A Study of Community Gardens as Catalysts for Positive Social Change

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Abstract

The community gardening movement has gained momentum in the past decade in response to an increasing interest in resisting global trends in food production as well as to the limitations of personal choice that result from the industrialization and globalization of agriculture. The multifarious nature of community gardens reflects the equally diverse motivations that inspire individual

1) Introduction

Over the past hundred years America has drastically changed from an agrarian nation where almost a quarter of the population participated in some kind of food production to a nation where less than 2% of the population farms. Even fifty years ago, 1.2 billion acres were devoted to farmland. Today, only 925 million acres remain farmland (Nabhan 70). As Abiola Adeyemi explains, there are a number of reasons for this loss of farmland:

> "Unfortunately, in modern times, arable land acreage is decreasing due to soil and environmental degradation, surges in industrial development, and the need to accommodate increasing urban populations. Urban sprawl causes annual cropland losses equivalent to an area one kilometer wide stretching from New York to San Francisco. These trends contribute greatly to concerns about natural resources and food security."

Most people are not involved in growing their own food and are not connected to any sort of local food production. The implications for this disconnect are huge—creating entirely different relationships between people and food, agriculture, land,

many gardens throughout the country have created so

way to support the hungry poor. As a result of these subsistence garden programs, in 1934, around 23 million households generated $36 million worth of produce (Lawson 2).

During World War II, the American government encouraged participation in "Victory Gardens," neighborhood and backyard gardens, as a way to support the war effort. A poem on a promotional poster reads, "Vegetables for Victory, Give vitamins for health—Add riches to the nation—Augment our country's wealth. Now go to work good neighbors, With busy rakes and hoes, So that garden diligence, Will help defeat our foes. The vegetables have registered—Each root and bulb and leaf—All stand awaiting your command—Their General-in-Chief (Boekelheide)." As a result of these gardens, Americans produced 40% of the food they consumed. The gardens were an opportunity for Americans to express their patriotism while ameliorating their own health, connecting with their neighbors, and learning valuable skills. Unfortunately, many of these gardens were abandoned once Americans were able to rely upon the efficiency of industrialized agriculture to support their consumption needs.

Community gardens didn't disappear completely, but it wasn't until the 1970's that there was a real revival of interest in gardening. The inspiration for many of these new gardens was less nationalistic and instead focused more on local community empowerment. The gardens emerged as an expression of the new environmental ethic and self-sufficiency during an energy crisis, as a result of the desire to create more social justice, in reaction to rising food prices and urban decay, and as part of open-space initiatives to regain public ownership of the "commons." One of the founders of the Boston Urban Gardeners, Charlotte Kahn, says of her experiences with urban community gardens in the 1970's, "For me, the gardens were a symbol of the opposite of what was

going on—the possibility for a better city and a real centered community, an expression

> "The community garden movement in the United States in the last three decades of the twentieth century was (and continues to be) subject to four interlocking sets of dynamics: the politics of space in the context of urbanization and land scarcity; the transformation of the relationship between processes of food production and food supply in urban environments; conflicting agendas framed around aesthetics and urban beautification, on the one hand, and functionality and urban agriculture, on the other; and the clashes between administrative policies and ideologies and grassroots initiatives (Hassell, 91)."

While garden participation today is not nearly as great as it was during the war, the community garden movement has continued to grow since the 1970's. Even by 1994 there were more than 80 American cities with community gardening programs, a statistic that excludes the large number of community gardens without any national or local government support or recognition (Hassell). "The American National Gardeners Association estimates that some 35 million people are growing their own food in backyard gardens and allotments in the United States. Their contribution to the informal economy is estimated to be about $12 to $14 billion per year" (Pretty and Barlett 306).

While community gardening is ostensibly on the rise, the struggle to keep gardens alive remains significant. Many grassroots inspired community gardens have come into existence using land that has been abandoned. Usually this land is owned by the city, state, or even federal government, and is vacant only because its value isn't great enough to put money into its development. Unfortunately, the process of gardening restores vacant lots in a way that makes them appealing for development. The benefits that accompany community gardens, which potentially include reduced crime rates and domestic conflicts (Kuo and Sullivan), contribute to heightened property values, and thus enable developers to take advantage of such communities by destroying the source of the improvements and exploiting the benefits (Armstrong).

3) What is a Community Garden?

The American Community Gardening Association defines community gardening thus: "Our vision is that community gardening is a resource used to build community, foster social and environmental justice, eliminate hunger, empower communities, break down racial and ethnic barriers, provide adequate health and nutrition, reduce crime, improve housing, promote and enhance education, and otherwise create sustainable communities"(Lawson 239). This definition helps to illustrate that the ever-increasing number of community gardens in the United States do not form a collective entity with a single agenda. Each is managed and created in a way that reflects its particular environmental and social context. While most gardens seem to share similar ends—the production of plants for human use—how the garden operates and the impact of the garden on the community may be radically different. A community may create a garden to preserve native species or for purposes of neighborhood beautification with no intention to create a local food source. Some comm

For every potential benefit that might result from a community garden, there

awakening their senses and encouraging awareness and appreciation of the transformative values of nourishment, community and stewardship of the land" (Lawson 282).

There are also gardens that exist to address larger social issues such as food security. For some people, who do not have access to affordable produce, gardening provides the only alternative. Subsistence community gardens may not be as popular today as in the 1930's, but many people are still motivated to garden in order to supplement their diet with produce and to save money. For these individuals, the opportunity to garden may be the main reason they participate in the garden. The garden simply provides them the physical space, the lack of which otherwise inhibits them from growing their own food, and thus the social/community element may be relatively inconsequential. The net savings from food produce

pantries. “The USDA estimated in 1993 that urban gardeners involved in its programs grew $16 million worth of fresh food. One study of

> "A healthy community is one that has high levels of social, ecological, human and economic 'capital,' the combination of which may be thought of as 'community capital.' The challenge for communities in the 21st century will be to increase all four forms of capital simultaneously. This means working with suitable partners in the private sector, making human development the central purpose of governance, and more closely integrating social, environmental and economic policy. Community gardens, sustainable transportation systems and energy conservation programmes in community housing projects are some of the ways in which we can build community capital" (Hancock 275).

For a garden to create social or community capital, it must facilitate relationships between people. While the benefits that individuals gain from gardening are important, they are relatively negligible in contributing to real social capital. "To be successful, community development must not only address the current conditions but also commit to dispelling larger economic and social forces that inhibit a community's self-actualization" (Lawson 294). The positive social change that could be created by a garden is recognizable in community meetings, or in community leadership, or in community activism, or in the political connections a community gains. Without some measureable positive outcome, it would be difficult to determine whether or not a community had created social capital (Lawson).

5) Examples of community gardens that have created social capital

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leadership (Lawson 244). "Through the food and flowers they grow, the people they involve, and the physical environment they create, urban gardens are community resources at multiple levels. Urban garden projects are uniquely capable of providing a food source, a hobby, a place to socialize, and a place to express urban ecology all in one" (Lawson 301). Garden projects have the potential to inspire community activism when connections are created between community members, local and national organizations, and/or federal agencies (Lawson 302).

In a study of 63 community gardens in upstate New York, garden coordinators reported that 33% of the gardens supported additional community organizing. Community organizing—such as additional beautification, tree planting and crime watch efforts—was only made possible by the social connections and networks forged within the garden (Armstrong). Community gardens have proven their ability to instigate positive social change in the form of the creation of social capital, but it is more difficult to determine the conditions that make such change possible. The following are some examples of gardens that have succeeded in creating positive social change.

An organization that began as a coalition of gardeners, the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, has extended itself beyond the realm of community gardening to address youth unemployment issues. While this doesn't represent positive change inspired by a single garden, it demonstrates the potential for gardens to address social issues. In this instance, the garden provides a space for employment and job training for local residents (Boekelheide).

In many cases, gardens provide the community with economic opportunities that would not otherwise be available. For example, at a community garden in the South

Bronx called “The Farm,” participants also run an indigenous firewood business. When

fresh produce. This represents a complete transformation of the community (Lawson 272).

Another garden in California, the Berkeley Youth Alternatives Community Garden Patch, provides a source of employment, enjoyment, and education for at-risk kids and their families. The community-designed garden supports community activities and a youth-market garden that not only provides employment, but also leadership opportunities, where youths take on the responsibilities of the market garden and the coordination of the farmer's market. Local schools use the garden for after-school and summer programs so that the kids can grow the food that will later become their snack and also learn about nutrition. The garden acts as a resource for all community members—for one year, developmentally disabled youth maintained a couple of plots that were set aside for them (Lawson 275).

The Pico Union garden in Los Angeles was created for a mothers' club attached to the local school. Common Ground, a program created by the United States Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension, helped secure the land (almost an entire city lot) for the garden, but it was about twenty mothers who picked up all of the rubble, garbage, and removed abandoned cars in order to create the space for their garden. Drug deals were a problem in the neighborhood, and even went down on a corner of the garden. The participants of the garden put pressure on the police to arrest the dealers, thus improving the neighborhood for all. The garden also managed to aid homeless Mexican youths who otherwise would have been overlooked if they had not lived near the garden. Participants of the garden hired the youths to build benches and work in the garden, and eventually helped them to find jobs and found them bicycles to

between people and food, people and the land or a s

participants who felt a positive sense of community were also those that participated in the informal gatherings like the basil harvesting pesto making event. One of the gardeners plans to get married at the garden this summer because she feels as though the garden is an integral part of her community that she wants to share with her friends and family. Many of the people who felt a slight sense of community mentioned feeling as though the community generated by the garden was something they could tap into if they wanted or needed to. Many people, especially those with families, expressed their busy lives as preventing their increased participation. Others mentioned the limited interactions with other gardeners as a result of the few numbers of people at the garden at a given time. Only one person mentioned socializing with people outside of the garden, whom had met through the garden. Others estimated that they knew 20-25 people by face, and 10-15 by name. Many of the participants became involved in the garden through friends, and thus mostly interact with the people they already know.

The community aspect of the garden is far from the most important element of the garden for some, while it is the most essential for others. One of the questions I asked concerned the main motivation for gardening in the community garden, and provoked a wide variety of responses. While some people's love of fresh, homegrown produce inspires them to garden, others simply like the therapeutic and relaxing qualities of gardening. One gardener says, "It's not really about the produce, but the process…the r toh7b78k. 4H8?d7t

provides a way for her to connect to her family as well. The intergenerational motivation is a common theme, even when multiple generations are unable to garden together. For some gardeners who have come from farming families or whose parents and grandparents gardened, there is a sense of connection to those loved ones in the continuation of the cultivating tradition.

The 61st and Dorchester community garden has provided many participants with their first experience gardening. While even experienced gardeners express the same passion, many new gardeners love the process of watching something grow. The new experience of gardening also provides them with a process of discovery and learning. The tangible results create both satisfaction and wonder. A couple of participants garden almost entirely for the return of fresh vegetables—to fuel their love of food and the production of specialty veggies, to have the opportunity to control the way in which the food they consume has been produced and thus connect them to their food, to avoid buying produce that isn't organic and has been trucked from a long way away, to save

within the garden. Gardening necessarily requires increased attention to natural cycles and processes such as rainfall, temperature changes, and awareness of the other life forms within the garden. While rabbits and slugs may not be as welcome as birds and beneficial insects, many people enjoy seeing a part of nature in the garden. The garden becomes a place of therapy and relaxation, usually quiet and peaceful in comparison to the noisy and stressful pace of urban life.

One gardener uses the garden as a teaching tool for his kids, who are interested by the diversity of life within the garden. He relates that there are many social lessons in the process of community gardening, such as respect for boundaries—the understanding of how one's activities in one space may affect another person's space, the patience and nurturing required for growth, the idea of planning ahead—planting seeds, and a multitude of other lessons that can be applied outs

minutes in the garden. She integrates lessons in class with observations and projects in the garden, using it not only a space to teach about organic gardening, but also as a natural environment that reflects the concepts they've learned in the classroom—the garden is a learning tool on multiple levels. She describes how much the kids love having the opportunity to spend time in the garden and see it as a special privilege.

For this teacher, one of the most important objectives of the community garden is to provide the students with an understanding of where their food comes from. She also hopes that the garden will serve as an example of the way in which growing one's own food allows one to take ownership of certain choices relative to food. While she primarily uses the garden for the space that it provides, the community aspect of the garden has recently become more significant to her. Last year she created an activity in which kids wrote down their "Hopes, wishes, and dreams," and placed them in bottles and hung them on trees in the garden, as well as decorated the space with glitter, sparkles, etc. She relates that she got positive feedback from other gardeners who were curious about the affair and enjoyed the decorations. This year there will be even more interaction with the community—an elderly couple from the garden, who have done extensive gardening, have been invited to the school as guest speakers. There also tends

Another common concern is the lack of organization within the garden, but this seems to be an issue that people are willing to easily relinquish. It is exactly the informal and lateral style of management that some people cherish about the garden. One gardener says, "The beauty of the garden is in its informality and lack of agenda." Participants expressed their satisfaction with the spontaneous interactions that occur within the garden and the ability to choose one's level of social engagement. People with busy lives can access the community when it's convenient for them to do so.

8) Conclusions about the garden

In order to evaluate this community garden's role in creating positive social change, I must begin by identifying the "community" the garden supports and how the needs of that community are being addressed. "Each garden consists of a complex web of interpersonal dynamics that involve issues of race, class, and gender. Each garden community confronts the ongoing challenge of balancing individual interests and needs and interests of the group" (Hassell 101).

Perhaps an even better place to start is with the question, "does the community garden have a community?" While all participants don't share the same sense of community, in the broadest sense, there exists a community formed by a collective group of people who share the same space and participate in the same activity. People have come together, regardless of differing levels of social interaction, as a function of a shared interest. The interest may be new or old, occupy a large or small space in each person's life, and result in a wide range of experiences for each participant, but there is at least some commonality of interest, and thus the garden constitutes an unintentional

community of sorts. As such, the community is defined entirely by the participation within the garden. According to most participants interviewed, the garden is not a reflection of the larger community (which I have taken to mean Hyde Park and Woodlawn); however, the garden still may have the potential to serve the larger community outside of the garden. The only way that the garden currently may extend itself to this degree is in its educational component.

Using "community" to define the participants of the garden, what are the needs of this community and how are they being addressed by the garden? With the understanding that the interviews are only partially representative of the garden and thus constitute a limited perspective, I would still venture to say that the majority of the garden is comprised of people who garden as a recreational activity, rather than as a necessity. Therefore, the only essential requirement of the garden is that it provides the land and space to support the activity of gardening. The plot system is an effective one for this community. Many of the participants inhabit apartment buildings and have no land available to cultivate. The garden provides them with the arable land needed to grow vegetables and flowers. There is a monetary requirement of $40 per plot, which seems a reasonable and comfortably met condition for the participants involved. The rules are fair and simple, and actually quite minimal.

The garden was created with the intention of providing space for gardening without a political agenda or expectations for community empowerment. While some individuals may desire to extend the influence of the garden throughout the larger community, there has not been any effort to use the garden as a resource to address larger community issues. The Hyde Park and Woodlawn communities are fairly stable, with

ample resources and alternative ways of addressing community needs. Many of the

participation in the garden, and the garden allows them the freedom to use the space in whatever way they desire (so long as they don't infringe upon the interests of other gardeners) without asking anything more of them.

Lawson writes, "In both the past and present, the act of building a garden on a vacant lot was intended to yield not simply a prettier lot but an inspired and activated community. Having started with such a satisfying product as a garden, the community would hopefully move on to other civic improvements

bigger problems facing urban communities—it cannot single-handedly stop drug sales on the adjacent street or the lack of public services to maintain vacant land" (Lawson 293).

While it may be dangerous to consider community gardens as the all-encompassing remedy to community concerns, it still remains important to recognize the overwhelmingly positive capacities of community gardens. As Maria Elisa Christie puts it, "Gardens help people feel peaceful, self-sufficient, useful, healthy, and in touch with the living earth. Garden products go far beyond edible plants to include social networks and healthy environments, economies, and people" (Christie 263). Community gardens provide a wealth of benefits to individuals, communities, and the society at large, and yet, gardens are continually faced with challenges.

The American Community Gardening Association did a study in 1996 and found

Viertel believes that permanency of land tenure is an important condition for community empowerment because the garden is guaranteed to remain under local control.

There are several ways that community gardens can secure land, including, private purchase or lease, private or public land trusts, government or institutional land,

Lawson writes, “Today, as advocates assert that gardens should be permanent

administration—driven assistance. Maintenance of group interest or governance may be a stronger factor that influences losses, along with how a particular garden is valued in the community" (American Community Gardening Association).

In citywide greening efforts there is some controversy that surrounds the conventional parks vs. community garden debate. There has been some research done on the difference between public parks and community gardens. One study conducted in 1987 in Sacramento, California, found that the city

environment and requires the awareness of natural processes, from the life cycle of a plant to the observation of weather patterns, and thus connects urbanites with their environment in ways that wouldn't otherwise be possible. Even the benefits that accrue

social cohesion, the very activity of gardening supports healthy activity and may contribute to the cultivation of community knowledge (Hassell).

There are 55,000 vacant lots in Chicago and a number of organizations working to help people convert some of them into community gardens (MacNair 18). Whether or not community gardens should become a permanent part of the city landscape is a question left in the hands of the public. How valuable are community gardens and in whar

catalyzed the creation of social capital as it has been defined, it has succeeded in fulfilling important community needs.

Community gardens provide a necessary alternative to an increasingly industrialized world where globalization homogenizes everything from culture to the landscape, by fostering care for the earth, nurturing human relationships, and supporting a vision of a livable future.

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The only thing she claims she would do differently is to put in an outhouse for people. Otherwise she thinks xxxx is doing a great job and would not criticize anything. She says they set aside plots for African Americans from woodlawn, she hopes xxxx is still doing it. She mentions that the older generations are more involved with the younger generations (her generation) who have a problem getting dirty. The older generations are still connected with the soil, where their seems to be resistence to getting their hands dirty of younger generations. She mentions that it might be too close to slavery. She says the ideal would be for the community garden to reflect the community better.

I ask if there is a sense of community.she mentions that the people who participate in the group events, probably feel a sense of community, but for the rest, probably not. She mentions the "crabby" people who have been gardening ever since it was in the other plot of land and don't interact with anybody. People get together for the basil event, the eggplant event. Some would say they felt a part of a community others would not. Definitely not a source of community empowerment (quick reaction to that question). She mentions that one African American woman ate a whole hot pepper and was seriously affected. That brought the people together to figure out what to do.

She mentions the connections that the community garden does support. The connection to the experimental station…the existence of the promontory point coalition (those people met through the garden…political action ?(me saying that) …she met xxxxx from the garden). Building all sorts of great relationships. Deep relationships.

I ask her how her conceptions of nature/land/community/food/agriculture have changed since gardening. She says at home they talk about food all the time. They talk about vitamin green, vitamin yellow, vitamin red…meaning all of the vegetables… "Gardens are a wealth of health"…she emphasizes the changed awareness of food and how important that is. The garden is organic. Strictly organic, you'll be kicked out if they find you've not been organic.

They are a part of a food buying club. They starte

She claims she's a bad gardener. She loves that she can put as little effort as possible and reap such great bounty. She says nothing else works that way.

Interview with xxxxx—afternoon, her apartment, she's slightly sick. Friendly, but not especially gregarious.

Grad school—duel degree M.D. pHD. Two more years.
Grew up in the suburbs outside of boston
Mother is gardener (grew up on a farm…huge part of her life), xxxxx wasn't really interested in it until she had her own space. She's been doing the community garden on 61st and Dorchester for the past four years…the first gardening she's done. Mother has been a resource for learning how to garden. Wanted to be involved in growing her own food, the process of growing things from the ground up.
Gardening is a process of discovery…learn as you go…have to be more attuned to your environment (weather patterns, rainfall)…brings you closer to your environment instead of being isolated from it (you have to be aware). Likes that the garden is organic. Being organic, every year there is a new challenge…some beetle that attacks the beet crops, etc. Have to be more willing to relinquish.
Time commitment—in spurts, depends on the weather, maintenance, sometimes every weekend, sometimes, like last summer when it was really dry, every day to water.
Garden started small, and has expanded a lot. Estimates that she doesn't know 80% of the gardeners. She participates in the basil harvesting, eggplant processing, that xxxxx coordinates…the same group of people 10-20…out of 150 gardeners. Some People don't do anything communal…everyone has their own style. Guesses that the garden started off as being more communal. Started the discussion-group, but it really didn't take-off.
Issues to talk about—no lock on the gate, so maybe a

In terms of having xxxxx manage it, he's happy to have someone else manage it. He grows what he calls standard vegetables…tomatoes, eggplants, lots of kitchen spices.

of the participants have been gardening for a while. They've learned from their parents, etc. this is only a continuation for something. (

unpicked. Or one old religious woman put American flags all around her garden. Made

would be upset if it happened. They seem to have grown quite attached. They are both very friendly and open and seem like good friends.

Interview with xxxxx xxxxx

Started in 2000. Got one plot with her friend. Her friend is responsible for choosing what they grow. She's been involved with gardening because her family has farmed…not too far from the generations that farmed. She likes gardening most for the excitement she gets out of seeing what you plant grow and then just eating it. The produce produced is significant…all of the tomatoes

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Interview with xxxxx xxxxx …in the same spot right after my other interview. He seems much more political, much more engaged, interested, and knowledgeable about these sorts of things…you can tell he's been thinking of them. He brings me a whole packet of printed out material I should look at and mentions a SMART gallery show I should look into that happened in2002 that documented community gardens around the city of Chicago.

He had always been aware of the garden and had wanted to participate, but there was really no room until about 5 years ago. It was his first gardening experience. He learned through trial and error and people were very willing to share their experiences, and information with him. He now has two plots. He feels a real sense of community at the garden. He says the garden might not be the most important part, but it is certainly key in making him feel a part of the neighborhood and community. A good way to interact with people outside of the U of C. There are also the tangentially associated experimental station and the buying club (which he participated in once, but wasn't practical for him…he lives alone). He relates socially within the experimental station and considers himself a customer.

He occasionally interacts with people outside of the garden. He does participate in the events that xxxxx has, but can't always make them all. He seems to interact a lot with people. He goes to the garden and walks around and chats. He loves to share his produce, and gets produce from other people as well. He can't ever eat all of the food he produces, so he always shares. A substantial portion of the produce he consumes over the summer comes from his garden. He had a bumper crop of cucumbers a couple years ago and canned 50 cans of pickles…he still has some cans.

Gardening hasn't changed his coneeptions too much, it was kind of the other way around. The reason why he was interested in gardening, was because he thought that food production was important. He doesn't buy exclusively organic. It is important to him that the garden is organic, although that has its problems as well. He had squash beetles the other year and couldn't just spray them with industrial chemicals. He also got some heirloom varieties at the hyde park garden fair.

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The garden is not very democratic but it's well managed and there aren't actually that many decisions to make in the first place. He's never had any problems. He's a member of the listserve, but hasn't been too active, it hasn't been used that much and he hasn't used it that much. It's a tool that's there for people though. He doesn't think there should be any further efforts at discussion. He says that when there is a need, people usually find a way to address it, so if there was a need for more discussion, something would be created…There's no need right now.

What he likes most about gardening is the community and social aspect. He loves sharing food and getting his hands dirty too. He just enjoys it. At the bottom of the list is eating the food from his garden. He doesn't really feel aligned with any movements but is sympathetic too them. Not in a really active way does he feel connected. He identifies himself on the non-authoritative left, but isn't necessarily politically motivated. He thinks the garden won't appreciably change food production in this country, but changes individual's consumption, and maybe that's enough. More importantly, the garden has a role as a vehicle for integrating the community. The garden is part of it though, it definitely goes against the trends of the larger society. He says it's a bit of hope in a grim contemporary condition.

Interview with xxxxx xxxxx

She works for a non-profit organization in Chicago called Growing Power. It's a national organization…might be worth it to check out this organization. Responsible for trainings for local initiatives. Facilitates the growth of community based food systems, especially emerging urban agriculture projects. Philosophy pretty clear—do not work in communities unless invited to. The interest and the request for help/aid/advice has to come from within the community. Many of the gardens are short-term and the work that growing power does is pretty short-term.
There are a diversity of structures/models/hierarchies for how these things work, but the best are most laterally spread. And the support is thus lateral as well. A garden is challenging particularly because it's transient urban space use. Land ownership is important for community empowerment. Green space has to be given to people. Some people think that any green space period is good. There needs to be a longevity of space.

People manage every space differently, because what community means in each space is different, what the space requires, who the people are, etc. The outreach is really diverse. Sometimes it's through the church, which is the main structure and center of some communities. Then they can communicate with the most people. And use the structure that already exists to support more communication within the community. That's empowerment. Elements of empowerment (1. Access to Space—some people like to protect the materials and fence off the garden, but this creates bad things). 2. How the space is defined…so that it remains accessible….what was the space used for before? Was it a kid's baseball field that they're now kicked off of? The garden needs to be a visual metaphor. And it needs to prevent alienation. 3. Cultural appropriate varieties of plants—to provide a comfortable environment/ so that the people are empowered to grow what they want to eat. 4. Youth involvement is really important.

Community empowerment—means having the information/understanding of the systems that create their environment. The distribution of where grocery stores are. And to be empowered is to create a space outside of that structure. Community Gardens work for food systems, the garden becomes a space for brainstorming, a space for dialogue, for healthy healing, a multi-generational project that can provide people with life skills.

The plot system can work very well. The structure of the organization is really important and it needs to incorporate the distinguishing things that make a place a place. Diversity is important in order to promote inclusion. The power of sharing is really important. The garden has to be culturally sensitive…the cultural perspectives of the community need to be accounted for. People who manage the garden have to be driven, and organized and have perspective of what the community aspect means. Chaos is Good. Every situation is different so models of gardens are different everywhere. And Somebody has to be there to pick up the slack…there has to be some big element of dedication to the garden or it will fail. Youth programming is huge.

Interview with xxxxx xxxxx
xxxxx is an old friend and is how she became involved in the garden. And now it is much more organized and better than the original. She's been doing it for the past four years or so (I think that's what she said, but she may have been doing it for longer). She doesn't think that xxxxx acts as a dictator because some people barely know xxxxx, and

She thinks the watering system in the garden works

She's learned to plant what she likes to eat. She always comes out with more than her small family can eat, so she gives a lot away. Her son's school had a silent auction and one of the things was for her to bring groceries of produce to someone (could be anything

sometimes there are dogs. She had a problem with rabbits eating all of her food, but a friend told her to put dog fur around her garden, and it's worked.

The garden produces a huge super abundance and there is a lot of waste. But it's much a pleasure as a food source. Sometimes she gets tired of watering and things wilt. She wonders if there could be some way for the extra produce could be collected and distributed throughout the community. She mentions that she would be utterly devastated if the garden was developed by the university. It has become a real part of her life.

She feels connected to her past too. She thinks of her grandmothers who used to garden. She grew up in LA. She also thinks there's such a disconnect from nature, that it's nice to have a little bit in an urban environment.

Interview with xxxxx xxxxx

Quick and on the phone during her lunch break. She works as a paralegal doing social work. She learned about the garden through a friend. She has two plots that she shares with her girlfriend. Gardening has always been a part of her life because of her family…her father grew up on a farm and her mother

Volunteerism, Race, interesting issues. People who can participate in social change have found stability. Vs. Difficult to organize people who are in constant states of emergency.

Victory gardens—40% of food came from family gardens. There is a victory garden on 75th—southshore.

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xxxxx says…not too many community gardens survive unassisted. There needs to be an onsite-go-to person who takes care of conflicts. A garden is a place to come together and for community building…its beyond just a place to grow, but a good mix of class and economic backgrounds. There is a lot of inadequate public support. Want to develop a permanent garden site. There is political support. City owned land always for speculation and development (garden not seen as of value) . ken grows for market..
He sees that there are resources in the city that are not being utilized and gardening is a good opportunity to use them. In 1975 the 61st Dorchester garden. Finances are the biggest problem. Grows for high-end restaurants to sustain costs. Half sells affordabliy back to community with farmstand. Uses compost not soil. $25-30,000 per acre is what it costs to sustain.