Douglas, 2005), which facilitates casual/serendipitous interactions with less familiar (new) plot-holders, generates friendships, and prompts impromptu forms of sociality on site (Fig 147a, 150b, 158d, e & f). In fact, reciprocity is viewed as *crucial* for (re)generating elective affinities,

(re)invigorating particular principles and values, and establishing a shared politics of place, *and* creates a vivacious, convivial and 'shared-in common' landscape in which all (despite difference) have an equal stake (Figs 158 a-f). Interactions explicitly eschew a cash nexus which creates a highly visible difference to the form and content of sociality (Simmel, 1908) on allotment, compared to those evidenced beyond the boundaries of urban dwellers allotment sites. Deirdre's comments resonate with all respondents in this study:

"Everyone shares and tenders their bit of advice or experience. That's the norm here and it's great. I absolutely love that … everyone's willing to help each other … I love that about it. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do outside, what you have, how you do your plot. Here, they're *always* willing to give a dig out. You could stop and ask *anyone* to help you and they would help you no problem …it's because you have the same thing in common …it's a common space I suppose that people share. They share everything …People will just come up to you and give you plants, and that's really makes it so different"   *Deirdre. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Similarly, Fred is keen to reiterate:

"….. most people are only too eager to share their knowledge and everyone is willing to offer a bit of advice which is good … They'll share what they know … You'd even share your produce [laughs]. I mean, the *same* produce [laughs]. Like I've grown tomatoes and x gave me some he'd grown. We regularly share and taste what we grow. That's just part of it. Everyone shares plants or seeds and say like if they'd too much of one thing growing. Like that broccoli there, I got that from x [neighbour] there … and the rhubarb was given to me by somebody else"   *Fred, Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

In that sense, having the 'right' to give, to 'choose' to give, and to exchange 'freely' with 'strangers' on site engenders an incipient *social identity* and helps weld an allotment culture based on reciprocity, trust and mutual support: As Lisa's comments illustrate:

"it's a silent sort of trust and friendship really… it's because of the allotments that that has built up …you're chatting with people all the time … they help you out … People share a lot, they share everything really. It's not expected, it's just something people automatically do"   *Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Through chance *and* regular interactions with unknown others, plot-holders are drawn into circuits of sociability which generates a sense of belonging *and* ownership of the place, albeit in the public realm. Their *raison d'être* is simply based on the tasks of cultivation and a desire to (re)connect with others in their locales. Social categorisations such as class,

status and/or ethnicity are eschewed in favour of a shared interest in cultivation, as plot-holders invest their mental and physical labour in the care and cultivation of the land. They engender a sense of mutuality, solidarity and 'communality' with others and create a new kind of politics of place. Individuals can be busy and active *and* interact with unknown others, even though plot-holders are engaged in their own individual enterprise. Key features of the landscape facilitate and promote social interaction and social integration and a shared politics of place.

Figure 152 (a,b,c,d). Absence of boundaries and the lure of the aesthetic.

The absence of physical barriers (walls) facilitates the (re)construction of a people'd landscape (Viljoen et al, 2012) (Figs. 152 a & b). As Andrew and Lisa' comments illustrate:

"…there's no walls here. You can't just step in you front door and just close it. So if someone's over there, you'd give them a wave, or if someone is walkin' past you'd say hello. Basically, there's no barriers … there's nowhere to hide … you can chat to everyone and learn a great deal …"   *Andrew. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013*

And similarly Lisa is keen to illustrate:

"it's the fact that it's open… even though you've your own little space and fence between the plots people can just glance right across the plot, wave across … and even a wave means a lot. It's a sort of connection between people … even if you don't get to chat, you know they're there … people walking past even like that see? [non-practitioners' passing by]. Everyone say's hello or nods n' generally chats …you feel, you're part of the community"
                    Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Indeed, the openness of the landscape was identified by all respondents as a primary factor that facilitates interaction, despite the absence of knowledge, previous experience or inter-generational connections to the land (Figs, 152a-b, 153 a -d). Francis, as practitioner new to UA is keen to explain:

"… having the open plan *does* make a difference *definitely*, … Having low fencing definitely makes a difference … It wouldn't be the same if there were walls or if they [fences] were higher … you wouldn't see anyone. You may as well be in at home in your back garden. Here, you can see everyone … The difference here is there's no walls, and there's somebody up there, there's somebody over there, and there's somebody passing by … whereas at home I can't see the person next door. Like everyone coming past would say hello and chat … it's because you can see each other … people automatically say hello or they might stop and chat"   *Francis, Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

Similarly, Margaret says:

"We don't have our plot as long as other people. But the best thing first of all about having an allotment is meeting people … We'd just be here having a coffee or a bottle of wine … and people just stop and chat …. People you've never met before just stop and talk to you. It's *marvellous*. … I *love* the fact that we meet lots of different people. …People *always* say hello …or stop, … give you advice, that sort of thing"
                    Margaret, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

However, is also about the '*doing'* that facilitates interaction. Through the creativity associated with designing, constructing and cultivating one's plot, engaging in similar practices and sharing this designated space, plot-holders transcend social cleavages, build bridges and create a 'common bond'. As Lisa and Deirdre elucidate:

"If this was just an empty grass field you couldn't just come out and meet people, whereas with allotments it definitely gives you an excuse to meet others and chat …you're all *doing* the *same thing* … you're producing, all using the space, doing it together"
                    Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

"…it's also the fact that it's open and you can see people ... if you walk around and see people's plots you'll see how amazing they are. Some people have done amazing things. Basically it draws you in, you're chatting about the plots and that …."
                    Deirdre, Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Pointing to his plot, Francis reiterates:

"…. Well last year was the first year I took the plot and I'd never grown anything before … but everyone was coming over and looking at it [sweetcorn] and asking me about it. Like there was only two little cobs that size [finger length] off each plant but everyone was asking me about them. …People are always admiring that [artefact]… it was given to me as presents ... people are always admiring that [laughs]… You meet people purely because you can see each other too …and it's because you're all doing the same thing too"   *Francis, Socio-organic gardener, 2013*

However, plot-holders make use of what Sennett (2011) observes as 'theatrical language and role play' to interact with unknown others, which provides the basis for a common

speech and creates an 'as if', as though they are in the same realm. Elaine's comments illustrate:

"Growing, that's all we talk about really …'cos it's a common interest. … that's what you talk about … Generally it'd be a conversation about what you're growing and … that's really kinda how you get to talk to people and know people here … that's how you meet people"   *Elaine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011*

And as Andrew, like the majority of practitioner's enthusiastically explains:

"… the only thing you talk about is your produce, so it's easy to talk to people. Like 'how are your potatoes?' or 'your potatoes look great' 'I've had terrible problems growing such and such', and that's how it goes … Everyone chats about the food … it's a common denominator … It helps you chat and you feel you're part of the same, the same community really"   *Andrew, Practical gardener, 2013*

Figure 153 (a,b,c,d). Sharing time, knowledge physical labour & constructing a 'common ground'

Moreover, tacit rules of engagement allow urban dwellers to set the boundaries of those interactions and generate loose rather than deep or lasting attachments with others:

"I've met a lot of people here … there's a great community here and that's a nice thing but I know at the same time that I could work away, keep my head down and wouldn't feel that I *have* to talk to everyone. …there's a general understanding. You're under no pressure to talk if you don't want to. You can keep to yourself and not talk to anyone if you didn't feel like it and no-one would bother you … nobody takes offence to that … yet I know that if I needed help I could ask anyone. They'd only be too willing to help you out"

Elaine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011

In that sense, allotments can be seen as a vivacious public space that affords opportunities for mutual tolerance, trust and mutual respect for others. Interactions foster and promote social levelling which creates the framework for a new local politics of place, a sense of communality with others *and* a sense of belonging, possible because of the creation of an incipient *social identity* generated by engaging in specific activities on site.

8.4. **Reconstructing, Managing, and Performing *Identity***

Figure 154 (a & b). Identify (re)construction and performance

The question of how individuals restore a sense of belonging and (re)generate a 'shared politics of place' hinges on the (re)construction and constant management and performance of a *self and a social-identity*, which on the one hand are closely related yet on the other, remain analytically distinct. Identity is about belonging, and helps individuals link their personal and private worlds. It hinges on a paradoxical combination of sameness and difference – that is, by similarities between individuals who are alike, and by difference, by those who are not (Lawlor, 2008:2). Individuals constantly (re)construct, (re)negotiate, manage and perform multiple (and often conflicting identities) depending on the particular 'field of interaction' (Bourdieu 1977) they finds themselves, to (re)generate a sense of personal identification with, and belonging to a particular social group and/or place. Hence, specific social contexts *can* influence and *elicit* certain identities, shape their meanings and impact on social actors' socio-spatial worlds Crucially, their sense of identity gives rise to a structure of feeling that (re)generates a stable harmonious self-concept (Schouten, 1991),

which helps link individuals personal and private worlds. They draw on a repertoire of symbols, deploy strategies and engage in specific practices to construct their identities, and request others to take seriously the impression fostered before them (Goffman, 1976), to generate and maintain their social identity *and* belonging to a particular group and/or place. Hence, self-identity needs to be understood *not* as belonging *within* the individual but rather, as produced *between* individuals and *within* social relations.

On allotments, individuals actively choose (re)construct, and constantly (re)negotiate, manage and perform a chosen *self-identity* (as a plot-holder) and a *social-identity* (as a member of the allotment culture. Their identities are constructed by creatively designing and constructing their plots. There, they can establish some sense of freedom to (re)construct (and perform) their self-identity as a plot-holder *and* differentiate themselves from others whom they are not. They actively choose, and (re)construct their self-identities using specific practices and techniques, and constantly (re)negotiate, manage and perform and reinforce their (self) identities through 'impression management' (Goffman, 1979) through interactions (and practices) they engage in on site.

They firstly imagine themselves, reflect on who they are and identify what it meaningful to them. They then draw on a variety of principles, knowledge systems and practices to mark the ways they share identities with some, and to differentiate themselves from those whom they are not and implicitly request others to take seriously the impression fostered before them when interacting with others (both within *and* beyond the boundaries of allotment sites, which reinforces a sense of belonging to a particular community and/or place). Some practitioners draw on their habitus' to (re)invigorate and perform a self-identity to convey their intergenerational connections to the land. However, the majority of practitioners' have little/no knowledge *or* previous experience and draw on a repertoire of symbols and strategies when designing and constructing their plots. They draw on and make use of the landscape and others practices to construct (perform) and convey a chosen/specific identity

to others on site but all use theatrical language and role play to reinforce and maintain their 'chosen' (self) identities, when interacting with others to generate similarities with others and foster (and restore) a sense of belonging to the place. For example, Socio-organic, Gucci and Non-gardening gardeners employ specific strategies to construct, manage and perform an 'organic identity' to (re)connect with others when designing and 'cultivating' their plots (see chapter 6 & 7). For example, Socio-Organic employ a concept gardening approach and try to comply with organic land-husbandry techniques whilst Gucci Gardeners are (over time) adopting similar strategies despite the lack of cultivation on their plots. Non-Gardening gardening gardeners integrate specific materials to generate similarities with others who share similar ecological and environmental concerns as others advocating UA as a pedagogic space to generate alternative lifestyles, actions and worldviews.

While their self-identities differentiate them from 'others' who possess knowledge, previous experiences and/or intergenerational connections to the land, their shared motivations for investing in UA engenders an *incipient social identity* which (re)generates a sense of identification with and belonging to community and place. Yet, these gardeners differentiate themselves from Practical gardeners and Idealists by aestheticizing and 'feminizing' their plots. (see figs 155 a, b & c) but are keen to employ concept gardening techniques to display their (new) 'organic identity' to reconnect with the social relations inherent in food production, rather than constructing lazy beds or drills. They are keen to integrate recycled materials to generate similarities with others and engender a sense of belonging to community and place (Figs: 156 a-d, See chapter 7 also). Elaine, a Socio-organic gardener's comments illustrate:

….."it [plot] represents each of us in many ways really… I suppose as women we put the finishing touches to the plot … it definitely represents us and shows that it's a family plot with all the bits and bobs for the kids …and we've the boxes like other people have and that … and like little things like the funny signs ….they say a lot about her [fellow plot-

holder]… she's gas, she'd make the plants laugh if she could [laughs], so that really represents her personality and the other bits and bobs there, they represent mine"

Elaine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2011

Their self-identities are *imbued* in the landscape and reflect their motivations for investing UA (see chapter 6). However, they distinguish themselves from Practical gardeners and Idealists by taking a more eclectic and holistic approach to their plots. Indeed, the majority of these gardeners draw on a variety of representational systems which act as significant markers of their self-identity (and display their motivations for investing in UA) even when they are absent from their plots (Figs.150, 152c & d, 154b,, 155b & g, 157 a & b. Also see, 81, 84a, 86b, 89b, 90a & 93b – chapters 6 & 7).

"I think is funny here is that there's three sizes here, but if you took each plot none of them would be the same….they've all got their different personalities and you can see it like, the peoples personalities in their plots which I think is hilarious … you can see my personality here [laughs]" *Lisa. Socio-Organic gardener, 2012*

"Well the L-plate says a lot about us doesn't it? We're new to this … some people identify with that … they'd say they're new too. It's a talking point too"

Jean, Socio-organic gardener, 2013

By contrast, Practical gardeners' (re)construct, and constantly (re)negotiate, manage and perform *their* self-identities to display their habitus, knowledge and inter-generational connections to the land (Figs. 155f.   Also see 127a-f). In many ways they display similarities with Idealists as their self-identities are underpinned by an explicit desire to (re)invigorate particular practices, principles and knowledge systems and alternative systems of exchange (see chapter 7). Whilst both gardeners display their identities by disseminating their knowledge, ideologies, habitus and worldviews, Practical gardener's identities are distinguishable from others evidenced in their ('traditional') layouts and design (See 127 a-f, chapter 7)s. Eileen and Paddy explain as they point out various features of theirs and other practitioners' plots:

"oh absolutely, it [plot] says a lot about me. I'm very much into companion planting. I like to mix my veg with flowers and strawberries. I'm not into raised beds. I don't like the neatness of them … the old way, that's what I like … I suppose it [layout] reflects that alright" *Eileen. Practical Gardener, 2011*

Pointing across his allotment Paddy demonstrates how he differentiates himself from others through the practices he employs on site, which displays his self-identity and intergenerational connections to the land:

"They're *all* different … There's completely different layouts. Mine, … well it's [layout] it's because I'm from the country . You can tell. You can tell the age of people and the people who are from the country by their plots, … the way they plant, the techniques they use…. they use the old ways . The traditional allotment way …. Others', well their whole design is well … I think it's a waste if I'm honest … See that one there? The whole design is in the middle … and looking at it, you'd know it's a woman's plot … . But the traditional guys, you can spot them a mile off …whereas some of them are like gardens at home [residences] … I rotate my crops …I put in drills …I use the entire plot … it's like riding a bike you never lose it [habitus]. You can see that I suppose in the plots, the ones who did this before, growing up. See that plaque on the gate? That is where I grew up, that's the same address as where I grew up"   *Paddy Practical gardener, 2013*

Idealists' (self) identities are constructed and constantly managed and performed through their practices, lifestyles and worldviews. Their identities are particularly evidenced in their plot layouts, their approach to cultivation, and through the materials they integrate and use (see chapter 7). They are keen to display their 'organic' identity to others by constructing sheds entirely from re-used urban waste, *and* by promoting environmentally friendly methods of food production and engaging in specific (pedagogic) practices on site (see below). Whilst their self-identities differ from gardeners employing 'traditional' or 'contemporary' cultivation techniques (see chapter 7), they are nevertheless keen to (re)construct a shared social identity to (re)connect with others and improve the quality of urban life .

Whilst all plot-holders engage in specific practices to construct their chosen (self) identity when constructing and cultivating their plots, they perform and constantly manage and reinforce their identities through interactions to maintain and reinforce a sense of belonging to a particular group and/or place. Some gardeners are keen to disseminate knowledge, and promote particular principles and practices on site, but the majority of practitioners' interactions centre on their plot aesthetics and the social dividends UA generates.

For example, Practical gardener's interactions largely focus on *traditional practices*, *values and principles* and their motivations for investing in UA. They perform their identities by sharing their knowledge, physical labour, their experiences of cultivating the land. Idealists however tend to focus on the *ecological and environmental benefits* of organic principles generate, whereas Socio-Organic, Gucci Gardeners and Non-gardening gardeners focus on their *plots aesthetics* and specifically, the *social dividends* UA generates.

Despite their diverse approaches and the aesthetics their practices generate, all plot-holders eagerly share their experiences of the urban, exchange ideas and experiences of the dividends UA generates which are often juxtaposed against the absence of a private garden, a decline in focal points in their localities and/or the extensive privatization of public space.

As Eilish explains:

"… the shoes there are my daughters and x [husband] decided one day to bring them down and screw them to the post because there's a story behind them. … he [spouse] nailed them to the railing … and we had a great laugh, … I'll never be let forget those shoes, the story behind them [laughs].… It just tells the story of a part of our lives …So the shoes and other bits represent me …and … all the funny little ones [signs] there… and those funny bits represents her [fellow plot-holder] and the shoes and other bits represent mine. … I suppose it does represent who we are really in lots of different ways"

Eilish, Socio-organic gardener, 2011

Similarly, Anthony explains:

"it's a social thing. The social side of this is *fantastic*. …you're having the craic while you're working away … There's a lot of people out there who are lonely. …. Their on their own and there's very little for them to do because they don't go to the pub, or you mightn't have the transport. ….and people don't talk to you. It's a lot to do with the way housing estates are now. … you know, the developers have a lot of answer for, *and* the planners too. They just lashed up houses and apartments and didn't think about all the people who were moving into them. … and it's because our estates have been planned with walls blocking us. You don't even see women out talking across the walls anymore like you used to. Nowadays, people go in and out in cars. They don't talk to you … we've the seating area and brolly there. … people stop and talk to you when they're going past here … They'd admire your plot and they'd compliment your work, what you're doing …Years ago, it was like one big family on a street. You knew everybody, everybody …. Having an allotment is the same"

Anthony. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Figure 155 (a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i). (re)constructing, managing & performing self-identity

Figure 156 (a,b,c,d). Imbuing self-identity to (re)construct a sense of belonging

Whilst the construction, negotiation and performance of self-identity illustrates the agency, creativity and constant (re)negotiation by the *individual* in setting themselves apart as distinct from others, collectively plot-holders (re)construct an incipient *social identity* by engaging in similar practices that focus purely on cultivating the land. That is, their social identity relates to the characteristics and connections/group affiliations generated by engaging in practices associated with UA, which they constantly (re)negotiate, manage and

perform by interacting, participating and engaging with unknown others, and they privilege that version of themselves above all others as a means to (re)connect with others in their locales. They employ tacit rules of engagement and, make us of what Sennett (2012) observes as 'theatrical language and role play' to (re)construct, manage and perform a *social identity* as members of the allotment culture when interacting with others on site. Their shared interest in cultivation means that their *social-identity* as members of UA is a socially recognised position, recognised both within *and* beyond the boundaries of the landscape which acts as a symbolic marker of belonging to a specific community, which reinforces a sense of personal identification with and belonging to a particular group and/or place. Martha and Deirdre explain:

"I suppose it's a link … you'd certainly recognise people outside because they have an allotment … I've often met people in the town from the allotments … The other day I met a man … I don't know what his name is but he recognised me from the allotments. ….it's because you're all part of the allotments"

Martha. Practical Gardener, 2013

"It's amazing the amount of people you'd be talking to who'd say they know someone who's an allotment too … It's great because you've something in common with people … it's a talking point. suppose we're likeminded … at things [pedagogic events beyond the boundaries of the allotments] you mightn't know anyone there or have ever met them before …like they might have an allotment somewhere else but you're still the same … You wouldn't feel uncomfortable or anything going to them because you're all interested in the same thing … you've the same thing in common"

Deirdre. Socio-organic gardener, 2013

By having a shared/common interest and engaging in practices associated with cultivating the land, plot-holders constantly reinforce their social identities beyond the boundaries of allotment sites. Indeed, many practitioners' use their social identities as a resource to enhance levels of capital (social and cultural) when in particular 'social fields' (Bourdieu, 1984). Eilish's comments provide an example:

"last year we were up North …up in 'Ards' at a function and we had the most beautiful spuds and x [husband] said, I think I'll ask the chef what they are … So he asked the girl to ask the chef … Anyway, the people at the table, it was a big long table where we were all sitting and this man says 'why do you want to know about the spuds?' and x [husband] says, 'Oh we've an allotment'. Well .. like that [click's fingers], it started off a *huge* conversation about allotments, and the amount of people at that table who said 'we've an

allotment too' …It was incredible …. And we got so many tips and everything else. It was fantastic …..So it definitely makes you connect to other people who do this too"

Eilish, Socio-organic gardener, 2012

Hence, when plot-holders share one or more features, a common bond is formed. Whilst they engage in their own individual enterprise and (re)construct, manage and perform a self-identity, collectively they (re)construct a shared social-identity which engenders a sense of *communality* and belonging to a particular group and place.

8.5.   **Cultivating *Communality* and Belonging**

The notion of *communality* on allotments embraces a shared *social* identity and holds positive meanings such as mutuality, trust and support. It facilitates actions of cooperation for mutual benefit, engenders social levelling, social and civil integration, and a shared politics of place.   Unlike the world beyond its boundaries where social and spatial differences exist, allotments facilitate and promote more *inclusive* and *cohesive* forms of sociality and *feelings* of belonging to a particular 'community' and/or place.

However, community is a notoriously difficult concept to define (Cohen 1985; Crow and Allan, 1994; Corcoran, 2008; Firth et al 2011) but is largely viewed (and defined) by social scientists as 'place' and/or 'interest' based. However, it can engender feelings of exclusion but also implies that strong bonds exist, but nevertheless (as a concept and key sociological variable) allows for a systematic account of unique features of local social life. It can inform us about *how* the social world is experienced, and how individualise rationalise the everyday social world: how they construct, (re)negotiate, manage and perform their identities and generate a sense of belonging, and also, of many social ills (issues associated with the contemporary social world). Whilst it has many different meanings as a concept, it continues to resonate through our personal and public lives (Crow and Allan, 1994).

Whilst plot-holders are keen to explain how allotments facilitate the (re)construction of a sense of 'community', they nevertheless value their allotments for generating *loose* bonds rather than deep or lasting attachments with unknown others on their sites (see above). In that sense, the notion of '*communality*' is often *perceived* as a sense of 'community' since it is spatially and socially inclusive *and* conceptualised through shared interests, motivations, and the dividends UA generates. It is conceptualised as mutually *inclusive,* and *not* defined by social categorisations such as class, gender, ethnicity or race.

 A sense of '*communality*' engenders feelings of belonging even though it is place *and* interest based. It gives rise to *and* enhances social capital which restores a sense of belonging, and (re)constituted through *and* a product of engaging in common practices (with unknown others) in this designated space. In that sense, the nature of '*communality*' is ascribed to a sense of 'community' because it fosters and restores a sense of belonging to a particular group and/or place. As Jan and Sarah's comments illustrate: ascribed

"ah without a doubt, allotments are bringing people together, creating a unity between people. There's a *huge* community that comes out of it, *huge*….There's a real togetherness here … People help each other out, they share what they know, everyone trusts each other … you could trust anyone really. Everyone's here for the same thing … and that's what's created that sense of community. You can *really* feel it here … This [UA] really brings out the best in human nature … it brings people together … it just creates a cohesion between people"
Jan: Allotment Provider 2013

 "There's a great sense of community and belonging here … People tend to look out for each other and look after each other … I mean, like … I'll never move from here [residential locale]. I mean, you can get bigger houses, grander houses, bigger gardens and all that but all of that wouldn't be the same, wouldn't mean anything if you didn't have a sense of community …that sense of belonging or bond if you call it that you get here"
Sarah, Socio-Organic gardener, 2012

Hence, the notion of '*communality*' may be defined by 'place' and/or 'interest' but *also* by perceptions of personal connectedness to others, generated by engaging in specific *social* activities (see below), and by the dividends UA generates.

8.5.1. Impromptu and Organised Social Activities

Social activities can be organised into two main types: *Impromptu Activities* and *Organised Activities,* which are attributed great social significance by plot-holders, UA advocates and key champions alike. They provide a means to practice cooperation, an opportunity to (re)invigorate particular values, practices and ideologies, and promote alternative lifestyles, actions and worldviews.

The majority of practitioners' view impromptu and organised activities as crucial for generating more cooperative forms of exchange. They have a profound impact on generating alternative forms of sociality that stand in contradistinction to those evidenced beyond the boundaries of allotment sites. They provide a means to disseminate knowledge, promote particular practices and transform urban dwellers actions, practices and worldviews. Crucially, they provide opportunities to meet and interact with diverse class and ethnic groupings urban dwellers may not otherwise interact with or meet.

Impromptu activities are the most common type of social 'events' on allotments. They are informal, organic and more or less spontaneous in nature, rather than being organised and engineered (see below). They range from brief exchanges between practitioners, to interactions as plot-holders become more acquainted with each other through chance/serendipitous (both within *and* beyond the boundaries of their allotment sites). They play a significant role in drawing plot-holders into circuits of sociability, (re)constructing a sense of *communality* and engendering social integration between diverse practitioners on sites. Like chance and regular interactions, their salience transforms the landscape into a social arena which provides opportunities to generate friendships, networks, a sense of 'communality' and a shared politics of place. They facilitate the (re)construction of a 'people'd landscape' (Viljoen, et al, 2012) where members come together and form mutual relationships although differing in class, age, gender, ethnicity or race. They range from

impromptu barbeques, sharing a drink/cups of tea, produce, physical labour, experiences and/or skills (Figs. 6.31-36).

Whilst plot-holders are keen to stress the importance of allotments for facilitating impromptu events, circuits of sociability on allotments tend to remain relatively separate from those beyond allotments which allows urban dwellers to (re)negotiate and perform an *alternative* social identity to those performed beyond the boundaries. Nevertheless, even though plot-holder may construct, negotiate and perform diverse (conflicting) identities to those beyond the boundaries of allotments, the practices and activities they engage in within contribute to a sense of communality and restore a sense of belonging to place. As Adam and Ben's comments demonstrate:

"You don't necessarily have to have social events … people are always doing things on their plots like barbequing, having tea and that … they'd invite you to join them or say if I'm making tea, I'd shout over to x [neighbouring plot-holder], *do you want a cuppa*? That's how we really became friends with x & y [neighbouring plot-holders]. She was here one day and I asked her if she fancied a cuppa. …people socialise on their plots and they'd invite anyone whose near them or around … it's just the done thing"
Adam. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

" … we have an old drum from a washing machine and we sometimes sit around that and light a fire in it and … x [plot-holder] just arrived with it one day and himself and y [plot-holder] … and before you knew it they started doing that regularly … the older lads' are gas … there's great craic … they'd be tellin' you stories, and about how hard times were for them years ago …. Givin' ya tips on growing, how to manage [social issues] n' that …and X [key champion] is always running around organising something, making sure everyone is involved …organising days like the market day, the open day for the public and things, and the course on a Saturday … to help people and show them how to grow and that … those kind of things are what bring people together … that's what allotments do …"
Ben. Socio-Organic gardener. 2013

Figure 157 (a,b,c,d). Impromptu activities

However, organised activities are generally orchestrated and coordinated by committee members and key champions to facilitate practice, promote alternative lifestyles, practices and worldviews (social, ecological sustainability – see chapter 4). However, practitioners *also* initiate social and pedagogic events to facilitate practice and generate friendships, loose bonds and social ties. They range from barbeques, harvest days and therapeutic evenings to seed-swaps and specific (social and pedagogic) events (Figs. 155 a-f), and play a significant role in fostering social integration and the construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground. Whilst the spatial layout and design of allotments facilitates and promotes social interaction, allows urban dwellers to (re)connect to the physical practice associated with cultivating land, organised events help build and enhance a shared social identity and a sense of 'communality' on site.

Adam gives an account of one organised social event on his local allotment. Like others, he explains how organised social events provide opportunities to meet and interact with unknown others in his neighbourhood, and become familiar with 'strangers' on his local allotment site. His comments also bring to the fore the nature of governance on allotments and how democratic models of governance allow plot-holders to contribute to, initiate and organise social events to accentuate allotment social life:

"Well we'd a pig on a spit …and we'd lambs too another time….and it was just fantastic, the craic [fun] was just fantastic. When we first done the pig on the spit there was four of us here … and we said 'why don't we do a pig on a spit'? so, we asked x [committee member/key champion] because we needed to dig the pit. I got tables from the [local] community centre so people could sit at them, but there was so much food, the tables were full. We had 100 people … it was unbelievable, just brilliant. When the pig was finished we just put any wood we had left on the fire and … the jokes were flying, people were singing, telling stories … it was just unbelievable. People from all walks of life just got along and had a brilliant time together. It definitely helped get everyone together as a community … it just helped bring people together quicker. I think it would have happened anyway at some stage … but that's the spirit here … people are involved … It has really improved, changed the area [local community and social life]"

Adam. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

However, they are largely organised by key champions, providers and UA advocates who aim to promote alternative lifestyles and alternative systems of exchange. In that sense, the notion of *communality* has wider political meanings and mobilises in different ways. However, it still remains important to its members for (re)constituting alternative forms of sociality and promoting a more public politics of place.

Pedagogic events are held both within and beyond the boundaries of allotments and aim to provoke awareness-raising of the environmental and social benefits UA generates. Some practitioners' (involved in various networks and UA advocacy groups) view them as a means to provoke awareness-raising amongst the cultivating citizenry about the dividends (and potential) of UA (Figs. 158 a-f).

Figure 158 (a,b,c,d,e,f). Organised social and pedagogic events

Whilst they largely aim to improve (and restore) human-nature relations through activities associated with cultivating the land, they are also organised to foster better social relations, promote social integration and more cooperative (and reciprocal) forms of exchange. Indeed, many see them as a means to promote social cohesion, challenge social exclusion and social polarisation and engender more integrated, cohesive communities to improve everyday urban life. For example, Bernard, is keen to educate others about improving bio-diversity and the ecological and environmental quality of the city *and* the quality of urban life. He explains how pedagogic events promote particular practices, worldviews and values, *and* foster social integration between diverse class and ethnic groupings residing in his urban locale:

"….we've a range of events. We've courses that teach people … we also had an open day for the whole community … we've a Christmas fair too and harvest days. It's about passing on knowledge, educating people … it's about educating people but it's not *just* about growing, it's also about the social too …. It's about participation, … helping people integrate. There's such a mix here [locale]. You've the 'have's' and the 'have-nots', … a lot of people are isolated, …. the socially marginalised, … .It's very important that people are given opportunities to bring people together … it's about getting people involved in other things in the community. We organise public barbeques … a lot of people come to that. People bring their families … people from all backgrounds come. Then you also the other things like x [UA advocacy group] events. … they're great for educating people about biodiversity about growing organically …. But they're social too … there's been poetry evenings, walks, cycles, lots of educational things on, and only recently we'd a night x [cinema] that showed film on this [UA], …people from all backgrounds attend them. They're a great way for people to meet … for helping people integrate …"

Bernard. Idealist/Eco-Warrior. 2013

Following Jane Jacobs (1961) assertion that social capital stems from social interaction in public space, allotments as a 'new' (and somewhat *revived*) version of urban public space provide a means to practice cooperation and allow individuals to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives and common goals. Indeed, *communality* on allotments constitutes diverse individuals who may not be well known to one another but who, to a high degree, participate in common activities, engage in mutual aid and support, who are conscious of a shared social identity and a sense of belonging to a particular group and place. As *place*, allotments are (re)constructed and adapted to facilitate individual and collective needs. They allow common understandings (and acceptance) of 'others', place (the landscape), interest (practice) and communion (social bonds) to (re)generate and emerge. In that sense, the notion of communality on allotments as a positive social relationship embraces a shared *social identity* which enhances levels of social capital, engenders social integration and has the potential to reinvigorate the public realm. Key features and (interrelated) practices weld an allotment culture that promotes cooperation, solidarity, trust and mutual support. The following comments from two plot-holders and a provider illustrate:

"I am one of the original, early ones here and I can really see the difference over the years. There's a complete mix of people here and …everyone gets on. ….You'd be talking about the plants … everyone's here for the same purpose … there's no difference between people here … Everyone's just an allotment grower …. and there's nothing stopping you from talking to anyone or taking part*"*   *Clare. Socio-organic gardener, 2012*

"… this creates a bond between people … even though you don't know everyone's name, you still talk to them … You feel a connection between each other here that's not outside …, … It's a likeminded-ness because they all want to mix, but everyone's from different backgrounds… not necessarily likeminded about the way they grow. It's about *feeling* that sense of community people had in the area years ago and people miss that and they are doing something about creating it again"   *Socio-Organic gardener. 2013*

" it [allotments] certainly helps people come together … people have created that … they have built up … people are chatting to each other *and* they have a common interest so that makes it easier … Everyone talks to each other … there's no difference. It's about participating, doing things together yet at the same time people are all doing their own thing too …They share what they know, give each other tips … socialise … it's great"
              David, Provider. 2012

Therefore, the notion of *communality* on allotments resonates with what Cohen (1985) refers to as "a *community of meaning'*, which plays a symbolic role in (re)generating a sense of belonging in the city amidst immense economic, cultural and social change.

8.6. **Conclusion:**

One of the most striking and significant impacts of recent transformations in Dublin has been a decline in the public realm, conceptualised broadly as the city's public life or social territory. The physical (re)configuration of the city and extensive privatization of public space transformed the material, cultural and social fabric of the city and the pace and quality of everyday urban life. Public space was increasingly privatized to accommodate development, movement and flows which accentuated 'hyper-auto mobility' (Freund and Martin, 1993), led to a decline in focal points in the city and brought about particular modalities for living to which urban dwellers continue to adjust. Cars became the defining feature of the built environment and enabled the extension of the 'privatization of space' (Wickham, 2006; Slater, 2008; Wickham, 2012) which had a profound impact on forms of sociality, the pace and quality of life in the city, and community and social life. Life has become busier, more anxiety ridden and increasingly pressured, and more time is spent moving on what Putnam (2000) refers to as a 'triangle of movement' between work, shopping centres and the home. Bonds of solidarity are fragmenting, face-to-face interactions are in decline and individuals are retreating into more individualised and privatized worlds. Everyday life has become increasingly determined by global forces, hyper-consumerism and competitive practices. Primary ties have become more spatially dispersed, and intimate social relations now tend to be organised on differentiated social networks rather than community bonds or solidarities evidenced in the past. Such change has transformed individual and place identities, created social cleavages, generated a sense

of placelessness and led to a decline in traditional values, practices and ideologies that provided a sense of community and belonging to place.

Allotments by contrast, constitute a new form of urban 'public' space that provide an arena for socialising and sociality, for the individual and collective cultivation, exchange and the dissemination of knowledge and skills. They provide a means to practice cooperation, promote social levelling, a sense of communality and engender a new kind of politics of place. Not only do allotments provide a range of therapeutic and ecological functions both in a direct and indirect sense, but I argue, constitute important sites of *civic engagement* in the contemporary urban metropolis. They are landscapes where barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed in favour of a common identity, generated by cultivating alongside unknown others in this designated space. The kinds of social markers that have a taken-for-granted currency in everyday life are generally eschewed as plot-holders invest their mental and physical labour in the care and cultivation of the land (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015). They provide opportunities for social mixing, which are organic and serendipitous rather than being contrived or engineered. Interactions are inspired by what plot-holders have in common rather than by what divide them, which (re)generates a sense of solidarity, mutuality and restores a sense of belonging to place. They facilitate and promote civil interfacing between urban dwellers of 'multiple geographies of affiliation' (Amin, 2010), and provide a means to promote and engage in 'principles of civility'(common courtesies, simple forms of acknowledgement and indifference towards diversity) which Vertovec (2007) contends, are necessary prerequisites for getting-along with others, bridging citizens across social cleavages, generating social integration and improving the quality of contemporary urban life.

Therefore, urban allotments I argue, are important *spaces of potential* in the contemporary urban metropolis. They provide a means to practice engender a sense of communality and

promote 'bridging' social capital which, according to Putnam (2000), builds on the notion of 'the strength of weak ties'. In that sense, the urban allotment proffers a template for reform, that can improve the 'well-being and liveability' of the city (Jacobs, 1961) provoke the vivacity in public space' (Sennett, 2011). As a 'new' form of urban public space they are spaces of potential that provide a means to engage in "everyday practices for getting-on with others, in the inherently fleeting encounters that comprise city life" (Vertovec, 2007:3).

The penultimate chapter illuminates the centrality and potential of urban allotments to the creation of shared-in-common spaces, promoting mutual tolerance of diversity, bridge-building and a new kind of politics of place through a case study analysis of allotments in a city that remains divided along ethno-religious/national lines: Belfast.

9.
'SEEDS OF HOPE'
MOVING BEYOND DIFFERENCE: ALLOTMENT GARDENING IN BELFAST

Figure 159 Engendering sameness despite difference

9.1. Introduction

Belfast, like Dublin has witnessed a demonstrable rise in demand for allotments and the emergence and growth of community gardens in and around the city and on its perimeter. Public, private and voluntary bodies are adopting strategic approaches to meet current demand. For instance, they are providing opportunities for UA on green-belts adjacent to built-up areas, on parklands, vacant sites in the city and on private land parcels located in the hinterlands. Local authorities in particular are introducing community gardens across the city not just to meet demand for UA but also as a strategy to engage in bridge-building across the community divide.

No longer dominated by older, working class males, plots in Belfast are now tended by young working class men and middle class women and men, immigrants and community groups and advocacy groups catering for clients with special needs. Whilst Belfast like many cities, is divided in a variety of ways such as class, residence and occupation, there is however, a primary division in Belfast that lies along the axes of religious affiliation, culture, history and a consciousness of national identity (Protestant-Catholic, Unionist-

Loyalist-Nationalist, British-Irish-Northern Irish). It is city characterised by a long history of sectarianism, segregation, territoriality, street marches, parades, commemorative activities and violent protests that represent expressions of animosities and unresolved issues (nationality, religion, power, territorial rivalry) that go back many decades (McAulty and McCormack, 1989) (Figs. 9.77-82). Indeed, ethno-religious/national identities are embedded in extremely complex ways in the material and social fabric of the city, and publicly performed and played out.

The Troubles, which broke out in the late 1960s created greater segregation, new interfaces and rigid boundaries between both communities and 'exclusivist renditions of belonging' (Shirlow, in Coulter and Murray, 2008; Mc Kittrick & McVea, 2012). However, despite the political resolution to the conflict in Northern Ireland (paramilitary ceasefires in 1994, Good Friday Agreement, 1998), residual ethno-religious/national divisions continue to overshadow everyday urban life. Sectarian inscriptions on the landscape continually reinforce both the idea and the reality of a divided city in terms of religious/national identity and the landscape (O'Dowd and McKnight, 2013). Violent division is effectively inscribed in the cityscape through periodic protests, riots and paramilitary campaigns aimed at disrupting the normalisation process underway in the wake of the political resolution of the conflict. Whilst many initiatives strive to contain the legacy of violence and identify pathways for moving forward into a fully "post-conflict" society by engaging in bridge-building across the community divide, these are less frequent, less visible and are less embedded in either civil society or the state (Corcoran & Kettle, 2015).

This chapter examines the potential of UA to provide an alternative avenue that can allow urban dwellers across diverse locales in Belfast to engage in a shared politics of place despite the history of sectarianism and residual ethno-religious/national conflict. Specifically, the chapter examines the potential of UA (as a form of public space) to

support positive interactions, cooperation and promote bridge-building across the community divide. It identifies how *and* the extent to which a shared politics of place can be cultivated and nurtured amongst the cultivating citizenry, and illuminates the potential of UA to accommodate the urban citizenry with 'shared-in-common' spaces where urban dwellers can move beyond the residual ethno-religious/national divisions and the politicisation of everyday urban life.

The evidence suggests that UA sites can be classified as '*non-contested, productive, multi-functional, vibrant urban public spaces*' (Viljoen et al, 2012) that provide Belfast citizens with a means to practice cooperation, foster solidarity, trust and mutuality and opportunities to engage in bridge-building across the community divide. My analysis from Belfast reveals that as in Dublin, UA sites are important spaces of self-expression. They help urban dwellers of diverse ethno-religious/national categorisations to interact, participate and engage with each other, generate friendships, loose bonds and social ties. They are sites conducive to lingering and sociality where urban dwellers can join in concert and give shape to their immediate environs, eschew difference and move beyond parochial understandings of their lives, despite the fact that plot-holders bring with them 'multiple geographies of affiliation' (Amin, 2010). They foster social levelling, facilitate bridge-building and allow for the (re)construction of a' shared-in-common' ground. Barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed by engaging in similar activities in this designated space. This shared politics of place is possible because of a general desire to cultivate the land and get on with the task of simply getting on with everyday life. In that sense urban allotments can be identified as important '*spaces of potential*' in the contemporary urban metropolis that foster social levelling, re-shape the politics of place and produce an inclusive and cohesive notion of the public. The urban allotment I argue, constitutes an important space in the city that engenders

social integration and a localised form of social cohesion where difference, at least for a time, is rendered less salient.

The chapter begins with a brief examination of the primary motivating factors giving rise to the demand for UA in Belfast. The evidence suggests that as in the Dublin case, motivations for investing in UA are related to but not necessarily determined by a desire to cultivate food. Urban dwellers display similarities with their counterparts in Dublin in terms of their concerns over the provenance and quality of food, and environmental and health concerns over the changes in food production and consumption. However, motivations for investing in UA in Belfast represent an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to (re)connect with others, engage in bridge-building and escape the politicization of everyday life *and* resist the dis-embedding social processes generated by late and post modernity, which have disconnected urban dwellers from traditional forms of knowledge, practice and the land.

In terms of motivations, allotment holders constitute three unique categories: (1) The Practical gardener, (2) The *Socio*-Idealist and, (3) The Socio-Organic gardener. Whilst these categories appear analogous with typologies of gardeners in Dublin, they diverge in many ways. I discuss each category, and offer various vignettes and visual methodologies to explicate the characteristics comprising each typology of practitioner investing in UA in Belfast today. I then provide a textured analysis and visual representations of the various practices associated with allotment gardening in the city, identify and examine the various forms of sociality UA generates, focusing in particular on the factors facilitating sociality and the social processes they generate. Specifically, the chapter identifies the specific social and civic dividends flowing from UA across the city, and illuminates the potential of allotments to foster social levelling, social integration and a *new politics of place* that facilitates *and* promotes mutual tolerance and respect for friend and stranger alike.

9.2. The rise in demand for UA gardening in Belfast.

In Belfast, allotment cultivators constitute a diverse population who have restructured the allotment landscape, the allotment culture and social relations between diverse members from both communities investing in UA. As in Dublin, my analysis of the data from Belfast reveals that there is no one typical allotment holder and that motivations for investing in UA vary across the sector. Unlike the Dublin case, in Belfast allotment holders are categorised according to *three* unique categories, to reflect motivations for investing in allotments and explain the rise in demand for UA: (1) The Practical gardener, (2) The *Socio*-Idealist and, (3) The Socio-Organic gardener. Whilst these typologies appear analogous with the findings from Dublin, they display many differences. Despite their differences this categorisation suggests that the urban gardener in Belfast can be located along a continuum ranging from primary concerns with food to primary concerns with social needs (Fig, 160). Let us now examine each in turn.
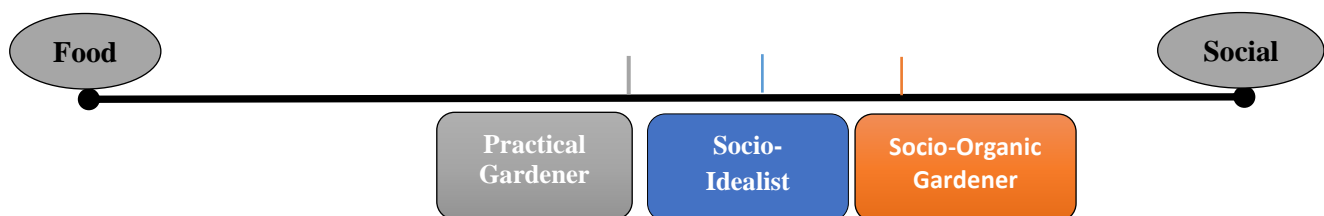
Figure 160. Typology continuum: Belfast

9.2.1. The Socio-Practical Gardener

Figure 161. Socio-Practical Gardener

"When you taste your own vegetables straight from an allotment there's no comparison… Your fruit, your tomatoes, your vegetables, everything tastes different. There's no chemical treatment on it. But as ol' Joe used to say, '*if you don't have time to sit down in the communal shed and have a cup of tea with your fellow allotment holders you shouldn't be here*' … That's the attitude, … It's about connecting to people. You look forward to seeing others … If you're working on your own here, it's very lonely"

Martyn. Socio-Practical Gardener. 2013

Practical gardeners in Belfast constitute the majority of practitioners' investing in UA. Like their counterparts in Dublin, they possess an 'agrarian habitus' which provides them with strategies of action to engage in the tasks of cultivation and knowledge of the soil, plants and the land. They see UA as a means to maintain connections to the means of production, knowledge, practice and the land and are particularly cognizant of the ancillary social benefits emanating from UA.

They largely comprise working class men and women and also include a diversity of social groups who express concerns over the provenance, changing character, taste, quality and nutritional value of food who see UA as a means to improve their health and nutritional status by producing and consuming 'organic' 'chemical-free food'. They are viewed by others as keen and dedicated members of the allotment culture who are passionate about growing food. However, their foray into UA provides an opportunity to

(re)connect with 'others' from both communities *and* escape (albeit temporarily) the politicization of everyday life.

Harry, an elderly working class gentleman represents many Practical gardeners in Belfast. He possesses an 'agrarian habitus' and acquired his knowledge and passion for cultivation from experiences and practices he was predisposed to in his earlier life. His foray into UA was underpinned by a desire to maintain connections to the means of production, knowledge, practice and the land. Like the majority of gardeners in both cities, he expresses a distrust in contemporary food production systems and concerns over the provenance, quality and changing taste and nutritional value of food, but explains how his foray into UA provides an opportunity to interact with 'strangers' from both communities who share an interest in cultivating the land. As Harry observes:

"I grew up on a farm … I always liked growing stuff at home so then when I came up to the city to work ….I got an allotment. ….The reason I wanted it is because I want to be able to grow my own food … Food you buy in the supermarkets are full of preservatives. They don't taste the same … they're forced - force grown and they just don't have the taste … I like to know where it's [food] coming from…know what you're eating. It's also the satisfaction of being able to grow your own too…it's very rewarding …but also, you see a lot of people here….and there's better interaction between people here, people from *both* communities… If you are working or people are going by, you'll stop and have a chat …it was even like that during the Troubles … They're [Catholics and Protestants] *all* here for the same purpose…They're just people … bringing back old ways of living …They're all interested in growing"   *Harry. Socio-Practical Gardener. 2013*

Similarly, Martyn, a retired middle-class professional who has been tending his plot in the city for almost forty years reiterates:

 "If you look at the strawberries in the supermarkets they're all radiated for shelf life … When I was working as a researcher, we were looking at the residual effects of that, and it's not good. Supermarket apples are covered in a wax to make the chemicals adhere to the surface. If you put an apple that you buy in the supermarket into warm water it will go white, there's a layer of wax on it …In the 60s and 70s there was a big lull [in UA]…I came up in the 80s. I have a background in horticulture, and worked all my life in it too … but since 2000 there's been a great interest in it again … People want to know where their food is from, know what they're eating, how to grow their own … and the food scares contributed to that too … There's no comparison with the food here … there's no

chemical treatment on it …But it's a *very* social thing … It's a social thing as much as it is about the growing"   *Martyn, Socio-Practical Gardener East Belfast, 2013*

Ralph, a retired professional possess an 'agrarian habitus' has been cultivating on his allotment for over twenty-five years. He explains how his foray into UA was shaped by structures, practices and experiences he was pre-disposed to in his earlier life. He possesses an agrarian habitus, and is passionate about growing food. He explains how his motivations were underpinned by a desire to maintain connections to knowledge systems, practice and the land *and* to generate friendships, loose bonds and interact with others from within and across the community divide. Like the majority of Practical gardeners across the city, he explains how he has developed friendships, loose bonds and social ties with individuals from *both* communities through UA and he is particularly keen to explicate the ancillary social benefits of cultivating alongside unknown 'others' who share a love of the land. He explains how, during the Troubles UA provided opportunities to engage, participate and interact with unknown 'others' from both communities and helped develop friendships, loose bonds and social ties with individuals from across the community divide. He sees his allotment as an important resource in the city and illuminates the potential of UA to foster better social relations within and across both communities where residual ethno-religious/national divisions continue to overshadow everyday life:

"Aye, we would have grown at home as wee lads on the farm. I have my plot now going on twenty six years or thereabouts …. This is a good site here … There's a lot of nice people and you get to meet up and chat. Mainly I suppose it was for the vegetables and the company. There's a lot of very nice people here and I suppose with the Troubles here in the North it was a nice way to meet others [from both communities] you know? You see, you're connecting … The people are *very* decent here [from both communities]. Even during the Troubles people [from both communities] here were *very* welcoming, *very* welcoming … They'd give you a cup of tea and you'd have chat, …help each other out …It's still that way here aye … it's a great thing aye, a great way to get people to mix. There's no animosity here"

Ralph. Socio-Practical Gardener 2013

Practical gardeners in Belfast are receptive to being part of a convivial environment where both Catholics and Protestants can interact, participate and cultivate alongside each other and share their passion for cultivation. They are willing to eschew difference whilst engaging in the tasks of cultivation which allows them to move beyond parochial understandings of their lives.

Like their counterparts in Dublin, they see allotments as functional for the purpose of growing food and self-provision. However, they *all* see UA as an opportunity to interact with 'others' and engage in more cooperative forms of exchange. They see UA as means to practice cooperation, disseminate knowledge, share experiences, physical labour and skills which facilitate social levelling and the construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground. They see the allotment as a 'social leveller' where ethno-religious/national identities are rendered less salient when engaging in tasks associated with cultivating the land. They are particularly keen to explicate how a shared interest in cultivation generates *alternative* forms of sociality that stand in contradistinction to those evidenced beyond the boundaries of allotment sites. Engaging in similar activities and sharing an interest in cultivating the land (in this designated space) allows them to eschew difference and simply get on with the tasks of everyday life. As Martyn explains:

"There's such a range of people up here, from all professions, all backgrounds, both sides [both communities] …x has been up here since 1955. When he was only 15yrs old he started and he's still up there … But there's definitely a social need behind this … it's about connecting to people. You look forward to seeing cars coming up because if you're working away here on your own it's very lonely … If you have an interest in growing your own vegetables there's a reason for it, there's lots of reasons for it …but there's a difference there outside. When you come on to an allotment, you're *all* allotment growers. It's a leveller and it doesn't matter if you're the Lord Mayor, you're all the same as everyone else …."   *Martyn, Socio-Practical Gardener, 2013*

Martyn, like others is eager to explain how plot-holders eschew difference while engaging in the tasks of cultivation. He explains how, during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, plot-holders eschewed difference, dismantled barriers and generated friendships, loose bonds and social ties. Like others, he sees UA as an *important* resource in the city which

engenders 'social levelling', generates an incipient social identity and facilitates the construction of 'a shared-in-common' ground:

 "…. It's about food but ….it's also when you come on to an allotment, you're *all* fellow allotment growers. It's a *very* welcoming place. …People from all walks of life up here mix … I really think it breaks down barriers between people. …There's no mention of it [politics/religious beliefs]. People mix here, and it's like ol' Joe used to say, 'you have to have time to sit down in the communal shed and have a cup of tea with your fellow allotment holders, otherwise you shouldn't be here'… Ach, it's a *very* social thing … and people are *very* decent. They're very welcoming … they help each other out …But even during the Troubles when people were on site *everyone* mixed …*Everyone* [from both communities] mixes here. It's a social thing as much as it is about the growing for a lot of people. It can be very lonely if you're here on your own, so it is about meeting people. Even during the Troubles when people were on site there was no mention of it [ethno-religious/national divisions], no mention of it at *all.* Not a thing. Everyone mixes"   ''
Martyn. Socio-Practical Gardener, 2013

In many ways, their motivations are underpinned by a desire to meet and interact with others and a means of escaping the divisions and constrains generated by institutionalised sectarianism and the continued politicization of everyday urban life.

Plot-holders use the entire plot to maximise cultivation and integrate lazy-beds and drills. They are keen to generate a particular aesthetic to display their knowledge, habitus, principles and overall (changing) worldviews (Figs 161-164)**.** Whilst they display similarities with their counterparts in Dublin in terms of the domesticated effect their practices generate, in Belfast, Practical gardeners employ a combination of both 'conventional'' *and* 'contemporary' methods and techniques. They are keen to integrate principles of practices which gardeners with a political-organic habitus in Dublin advocate **(**integrating raised beds and concept gardening techniques to generate a particular effect) **(**Figs 162f-163, a, b & c**),** and have high standards in relation to cultivation (evidenced in the produce they cultivate) (Fig. 166i). In particular, they are keen to maintain the aesthetic quality of their plots and invest heavily in the physical practices of actively digging and nurturing the land (Fig 166h). In that sense, they display similarities with Socio-Organic gardeners (in both cities) who employ similar principles and techniques. Their approach produces similar aesthetics that creates a particular visual

affect others new to UA are keen to replicate. However, their approach to practice reveals that their practices are underpinned by particular dogmas that reflect their ideologies and worldviews (Figs. 164-165).

They are particularly keen to use salvaged materials to facilitate practice, *maintain* a 'partnership with nature' and connections with practice and the land. Whilst they display similarities with their counterparts in Dublin in terms of some of the materials they integrate and use, they are particularly keen to used *salvaged materials* from in and around the urban to blend into the landscape when designing and constructing their plots. They unleash their imaginations when designing, constructing and cultivating their plots and see self-reliance and self-sufficiency as important virtues both Idealists and Practical gardeners in both cities advocate (Figs.164b,c,d,e,f, 166a). They see nothing wrong with integrating salvaged materials and express a desire to escape the commodification of everyday life. They have a 'make-do' approach to practice which underpins their values, practices and worldviews. Their approach to construction and the maintenance and cultivation of their plots suggests that their practices exhibit a particular set of codes and 'ethical' maxims that shapes the conduct of everyday life (Protestant Ethic) (Parsons, 1958 in Hamilton, 1999). They extol the virtues of hard work and physical labour evidenced in the way they construct, manage and maintain their plots (Figs 162a-f). Their principles and ethics are also evidenced in their everyday parlance and in the way they construct their sheds (and raised beds) *entirely* from re-used urban waste (Figs. 164 a,b,c). In many ways they display similarities with Idealists in Dublin whose motivations are underpinned by a desire to promote particular values, practices and worldviews, but their approach to practices appears to suggest that they draw on particular principles ethical in origin) which have practical significance for shaping the conduct of everyday life for the common good (frugality, prudence, asceticism, discipline, hard work, consciousness). That is, their approach to practice appears to elevate from a 'moral duty' and 'impositions

of religious maxims for regulating the conduct of everyday life" (Parsons, 1958 in Hamilton, 1999; Morrisson, 2006): a 'spirit' which is particularly evidenced in their discourse, their practices and visually evident through the aesthetics their practices generate (Figs. 162-163a, 164b-166a). Their practices bring new life into an otherwise empty or derelict/dis-used urban public space**.**

Whilst their practices may exhibit a religious dogma (Protestant Ethic), lifestyles, values and worldviews, their approach to practice nevertheless creates a particular aesthetic Socio-Organic gardeners in Dublin are keen to generate. They too are keen to generate a particular (convivial) aesthetic which lures others to stop and consume the landscape and provides opportunities to interact (Figs. 162-164b, 165b-166a): John, Hugh and Samuel's comments illustrate:

"Ach I have some wee things there [mannequin] I got from a skip ….everyone admires that wee girl, and the wee dress she has on …. Aye, it's a bit of humour [laughs] but she's helpin' keep the pigeons away too … the shed is made from all old bits of wood, window panes and that aye …. " *John. Socio-Practical Gardener, 2013*

Hugh reiterates:

"Sure that's what an allotment is about too. …. You can use old bits' n bobs from around you know? Giving them a new use … That wee lad [mannequin] was got from a skip … it's very handy for putting my wee tools on there. It keeps the birds away aye" *Hugh. Socio-Practical Gardener, 2013*

Similarly, Samuel explains:

"See that site there, that one here and that one over there?.... they're all about 85-86 [years] them there, …. see x's [plot-holder] wee shed there, it's leaning … they call it the 'listed building' [laughs] … Mine is going the same way [laughs]. … one of the ol' men recommended to use this wee bit of tarpaulin 'cos it was startin to go a wee bit astray… I'll get to tidy it up a wee bit … I'll get another year out of it aye…See here? this saves on glass and all the rest of it ... see the hoarding signs?   I've always had an interest in hankering around. When I was in school. … and I came out on the wee bike, I was about 13 [yrs] and I asked Mr x, how do you get one of these things?[allotments] but he said I was a bit young for it and to come back. And I've been here since. That man here, his [plot] is immaculate. He put 10,000 Chrysanths (Chrysanthemum Flowers) in there last year … he gives them to the Church … and I've a good bit too aye. … but it's a social thing too you know? Aye, I've made many friends here … from *both* sides [communities] … There's no problems [divisions]. People are very conscientious. See even you coming here, that man here beside me when he was going away today, he told me to wait here to make sure you were looked after. … you look after each other … that's what it's about" *Samuel, Socio-Practical Gardener , 2013*

Whilst their counterparts in Dublin are inscribing divisions by being dismissive of the aesthetics gardeners new to UA generate, in Belfast Practical gardeners are creating a culture of 'live and let live' by being open to new ideas and welcoming new practices practitioners' new to UA bring to the plots. They place a high value on the landscape and the aesthetics gardeners new to UA generate, particularly in terms the creativity and vibrancy their practices generate. In fact, they commend new practitioner's approaches for the dividends they generate. As Nigel and Ralph's comments demonstrate:

"well we all do it a wee bit differently up here … I've put in some of those beds [raised beds] too … I'm getting on [older] now and it's easier to maintain and I use lazy beds to use up the ground and I have a green-house which brings the plants on. … It's instilled in your genes to do it that way … but everyone does it slightly differently. This is a great site … people are very creative and innovative here, especially some of the more recent ones [plot-holders]…Some of the plots are very cheery and you can see that a lot of effort and work has gone into them …and they're well maintained. You do get people who take it on for three weeks and leave it and it's like a jungle and they get discouraged because they think it's easy …. but the committee have a solution to help that. It's just that they don't know how to do it …so they'll [committee] go and give them a wee dig out, help them weed and sort it out for them …"
Nigel. Socio-Practical Gardener 2013

Similarly, Ralph's comments explicate:

"You have to think of other plot-holders too and keep the weeds down … because chickweed comes up everywhere so if you don't [maintain plots] the weeds proliferate and blow everywhere … The thing is, you're fighting with nature … everyone does it a wee bit differently. I use the drills but I also have the beds [raised boxes]. They're easier to maintain and control the weeds and better for growing certain things. Like the strawberries there, I can just sit down there [on raised boxes] and rub my hands up and down through them and clear the weeds. It's neater too and easier to rotate"
Ralph. Socio-Practical Gardener,2013

Practical gardeners are keen to integrate '*a concept gardening*' approach new gardeners in Dublin embrace (see chapter 7), which facilitates practice, eases maintenance and frees up time to interact, participate and engage with unknown others on site. However, they also exhibit similarities with Practical gardeners in Dublin in terms of the value and respect they place on knowledge, the quality of soil and the land, but are particularly keen to promote more cooperative forms of activity and engage in more reciprocal forms of exchange. They are keen and dedicated members of the allotment culture whose

knowledge and experience of UA facilitates others practices (particularly members new to UA). They play a *crucial* role in paving the way for greater collaboration and cooperation between diverse members from both communities investing in UA. They perceive their plots as the next best thing to the rural-cultivable landscape and the outdoors (Fig 166h). They enjoy the physical nature of practice and express an explicit identification with freedom and being back to the land in a way that it represents everything the city is not. Harry and Ralph's comments demonstrate:

" … I've mainly the drills and use the old ways …I want good food …but everyone has an opinion about food [industrialised] and you've these people on the TV saying that there's not much difference between the stuff you get from the shops but you do find a difference. Here it's like farming … you're in the city but like on a farm … It's the next best thing to it ….. and you'll find the stuff tastes different …"

Harry. Socio-Practical Gardener. 2013

And as Ralph's comments reiterate:

" there's nothing as rewarding as seeing plants grow, being out in the open, growing and … it's just something very calming about it too … It's a wee bit of the country in the city if you like …[and] it's a very welcoming place … People from both sides [community divide] get along. Even if there is a difference there outside … here you're all allotment growers. You're all fellow allotment growers …you can get away from all that [ethno-religious/national divisions]"

Ralph. Socio-Practical Gardener, 2013

Figure 162. (a,b,c,d,e,f). Lazy beds, drills and traditional methods

Figure 163. (a,b,c). Integrating contemporary and traditional methods and techniques

Figure 164 (a,b,c,d,e,f). Blending into the landscape & displaying virtues, ideologies and religious maxims

Figure 165 (a,b,c). Using local resources, exhibiting ideologies & religious maxims/virtues

Figure 166 (a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h). Exhibiting principles, motivations and worldviews

9.2.2. The *Socio*-Idealist
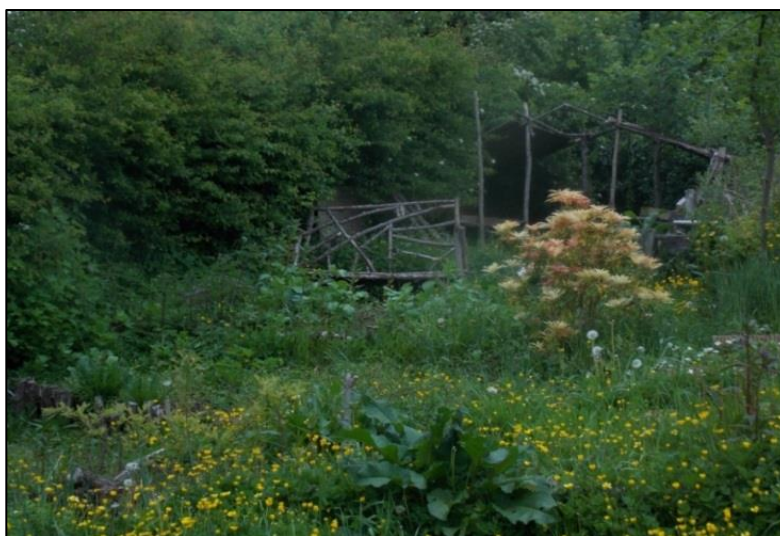
Figure 167. Improving the environmental quality of the city

"We're empowering people … getting them to grow, to learn, educating them, providing an alternative way …Change will take time. It will happen, but it'll take time …"

Charles. Idealist, 2013

Socio-Idealists in Belfast comprise a small number of practitioners investing in UA. They largely comprise the young new middle-classes whose motivations are underpinned by a desire to promote alternative lifestyles and transform practitioners' practices, actions and worldviews. Whilst they display similarities with Idealists/Eco-Warriors in Dublin whose motivations are underpinned by wider environmental and ecological concerns and a desire to alter practitioners (and public) opinions on issues that relate to food, they see their foray into UA as a means to transcend social cleavages generated by ethno-sectarianism and promote bridge-building across the community divide.

The majority are members of various networks and advocacy groups who are committed to awareness-raising amongst the cultivating citizenry (and the public at large) on issues that relate to the production and consumption of food. They are committed to educating others about the environmentally friendly sustainable methods of food production to generate alternative systems of exchange. As Charles' comments illustrate:

"We all need water and food. These are necessary resources… and companies are controlling these more and more. Prices are going up and up and soon it'll be about access and being able to afford the food we eat. So the question in the future is all about food security. Once food and water are controlled by external forces, the world is in trouble. … People are disconnected from food, how to grow it, the knowledge is not passed on … and we need to educate people about the harm too that they're doing to the environment"

Charles, Socio-Idealist. 2013

Socio-Idealists see UA as invaluable resource in the city to engage in bridge-building and negotiate social and spatial practices across the community divide. They see UA as a new avenue through which urban dwellers can engage in alternative systems of exchange, and transcend ethno-religious/national divisions to improve the quality of urban life. Charles elaborates:

"You see, the knowledge is not passed on because we rely more and more on them [Global Food Industry] for our food … and we need to educate people about the harm too that they're doing to the environment. …but it's about bridging divisions between people too … to give people an alternative way …A lot of people went away [to prison] because of terrorism and got out [released] early but there was an influx of these disadvantaged people coming out into a world that had changed dramatically … And there are divisions too that are deeply rooted … so this [UA] encourages them to reconnect with structure *and* others too … It encourages a sense of responsibility to the environment, *and* to others … It gives them a sense of ownership, responsibility … an alternative way …An alternative in many ways"

Charles, Socio-Idealist. 2013

They are cognizant of and promote the rehabilitative benefits of engaging with nature, practice and the land. They are particularly keen to engender a sense of solidarity, trust and mutuality between members from both communities by encouraging urban dwellers to engage in cooperative (and reciprocal) forms of exchange. They aim to generate (and promote) alternative forms of sociality and the construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground to foster better social relations within and across the community divide. Ruth explains:

"It's about the big picture. … it's about bridging divisions between communities, getting them to take responsibility for the environment they live in too….There's people who live in communities nowadays and it's all about 'me-ism', they don't know their neighbour, they shut their door and think they shut the world out and the history of Troubles here of course, that's obvious ….With this [UA] you're bringing a community together again, from the oldest to the youngest, … and getting them to work with others …. To take care of the environment … to care about what they're eating … and about respect …

Respecting that, and each other instead of this divide … And gradually you see them change … It's about educating them, *and* getting' back to basics"

<div align="right">*Ruth, Socio-Idealist, 2013*</div>

They draw on theirs and others' knowledge, physical labour, experience and skills to (re)construct shared-in-common spaces in the city where urban dwellers can join in concert, integrate with 'others' and transform their practices, actions and worldviews. Like the majority of gardeners new to UA in Dublin, they place a high value on open green space, and are keen to express their concerns over the growing privatization of public space. They see their foray into UA as central to awareness-raising amongst the cultivating citizenry (and public) of the value of generating an 'equal' and 'neutral' public space. They aim to progress sustainable urban development *and* generate alternative lifestyles by providing opportunities for mutual tolerance and respect for friend and stranger alike. As Charles explicates:

"It's not that there isn't enough room for all those wanting to participate in allotments because there *is* land … there's *plenty* of parks, green spaces, enough land, but the council are keeping the land because they want to make something more valuable …. You see, you've all these older people with all the information you could ever want and you've all these younger people with all the energy you could ever want, and they are a great thing to combine. You've older plot-holders who are in their 70s now … and I see the potential there by getting the younger ones' to help them which in due course, will build better social relations between people who are divided …. and better the environment and show an alternative way. Food is a common area for us all. We all use it, need it and it's through growing food that we can create a common interest between people … but you have to allow them to move on at their own rate. You can't force people to do it … if you do, they will resist … But it *will* happen. It just takes time"

<div align="right">*Charles, Socio-Idealist. 2013*</div>

Socio-Idealists see UA as an important resource in the city that can provide new possibilities to bridge divisions between urban dwellers with entrenched political views. They are keen to encourage more cooperative forms of activity by encouraging diverse social categorisations to become involved and participate in UA. They see UA as a means to dismantle barriers, practice cooperation and promote bridge-building across the community divide, and are particularly keen to promote the benefits UA generates. They explain how UA can offer urban dwellers an opportunity to reconnect with the knowledge,

practice and the land but *crucially*, to (re)connect with others and construct a 'shared-in-common' ground.

"We bring a variety of groups to the site, from prisoners, to people involved with Horizon (mental health initiative). The aim is to try (re)integrate people back into society, particularly those who are marginalised from crime, sectarianism, people with mental health issues- to teach them about environment, growing food, and team work. Over 150 people use the garden on a weekly basis, from various groups, from ex-prisoners, school kids, drug rehabilitation groups, mental health awareness and that"

Charles, Socio-Idealist. 2013

Socio-Idealists are revered by the majority of practitioners' for attempting to engender social integration, foster and promote bridge-building and a sense of mutuality, solidarity and trust. However, there are gardeners who are hesitant about the rehabilitative nature and possibilities UA may be able to sustain. Whilst the majority of practitioners are aware of the potential benefits UA can generate, some practitioners have their doubts about integrating individuals who have not 'kept their noses clean' (in the past). As Rej and Charles explain:

"I don't deny that what they're trying to do would work … but I don't think that just because you've found one solution that you can apply it to a different set of circumstances, especially because you've different people involved. You've be very careful … you've to look at the context. It's the ideal they're aiming for … but I certainly wouldn't be antipathetic to them [ethno-religious groups] …. [but] I would be watching for a trend to make sure that they kept their noses clean"

Rej. Practical Gardener, 2013

Charles also explains:

"… when we first came and had ex-paramilitary prisoners, the homeless or other marginalised groups using the site, plot-holders detested their presence in the beginning, …although it was the homeless that posed the biggest threat as people feared that in the evening they would return and start breaking into sheds to sleep you know?...but as soon as they [other plot-holders] seen what we were trying to do, rehabilitate and educating, integrating these groups and that, we were trying to encourage better civic engagement …. they soon opened up and became more receptive to those using this plot"

Charles, Socio-Idealist. 2013

Whilst a legacy of fear remains in the city because of the residual politicization of everyday life, Socio-Idealists are nevertheless motivated by a desire to generate alternative lifestyles by promoting UA. Their motivations are underpinned by a *Political-Organic habitus* which resonates with Idealists/Eco-Warriors in the South, evidenced in

their discourses, practices and plot layouts and designs (Figs 168-a & b). However, they employ diverse approaches to plot construction and cultivation which produces particular allotment aesthetics, layouts and designs (Figs. 168 c, 169 a-c). They reveal their commitment to an organic ideology by advocating organic principles and land husbandry techniques, and although some employ 'companion planting' methods which they believe are instrumental to improving the ecological and environmental quality of the city and transforming practitioners' practices, actions and worldviews (Figs. 168 a,b,c, 169ca & c) the majority integrate *concept gardening* methods to expedite specific principles and promote alternative lifestyles, practices and worldviews.

This approach produces a particular allotment aesthetic which lures others to stop and interact with 'others' which they believe, helps dismantle barriers and allows for the creation of a new politics of place (Figs. 169 a & b). Charles explains:

" When we got this site it was so overgrown. … It took 6 weeks to clear and 7 large industrial skips of rubbish were pulled out of it. We [members] did that ourselves …. And we put in all the boxes there, the raised beds … Once people [plot-holders] saw what we were doing, saw what they [practitioners/groups] were doing they soon opened up and became more receptive to those using this plots … they could see what they were doing here and what they've produced … how they've transformed the plot… that it is working … Now they chat away to them [ex-prisoners, etc.]"

Charles, Socio-Idealist. 2013

Hence, their plots suggest similar values and principles Practical gardeners draw on, exhibit and promote, evidenced in the way they integrate salvaged materials and construct their sheds entirely from re-used urban waste (Figs 170 a, b & c, 171a-c). Despite their diverse approaches, their plot aesthetics and designs, they view their approach to UA as '*restituitive*' (McClintock, 2010), as it provides a tool to re-shape and re-order the urban, and a means to (re)generate a 'shared-in-common' ground.

Figure 168. (a,b,c). Diverse approaches (companion planting, concept gardening)

Figure 169 (a,b,c). Diverse approaches aesthetics, principles, values, habitus & worldviews

Figure 170 (a,b,c). Re-using urban waste to (re)construct a sense of place

Figure 171 (a,b,c) Exhibiting values, motivations, habitus, principles & worldviews.

9.2.3. Socio-Organic Gardeners

Figure 172. Socio-Organic Contemporary plot design

Socio-Organic gardeners in Belfast are analogous with the majority of gardeners investing in UA in Dublin today. Their foray into UA is directly framed by certain dis-embedding social processes generated by modern lifestyles, and underpinned by a desire to (re)connect with knowledge, practice and the land, but see UA as a means to transcend the salience of residual ethno-religious/national divisions that continues to overshadow everyday urban life.

They express concerns over changes in food production and in particular, the provenance and quality of food. They are keen to generate alternative lifestyles and (like their counterparts in Dublin) to improve their health and nutritional status by producing and consuming 'organic' food. However the desire to (re)connect with others and engage in bridge-building across the community divide provided the majority of Socio-organic gardeners the impetus to invest in UA. They see their foray into UA as an opportunity to meet and interact with 'others' within and across diverse urban locales. They express an explicit desire to transcend ethno-religious/national distinctions and differences and (re)construct a 'shared-in-common' ground and see UA as a means to integrate and

cooperate with 'others', and engender a sense of mutuality and restore bonds of trust.

Paul, a Protestant Socio-Organic gardener explains:

"There's far more people who have no interest in religion than there are who have an interest in religion. … [and] I want to move on from that [divisions].… Even my kids [young adults] are the same. It [ethno-religious/national divisions] means nothing to them, *nothin* to them. I think for the future it's getting better because even one of my kids is goin out with a Catholic lad … and it's progressive down to my youngest child. They're the same, they want to move on from all that …. *I* just want to move on, move on from from all that [divisions]"   *Paul, a Socio-Organic gardener, 2013*

Their motivations are underpinned by an explicit desire to (re)connect with knowledge,

practice and (re)connect with food systems but particularly to 'others' to ameliorate

residual ethno-religious/national divisions and find a new pathway to transcend the

politicization of everyday urban life. Fay explains:

" … You do it because you want fresh food … with all the food scares it makes you kinda think '*what am I eatin*'? …but it's *not* just about the food. It's the social too … If you live for thirty or forty years and your life depends on keeping your mouth shut and your head down or making sure you're in the right place, even though things have changed, there is a residual wariness there. … So it's a social thing as much as it is about the food … . Also, work has changed so much too … now your more attached to machinery …Plus, you don't talk to people …even though things have changed in Belfast, there's a residual wariness. People will say in Belfast that you could talk about the weather for two hours until you're absolutely certain of whose around, you know? …. So it's [UA] a social thing… It's about getting back to the basic thing of being grounded, … mixing with people from both communities … With this, you can connect with human beings and nature, and your food"   *Fay. Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013*

They see the allotment as an opportunity to join in concert and construct a 'shared-in-

common' ground, where they can discard the particularities of their identities (class,

gender, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation) (re)connect with others and generate loose

bonds and social ties. Ivan, a young Socio-Organic gardener new to UA explains:

"well we've been on the waiting list for almost five years now …We have a house with a wee front garden and we dug it all up to grow vegetables to grow our own food, to grow organic food … but it's impossible really to do it there. Plus, you don't meet people [from both communities] there or talk to *anyone* there either … I only know seven people on my street. You don't get to meet people [cross-communities] like you do here. I mean, I've only been here three weeks and honestly I know more people on the allotment than I do on my street, and I've been living there eight years. So I suppose, it [motivations] was a way of meeting people [from both communities] … It's totally different here …it [difference] doesn't matter …*Everybody's* welcoming, very much so"
                                                              Ivan. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Like *Socio*-Idealists in the city, they too see UA as a means of engaging in '*restitutive*' practice to transcend the growing dis-embeddedness generated by modernity *and* ameliorate the social cleavages generated by ethno-sectarianism, enduring ethno-religious/national divisions and to transcend the residual politicization of everyday urban life. They see their foray into UA as a means to practice cooperation and generate elective affinities with unknown 'others' across the community divide, while engaging in a healthy recreational activity in a convivial *public* space. Andrew, a young Socio-Organic gardener explains:

"well this site has been here since before the war … so it's been here a long time … I took my plot to try and stay away from trouble you know? To try and you know, stay out of trouble and have a better life … I'd a lifetime behind me [involved in conflict]in the divide you know? … I wanted to get away from it and have a better life, so I came up here … to try and go on the right path, go forward … mix … and get food out of it … meeting people up here, different people coming up … mixing with different people from all backgrounds …And to have peace of mind … It's cross cultural and multi-cultural …it's Catholics *and* Protestants up here."

Andrew, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

Their motivations are evidenced in the aesthetics their practices generate. Like their counterparts in Dublin (and in many ways, like Practical gardeners in Belfast), their plots are well structured using a combination of both concept and conventional cultivation techniques (Figs. 172, 173a-i). Their practices are underpinned by an *aspirational habitus* evidenced in their desire to (re)connect with knowledge and transform their practices, actions and worldviews, and are particularly eager to cultivate their plots symmetrically to create a particular appeal. They integrate a range of materials and cultural artefacts, which like Practical gardeners, creates a somewhat domesticated effect which enhances the overall aesthetic, conveys a sense of ownerships (albeit in the public realm) and a sense of belonging to the place (Figs. 173a-i, 174 a-c). In many ways their practices display similarities with Socio-Organic gardeners' in Dublin whose practices create a somewhat feminized effect, which lures passers-by to stop and consume the landscape and provides opportunities to interact. (Figs. 173-175, 177c-188c, 179a, 180a, 181b).

However, unlike the majority of practitioners investing in UA in Belfast today, Socio-Organic gardeners tend to display high levels of material investment and integrate a range of 'off the peg' sheds rather than re-used urban waste. Like their counterparts in Dublin they transform their shed interiors and paint them brightly to create a particular effect, which creates a sense of private ownership and control of a space, albeit in the public realm (Figs 175 a-c). They integrate poly-tunnels, water harvesting systems, seating areas, signs and cultural artefacts to facilitate practice, display their motivations, what the plot means to them and their (changing) practices and worldviews (Figs. 173, 178, 180b) However, one of the most notable and distinguishing features on allotments in Belfast is that Socio-Organic gardeners tend to omit green areas, lawns and symbolic markers of identity, gardeners in Dublin are keen to display and integrate.

Indeed, across all sites in the city, social markers of class, ethnicity, religious and/or political affiliation, or national identity are not evidenced or displayed on *any* allotment plot/site. This is significant in the context of Belfast where so much public space tends to be inscribed with ethno-religious/national territorial claims, and where symbolic markers of identity are evidenced at every available turn (Figs. 182a-g).
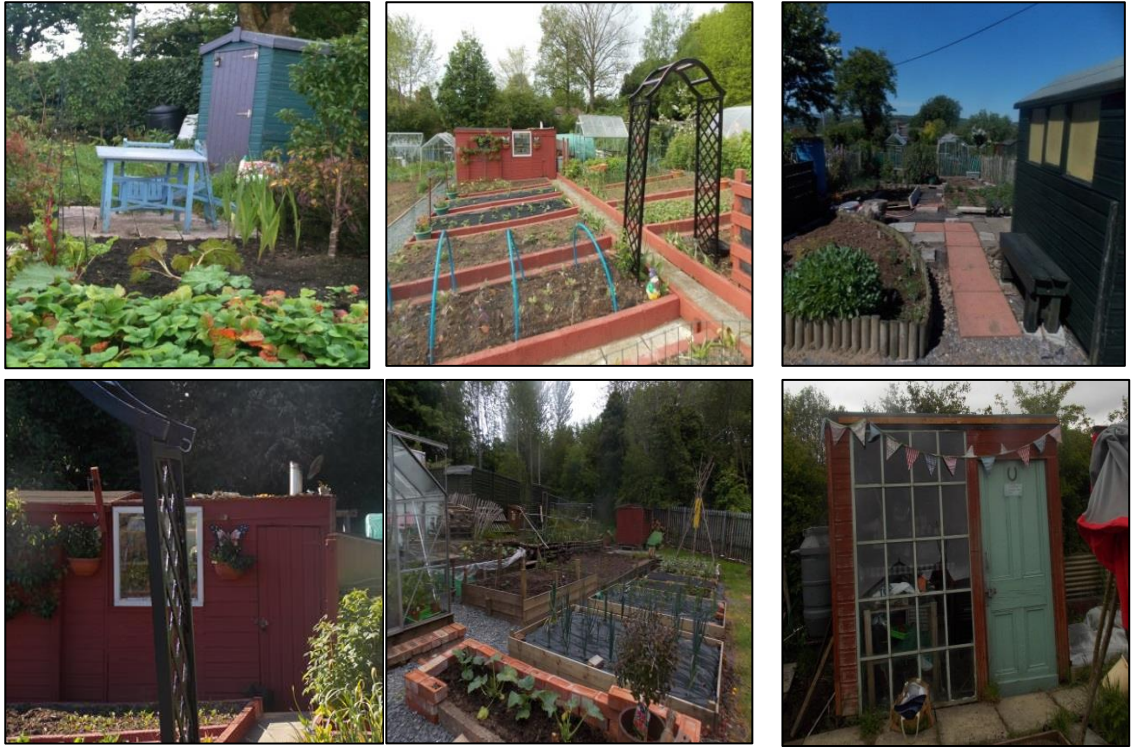
Figure 173 (a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i). The lure of the aesthetic and the 'domesticated effect'.

Figure 174 (a,b,c). Integrating materials & artefacts to enhance the aesthetic

Figure 175 (a,b,c). Integrating poly-tunnels, water harvesting systems and re-using urban waste
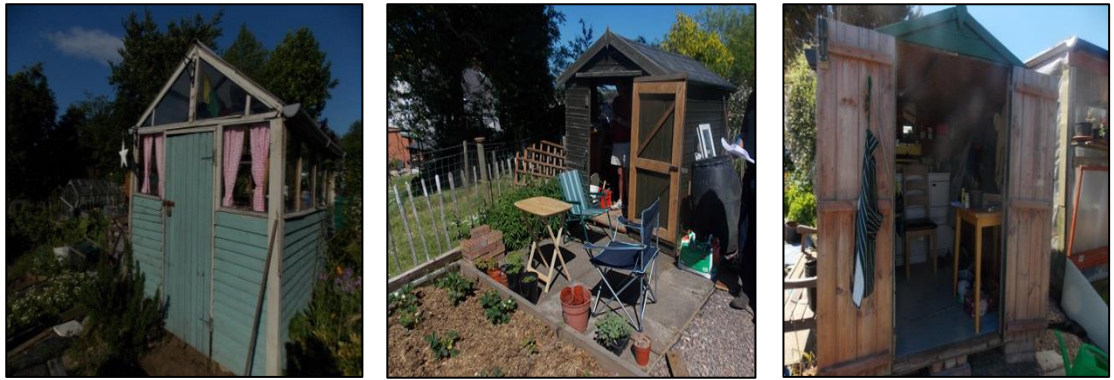
Figure 176 (a,b,c). Feminizing, Aestheticizing, creating a sense of ownership and belonging to place

Figure 177 (a,b,c). Creating/Displaying a sense of ownership and belonging.

Figure 178 (a,b,c). Cultural artefacts to exhibit meaning, ownership and belonging

Figure 179 (a,b,c). Facilitating Interaction

Figure 180 (a,b,c). A sense of ownership and belonging

Figure 181 (a & b). . Creating a sense of home-from-home, ownership, and easing interaction

9.3. Moving beyond difference and constructing a 'shared-in common' ground.
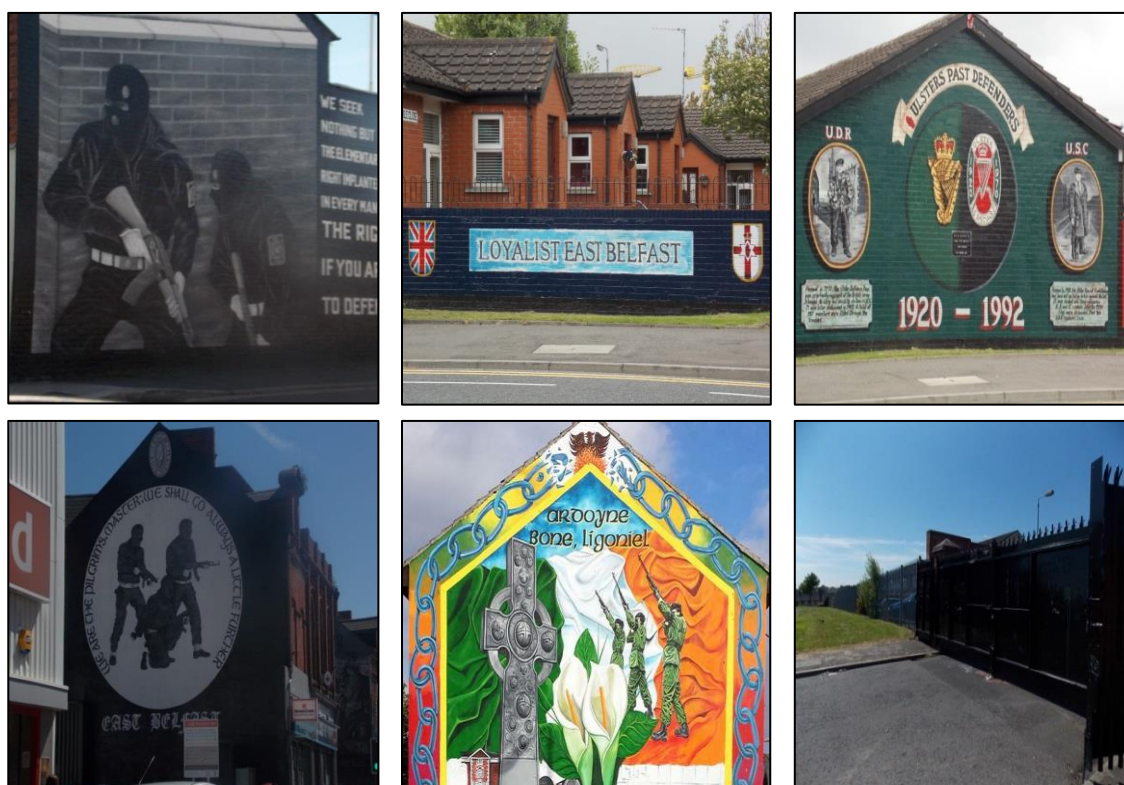
Figure 182 (a,b,c,d,e,f,g). Territoriality, interfaces and 'exclusivist' renditions of belonging

One of the most remarkable and most striking features of the research on allotment gardening in Belfast was a tendency by plot-holders to describe allotments in terms of their social value rather than primarily in terms of cultivating and nurturing the land. Regardless of age, class, gender and ethno-religious/national identity or motivations for investing in UA, plot-holders across the city avowedly testified to the non-political nature of the landscape emphasising how allotments provide opportunities for social mixing and bridge-building with diverse class and ethno-religious/national groupings within and across the community divide. Respondents unequivocally identify allotments as a principle source of sociality; a space to (re)connect with unknown 'others' despite the fact that they bring with them 'multiple geographies of affiliation' (Amin, 2010:4). They describe allotments as spaces that facilitate the striking up of easy interactions and which allow urban dwellers of diverse social categorisations to transcend the social cleavages

generated by ethno-religious/national divisions and enduring ethno-sectarian separation which saturates the material and the social fabric of the city's life world. This is significant in the context of Belfast where so much public space is inscribed with ethno-religious/national territorial claims, and symbolic markers of class, status, religion, national and political (territorial) identities are visible at every available turn:(Figs. 182a-g) maintaining boundaries, interfaces, identity performance and generating specific daily experiences. Significantly, allotments are described by all who frequent them as '*equal'*, '*neutral'* and '*non-contested' spaces* that allow individuals in concert to give shape to their immediate environs, and move beyond parochial understandings of their lives and the constraints of institutionalised sectarianism: a space not available elsewhere in the city.

Gardeners from both communities explain how their foray into UA provides opportunities to interact with others and (re)construct a 'shared-in-common' ground. Paul, a Protestant Socio-Organic gardener explain:

"I just feel that Northern Ireland is too tied up and mapped out for religion … we get a bad press quite often and very deservedly so because there are *some* bad people … but there are far more people who have no interest in religion than there are who have … Ach, we all have to move on … you see loads of Union Jacks [British flags] all around the place [Protestant areas] and you're sort of saying '*why do you feel so insecure of your own identity that you have to do this?*' … I think the future is getting better …. It's progressively [getting better] and it [conflict] means nothing … I can't be bothered with things like that and that's why I'm here [allotment], and the majority of people here feel the same. They just want to move on. I'm just not interested in all that … I'm here to grow vegetables and socialise, regardless of where you're from. People just want to move on … this [UA] is a measure of how well things have moved on"

Paul, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

Similarly, Kate, a young Socio-Organic gardener who has recently invested in UA explains the benefits of UA spaces. Since the ceasefires in Northern Ireland she has been making attempts to engage in bridge-building by investing in UA to integrate and foster better social relations with 'others' across the community divide. As a child growing up in the Troubles, she has vivid memories of ethno-sectarian violence, which had a profound impact on social relations in her neighbourhood, her well-being and her overall quality of

life. Living in an interface area of the city, (an area which has been at the epicentre of the Troubles, has witnessed some of the worst sectarian violence, for example street rioting, clashes with security forces, shootings and intimidation, and where Protestant and Catholic communities remain almost wholly segregated, she explains how, despite the political resolution to the conflict in Northern Ireland, that ethno-sectarian divisions still exists, and that political tensions remain high.

Like the majority of gardeners, she sees her foray into UA as a means to interact, participate and engage with 'others', improve cross-community relations and improve her quality of life. She is particularly keen to explain how UA has allowed practitioners' in her residential locale to move beyond parochial understandings of their lives and the constraints of institutionalised sectarianism. She explains how practitioners' have constructed an 'equal', 'neutral' and 'shared-in-common' ground by participating in UA:

"when we were growin up here, they used to leave a bag on the door of a house … and if you saw that, you knew to run, because …. you knew it was a target. You knew to get out of there. … And sure ach, then there's the bread van, the bread van would come in here and all the kids'd run to it to get free bread, … but one time the thing [bread van] blew up … aye ….It was terrible, terrible … It leaves its scars … it's mark … ..The Troubles divided people for a long time, but this place is *still* divided …people know their boundaries … You're still wary, there's been marches there on x Road …and with the Holy Cross [protest] and with the flag flying at the moment too, aye all that carry on ….it wouldn't take much to kick things off [sectarian violence]. But doing this is like a common thing [commonality]…it helps people to integrate …and build-up relationships. That's how I see it"   *Kate. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013*

Like others, Kate sees her foray into UA as a means to improve her health and nutritional status by producing and consuming 'organic' food. However, like the majority of practitioners', her foray into UA is *primarily* underpinned by a desire to engage in bridge-building, move beyond the residualization of ethno-sectarian conflict and improve the quality of urban life. Although her site constitutes a mono-ethnic community, she describes her site as an '*equal', 'neutral'* and '*non-contested space'* that allows individuals from both communities in her locale to join in concert, give shape to their immediate environs, (re)connect with knowledge, practice, the land and *particularly* to

'others' and move beyond parochial understandings of their lives. She explains how UA

provides a means to practice cooperation, a space to engage in bridge-building and affords

urban dwellers an opportunity to meet, interact and participate with 'others' and

(re)construct 'an equal, neutral, shared-in-common ground'. She explains:

"aye, it's good way for meeting them [cross-community], ….to get involved and to stop and think … Its learning about your food, where it comes from instead of thinkin it's from a bag in Tesco …it's organic food. Meetin' people, mixin' with them [ethnic-community]. … and like there, it's good because you got to go up to x [cross community]. We went up and helped them out so we did, and they came down here and helped us out a wee bit too … It was a big thing, a big step like. .. And we started volunteerin' up there to help them out a wee bit… and they came down with a chilli plant, a sort of a peace offerin' you know? and one day he [plot-holder from opposite community] came with it [a plant] and said tell 'em [other plot-holders] I was down? …. it's changed my life so it has …"

Kate. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Similarly, John, a middle-aged Socio-Organic gardener represents many gardeners

investing in UA in Belfast. As a young retired professional who commenced his career in

a rehabilitative programme when sectarian violence was the order of the city and

embedded in every aspect of urban life, John rents his allotment on a site comprising both

Catholics and Protestants, which he believes, all of whom have an equal stake. He explains

how UA provides opportunities to transcend residual ethno-religious/national divisions in

the city. He is particularly keen to explain how the social truncation arising from sectarian

asperity in the past has had a profound impact on urban dwellers well-being and quality

of life (physical, social, psychological). Despite the political resolution to the conflict and

the general commodification of life (urban regeneration projects since the ceasefires), he

describes how ethno-religious/national divisions prevail in the city and continue to impact

on the quality of everyday urban life. However, he is particularly cognizant of the

potential of UA and keen to share his experience of the ancillary social benefits of UA.

He is particularly keen to illuminate the potential of UA for facilitating the

(re)construction of an *'equal', 'neutral'* and *'non-contested' space,* which he believes,

allows individuals from both communities to join in concert and move beyond parochial

understandings of their lives. He explains how, during his career he was actively involved

in promoting bridge-building between individuals with entrenched political views through projects that centred on UA. As John observes:

"…in my work I witnessed it, I've first-hand experience of it, what the Troubles did to people … and I know what this [UA] can do for people …it was one of the things I did in work … it's definitely a good way socially [integrate] because everyone is an equal… to bridge the two communities through gardening … You'd people [in rehabilitation] who probably would've ignored each other, if they'd been walkin' down the street they'd have ignored each other quite literally and … It [UA] certainly broke down barriers. Religion it … it just didn't enter into it … it's pretty pointless being bitter, … The generation before us are very parochial, … institutionalised in a sense, … but I knew that people [participating in UA] could come in their own time, they could come in the evenings, whenever, and they had a sense of ownership of it … look after it in their own time and simply talk to people and break down barriers that were there for so long you know? … so, that's why I put my name down for one [plot] before I retired"

John, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

He sees the allotment as a leveller, where he (and others) can engage in bridge building with 'others', a space which provides a means to practice cooperation and transcend the ethno-religious divisions that continue to overshadow everyday urban life. He is aware of the ancillary social benefits of UA particularly in terms of how plot-holders eschew difference while cultivating the land. He believes that UA practices can provide a new pathway for urban dwellers to build bonds of trust, a sense of mutuality and move beyond parochial understandings of their lives. They provide a patch of ground that gives people a sense of private ownership and control of a space *albeit* in the public realm. He explains how UA softens attitudes even among plot-holders with entrenched political views. Whilst his experience of working with others involved in UA informs his knowledge of the benefits and potential of UA, his motivations are framed by an explicit desire to ameliorate the territorial and ethno-national/religious differences that frame identity and a sense of belonging to community and place. John explains:

"well it's not top secret what's been going on up here [sectarianism] …. And even with [peace process] it's not to say that it happens [integration] because you still get individuals who are sort of bitter on both sides …. Like my name is x and it's obvious which side I'm from, … When I was working, they [clients] couldn't even say *my name* because of their political beliefs … but through working with them on the allotment they soon started to soften …It took some of them a year to be able to say it, my name. They were civil but they just couldn't say my name because of where I come from, that's how embedded it is [political views]. … in the end, they called me by my name. ….Here,

nobody's interested in that sort of stuff [political affiliation] … *at all* on allotments…
It's a great leveller in that respect because everyone who attends is an equal …It's sort
of a social occasion being here … on Saturday's everyone would be here … it's half and
half [half Protestants, half Catholics]. We've everybody here, from Catholics to
Protestants … . Catholics and Protestants side by side … and everyone mixes"

John, Socio-Organic Gardener, 2013

All gardeners are united by a self-conscious desire/commitment to crossing ethno-national
boundaries in the safe space of the non-political terrain of allotments. There is a general
consensus by plot-holders to bracket difference and move beyond parochial
understandings of their lives. Widely accepted labels such as Protestant-Catholic,
Loyalist-Nationalist, Irish-Northern Irish-British, are rendered irrelevant and eschewed in
favour of an appreciation for and common interest in the care and cultivation of the land.
Particularities and identity characteristics that have a taken-for-granted currency beyond
the boundaries are parked at the point of entry and replaced with synonyms such as
"fellow plot-holders", "a community of growers" or as "equals" instead. This allows for
social levelling and a new kind of politics of place. Bernard and Martyn, two plot-holders
from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds who rent plots on the same site in the city
explain:

"Well the social side of it is definitely the best aspect to it. If you really wanted food you
could grow at home, or go and buy organic food at a farm … Allotments are *very* social
places. There's a tremendous social side to it, that's what it mainly is. It's quite nice to
meet different people here from all walks of life, all backgrounds. … People wouldn't
necessary [normally] come across from the two communities [in locality]… but there's a
big social mix from *both* communities here and social strata as well. … There's a good
mix of people here, and people integrate …They get on. All that counts is that you work
your allotment. There's no animosity, no … no mention of *anything*, of that
[religious/political identity]. Here, … everyone's just an allotment grower. The only
animosity may be if someone was spraying weed-killer along the edge of their plot … but
nothing between the communities, no. No animosity at all …"

Bernard, Socio-Organic, 2013

And as Martyn explains:

"It's social, that's what it's about. There's all walks of life up here from Barristers to Bin-
men. Everyone mixes and gets along. It doesn't matter where you come from. … *Anyone*
that comes in here is made feel welcome. I really think it breaks down barriers … when
you come up through that gate, you're all allotment growers … Even if there is a
difference there outside, when you come on to an allotment you're all allotment growers.
You're *all* 'fellow allotment-growers'. It's a leveller. I doesn't matter what you are

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[beyond boundaries], you're the same as everyone else here. It doesn't matter *what* your background is here, where you come from, *everyone* mixes here. When you come in this gate, there's no worries. Everyone just gets on. It disregards your class, your religion. It's just about growing, *that's* what brings people here. It's a *very* welcoming place"

Martyn, Practical gardener, 2013

The capacity to bracket difference is relatively novel, particularly in the context of a divided city such as Belfast, and allows urban dwellers to move beyond prescribed distinctions/social categorisations and lets sectarian conflict sit firmly in the past. Whilst plot-holders recognise that allotments attract people from all walks of life individuals can interact *without* having to be conscious of or adhere to prescribed ethno-religious divisions. Interactions are convivial, amiable and largely jovial and generally about *civil interfacing*. As in Dublin, plot-holders develop loose bonds rather than deep or lasting attachments and circuits of sociability on allotments generally do not extend beyond the boundaries of sites. Whilst on site, practitioners cooperate with each other and engage in reciprocal forms of exchange, - sharing knowledge, produce, their physical labour, experiences and skills. There is a sense of fellowship, tolerance of difference and a general willingness to eschew difference, interact, participate and engage with unknown 'others' and push all other identity markers into the background (Figs 182, a-g)

"Everyone just gets on. It disregards your class, your religion. It's just about growing, *that's* what brings people here. It's a *very* welcoming place"

Martyn, Practical gardener, 2013

Indeed, practitioners eagerly identify forms of sociality on allotments as distinct from those evidenced beyond the boundaries. Neill and Geraldine explain:

"There's [beyond boundaries] no-man's land … and well here, it doesn't matter. It really is the luck of the draw who you are and what you are [identity] so why make barriers between you? You don't choose who you are or what you are. We don't choose our backgrounds. We're all just people at the end of the day and there's good and bad on both sides. …. It's what you make of it. Just do with what you've got and make life what you can. No barriers …here everyone is willing …everyone talks, no-one's any different here"

Neill. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

And as Geraldine elucidates:

"the man who is here beside me, he's been working here since the year I was born. His company has been very stimulating. He is really into this on a very deep level. I see him carrying his little plants and he sow's like it's a sacrament … and then there's all the guys around who are good *craic* [fun]. I love coming up here … people on the allotments are very good, very obliging … They'll help you out, … give you plants, seeds … ask if you want a cup of tea. They're *very* obliging. Whenever I was very stressed, I'd come up here and it was like taking off a heavy overcoat … . Everybody is lovely … willing to chat and give a dig out you know? … I'm not a religious person … but it's like a sanctuary really*"*
Geraldine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Geraldine recalls several acts of kindness on her allotment and explains how allotments provide a means to practice cooperation, opportunities for mutual tolerance and respect for friend and stranger alike. Living in Belfast for over thirty years, she recalls how often she felt social isolated and somewhat socially polarised as a Catholic residing in a predominantly loyalist locale. She explains how, despite the political resolution to the conflict in Northern Ireland that space and territoriality continue to have an impact on the quality of the urban and everyday urban life. Like others, she believes that the legacy of the Troubles cannot be easily erased, but sees her allotment as a means to work in harmony with others and escape the residual ethno-religious/national conflict that continues to overshadow everyday urban life:

"Well I spent most of my life [in Belfast] being anxious about things … you know with all that [political conflict]. I mean, I even remember one black man coming up to work here and he was from Dublin, and I realised that he was the only black person that had crossed the threshold. That's how parochial we were up here … in both ways [ethnicity, ethno-religious/national identity]. … but that's how provincial we were, how things were up here … you still get a bit of that alright …"
Geraldine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

She is keen to explain how the landscape facilitates interactions and promotes reciprocal forms of exchange which often draws plot-holders into circuits of sociability and engenders a new kind of politics and 'geography of acceptance'. Like others, she is particularly keen to explain how plot-holders eschew difference which promotes social levelling, a sense of solidarity, mutuality and trust. She recalls several acts of kindness and explains how plot-holders willingly interact with others and voluntarily engage in

reciprocal forms of exchange. Tacit rules of engagement and reciprocal forms of exchange galvanises a strong sense of solidarity, mutuality and trust between practitioners and facilitates the (re)construction of a 'shared-in-common' ground. Geraldine recalls one such instance when, on having to leave to travel to Dublin when her sister was terminally ill, she feared that her plot may fall fallow and generate tensions on site. However, while away, plot-holders joined in concert and cultivated and maintained her plot, which she construed as an act of solidarity, mutuality, acceptance of difference and a sense of belonging to the place:

"Well people here don't talk about religion. The only way they knew where I was from was when my sister was terminally ill. Her dying wish was to go to Rome and that was the only reference to it [her religion]. … and when I had to go to Dublin because my sister was terminally ill, I was sure I would lose it [plot] because it would fall fallow, but they [Protestants] came and dug my whole plot, sowed it and watched over it for me … I couldn't believe that they came and did that for me … that said a lot. I choke up when I think of that … A couple who subsequently moved to the plot next to me, and a woman up there and another couple … I didn't know their names … They were Protestants too, and I was *very* touched by that … . Even when I came back I was very delicate … I was on my knees after her death, and they really supported me … They're *amazing* people … So religion is never a question here …, that doesn't come into it … there isn't *any* discussion about it here."

Geraldine. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Another plot-holder reiterates:

"I first took the plot it was overgrown with weeds and I got 2 tonne of manure delivered, and … and also 2 tonne of soil. … Everyone automatically took their spades and wheelbarrows and chipped in and brought it over to my plot. I didn't even have to ask for help. It's just the done thing. Everyone chips in and looks out for each other. If they've too many seeds they'll say, 'hey listen, do you want some seeds?' It's great. It's a sort of camaraderie … no matter where you're from or who you are"

Gary. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

As in Dublin, overcoming problems on how to interact with 'others' are solved by focusing on activities associated with cultivating the land. Whilst plot-holders acknowledge that there are differences between people, these differences can be managed and transcended through a shared interest in cultivation, tacit rules of engagement and a general willingness to simply get on with the tasks of cultivation. Manifestations of

religious or political views are generally frowned upon and *not* discussed on site. Indeed, such subject matter is effectively out of bounds and not permitted under tacit rules of engagement. Through the application of this tacit rules of engagement a new politics of place is opened up on allotments .The *raison d'être* is simply based on a desire to generate alternative lifestyles, improve the ecological and environmental quality of the city, their health and nutritional status, (re)connect with the land, knowledge and practice, and 'others'. As Frank observes:

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no, they would *never* talk about religion, or refer to it. Nobody really knows what religion you are here. Religion *isn't* part of it. It's a neutral space. There's never *any* question of it [politics/religion]. The sole interest is the allotment. Our conversation revolves around that, and that's it. No one would ever speak of anything else like religion"
Frank. Practical Gardener, 2013

Crucially, Gary, an ex-paramilitary reiterates:

"It really is neutral ground … here the only thing people ask is 'what team do you support?, What vegetables do you grow? They're just not interested in it at all, not in the slightest bit here … you don't discuss your background, and I certainly can't get into any conversations about that here, with *my background*. I know, because my details were leaked to the IRA and I had to leave where I was living …."
Gary. Socio-Organic gardener, 2013

Individuals can interact *without* having to be conscious of or adhere to prescribed ethno-religious divisions. As in Dublin, plot-holders make use of what Sennett (2011) observes as 'theatrical language and role play' to interact with unknown others by focusing on activities associated with cultivating the land. Their shared interest in cultivation and desire to transcend the politicization of everyday life creates an 'as if' as though they are in the same realm (Sennett, 2010). Whilst practitioners have routine/regular interactions with others on site, as in Dublin chance/serendipitous interactions are the most common form of interactions identified by practitioners. However, one of the most notable and distinguishing features on many sites in Belfast is that the majority of plots are not delineated by fencing but rather, by raised beds, produce or simply by flowers, blending one plot into the next. Indeed, the absence of physical boundaries creates an 'open', 'accessible' and convivial 'shared-in-common' space which provides opportunities to

linger and interact with unknown others, facilitates the (re)construction of a sense of

communality on site and a shared politics of place(Figs. 185a-f, 186a-c, 187 a-c). As

Martyn notes:

"Bill' [a Protestant] has his site there 25yrs but his wheelbarrow keeps falling over into
Kieran's plot [Catholic]. There's great banter between them [laughs]… and often they'd
go up to help George on his plot and tell us they'll be back for tea and biscuits, to put the
kettle on [laughs]"   *Martyn, Practical Gardener, 2013*

Equally, reciprocity and a general willingness to interact and participate with others

generates a sense of mutuality, solidarity, communality and a strong sense of belonging

to the place (Figs. 180a-c, 181a & b). Practitioners' regularly share, taste and harvest their

produce individually and collectively on site which provides opportunities to engage with

'others' plot-holders may not otherwise have an opportunity to interact with or meet (Figs

185d & e). Reciprocal exchanges, and casual interactions on site often draws plot-holders

into circuits of sociability and welds an allotment based on solidarity, mutuality and trust

and social integration that is organically produced rather than proscribed or engineered

(Figs184 185,b & c, 186 a-c, 187 b &c). Plot-holders are cognizant of the social dividends

and eager to illuminate the potential of UA to engender social integration and bridge

divisions within and across the community divide. However, some plot-holders believe

that social mixing is all very well when individuals share the same interest, class

categories or hail from the same law-abiding sections of ethno-religious/national

communities. They express their doubts about integrating individuals who had not kept

"their noses clean". As Rej notes:

 "well it [UA] can transform people, community groups especially youths … it gets people
to divert to something more responsible … certainly children growing up can get a lot
from it … but my feeling is that there are paramilitaries who are just up to no good. I just
wonder if you reach out to these paramilitary infected folk and put them on an allotment,
what is going to happen to those people who've kept their noses clean? I would certainly
spend the time of day and I certainly wouldn't be antipathetic but I'd be watching for a
tend to make sure they kept their noses clean"

Rej. Practical Gardener, 2013

However, the majority of plot-holders conform to the tacit rules of engagement and are adamant that most plot-holders conform to the social requirements which fosters social levelling, engenders a social integration and 'shared politics of place' (Figs. 183, 184,185 a-f, 186-187, 190))

Figure 183. A 'shared-in-common ground'
(Images depict Catholics & Protestants cultivating shared-in-common' ground). Fig 183 shows Catholic and protestant cultivated plots side by side, but with Stormont castle located between them in the background

Figure 184.Transcending difference.

Figure 185. a,b,c,d,e,f). Exchanging, sharing, interacting & cultivating a 'shared-in-common' ground

Figure 186 (a,b,c, Serendipitous/Casual interactions

Figure 187 (a,b,c). Cultivating a shared politics of place

Figure 188 (a,b,c,d). Absence of barriers/Openness

*Figure 189 (a & b). Plots blending into the next :
Absence of barriers*

Figure 190 (a & b). Cultivating and nurturing a shared politics of place

9.4. Conclusion

Belfast is a city that remains divided along ethno-religious and ethno-national lines. Despite the political resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland, fixed ideas of space, place and territory continue to frame identity and belonging and even fuel and maintain ethno-religious/national divisions (O'Dowd: 2010). The physical morphology of the city reflects a continued salience of religion in every urban life, evidenced in the distribution of places of worship across the city. Sectarian inscriptions on the landscape continually reinforce both the idea and the reality of a divided city in terms of national/religious identity and the physical landscape (O'Dowd and McKnight, 2013). Violent divisions are effectively inscribed in the cityscape, through periodic protests, riots and paramilitary campaigns aimed at disrupting the normalisation processes underway in the wake of the political resolution

and conflict (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015) Whilst efforts have been made to address the legacy of the conflict of the city through 're-imaging' and 'place-making' strategies supported and presided over by a power-sharing government (Coulter & Murray, 2008; O'Dowd & Komarova, 2010) and initiatives identify new pathways for moving forward into a fully 'post-conflict' society, the veneer of a modern urban metropolis generates a somewhat distorted view of the city that appears to deny the reality that ethno-religious/national conflict still exists (Shirlow, in Coulter & Murray, 2008: 73-75). Given the salience of ethno-religious/national divisions and the continued politicization of urban public space, urban dwellers are seeking new opportunities to ameliorate divisions and transcend social cleavages by investing in UA. This chapter examined the potential of UA to provide an alternative avenue that can allow urban dwellers across Belfast to engage in a shared politics of place and move beyond the politicization of everyday life. The evidence suggests that UA sites can be classified as *non-contested, productive, multi-functional neutral urban spaces* that proffer Belfast citizens a means to practice cooperation, facilitates and promotes social solidarity, mutuality and opportunities to engage in bridge-building across the community divide. Drawing on extensive data gathered on allotments in diverse locales across the city, this chapter demonstrates the centrality of allotment cultivation to the creation of shared-in-common places that help re-shape the politics of place and produce a cohesive notion of the public. My analysis reveals that UA sites are important *spaces of potential* in the contemporary urban metropolis. They proffer Belfast citizens with a means to practice cooperation, promote social levelling and a new kind of politics of place. They allow urban dwellers to join in concert and give shape to their immediate environs, eschew difference and move beyond parochial understandings of their lives. Barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed in favour of a common identity generated through the care and cultivation of the land.

The chapter commenced with an examination of the primary motivating factors giving rise to the demonstrable rise in demand for UA in Belfast today. The chapter demonstrates that the salience of ethno-religious/national divisions is creating conditions that challenge the individual to seek alternative as a form of resistance to the politicization of everyday life. To understand the various dimensions giving rise to UA in Belfast, this chapter developed a typology of three gardening types: (1) the Practical gardener, (2) the Socio-Idealist and (3) the Socio-Organic gardener. This typology grows out of a textured analysis of individual motivations, and demonstrates the complexity of factors implicated in UA practices. Class, gender, age, socialisation, the salience of ethno-religious/national divisions and the politicization of everyday life all play roles in shaping motivations and practices. The particular constellation of these factors creates different types of gardeners and practices. For the majority of practitioners investing in UA, the desire to (re)connect with 'others', engage in bridge-building and escape the politicization of everyday urban life and construct a 'shared-in-common' ground are clearly implicated in their motivations and urban agriculture practices. Whilst each type of gardener may appear distinct in character, typologies of gardeners are however fluid. By engaging in the tasks of cultivation, interacting, participating and engaging with 'others' across the community divide, this chapter illuminates the potential of UA to foment social levelling, re-shape the politics of place and produce a cohesive notion of the public. Specifically, the chapter demonstrates *how* UA initiatives engender alternative forms of sociality that stand in contradistinction to those generated by ethno-national/religious divisions and the politicization of everyday life. Barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed as plot-holders invest their mental and physical labour in the care and cultivation of the land. The social levelling that results, - albeit temporary and site specific'- indicates that urban agriculture initiatives constitute important 'spaces of potential' that fulfil an important role associated with public urban life (Sennett, 2011).

10.
CONCLUSION

10.1. Introduction

This study explores the social and civic dividends of allotment gardening in Dublin (Ireland) and Belfast (Northern Ireland), both of which have witnessed a demonstrable rise in urban agriculture (UA) initiatives in recent years. This rising interest has been reflected in the rise in demand among the citizenry for plots, increased provision by both municipalities and private operators, and through the flourishing of a range of groups in civil society committed to promoting sustainable forms of production and a UA agenda. Traditionally, allotments were associated with older men and lower socio-economic groups, and provided a means of subsistence during times of war and economic adversity. The demonstrable rise in demand for UA in recent years has seen a significant shift in the demographic profile of allotment gardeners *and* to the factors giving rise to the renewed interest in UA. No longer dominated by older, working class males, plots are now tended also by middle class women and men, immigrants and community groups catering for clients with special needs. The rise in interest in UA I argue, represents a form of resistance to the *dis-embedding* processes associated with modernity. In Belfast, the rise in demand for UA also represents an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to engage in bridge-building across the community divide, ameliorate residual ethno-religious/nations divisions in the city and transcend the politicization of everyday urban life. Beginning with a brief overview of the changing nature of city life, this chapter illuminates the centrality *and* potential of UA to improve the physical, social, ecological and aesthetic dimensions of the city and the quality of everyday urban life. The chapter makes a number of recommendations for how policy makers might better integrate UA practices into the everyday life of the city.

10.2. The demise and revival of the urban public realm

The urban context is the crucible in which economic, political, cultural and social forces intersect, creating new forms of conflict, new kinds of convergences and new synergies. Cities are simultaneously situated (in place), and trans-local/transnational (linked through their diverse populations with other localities and nations), and places in which "the individual and social structure is formed and played out" (Bounds, 2004:131). They have enabled a mélange of races, languages and cultures, and opportunities for multiple encounters and interactions. Hence, they constitute the crucible for the formation of social groups and social selves, providing opportunities *and* limits for interactions with unknown others, which take place *in* public space:conceptualized broadly as "the setting for everyday spatial behaviour of individuals and communities, emphasizing ordinary activities of citizens," (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007:8)). Thus, the real importance of the city lies in the interaction between people and the environment, where interactions influence perceptions, and perceptions influence interactions (Bounds, 2004:114, also see Gottidiener, 1997; Byrne, 2001; Mean & Tims, 2005). As Michael Bounds (2004) contends, "it is our personal and shared sense of place that expresses our relationship with the *urban* environment" (p.114, *my emphasis*) and underpins a sense of identification with and belonging to place.

However, contemporary cities face a number of key challenges. The nature of public spaces in the contemporary city is changing (Mitchell, 1995). Cities are becoming more diverse (intensified migration), and viewed as becoming increasingly privatized, more polarised and more exclusionary (Punch, 2005; Sennett, 2005; Sassen, 2013). Issues of integration and social cohesion are increasingly deliberated with academia and the wider public sphere (Lockwood, 1999; Beauvais & Jenson, 2002; Sennett, 2005; Chan et al, 2006; Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007; Fahy & Fanning, 2010).

Cities have transformed from sites of production to sites of consumption, and increasingly *reimaged* and repackaged by corporate and state planners, transforming the notion of 'public' space, and facilitating what Sennett (2001) refers to as '*disassociation*'. They have become a product, packaged and divided to generate segmented spaces that focus on a narrow range of activities to facilitate and reinforce the exclusiveness of certain groups, evidenced in the move to services, increasing levels of gentrification, lifestyle changes and the concept of the twenty-four hour city (Mitchell, 1995; Bounds, 2004; Mean & Tims, 2005; Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007; Sennett, 2011). This *re-imaging* of the city as a spectacle for consumption rather than a place to linger and interact, has created '*spaces of social practice*' (Lefebvre 1991, in Mitchell, 1995), and *hybrid spaces* where corporate and public concerns tend to be intertwined (Lownsbrough & Beunderman, 2007:14). This divides social groups and creates implicit barriers which diminishes the true *public* nature of public space. Such re-imaging of the city has resulted in what Sennett (2011) observes as a 'discourse of loss', raising concerns over a decline in the public realm (the city's quintessential social life or public territory), which Jane Jacobs (1961) contended, as *crucial* for improving the well-being and liveability of the city and a means to help people to learn to live together (by seeing different ways of behaving and different norms) (in Lownsbrough & Beunderman, 2007). In addition, Sennett (2011) argues that cities that lack a natural and casual public life (one that is serendipitously produced rather than engineered) are more likely to engender social isolation, or as Jacobs eloquently observed, would "lack public acquaintanceship … and no practice or ease in applying the most ordinary techniques of city public life at lowly levels" (1961:65, in Corcoran and Kettle, 2015:3).

In a similar vein, Ray Oldenberg (1989) highlights the disappearance of informal places in cities – so called third spaces – which are neither work nor home and where attendees are neither hosts nor guests - which he contends, are important for maintaining civil society and democratic engagement. He suggests that third places are being replaced by *non-places*,

where individuals lose their individuality, to the degree that they relate only to each other in purely functional and impersonal terms, as customers rather than citizens (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015). More recently, Lownsbrough and Beunderman (2007) contend, that "the number of spaces which fall unambiguously into the category of 'public' is dwindling" (p. 14). Others also argue that the extensive privatization of public space has created a world in which 'designed diversity' (represented in the 'disneyfication' of spaces and places, the rise in shopping centres, corporate plazas and so on) is replacing the 'free interaction of strangers' (Mitchell, 1991, Sorkin, 1992) *and* "reserving public space for commodified recreation, *imposing limits and controls on spatial interactions, threatening their exchange value and possibilities of unmediated social interaction and,* rendering them exclusionary" (Mitchell, 1995:121, *my emphasis*).

Whilst urban renewal has vastly increased 'open spaces' (green/leisure areas in residential areas, parks, bicycle lanes and so on), their purpose is different than public spaces with *civic* functions, and viewed as increasingly designed to preserve and improve biodiversity *and* to facilitate consumption rather than being designed exclusively for social contact (Mitchell, 1995; Sorkin, 1992). The testimonies of my respondents bear this out in my analysis of allotment gardening in Dublin and Belfast, evidenced in the socio-spatial impact of the recent reconfiguration of urban space (Dublin), the politicization of urban space (Belfast), the extensive marketization and privatization of public space in both cities, and recent contestations over the provision of public land to meet the demonstrable rise in demand for UA sites.

However, research shows that public and voluntary bodies operating in the civil society sphere can foster better social relations and social cohesion (Vertovec, 2007). Recent literature suggests that a 'shared politics of place' attained through joint activities which acknowledge difference and promote inclusion can foster social integration and provide

people with a means to practice co-operation (Baumann 1996; Sanjek 1998; Eizenberg 2012; Sennett 2012). Such a shared politics of place is most likely to occur in the context of public space. Social commentators also contend that public space can provide essential building blocks for bringing people together, help (re)build positive relationships between different communities, facilitate '*civil interfacing*' and shape the public realm (Jacobs, 1961 Lownsbrough & Beunderman, 2007; Sennett, 2011). Public space they argue, has the potential to generate shared experiences that can lead to a greater sense of belonging, encourage social and civic engagement and provide a richer notion of what it means to have the same identity, and is commonly perceived to be a measure of the quality of urban public life (Jacobs, 1961; Mean & Tims, 2005; Lownsbrough & Beunderman, 2007; Vertovec, 2007; Sennett, 2011).

However, a counterargument has been advanced by Lownsbrough and Beunderman (2007), who argue that whilst some third spaces may be disappearing, new types of public spaces in cities are emerging. They identify eight types of '*spaces of potential*': exchange, productive, service provision, activity, democratic/participative, staged, in-between and viral, which they argue, must not be interpreted in a narrowly spatial space, since many in practice, will have elements that cut across each of them, and/or be dictated by the activity happening within them at different times. Of central importance is trust and confidence from their users in creating valuable public spaces, which they view as *crucial* elements which link these 'spaces of potential'. The elements of public space include: multi-use, accessibility, legibility (in layout and design), adaptability (to people's diverse needs), local relevance, clarity of boundaries/open-endedness (without exclusive domination), and safety and conviviality. Ray Oldenberg (1989) also observes that public spaces need to be *less* understood in terms of the predetermined physical space and *more* by the *interactions* that occur *in* them and the *experiences* they generate. He argues that meaningful interventions in public space *must* be guided by definitions premised on an understanding and belief that '*people* make public

space', so that the broadest range of successful interventions reflect the reality of people's daily experiences and behaviours (in Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007:15).

This research argues that the urban allotment is one element of such public space which has the potential to generate an alternative framework for generating social relations and social practices that can improve the well-being, liveability and the vivacity of the contemporary urban metropolis. Allotments I argue, contribute to, nurture and engender a new kind of politics of place, social interaction and a localised form of social cohesion and improve the quality of urban public life. The study shows evidence that allotments, as a new (and somewhat revived) form of urban public space accommodate the urban citizenry with 'shared-in-common' spaces that promote 'civic interactions', social and 'civic' integration (Vertovec, 2007), and fulfil an important role associated with public urban life (Sennett, 2011).

Urban dwellers join in concert, give shape to their immediate environs and nurture *inclusive, vibrant, productive, accessible, multi-functional 'people'd landscapes* (Viljoen et al, 2012), which re-shapes the local politics of place. Barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed by simply working alongside others through the care and cultivation of urban land. Through a systematic sociological analysis of allotment gardening in two diverse urban contexts, this study illuminates the direct benefits UA offers in terms of producing more socially integrated, cohesive and sustainable cities of the future.

This study explored urban dwellers motivations for investing in allotment gardening, conducted a rigorous assessment of allotment gardening practices across diverse locales in both cities and identified the specific social and civic dividends flowing from UA. I provide evidence that the rise in demand for UA in both cities represents a form of resistance to the *dis-embedding* processes associated with modernity. Urban gardening in both cities I argue, represents an explicit attempt by urban dwellers to (re)connect with traditional forms of

knowledge, the land and agrarian practice, but primarily, to (re)connect with others, (re)generate a sense of community and to restore a sense of belonging in the city. In Belfast, the rise in demand for UA I argue, also represents an explicit attempt to engage in bridge-building across the community divide, ameliorate residual ethno-religious/national divisions in the city and transcend the politicization of everyday urban life.

The study developed an innovative typology of five unique allotment gardening types in Dublin and three in Belfast to explicate the complexity of factors giving rise to the demand for UA. It then examined *how* urban dwellers are appropriating, designing constructing and governing this 'new' (and somewhat revived) form of urban public space to generate *re-embedding* processes to disseminate knowledge, (re)connect with the land, agrarian practice and primarily to others, to foment and restore a sense of belonging amidst ubiquitous economic, cultural and social change. Through a textured analysis and visual representation of the various strategies employed, I demonstrate *how* urban dwellers are vivacious and creative in public space.

The concepts of *agrarian habitus* and *aspirational habitus* are introduced to explain the complexity of relationships between ecological goals and beliefs and actual cultivation practices. Crucially, the study illuminates *how* urban dwellers are reconnecting to others in the city by generating an understanding of food production, by participating and engaging in activities associated with cultivating the land. I examine *how* new forms of sociality are constituted, developed and sustained on allotments, and illuminate the potential of UA to build more sustainable, inclusive, vibrant urban public space that creates a form of social levelling that contributes to social integration and localised forms of social cohesion. Urban allotments are I argue, *spaces of potential* in the contemporary urban metropolis. Not only do they provide a range of therapeutic (and ecological) functions (both in a direct and indirect sense) but I argue, constitute important sites of 'civic engagement'.

They are *crucial* sites of 'civil interfaces', where barriers are dismantled, social cleavages are transgressed and particularities eschewed in favour of a *common identity* generated by engaging in similar activities in this designated space (Corcoran & Kettle, 2015). Their value is *in* their sociability and the experiences interactions and practices generate, which improves the well-being and liveability in the city and provokes the vivacity in public space (Sennett, 2011:395).

10.3. **Theoretical contributions and Policy Recommendations**

I spent four years engaged in research immersing myself in the world of allotment holders. I spoke to plot-holders, UA advocacy groups and local authorities, attended and participated in various UA events, allotment gardening activities and gathered an extensive volume of data (thousands of photographs and a large volume of ethnographic data on the practices and experiences of UA) in both cities. I developed a deep understanding of how urban dwellers make sense of the world around them amidst immense economic, cultural, and social change, *and* the processes through which knowledge, practices, social relations and new modes of being in the contemporary world are formed. The study constitutes the first sociological study of allotment gardening on the island of Ireland. In particular, the thesis makes an important contribution in terms of the following:

- Development of a typology for understanding different kinds of urban gardeners which could be tested in other urban contexts and refined. This allows us to see beyond the surface impressions and to appreciate the complexity of factors shaping cultivation experiences.

- Development and refinement of the concept of the *habitus* by applying it to urban gardeners in order to explain their cultivation practices and relationship to food,

the land and knowledge systems. The concepts of agrarian, aspirational and transitional habitus can be tested in other contexts and refined further.

- I shed new light on the shifting politics of place through the Belfast case, and illustrate *how* urban allotments provide a means to practice cooperation and move beyond the constraints of institutionalised sectarianism – a space which is not available elsewhere in the city which gives people a sense of ownership and control of a space. Indeed, in both cities, I shed light on *how* allotment gardening creates a form of social levelling that contributes to social integration and localised forms of social cohesion.

- I show evidence that the value of a well-functioning public realm lies primarily in the potential to bridge social cleavages by providing a setting for daily interactions. Furthermore, the foundations for civil integration can be "understood in terms of relatively straightforward elements of good public space" (Lownsbrough and Beunderman, 2007:18). In this context, I make recommendations to policymakers under five key themes:

- **Public Space:** City planners as a matter of course should undertake a needs assessment of public space and its uses and meaning with a view to optimising its potential.

- **Engagement:** Good public space relies on involving people in the process of creating that public space. This thesis clearly demonstrates the civic and social dividends that accrue from such involvement

- **Cultivation and Knowledge:** At a time of growing food insecurity and climate change, more emphasis should be put on teaching the skills of cultivation, such as

in schools, neighbourhoods and communities and through cooperative programmes

- **Ecology:** The therapeutic nature of UA highlights the potential of nature in the city. Those involved in public health promotion and campaigns should take cognisance of the benefits of UA and integrate nature into their policies

- **Belonging:** This study shows the significance of UA in terms of how urban dwellers are situating the self in place. Policymakers therefore need to respect place, value heritage, value the 'people'd landscape' (Viljoen et al, 2012) and develop strategies for care-taking places.

In effect, this thesis provides evidence of the physical, social, ecological and aesthetic dimensions of allotment gardening, the *potential* of UA and makes a number of recommendations for how policymakers might better integrate UA practices into the everyday life of the city.

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