THE SOCIAL OWNERSHIP OF COMMUNITY GARDENS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, FOOD ACCESS, AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

A dissertation presented
By

Jill Eshelman

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This study analyzes the roles and contradictions embedded within the establishment and maintenance of community gardens within urban communities. I apply Henri Lefebvre’s framework of the social production of space to evaluate the capacity for urban residents to shape their neighborhoods, in the context of neoliberal development practices. These realities shape the experiences of gardeners in a multitude of ways, including the extent to which they have access to amenities, political resources, and the spaces themselves. Throughout this study, utilizing data from a combination of 25 in-depth interviews and extensive participant observation in 45 community gardens across the city of Boston and the surrounding area, I demonstrate how narratives surrounding community gardens have shifted throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century and have adapted to dominant cultural rhetoric in order to justify their continued existence. Throughout the history of the community gardening movement, justifications for the spaces have included environmental justice, food access, and community resilience.

My findings demonstrate that due to neoliberal development pressures and the imperatives of the growth machine, community gardens in Boston are protected primarily through the non-profit sector, which has lead to numerous inequalities in the community gardening experience. Low-income people, racial and ethnic minorities, and immigrant populations, particularly in gentrifying neighborhoods, face barriers in accessing the spaces, despite the fact that they are often the most likely to need the spaces for the purpose of improving their access to fresh and healthy food. In disadvantaged communities, community gardens are often part of an oppositional strategy and the Right to the City movement, which seeks to counter gentrification. In these instances, community gardens serve not only as spaces for expression of environmental and food justices, but they also allow for the demonstrations of
ownership in the form of art, staging grounds for political dissent and transportation advocacy, and reclamation of space in communities with histories of violent crime. This study demonstrates that community gardens have a multiplicity of meanings for their stakeholders and contributes to our understanding of how community gardens relate to the broader urban social fabric.
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Chapter 1: Introduction to Community Gardens and the Research Project

Overview of Community Gardens

According to one widely accepted definition, community gardens are spaces in which gardeners share resources such as land, water, and sunlight for a variety of purposes including the ability to learn from and communicate with others, to commune with nature, to exercise, and to grow food for themselves and other members of the community (Naimark 1982). Community gardens can take many different forms. The most traditional notion of a community garden is an open space comprised of several made up of individual plots, where a single gardener or family both maintains and harvests a specific parcel of land, and typically people grow herbs, fruits, vegetables. However, some gardeners may only grow flowers and create private sitting and recreational areas. Other community gardens are more communal, where there may be only a few or no individual plots, and the main purpose of the space is creating a sense of community spirit and neighborhood identity. People may grow food to share amongst all the gardeners or the community at large. In some gardens, people may not grow food at all, instead opting for the creation of a garden space, which primarily serves as a nature sanctuary or a symbolic site for healing of past violence, crime, or gang activity.

Throughout this study, I argue that the experiences of community gardeners, like many other aspects of the modern urban experience, are increasingly differentiated between elite and non-elite stakeholders. Many of these inequalities are the result of increasingly neoliberal urban development strategies, which have become pervasive forces in community gardens. The inequalities of gardeners are expressed in multiple ways, including differentiated access to amenities and garden plots, utilization of the spaces for recreational versus pragmatic reasons, and the extent to which the gardens politicized or depoliticized spaces.
Throughout history, community gardens have served a wide variety of purposes, including improved access to environmental amenities, reclamation of vacant land for community building purposes, and improved food access, particularly for impoverished populations. Following the economic recession in 1893, many cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston, built the first community gardens in the United States in order to provide emergency relief for impoverished and homeless men who could not afford food. Likewise, during the periods of both World Wars and the Great Depression, government officials strongly supported the patriotic establishment of “victory gardens” on all open spaces upon which the populations of urban areas could grow food for their own sustenance (Hynes 1996; Warner and Durlach 1987). Through these periods, many cities developed “a crisis narrative of the garden” in urban spaces, through which municipal authorities and urban development institutions largely viewed community gardens as a temporary anomaly in the normative urban landscape, which typically regulates agriculture and the natural environment to rural spaces (Moore 2006). In the decades following World War II, with a few rare exceptions, such as the Fenway Victory Gardens in Boston, the majority of urban victory gardens either reverted back to their previous purpose as private lawns or became new developments.

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the development of community gardens largely centered around the idea of mitigating urban blight, which resulted from the rapid decline of urban populations due to forces such as the deindustrialization of the urban economy and the decentralization of the metropolitan area. Drawing off of national movements, such as the first Earth Day in 1970, many projects focused on the improvement of the environment in the inner
city, and housing authorities were often the specific locations for such improvements (Warner and Durlach 1987). During this time frame, many residents were frustrated by the prevalence of city owned and private abandoned lots in their neighborhoods, which attracted trash, drugs, and crimes. Urban residents began to establish community gardens during this period largely with beautification efforts in mind, while the production of food became a secondary motivation (Warner 1987, Anguelovski 2011, Hynes 1996, Lawson 2005). Many of these struggles for land were closely related to environmental justice movements, in which communities of color in particular would demonstrate ownership of their neighborhoods through the establishment and maintenance of community gardens (Anguelovski 2013).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, when many urban areas such as Boston began to see increased development and rising home prices, the community gardening movement began to take on a new tone centered around the production of local food, including training such as anti-obesity efforts and childhood educational gardens. Cities including Boston, New York, and Washington DC explicitly passed legislation during this period that established food production as one of the main justifications in the future protection of community gardens (Schukoske 2000). During this time period, a resurgent emphasis on alternative food systems also emerged as direct responses to practices such as heavy government subsidization of commodity crops, poor soil management, reliance on pesticides, and the use of petrochemicals to farm and transport food (Elton 2013; Nestle 2007; Pollan 2015; Schlosser 2012). In particular, the focus on creating an alternate food system, in which community gardens play an important role, includes a other urban-centric strategies such as increased support for community supported urban agriculture, farmers markets, and fresh food in corner stores (Allen 2013; Chase and Grubinger 2014; Cockrall-King 2012; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Winne 2009). Although such
strategies have their roots in the countercultural movement of the 1960s, mainstream American culture has adopted practices such as consuming organic produce and maintaining vegetable gardens (Belasco 2006). These shifting dialogues have had many implications for the contemporary community gardening movement, which continues to use the rhetoric of previous movements but has also continued to adapt to changing urban politics. In particular, modern activism surrounding community gardens focuses on the capacity for urban residents to retain community control, particularly in the face of gentrification pressures.

For the purposes of this study, I analyzed any spaces in which a group of community residents regularly came together in order to form or protect an outdoor space. Community gardens are distinct from parks, in that parks are generally open to the public at large and there is typically not an ongoing community that emerges as a result of its existence. It is also worth noting that although community gardens represent a particular type of urban agriculture, what separates them from commercial urban farms is that profit generation is not a central motivating factor, or a factor at all, in the mission of the participants.

The number of community gardens has increased rapidly in the beginning of the 21st century. According to the American Community Gardening Association, in 1996 there were 6,000 community gardens in the United States and Canada, a number which grew to 18,000 by 2012. Scholars cite the influence of increased public discourse on green living, including the presence of the Obama vegetable garden, as a main catalyst behind this trend. (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Winne 2009). However, community gardens have been a continuous feature in the urban landscape since at least the nineteenth century (Warner and Durlach 1987). They represent a unique type of cooperative and open urban development, which has attached itself to varying cultural trends and economic realities throughout history.
The literature on community gardens often describes the multiple benefits of community gardens, including access to safe space for recreational activity, reduction in crime rates, opportunities for economic development, the creation of social ties within a neighborhood, increased food security, and improved access to environmental amenities and biodiversity in urban settings (Beilin and Hunter 2011; Gardenworks 2012; Hancock 2001). Many studies have also indicated that open spaces such as parks and community gardens can help to reduce the inequalities that arise when people do not have equal access to environmental amenities (Anguelovski 2013; Gough and Accordin 2013). Some studies focus on the importance of environmental justice movements in the creation of community gardens (Anguelovski 2013; Hynes 1996; Taylor 2009), while other studies have focused on the importance of community gardens in creating access to affordable food in urban communities (Allen 2013; Belasco 2006; Chase and Grubinger 2014; Cockrall-King 2012; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Winne 2009). Other studies have indicated that community gardens reflect broader social inequalities and tensions that exist both among community gardens (French 2008; Martinez 2010), and between members of the community garden and city officials and developers (Eizenberg 2012; Martinez 2010; Zukin 2010).

Like most urban land use decisions, the development of community gardens takes place within a framework of debates about who has the power to determine the use of space and place. Many scholars in the urban sociological tradition have demonstrated that development strategies and land use decisions are highly contested political processes that both contribute to and reflect the dominant neoliberal capitalist ideology (Castells 1979; Gottdiener 2010; Harvey 2006; Lefebvre 1974; Logan and Molotch 2007; Soja 1980). Community gardens are distinct in that they represent a land use that is typically controlled neither through the state nor through
corporate interests. Instead, they represent a third type of land use under the direct control of residents in urban communities, as well as the non-profit sector (Schukoske 2000). Furthermore, collective citizen ownership, access, and democratic control distinguish community gardens from public gardens and private gardens (Ferris, Norman, and Sempik 2001). The study of community gardens therefore contributes to our overall understanding of urban power dynamics, particularly for the understanding of the contemporary role of third places, which are neither entirely public nor entirely private. Although many studies in urban scholarship focus on housing, economic development, fewer scholars have explored how power dynamics play out in open spaces.

Access to community gardens can be particularly important for economically and politically disempowered people who otherwise have limited access to land and its associated benefits, such as the ability to produce food for sustenance and the psychological benefits associated with access to green space (McCormack et al. 2010; Naimark 1982). Studies have indicated that access to nature results in the reduction of stress and depression, faster healing time for physical and emotional wounds, reduced need for pain medication, improved quality of life, increased creativity, better memory and concentration, and improved connections with spirituality and spiritual practices (Davis 2013). Gardens provide spaces where people can have cultural interaction with neighbors and with nature (Pollan 1991). Many analyses of community gardens and other forms of green development focus on their ability to attract members of the professional, middle class to neighborhoods that are currently in decline (Gallagher 2010; Lovins, Lovins, and Hawken 2007; Rocky Mountain Institute 1998). Local development strategies, such as the Gardenworks project in the Twin Cities and the Providence Urban Agricultural Task Force, list economic benefits such as job creation, the circulation of local
currency, and attraction of the “creative class” as some of the main advantages of community gardens (Gardenworks 2012; Providence Urban Agriculture Task Force 2011).

Given that it is often harder for disadvantaged populations to leave the urban area to experience nature, the provision of green spaces in the city is particularly advantageous in low-income areas (Kinzig et al. 2005). Furthermore, community gardens have potential for reducing food inequality and improving health in immigrant populations, racial minorities, and low-income individuals (Eggert et al. 2015; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Hanna and Oh 2000; Hynes 1996). Despite these benefits of community gardens for low-income populations, research on community gardens often indicates that power imbalances, including racial discrimination, can lead to unequal access to community gardens plots (Schukoske 2000). As a result of development initiatives, migrant populations, low-income populations, and racial and ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable to takeover by developers, since they do not have access to the same financial, political and legal resources as more advantaged members of society (Martinez 2010; Schukoske 2000; Zukin 2010).

**Overview of the Project**

Through this study, I demonstrate that, like many other types of social systems, community gardens and access to urban space serve people according to their various advantages and disadvantages. These advantages can exist at both an individual level as well as a community level, and multiple types of advantage and disadvantage can exist within an individual. I find that although certain elements of community gardening can be very unifying, the experiences and perspectives of gardeners from different forms of advantage backgrounds are very different. Although community gardens are nearly taken for granted in advantaged
neighborhoods and viewed as extensions of private space, urban residents in disadvantaged
neighborhoods continue to view community gardens as oppositional spaces directly related to
broader rights such as racial justice and the right to remain in the communities where they live.

The following research questions served as starting points for this research project:

- How do various stakeholders understand the purposes of the garden in their community? What, if any, are the alternate land uses that stakeholders envision for spaces that are currently community gardens?
- How do perceptions on community gardens and the nature of social interactions within them differ on the basis of socioeconomic status or race/ethnicity?
- Does the capacity to shape the use of community garden space vary among different groups of gardeners? Do non-gardener residents in the neighborhood have agency to shape the use of community garden space?
- To what extent do community gardens promote the concepts of environmental justice, food justice, and spatial justice in an urban setting? To what extent do community gardens reflect inequalities in access to public space?
- What are the policy implications of these findings?

This study is an analysis of the purposes, benefits, and limitations of community gardens through a comparative analysis of garden communities across the city of Boston. I demonstrate through a historical overview of the movement, both nationally and specifically in Boston, that changing cultural discourses have impacted the rhetoric used to justify the continued establishment of community gardens and argue that changing hegemonic discourses provide mechanisms through which social movements around community gardens take shape, despite that certain underlying themes such as access to food, neighborhood beautification, and community empowerment have always been central themes of the movement. I explore how changing urban power dynamics impact community gardens and demonstrate barriers that disadvantaged populations face in accessing gardens, particularly for renter populations who do not stay in neighborhoods long enough to make it through waitlist processes. I also demonstrate that although community gardens have the potential to serve an important role in the
advancement of food security in garden spaces, the policies to assure “fairness” in access actually serve as barriers to assure that the most food insecure people are able to access the spaces. Finally, I demonstrate how anti-gentrification movements utilize community garden spaces in order to resist development.

My research draws on the perspectives of urban residents, non-profit workers, developers, and city officials from a multitude of socioeconomic backgrounds, and racial/ethnic identities. The experiences of urban residents and their triumphs and defeats in establishing and maintaining ownership of community gardens, especially in neighborhoods that have experienced high rates of poverty, disinvestment, and deindustrialization frame the empirical findings in this research, utilizing theoretical models from the literatures on urban development and environmental sociology. I also build upon the previous sociological literature on community gardens in particular to demonstrate how the context of community gardens in Boston relates to the concepts of democratic control of space, the role of non-profit organizations, public-private partnership, gentrification, the urban food system, and political activism.

These dynamics of shifting neoliberal urban power dynamics, community control of land, and conflict both within gardens and between gardeners and developers all serve as tools through which we can analyze the contemporary community gardening context. Through a process of speaking with not only gardeners but also employees at non-profit organizations and other community activists, I demonstrate how the modern community gardening movement in Boston both corroborates this pre-existing literature but also provides new insights into the social dynamics at play in community garden spaces.
I document that there has been a shift, particularly in the last decade, away from environmental and community-building motivations in the gardening movement toward a more individualistic approach in which community gardens are neighborhood amenities rather than emergency relief land uses that are temporary until more permanent, profit generating “higher and better” uses can be fulfilled. I also demonstrate that although the discourse of food security is a particularly prominent justification for community gardens, the people who are most food insecure face the greatest obstacles in accessing gardens. Finally, I present how the contemporary community garden movement is attempting to respond to the challenges and obstacles of past community gardening movements through a proactive, oppositional social movement in which demonstrating symbolic ownership of space has become a central concern. Throughout the course of my study, I focused on the extent to which the participants conceived their ability to have democratic control of community spaces. This study is distinct from most other studies on community gardens due to its exploration of how people from all backgrounds, not just disadvantaged backgrounds, utilize and perceive of community gardens. It also considers the perspectives of urban residents who are not directly involved in the community garden movement, which has been an oversight in many past studies on community gardens.

As I explore these issues, the remainder of this dissertation will follow the subsequent format:

In chapter 2, I will provide the theoretical model for the project, including an overview of the progression of thought about public control of space and the capacity for urban communities to shape land use decisions. This chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical model that shapes the remainder of the dissertation.
In chapter 3, I will describe the geographical landscape of community gardens in Boston and provide an overview of the types of community gardens that exist. I will also describe the methodology and data that I utilized in my analysis.

In chapter 4, I will demonstrate how modern community gardens have shifted the primary purpose of community gardens away from a restorative environmental use and have become dominated by neoliberal capitalist features such as privatization of the space and an emphasis on the economic exchange values. This shift in mentality has also resulted in increased emphasis on the individual level benefits of gardening, rather than a more community level orientation.

In chapter 5, I will demonstrate that despite a shift toward community garden rhetoric focused on local food systems and a demonstrated need among low-income populations, racial minorities, and immigrants to access community gardens, that these very populations face significant class-based and cultural barriers to access, particularly in neighborhoods that have experienced high rates of gentrification. I will demonstrate how a shift to a model in which non-profit organizations control most gardening spaces has also served as a barrier to access.

In chapter 6, I will demonstrate how modern community gardeners are utilizing the spaces in order to demonstrate symbolic ownership of the land and resist gentrification through practices such as artistic expression, demonstrations of political activism and racial justice, and emphasizing the increased security of the space. I will also demonstrate that people from disparate backgrounds view issues of community garden ownership of the garden differently.

In chapter 7, I will explore the implications of these findings, and will suggest policies that can assist in improving community garden access.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks And Literature Review on Community Gardens

Urban theoretical frameworks explore the ways that landscapes define and reinforce broader socioeconomic hierarchies. The question of who controls space, and through what means is central to the study of urban spaces. The study of community gardens as a means for community control, particularly as it relates to the reduction of social inequality, are situated within a vast literature on the extent to which citizens are able to utilize democratic means to shape land use decisions in contemporary urban environments. Urban development schemes are increasingly concentrated in the hands of impersonal corporations with intense profit motives. Although contemporary urban society is nominally more fragmented, as central planning agencies and their massive development schemes for entire neighborhoods have fallen out of popular favor, they have been replaced by development schemes in which a handful of powerful global institutions make the majority of land use decisions (Brenner 2004; Dreier and Mollenkopf 2004; Hackworth 2007; Sassen 2006).

As a result, the average citizen in most urban development contexts has very little actual capacity to change the physical landscape of their community, regardless of social position in society. Through activism in urban areas, the typical response to mitigate some of this lack of control has been the creation of various justice movements, centered on achieving racial and class equality, through policy changes in housing tenure, improved transportation options, food access, and environmental improvement projects. Community gardens represent a type of urban land use aimed at community resistance to powerful global development forces.

Many of the questions about control in community garden spaces are, at their heart, questions about the capacity of the public realm, the average citizen, to shape the urban landscape. Scholars have been examining the power struggle between citizens, the state, and
private entities for several centuries. Early philosophical writings on the nature of the public realm typically focused on the notion of the free exchange of discourse, separate from the power of the state and later shifted to include a focus on property rights. An exploration of these conceptions serves as a framework under which we can understand the specific urban dynamics of land use underlying the creation of community gardens. This study exposes ways in which spatial and social relationships both corroborate and contradict previous urban theoretical frameworks, using the social dynamics of community gardens as a lens.

The modern line of thought surrounding issues of the public realm and its changing role in democratic, capitalist societies dates back to 18th century philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, who argued that members of society should have the ability to shape laws on the basis of their own individual moralities, the virtue of which relied on the basis of a dignified rationality inherent in their human nature. The collectivity of these moralities would form a rational ruling objectivity, manifested through the governing body of the state, which would mediate the effects of societally deprecating self-interest (Kant 1785 in Bennett 2015). Since Kant’s early writing, social theorists have grappled with the relationship between ordinary citizens, the state, and private organization, through various political and economic realities, and debated how to best apply these concepts to the study of society, both in a broad sense as well as in a specifically urban context.

For instance, later philosophers such as Georg Hegel and Karl Marx argued that Kant’s definition of societal membership applied only to a certain class of people granted with the privileges of citizenship and thus overlooked inherent inequalities between social classes. In his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argued that through a process of consensus, individuals needed to build an actualization of freedom based on rationality and that this freedom
Inherently included the right to shape property (Hegel 1820). In *Capital*, Marx argued that after the rise of industrial capitalism, the bourgeois class maintained power in the ability to control labor, capital, and property, and that the way for the proletariat to obtain power was through a united revolution that would ultimate result in a society of communal rule (Marx et al. 1978). Hegel and Marx formulated the idea that relationships in space would never be entirely populist under capitalism, given the existence of power imbalances in society, and many social movements since their time have focused on ways to reform the social order utilizing degrees of dissent ranging from national revolutions to much smaller grassroots organizations.

In the twentieth century, much of the life work of Jurgen Habermas emphasized the role of the public sphere in promoting communication and consensus to make decisions based on collective rationality, particularly in a pluralistic society under advanced capitalism. In particular, Habermas focused on the bourgeois class of highly educated property owners, who, in his view, contain the sole power to shape both the structural *system* of society, as well as the *lifeworld*, or culture, shared ideas, and social interactions within society. Although Habermas grants some autonomy to all actors within the public realm, regardless of status or power, to negotiate the meanings of the *lifeworld*, he also argues that the hegemonic discourse of elites permeates modern society to such an extent that no entity, including the state, could ever be truly separate from their power (Habermas 1975, 1991).

Henri Lefebvre conceptualized a distinctly spatial component to the Habermasian emphasis on the role of discourse in shaping societal relationships. In particular, he conceptualized abstract space, which closely parallels the Habermasian notion of system, in that space is fairly meaningless without a broader context. The concept of social space parallels the *lifeworld*, in that space only holds meaning as an application of cultural ideas becomes reflected
in the creation of space (Gregory 1994; Miller 2000). In Lefebvre’s framework, although all space by nature must possess a certain degree of materiality, it is lacking any meaning in reality without the flows of networks and discursive exchanges that take place regarding a space. The layout of collective space in modernity often both reflects and reinforces the hegemonic ideology of the ruling class. Through a process of “trial by space,” characterized the contestation of prevailing ideologies as well as a consensus of collective ownership and management of space, the ordinary public, living in what Lefebvre referred to as “everyday life,” has a chance to redirect control away from powerful elites and toward the greater public. Lefebvre labeled this process the production of space, and he especially emphasized that residents in urban areas should be directly involved in planning the spaces they utilize (Lefebvre 1974).

Lefebvre’s work has particular applications for the study of urban space. He, like many other Marxist scholars and political ecologists, has written that under modern capitalism, nature has become a commodity as a result of its perceived scarcity. Nearly all nature within an urban space has been socially produced, and arguably community gardens represent the most collectively produced natural spaces in an urban area. Although other forms of development decisions may involve community participation, the format is most typically a situation in which urban residents give input to outside professional developers who hold specialized expertise in the design and construction of architectural structures. Most community gardens represent a type of “Do-It Yourself” design, which involves community members with specific skills such as landscape design in order to establish the layout of the space. This involvement of community gardeners in the design phase of the garden site has proven to be critical, as top down approaches where the gardeners “inherit” a garden from a city agency or non-profit organization can lead to abandonment of the site if there is not enough interest in maintaining the site according to the
will of its participants (Lawson 2005). Community gardens involve continual maintenance, planning, and oversight if they are to continue. Most gardens have a leadership structure in which multiple interested parties gather to make decisions about new projects in the space and to conceptualize the way that the garden space will best meet their needs. In some instances, the very existence of a community garden is significantly more meaningful to its proponents than the actual form or utilitarian purpose of the garden, particularly in low-income communities who struggle with issues such as an abundance of crime and pollution.

The theoretical frameworks of Manuel Castells also inform our understandings of how community gardens operate in a contemporary urban context. Although his work closely parallels that of Lefebvre, Castells placed additional emphasis on spatial praxis, the process through which the proletariat can gain direct control over the urban form. Instead of merely conceptualizing space, Castells encouraged urban residents to take a direct role in physically shaping their communities through social movements (Castells 1979). Community gardens remain one of the best ways for urban residents to take part in spatial praxis, given that they must put intense amounts of sweat equity into the creation process of community gardens. They must physically remove debris and trash from the space, and frequently they use language such as “building the soil” in order to describe the process of community garden establishment. Gardeners frequently reach out to community residents with construction skills or horticultural knowledge.

Castells also placed additional emphasis on the economic power of the capitalist class, compared with Lefebvre’s emphasis on state rule. Castells argued that corporate powers utilize existing class relations in the city primarily to increase profit. Additionally, Castells emphasized that spatial patterns often serve as status symbols, through which elites attempt to indicate
dominance over individuals with less desirable addresses and fewer community amenities. When they can afford to do so, people are willing to pay significant amounts of money to live next to open space in the city.

Although historically community gardens fell primarily under the control of disadvantaged populations, particularly those of lower economic means, they have increasingly become a desirable urban amenity for economically powerful consumers. A few studies have explored on the impact of community gardens on adjacent property values and tax revenue for the city. For instance, in New York City, properties directly adjacent to community gardens increased aggregate property values by an about $750,000 per garden, especially when the gardens were “high quality.” This value was also shown to increase over time and open space and parks in general had a positive economic impact on surrounding properties (Voicu and Been 2008). Another study found that in Milwaukee, each garden added approximately $9,000 a year to city tax revenue, through increases in adjacent property tax values (Bremer, Jenkins, and Kanter 2003). A working paper produced by the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania found that vacant land improvements boosted surrounding home values by as much as 30 percent (Wachter 2005), and a study in St. Louis found that community gardens raised rent in adjacent properties by an average of $91 a month, although the presence of community gardens did not have an impact on the census tract as a whole (Sherer 2006).

Many urban scholars have framed their analyses of economic exchanges in urban settings through the lens of the “growth machine,” a coalition of property owners, real estate agents, utility companies, and government elites, to make land use decisions. These elite networks of stakeholders seek to maximize the exchange values of their property to increase profits, tax revenue and/or personal wealth, which often directly interferes with use values such as
community cohesion and environmental quality of the space, particularly for renters and low-income residents (Logan and Molotch 2007; Molotch 1976; Stone 1989; Wilson and Jonas 1999). Increasingly, global corporations with no local ties make the majority of development plans, which are aimed to generate the best profits. The result is a form of impersonal urban environment in which most major world cities closely resemble each other, while lower income residents face displacement from their neighborhoods in order to make way for the elite luxury class that serves as the target demographic for these new development projects (Hackworth 2007; Sassen 2006; Smith 2005). Unmonitored decisions about the development of the land can lead to situations where people cannot afford to live in adequate housing or stay in the neighborhoods they prefer. This prioritization of the needs of elites perpetuates systems of inequality in urban areas. Development aimed at attracting upscale consumers can lead to both symbolic and economic barriers to participation in new forms of economic development. Even places that are nominally accessible to the public may nevertheless symbolically exclude the working class and racial minorities from participation (Deener 2007; Kurtz 2001).

Environmental and cultural amenities such as a vibrant nightlife scene, street art, and green spaces such as parks and community gardens are often used to attract the capitalist class to a neighborhood, which results in a spatial division of society by factors such as race and class (Marcuse and Kempen 2000). The aesthetic ideals of the politically and economically elite are incorporated into the development of buildings, streets, and parks. The production of symbols allows for selective representations of the past, which often gloss over inequalities and representations of ethnic and cultural minorities in the area (Zukin 2005). Many privileged members of society are attracted to the concept of authenticity in urban spaces, which puts them in touch with a representation of simpler, more primitive, and “grittier” neighborhoods that have
“character.” Elites often prefer these neighborhoods to suburban places or upscale urban places where consumer items are mass-produced at a global scale (Brooks 2001; Grazian 2005; Lloyd 2010; Zukin 2010).

Community gardens represent one form of “Do-It-Yourself Urban Design,” which also includes projects such as citizen creation of bicycle lanes and public art projects. Often, this type of development occurs outside of official channels of urban development, and involves professionals with some form of creative training to take on a small development project. People often describe their involvement in these projects as enjoyable and view their work as improving the spaces in which they live. Adding art such as sculptures, outdoor furniture, and small structures such as fire pits and gazebos also provides the garden with a sense of permanency and may make community residents more likely to fight against potential takeovers. Community gardens that are used for events such as weddings have the capacity to generate revenue and be more permanent features within the community.

These types of urban development projects may lead to the creation of a “neo-bohemia,” or urban areas that are dominated by liberal, young, middle-class, and white people, primarily at the exclusion of others (Lloyd 2010). Although these neighborhoods may maintain a community feel of local business owners and public artistic expressions, they often reflect a type of “high class” consumerist forms of art, such as fashion, art galleries, and hand-crafted objects that are generally inaccessible to people with limited means (Currid-Halkett 2008). In privileged communities, predominately white and upper middle class residents may view community gardens as primarily recreational spaces where they can experience a nostalgic connection to nature and an agricultural past. Meanwhile, this same agricultural past has different connotations
for blacks and Latinos, who have historically served subordinate roles involving hard physical labor and, at their worst, slavery (Allen 2013; Taylor 2009).

Guerilla gardening, or unauthorized takeover of space to create gardens, is a common strategy of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds who are seeking to improve their neighborhood without going through the bureaucratic process of obtaining official city approval. Some people intentionally try to drive up their property values through guerilla gardening, and are perfectly aware that their actions could have a beautifying and potentially gentrifying effect on their neighborhood. In fact, it may not always be in the best interest of community residents to create gardens if they will drive up the price of real estate and limit their own possibility for homeownership (Reynolds 2008). However, guerilla gardening can also unintentionally express ascendancy in a neighborhood. For example, one study in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn documents the case of a newcomer to the neighborhood, who planted sunflowers as a “gift” to the community. However, some long-time residents saw this act as changing the overall appearance and feel of the neighborhood in a way that made them feel unwelcome (Correal 2009). When the aesthetic ideals of the dominant social class replace pre-existing spatial realities in gentrifying neighborhoods, the result is erasure of the material history and culture of minority communities (Anguelovski 2011).

Despite their increasing popularity among affluent and advantaged populations, many community gardens face substantial obstacles in remaining part of the urban landscape. Many developers and city officials do not see urban gardening as the “highest and best use of space,” which means that community gardens are in constant threat of displacement. Thus, analyses of community gardens often focus on historical accounts of the contestations between community garden activists and real estate developers. The legal issues surrounding ownership of
Community gardens are often hard to decipher, and leases can be difficult to gain in many municipalities (Schukoske 2000). In many cases, even if residents are able to raise funds to buy plots of lands for gardens, their offers are rejected, even in cases where high profile members of the community are involved. One of the most famous examples of this scenario took place in Los Angeles and is depicted in the Academy Award nominated documentary *The Garden*. Despite a major fundraising campaign in The South Central Farm, which included a benefit concert with Zack de la Rocha of Rage Against the Machine, the property owners declined an offer of $16 million to buy the lot, despite that it was the asking price for the land (Lawson 2005; Purcell and Tyman 2015).

Much of the literature on the community garden movement centers around struggles between residents and developers in New York City’s Lower East Side, which has the highest density of community gardens in the United States (Eizenberg 2013; Martinez 2010; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004; Zukin 2010). The neighborhood is also the subject of many studies on gentrification, which went from a heavily blighted neighborhood with high rates of crime, drug use, and prostitution in the 1980s to being one of the most expensive and trendy neighborhoods in Manhattan in the early 2000s. Like in many other cities in the 1980s, community residents in the Lower East Side often used their personal finances and sweat equity to clear trash out of these lots and created community gardens that often reflected the ethnic composition of the neighborhood. However, in the 1990s, when property values in Manhattan began to rise, Mayor Giuliani opted to maximize the economic development opportunities of these lots. As a result, almost one third of the community gardens were destroyed in the name of economic development. Because the lots were owned by the city, the local residents had little power to stop this redevelopment (Currid-Halkett 2008; Martinez 2010; Smith 2005; Zukin 2010).
An on-going struggle to protect the remaining community gardens from development still occurs today, although new strategies aimed at protecting community gardens have emerged. Strategies such as the Trust for Public Land aim to gain collective ownership rights over community gardens, while projects such as the New York Preservation Project emphasize the preservation of land and open space through professional management. Even with these strategies to protect takeover by the city, community gardeners may feel like they have less say over what is occurring in a particular space, since garden members and management companies may not agree on the best design plans (Eizenberg 2012). City officials and developers often view community gardens as a short-term use, but park department stewardship, land trusts, conservation easements, and lease agreements are beginning to become more popular to preserve the spaces on a more permanent basis.

A handful of previous studies have indicated, however, that these protections for community gardens may unequally benefit members of advantaged communities. For instance, one study found that community gardens are less common in racially diverse areas (Schukoske 2000), and another study found that new community gardens are more likely to be developed in advantaged communities (Smith, Greene, and Silbernagel 2013). Furthermore, many of the community gardens in historically low-income neighborhoods have begun to attract gentrifying populations who change the socioeconomic dimensions of gardens dramatically (Aptekar 2015; French 2008; Lawson 2005). As a result of this unequal access to community gardening space for low-income and racial minorities, many environmental justice advocates have historically taken on the cause of providing community gardens in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Anguelovski 2013; Hynes 1996; Taylor 2009).
Patricia Martinez’s study *Power at the Roots* documents the cultural struggle that arose in many of the community gardens in the Lower East Side of New York, when a predominately white gentry attempted to structurally reform the predominately Puerto Rican gardens that had been established as an attempt to combat the urban blight of the neighborhood decades earlier. One example of this struggle occurred when a newcomer to the garden dug up a patch of day lilies that a gardener had tended for years after they were in a weedy plot near the front of the garden. She responded by recruiting long time gardeners to dig through the compost and retrieve the lilies, which they planted in a communal garden area that he had recently converted into an ornamental zen garden. In some cases, the constant struggles both between gardeners proved so stressful that gardeners felt that the benefits they received from the garden as calming and communal spaces were not worth the cost of constant opposition and conflict that they received not only from other gardeners but also the city at large (Martinez 2010).

Throughout the course of this research project, I will explore the ways that neoliberal imperatives and the social production of space shape the experiences of community gardeners. In particular, I will demonstrate the differentiated symbolic meanings that people attach to their gardening experiences and explore the conflicts and contestations that occur within these spaces. I will also highlight the ways that advantage and disadvantage play out in community gardens and explain the ways that my findings both support the previous literature on the topic as well as add new insights and understandings into the sociological research on the topic.
Chapter 3: The Geographical Landscape of Community Gardens in Boston, Community Garden Typology, and Methodological Approach

Historical Background of Community Gardens in Boston

This research project took place in the city of Boston and a handful of surrounding communities. According to the city of Boston’s office of Food Initiatives, “There are over 200 community garden spaces in Boston, covering nearly 50 acres in total. Neighborhoods across the City boast community gardens and plots of every size, worked by 10,000 enterprising gardeners. Community gardening is an opportunity to learn about growing food, to take stewardship of common land, and become involved with and build your community” (City of Boston, Office of Food Initiatives 2015). A variety of tools are used to fund community gardens in Boston and other communities. Gardeners often rely on federal, state, or city funding in order to fund their gardens, although increasingly, private funders and non-profit organizations have provided the bulk of the funding for community garden spaces. State agencies such as the Department of the Environment and the Department of Food and Agriculture occasionally use revenue to support community gardens, although this support often involves fundraising such as selling produce at farmers markets. The federal government also occasionally provides grant funding for the establishment of community gardens through agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and the United States Department of Agriculture, although these funding opportunities vary significantly based on political climates and budget infrastructures. In Chapter 4, I analyze in greater detail how these limited public funding opportunities shape the experiences of community gardeners.

The history and organization of community gardens in Boston is distinct from that of most other cities in the country. Boston has a long history of activism and an intricate network
of support between government officials, community activists, and non-profit organizations. As a result of decades of activist work and coordinated efforts between various non-profit groups, community gardens in Boston are among the most secure and protected in the country in terms of their potential for avoiding takeover by private developers. The majority of gardens in the city are protected either through privately owned land trust or exist on city land in which there are legal agreements that stipulate the spaces must remain gardens in perpetuity (French 2008). For this reason, an analysis of community gardens in Boston is distinct from analyses of cities such as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, where contestations between community gardeners, city governments, and developers occupy a great deal of time and energy for most community gardeners. Although Boston is not completely free of these land use struggles, they are less pronounced than they are in other cities. However, as I will examine in greater detail in Chapter 6, when contestations over land use do occur between gardeners and other external entities, they tend to take place in disadvantaged communities.

The early history of community gardens in Boston is well-documented in To Dwell is to Garden: A History of Community Gardens in Boston (Warner 1987). One of the oldest records of a community garden in the city dates back to 1895 when, as a response to economic depression and increasing rates of hunger, the Industrial Aid Society for the Prevention of Pauperism established the Morton Farm in order to feed the poor. This farm, which mainly served disabled and unemployed men, remained in operation for two years until a potato blight made the land unfarmable. Although the society aimed to find replacement land at a reasonable price, it was unable to do so, as public land use decisions at that time provided preference to the newly emerging leisure class, who had the means to provide optimal profit generation for urban real estate developers. Social conventions in the beginning of the twentieth century deemed it
appropriate and desirable for wealthy and well-established citizens to have access to open ground and recreational facilities, but the public provision of free land and homesteads for farming was framed as charity. As Warner writes, “…the commissioners of that day, then aggressively expanding their chain of public open lands, must have believed that vegetable gardening by poor people was not a suitable sport to add to their facilities for tennis, golf, [and] cricket” (ibid. 15).

However, at the advent of the first World War, this perspective began to shift, as vacant land or open space used for any purpose other than food production became stigmatized as “slacker land.” Urban farming was seen as a patriotic duty necessary for victory in the war, and a way for those who were not fighting to contribute to the war effort. This attitude about the efficiency of using all open space in urban communities for the purpose of food production prevailed through the periods of the Great Depression and the second World War. However, once the war ended, the majority of community gardens disappeared as developers and homeowners began converting the land back into housing developments, recreational facilities, and private yards.

Nevertheless, pockets of activism aimed at the preservation of community garden spaces began in this period. The city’s oldest continuously operating community garden, the Fenway Community Garden, survives from that era. Although there have been many attempts to redevelop the land into uses such as overflow parking for the nearby baseball field, Fenway Park, the Fenway Garden Club prevented such conversions as a result of continuous petitioning to the city government to establish the site as city-owned parkland.

As in many other cities across the country, the establishment of community gardens in Boston echoed strong undercurrents of civil rights themes, given that the inner city experienced intense concentrations of blacks and other racial minorities after large numbers of white residents
moved to nearby suburbs. In conjunction with urban redevelopment schemes that leveled the residences of entire working class populations of the city, most notably the predominately Italian West End, white people both fled the city as a preemptive measure against displacement and were also hesitant to invest in urban neighborhoods (Gans 1982). Due to redlining practices through which black populations were denied access to mortgages in predominately white suburbs, black people began to be heavily concentrated in the inner city of Boston (Bluestone and Stevenson 2002). Although the emerging black and smaller Hispanic and Asian populations in Boston filled some of the houses that white people left behind, their numbers were not great enough to replace all of the families that left. The resulting landscape consisted of numerous abandoned commercial zones and residences (Warner and Durlach 1987). Due to the declining property values in the inner city, many landlords committed arson on their own properties in order to collect insurances on the properties that they felt held little economic value. In 1974 after a highly controversial and occasionally violent attempt at racial integration of the Boston Public Schools, an additional one quarter of the white population of Boston left for the suburbs, which meant that the groups that were left behind with the vacant lots were disproportionately minority, and particularly, black (Bluestone and Stevenson 2002).

Citizens began to establish community gardens on the abandoned lots and in many of the housing authorities to which black people were confined. After activist groups also successfully organized to block an expansion of the highway I-95, which would cut directly through the neighborhoods of Charlestown, East Boston, Roxbury, Somerville, Jamaica Plain, and Cambridge, residents also began to establish community gardens on the land that had already been cleared for the project. After these spaces were established, gardeners reached out to the black activist Melvin King, who was elected to the state legislature and saw the gardens as
particularly poignant expressions of land rights for black people in the city. King helped to form
the Massachusetts Gardening and Farm Act of 1974, which stated that gardeners and farmers
could use vacant public land for gardening at no cost. Mayor Kevin White granted temporary
permission for vacant lots to be used as community gardens until a “higher use” for them could
be found, and as such, the use of land remained subject to termination upon short notice. Despite
support from the city during this period, approximately 2/3 of vacant lots at that time were
privately owned, which meant that residents had little control over how those spaces could be
utilized (Warner and Durlach 1987).

In 1976, Mayor White allocated $500,000 from Community Development Block Grant
funds to establish 20 “Revival Gardens,” which amounted to sixty total acres of city land. Local
activists and gardeners from various community organizations, alongside the staff of Action for
Boston Community Development and Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture,
formed a coalition called Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG) to facilitate with the distribution of
these funds. They held the primary goal of creating community gardens that would contribute
“to good mental health and nutrition, urban neighborhood vitality, aesthetics, and environmental
enhancement” (Joseph P. Healy Library 2016). The umbrella organization oversaw distribution
of soil and manure, capital improvements to the garden spaces, distribution of seeds from the
Department of Agriculture, and monitoring the new program (Lawson 2005).

Another organization that was founded in 1977 was the Boston Natural Areas Fund
(BNAF), which had the express purpose of protecting 143 undeveloped sites across the city, all
of which the Boston Redevelopment Authority had labelled Urban Wilds. Both BUG and BNAF
networked with public and private partners to secure funding for community gardens, and in the
1980s, the organizations would become concerned with ownership issues in order to permanently
secure the spaces as gardens. They also fought numerous political battles including zoning challenges, development pressure, and city budget cuts. The South End Neighborhood Initiative formed in the mid-1980s in order to determine the best use for forty parcels of vacant land in the neighborhood, all of which were located within one square mile of one another (Dowty 2005). Many of these lots were trash-strewn and needed remediation, some of these lots had been cleared by the city in preparation for urban redevelopment that never came to fruition (Lawson 2005).

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the neighborhood also had to deal with emerging gentrification pressures, where developers began converting affordable rental housing into condominiums. The neighborhood had to form a plan to both preserve the gardens and to keep the cost of living in the neighborhood affordable. Betsy Johnson, one of the main garden activists in the South End commented, “In 1986 one of the community gardens on the edge of Chinatown was bulldozed for affordable, low-income housing. That was a wakeup call for us to be more proactive, so that we would not lose all the gardens” (Dowty 2005:3). Although many residents suggested that the Parks Department take ownership of the gardens, it was unable to do so due to severe budget restraints. The Boston Redevelopment Authority did, however, grant BUG and Trust for Public Land a contract that allowed for the formation of the South End Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust (SELROSLT), which permanently established five community gardens and two pocket parks on BRA-owned land. Later a sixth garden, the Berkeley Street Community Garden, located at the intersections of the South End and Chinatown neighborhoods, which is one of the largest gardens in the city, was added to this protective collection of land parcels. Two additional organizations, Dorchester Gardenlands Preserve and Development Corporation and Gardens for Charlestown formed in the early 1990s, and similarly secured
In the mid-1990s, as property values in Boston began to rise and the number of development projects increased, securing land became more difficult. By the late 1990s, community gardeners, particularly in neighborhoods experiencing rapid growth, became more preoccupied with securing the land that they already had, rather than trying to expand and establish new gardens. In 1997, four of the predominant community gardening organizations in the city (Boston Natural Areas Foundation, Boston Urban Gardners, Dorchester Gardenlands, and SELROSLT) merged to create an organization called Garden Futures. The Garden Futures collaborative provided a variety of services to the gardens located on publicly owned property, which was overseen by the Metropolitan District Commission, the Boston Parks Department, the Boston Housing Authority, and Boston Public Schools. The organization conducted a study, funded through a combination of public and private sources, which evaluated the capital and programatic needs of community gardens throughout the city. Additionally, these organizations merged their respective garden plots to permanently protect 54 gardens in the city of Boston. (Garden Futures 1997).

As a result of this study, the organization revealed that in 1997 the city had approximately 4,000 gardeners and 140 community gardens. The gardeners were from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including Cape Verdean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Italian, and West Indian people. The top potential interventions in the report included improvements in capital and maintenance, organization and governance, education/leadership training, and community engagement. The study also found, notably, that the presence of a garden increased the value of surrounding lots by about 15 percent.
Although Garden Futures did important advocacy work for the continuation of community gardens, the organization dissolved in 2002, when the Boston Natural Area Fund essentially absorbed the other three organizations and became Boston Natural Areas Network (BNAN). Although this meant that former organizations lost some of their autonomy, BNAN continued to worked in partnership with non-profit and governmental agencies to coordinate activities, make capital improvements, provide educational opportunities for gardeners through training workshops. More importantly, though, the organization obtained ownership of 61 community gardens, protected through a land trust (16 of which were previously protected by SELROSLT and are funded through a special fund that provides services to those specific gardens). Since its inception, the organization provided services for community gardens across the city through the coordination of free compost deliveries to gardens across the city, offering a Master Urban Gardeners (MUG) training class to provide technical expertise to garden leaders, and hosting events such as the citywide Annual Gardeners Gathering (Boston Natural Areas Network 2013). By May 2005, there were an estimated 10,000 Boston residents that participated in community gardening (Dowty 2005). In 2013, a City of Boston database indicated that there were 184 community gardens throughout the city (City of Boston 2013a).

In 2008, BNAN secured a two grant from the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Neighborhood (DND), and several philanthropic organizations, which allowed for the creation of the community outreach program Boston is Growing Gardens (BIGG). The grant allowed for capital improvements in run down gardens in Dorchester and an expansion of the number of garden plots from 30 to 132 in Nightingale Community Garden, one of the oldest in the city. The project also focused on community outreach in order to encourage participation in some of the gardens where interest
seemed to be declining (Burns and Perry 2011). One of the main roles of this project was to demonstrate to people in low-income communities, particularly Dorchester, that the gardens had potential to provide food security for the residents in the community.

In spring of 2015, BNAN merged with the Trustees of Reservations, which is a non-profit organization that “preserve[s], for public use and enjoyment, properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts.” (The Trustees of Reservations 2015) This merge happened during the course of my research. It is noteworthy that this transition happened in the middle of the study period, and thus, I refer to both Boston Natural Areas Network and The Trustees of Reservations in this work. Although there was some staff turnover during the merging process, many of the same people who worked at BNAN transitioned into fairly identical roles at the Trustees.

The Trustees of Reservations permanently protects 61 community gardens in Boston through ownership and forms one of Boston’s largest land trusts. The majority of the gardens that the Trustees owns are located in the South End (12 gardens), Roxbury (9 gardens), Jamaica Plain (12 gardens), and Dorchester (19 gardens). Both the South End and Jamaica Plain are neighborhoods where tremendous gentrification has occurred in the last two decades. Dorchester and Roxbury have a mix of gentrifying neighborhoods and neighborhoods that are still predominately minority and low-income. The organization also has gardens located in East Boston (2 gardens), Fenway/Mission Hill (2 gardens), and Mattapan (1 garden). Although BNAN used to serve as a steward of all community gardens across the city of Boston, the focus of the Trustees is upon the oversight of the properties that it owns, and thus much of the
programmatic and technical support for the community gardens outside its ownership portfolio disappeared.

In 2008, the landscape of community gardens in the city of Boston included several state and municipal governments and approximately thirty non-profit organizations (French 2008). Community gardens owned by the city of Boston are funded by Community Development Block grants (Walsh 2014). Many of the gardens in the city are owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Boston Housing Authority, Massport (an independent public authority which develops, promotes and manages transportation infrastructure in the state), or the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation (American Community Gardening Association 2013). The Parks Department owns six community gardens within parkland. The city also owns 5 gardens through the Housing Authority and 11 gardens through the School Department (City of Boston 2014). The Massachusetts Department of Parks and Recreation also owns 18 gardens, which it maintains through the Community Garden Liaison program and its Maintenance Division.

Like the gardens protected under the jurisdiction of the Trustees, many of these public community gardens were established as a result of political organization through neighborhood associations, and as a result of these partnerships, the majority of community gardens in Boston have been more or less protected from development pressure. Furthermore, approximately 30 non-profit organizations other than BNAN/The Trustees have established community gardens in disadvantaged communities, which focus closely on issues such as environmental justice, resistance against gentrification and displacement, and food security (City of Boston 2014). The Audubon Society currently oversees one of the largest community gardens in the city located on the site of the former Morton Farm. They established a site in Boston in attempts to bring
education about natural ecosystems and preservation into the city and saw the community garden as an extension of that mission. Although the Audubon maintains a largely hands-off approach to the garden and allows the gardeners to manage the space, the Audubon does provide capital support for the garden.

Another non-profit organization that is heavily involved in the oversight of community garden spaces is Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), which “builds the power of communities of color and low-income communities in Massachuesetts to eradicate environmental racism” (Alternatives for Community and Environment 2016). In particular, the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP) at ACE has been involved in transforming vacant lots in the community into gardening space. ACE works in cooperation with other community organizations such as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and City Life/Vida Urbana (CL/VU), particularly to assure that structural improvements to the neighborhood, such as the addition of parks, community centers, and open spaces like community gardens, do not lead to the displacement of the low-income and minority residents that currently live in Boston. ACE currently oversees six gardens, four of which they have identified as being under threat of displacement. They are currently focusing on ways to protect these gardens permanently through a public trust or through direct ownership via DSNI.

A number of urban agriculture and food security organizations also oversee community garden spaces. For instance, The Food Project is a youth development project that teaches agricultural skills through urban agriculture and has developed three community gardens and a year-round greenhouse that provides leadership training and educational support about community supported agriculture. Another organization, Revision Urban Farm teaches homeless women about urban agriculture and owns two community farms through which the participants
grow and sell the produce at weekly farmers markets in Mattapan and the nearby community of Milton.

Through the course of my research, I also discovered that there were several unofficial, guerrilla community gardens, which are emerging, primarily in low-income neighborhoods, and do not have any official organizational support or protections from redevelopment pressures. These gardens, located predominately in low-income, high minority neighborhoods, are particularly vulnerable to the whims of city officials and changing political climates.

Furthermore, although this study did focus primarily on gardens located within the city of Boston, my study did include visits to a handful of the surrounding cities, such as Malden, Somerville, Cambridge, Chelsea and Watertown, which have recently developed community garden spaces. I also attended the annual meeting of the American Community Gardening Association in Denver, Colorado, which helped to frame my findings within the context of the national community gardening movement. Many cities do not have similar protections as the gardens in Boston, and thus experience similar displacement threats as community gardens located in other cities throughout the United States. My findings from these places are addressed, where appropriate, within the broader themes that I outline in the project.

**Boston Neighborhoods and the Community Gardening Landscape**

In order to provide a context for the community gardening landscape, I will provide a brief overview of the neighborhoods in Boston. This overview will help to demonstrate the types of conditions under which community gardens do and do not flourish in an urban setting. Although community gardens are located across the city, there are several neighborhoods where there are either zero or very few community gardens. These neighborhoods include Beacon Hill, Back Bay, West Roxbury, Hyde Park, and Roslindale. In general, neighborhoods where more
people have greater private access to outdoor space, or where public open space is built into the
design of the neighborhood, have fewer community gardens. These neighborhoods also tend to
have higher percentages of white people and are middle or upper class neighborhoods that have
never experienced extreme changes such as rapid gentrification.

The places where community gardens are located are places that either experienced
extreme population decline and white flight in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by a period of
gentrification, including the South End, Jamaica Plain, South Boston, Charlestown, and East
Boston, or places that have historically been poor and continue to be relatively poor. These
neighborhoods include Allston-Brighton, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.

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neighborhoods include Allston-Brighton, Roxbury, Mission Hill, Dorchester, and Mattapan. The neighborhoods of Allston-Brighton, Mission Hill, Fenway, and Longwood are also home to many university students, a fact which skews the populations of the neighborhoods to both have a large percentage of foreign-born populations and also low-income people. For a break down of community gardens by neighborhood, as well as a summary of where the gardens in this study were located see Table LMNOP. These data come from a map of the community gardens in Boston, which was created by BNAN. There are likely gardens that are missing, but these data nevertheless provide a good overview of the distribution of gardens.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 1: Overview of Community Gardens in Boston</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Community Gardens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allston-Brighton</td>
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<td>Beacon Hill/Back Bay</td>
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<td>Central</td>
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<td>Charlestown</td>
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<td>Dorchester</td>
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<td>Roxbury</td>
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<td>South Boston</td>
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<td>South End</td>
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<td>West Roxbury</td>
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In order to group the neighborhoods into “advantaged” and “disadvantaged,” I relied on a combination of census data summaries that the Boston Redevelopment Authority created at the
neighborhood level as well as my personal understandings of the breakdown of the neighborhoods and experiences in being in them. The most recent reports that break down the data at the neighborhood level were produced in 2013, based on data from the American Community Survey between the years 2007 and 2011. Although these data are slightly out of date, they nevertheless provide a general feel of the variations between the neighborhoods. These data reports are located at the following website: http://www.bostonplans.org/research-maps/research/research-publications?search=acs&sortby=date&sortdirection=DESC

Census data do not include median home prices, so I used an estimate of median home prices based on data from The Warren Group, which were reported in a Boston Globe article in 2015. Although these data were generally aligned with the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s planning districts, occasionally data were not available for a specific neighborhood, which is indicated in the tables below. These data can be found at the following website: https://www.bostonglobe.com/2013/09/05/median-home-prices-town/EFKrm7BXtTPdjSvgt6MWXJ/story.html

In order to analyze communities outside Boston, I referenced data from the 2014 American Community Survey. These data included all of the same information as the neighborhood summaries produced by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, with the exception of the ethnic breakdowns of the foreign born populations. Thus, this information is not included in the descriptions of these communities.

**Neighborhoods With No or Few Community Gardens**

These have been historically white neighborhoods. There are grand public gardens or private yards in these neighborhoods. Beacon Hill contains Boston Common, the Public Garden and The Esplanade. Back Bay is directly adjacent to Beacon Hill and was originally designed as
an upper class neighborhood, with historic brownstones. There are open spaces such as the
Christian Science Plaza, Copley Square, and Commonwealth Avenue, which has a park
stretching down the middle of the street and is modeled after the Champs de Elysees in Paris.
Although these open spaces have trees and are communal spaces that people from around Boston
enjoy, they do not contain spaces for gardening. Neighborhoods like West Roxbury, Roslindale,
and Hyde Park were generally have a more suburban feel, where the houses have large private
lawns. This is also true of certain parts of Dorchester. In these areas, the few community
gardens that do exist tend to be school gardens.

The downtown area of Boston (which includes Bay Village, the downtown/financial
district, the North End, and the West End) also has few community gardens, which has to do
with the fact that most of the area is built very densely, with small winding streets and little open
space. In recent years, the city has developed a few open spaces in the downtown area, including
the Rose Kennedy Greenway, on top of the subterranean I-93, which was placed underground
during the twenty year long project known as the Big Dig. Although there was discussion of
putting community gardens in the greenway in 2004, these never materialized. There is also a
newly redeveloped Christopher Columbus Park on the Waterfront and a small park known as
Post Office Square in the financial district. The West End contains portions of the Esplanade
and Charles River Park, as well as a park known as the Thoreau Path, which is in the middle of
the neighborhood’s large scale apartment complexes that replaced the former Italian tenements
from Herbert Gans’ famous study, The Urban Villagers (Gans 1982).
### Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Characteristics: Communities With No or Few Community Gardens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage White</th>
<th>Percentage Black</th>
<th>Percentage Latino</th>
<th>Percentage Asian</th>
<th>Percentage Foreign-Born</th>
<th>Top Three Foreign-Born Nationalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Hill/Back Bay</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>Canada, United Kingdom, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central (West End, North End, Downtown, Bay Village)</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>China, India, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyde Park</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roslindale</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>Dominican Republic, Haiti, Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Roxbury</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>China, Haiti, Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Socioeconomic Characteristics: Communities With No or Few Community Gardens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Percentage of Homes Renter Occupied</th>
<th>Median Home Price 2015</th>
<th>Median Rent (Monthly)</th>
<th>Percentage of Population SNAP Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Hill/Back Bay</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>$88,667</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>Beacon Hill: $666,000, Back Bay: $826,00</td>
<td>$1725</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central (Bay Village, Downtown, North End, West End)</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>$70,218</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>Bay Village: $624,000, North End: $886,000, Downtown and West End: Unavailable</td>
<td>$1543</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyde Park</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>$58,176</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>$340,000</td>
<td>$1179</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<td>Roslindale</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>$61,519</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>$420,000</td>
<td>$1183</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Roxbury</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>$74,797</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>$459,000</td>
<td>$1213</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Advantaged/Gentrifying Neighborhoods**

**Charlestown**

Charlestown has always had a somewhat bifurcated population, which means that in many ways, it is only a “half-advantaged” neighborhood. It was a historically Irish neighborhood, although the city’s largest housing project is also located in Charlestown. Most of the non-white population of the neighborhood lives in the housing project, and the neighborhood has historically had many racial tensions, particularly during the bussing crisis in the 1970s, when many white residents protested having to bus their children across the city to attend school. The neighborhood continues to have a population that is either very wealthy or very poor. The Bunker Hill memorial and the USS Constitution (the oldest naval ship in continuous commission) are in Charlestown. There is a community garden located in the naval yard, and the Sullivan Square Community Garden, which is in one of the most up and coming sections of the neighborhood, has a very long waiting list.

The newest community garden in the neighborhood is Charlestown Sprouts, a garden that is designed for the diverse populations in the area. It is located in a park along the Little Mystic Channel River. Fourteen of the beds belong to the organization NUBIA, which encourages participation in community gardening among the Nubian population. The organization donates the food they grow to food pantries in the area.

**East Boston**

East Boston is a peninsula that is geographically isolated from the rest of Boston. To travel between East Boston and the rest of Boston, it is necessary to travel through tunnels, either
in a car or on public transportation. In its early history, the neighborhood was home to many immigrants, who frequently entered Boston through the East Boston’s waterfront. In the early twentieth century, the neighborhood was a predominately Italian neighborhood. In the latter half of the twentieth century, when many of the Italian people moved to the suburbs north of Boston, it became a predominately Latino neighborhood, with immigrants from primarily central and South America. It has recently seen an influx of college students, medical professionals, and people who work in the finance industry because the neighborhood has quick access to the downtown area via public transportation. The neighborhood has also experienced many condominium development projects, particularly along the waterfront. Many landlords have also been making major renovations to the existing housing stock, which has lead to increases in rents.

Logan Airport is also located in East Boston. The community has rallied for many years against the expansion of the airport into the neighborhood and has negotiated agreements with Massport (the transportation agency that oversees the airport) to use much of the land that it owns in order to create open space in the community, such as Jeffries Point Park, Piers Park, and the East Boston Greenway. The Bremen Community garden is located in the greenway, next to the public library, playgrounds, basketball courts, and other recreational space, and several of the community gardens in the area are located near the waterfront parks. Although the neighborhood still has a predominately Latino population, the community gardens tend to be predominately white, and some of the original Italian gardeners remain in the gardens.

*Jamaica Plain*
In the period of the 1960s and 1970s, the neighborhood of Jamaica Plain was a target for redlining and neighborhood disinvestment. Although by the 1980s, the neighborhood began to stabilize as a result of activist work, it remained one of the most affordable areas in the city and attracted many college students and gay and lesbian communities. It became a somewhat artistic community, and eventually, the artistic scene of the neighborhood attracted gentrification, which especially took off in the beginning of the 21st century. The neighborhood has many expanses of green space, such as Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum, the Forest Hills Cemetery, and Franklin Park.

Most of the community gardens in Jamaica Plain date back to the activism of the 1970s and 1980s, when the community rallied to stop the construction of a highway directly through the neighborhood. Many of the community gardens in the neighborhood are located along space that was cleared for the project, which is known as Southwest Corridor Park. It is currently owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and contains bicycle trails, playgrounds, and other recreational spaces such as basketball courts. The community still has somewhat of an activist feel, as is expressed through community events such as the annual Wake Up the Earth festival, which has its roots in May Day and the Labor Movement.

South Boston

South Boston was recently a working class Irish neighborhood, which has recently shifted into a popular neighborhood for young people working in the finance industry downtown, which is either a short bus ride or a twenty-minute walk away from the neighborhood. There are few open spaces in the neighborhood, although new parks such as the popular Lawn on D and a redeveloped waterfront district featuring pocket parks and lawns along the water. The
neighborhood also contains Castle Island, the 22-acre site of a former fortress that has become a popular gathering spot during St. Patrick’s Day celebrations and in the summertime. The community gardens here tend to be open spaces that do not have individual plots.

**The South End**

In the 1960s, the South End became a predominately black and Latino neighborhood with the advent of racial steering and redlining after massive white flight to the suburbs. Although there were many vacant houses left behind, there were not enough racial and ethnic minorities to fill them all, and many fell into disrepair. Many landlords practiced arson on their own properties, which they could no longer rent due to a lack of demand, in order to collect insurance money. As a result, the neighborhood was left in great disrepair (Warner 1987). The South End was at the forefront of the community gardening movement in Boston, and many of the gardens are protected under a special fund housed within the Trustees of Reservations, which was the result of the Garden Futures project in 1997. Private corporate donors created the fund, which is still managed under a special account today.

The neighborhood is located in close proximity to Chinatown and Bay Village, and Berkeley Community Garden, one of the largest community gardens in the city sits at the intersection of these three communities. Historically, the garden was almost entirely comprised of Chinese Gardens, but over the decades, the garden has become whiter. Chinatown is fighting gentrification, particularly through organizations such as the Chinese Progressive Alliance, a division of Boston’s broader Right to the City movement. Both The South End and Bay Village have experienced tremendous gentrification since the 1990s and both have strong gay communities. It is worth noting that like Charlestown, the South End has a large public housing
project, which makes the neighborhood seem diverse and skews many of the statistics about affordability downward.

Table 4: Racial and Ethnic Characteristics: Advantaged Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage White</th>
<th>Percentage Black</th>
<th>Percentage Latino</th>
<th>Percentage Asian</th>
<th>Percentage Foreign-Born</th>
<th>Top Three Foreign-Born Nationalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlestown</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>China, Dominican Republic, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Boston</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica Plain</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>Dominican Republic, China, Jamaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Boston</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>Dominican Republic, China, Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South End</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>China, Dominican Republic, India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Socioeconomic Characteristics: Advantaged Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Percentage of Homes Renter Occupied</th>
<th>Median Home Price 2015</th>
<th>Median Rent (Monthly)</th>
<th>Percentage of Population SNAP Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlestown</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>$89,107</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>$624,000</td>
<td>$939</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Boston</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>$45,849</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>$332,000</td>
<td>$1093</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica Plain</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>$70,104</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>$469,000</td>
<td>$1235</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Boston</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>$68,221</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>$515,000</td>
<td>$1147</td>
<td>10.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>South End</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>$60,639</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>$703,000</td>
<td>$1176</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Allston-Brighton

Like many other neighborhoods in Boston, in the period immediately following World War II, many of the residents of Allston-Brighton left in order to live in the surrounding suburbs. The neighborhood has historically experienced a great deal of commercial development and has instances of high density/low quality housing stock, which has resulted from relatively low levels of political resistance in the neighborhood (Marchione 2016). Due to its proximity to Harvard University and Boston University, many of the residents of Allston-Brighton are college students. The permanent residents of the community frequently express concerns over behaviors such as excessive noise and drinking as well as the rising rents in the area as more landlords market their properties to students. The area is also home to many recent immigrants.

Although the neighborhood has a handful of parks that abut the Charles River, most of the area is highly developed with few open spaces. In recent years, residents have begun struggling to create new open spaces, including community gardens. I observed this activism firsthand in my fieldwork, as residents expressed that they felt ignored by the city and that developers were generally given free reign to do as they saw fit in the neighborhood. A description of the desire for community gardening in the neighborhood was outlined in the Allston Brighton Community Blog. It reads, “There are community gardens in neighborhoods all over Boston, but none in North Allston or North Brighton. Because our homes are so close together (limiting the amount of sunlight our yards get) and our house lots are quite small, a plot at a community garden is the only way many of us would be able to grow much of anything. Herter Park along the Charles has two gardens, but the gardeners seem to be people who drive in
from other communities, not local neighbors meeting and socializing as they grow food and flowers” (Mattison 2008).

**Dorchester**

Dorchester is a large and very diverse neighborhood in Boston. The demographics of the neighborhood change on almost a street-by-street basis, and there are many immigrant groups in the neighborhood. The northern and western portion of Dorchester (consisting of the sub-neighborhoods of Uphams Corner, Fields Corner, Four Points, and Codman Square) have a higher rate of renter-occupied units, multi-family homes, public housing, industrial parks, and black and Latino populations, while the southern and eastern parts (Ashmont Hill, Adams Village, Popes Hill, and Port Norfolk), contain many single-family, residential, owner-occupied homes, with large Irish and Vietnamese populations (Smith et al. 2012).

Although Dorchester contains a high number of community gardens, they are heavily concentrated in the more “urban,” less residential, northern part of the neighborhood, which has not experienced the same level of gentrification as the southern part, where yards are more common. Most of these gardens have been established on former vacant lots. Nightingale Community Garden is one of the largest in the area, and is located on the former site of a school.

**Fenway/Longwood**

The Fenway area contains several universities, while the Longwood area contains many of the areas hospitals. According to the official BNAN map of community gardens, there are only two community gardens in Fenway and no community gardens in Longwood. Nevertheless, four of the gardens in my study were in these neighborhoods. The neighborhoods
are developed very densely, although the Fenway does contain The Fens, which is a park that is a part of Boston’s Emerald Necklace, a park system developed by Frederik Law Olmsted that includes other open spaces such as Boston Common and Jamaica Pond. Very few people live in Longwood; most of those who do are medical students living in dormitories. One can walk for several blocks in the area and see hardly any green space.

One of the largest and oldest gardens in the city is the Fenway Victory Gardens, located in The Fens. Symphony Road Community Garden, also located in the Fenway, was built on a former arson site. It is, in many ways, a typical community garden with individual plots, although it is open to the public. It also contained a plot that was run by a Native American tribe for the purpose of promoting healthy eating and a focus on traditional growing practices and crops such as the three sisters (i.e. squash, beans, and corn). The two community gardens in my study that were located in Longwood were at institutional settings, and included the Countway Community Garden at Harvard Medical School and The Prouty Children’s Garden at Boston Children’s Hospital. Although the latter is not a community garden in a traditional sense of the word, I nevertheless included it in my study because of the deep level of community attachment that people placed on it.

Mattapan

Prior to the 1960s, Mattapan was a predominately Jewish neighborhood in Boston. In 1968, mayor White established a program specifically aimed to promote low-income homeownership, in which a consortium of banks and life insurance companies created a special type of mortgage that could only be redeemed within a specific geographic area, mainly Mattapan. As a result, real estate agents blockbusted the neighborhood by threatening white homeowners with the likelihood that their properties would dramatically decline in value and
encouraged them to sell their properties at very low prices. In turn, the agents would resell the newly vacant homes to black families at an inflated rate (Bluestone and Stevenson 2002). It is now a predominately black neighborhood, which has high rates of poverty and crime.

One of the newest community gardens is located in the neighborhood of Mattapan, which is a traditionally poor, black neighborhood that has the highest rate of crime of any neighborhood in Boston. In 2006, four people were murdered on Woolson St., and the neighborhood worked together with BNAN and the Mattapan Food and Fitness Council in order to establish a community garden on one of the many vacant lots in the neighborhood. There are three other open lots on the same street, which aren’t official community gardens, but are places where neighbors would plant flowers. On nearby streets in Mattapan, residents have set up guerilla gardens to grow tomatoes, lettuce, and other crops. These lots are in between vacant lots where trash has accumulated. They are right down the road from a lot for Revision Urban Farms, which is a program through which homeless women grow produce to sell at a Farmer’s Market. Revision Urban Farm has two lots in the city for growing this produce.

The Clark-Cooper community garden is also located in the Boston Nature Center, an Audubon property located on the former site of Boston State Hospital, and BNAN/The Trustees has a greenhouse and education center in the neighborhood called City Natives. Franklin Park also abuts the neighborhood. Although these large expanses of open space are located adjacent to the neighborhood, most of Mattapan is lacking open space and trees. It is also worth noting that the neighborhood contains the city’s compost area, which means that there are many pounds of trash that come into the neighborhood in collected yard waste. Although City Soil, the company that processes the yard waste, does its best to contain the trash, some of it nevertheless gets out into the neighborhood’s streams.
Roxbury/Mission Hill

Roxbury has been one of the main environmental justice communities in Massachusetts for many years and has a high percentage of African Americans, including a sizable Cape Verdean population. The neighborhood has historically been the site of toxic waste dumps, high rates of air pollution as a result of being one of the major bus hubs in the city, and has lacked environmental and recreational resources. The neighborhood has a strong network of activism that has resulted in many improvements to the environmental situation in the area, including creating such community resources as the Dudley Square park and the Kroc recreation facility. The neighborhood has rallied to curb illegal dumping in the area and to reduce emissions from busses in the neighborhood.

The organization of community gardens in Roxbury is very active and formal, and is woven into the broader fabric of neighborhood organization and environmental justice frameworks. Three main organizations (ACE, DSNI, and the Food Project) work together to form the Dudley Real Food Hub, to strategically plan the development of garden space in the community, alongside other projects such as farmers markets, commercial urban farms, and community supported sustainable agriculture.

The environmental justice organization ACE works closely in conjunction with the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, which has historically developed a community land trust in order to assure that low-income residents of the neighborhood have access to housing and community amenities that do not result in the displacement of current residents from the neighborhood. These two organizations also work closely with The Food Project, which “engag[es] young people in personal and social change through sustainable agriculture” (The
Food Project 2016). The organization provides community programs and training resources for people who want to grow their own food, in addition to running community farms that aim to provide low-income people with affordable access to fresh and healthy locally produced foods. The Food Project owns three community garden lots in Roxbury and also maintains a year-round community greenhouse, where residents in the community have access to educational programs.

Like many other neighborhoods around it, Mission Hill houses many college students, many of whom are Asian students attending medical school in the nearby Longwood area. The neighborhood also has a many blacks and Latinos. Mission Hill is frequently grouped demographically with either Jamaica Plain or Roxbury, which have close proximity to the neighborhood. Socioeconomically, the neighborhood is more similar to Roxbury than it is to Jamaica Plain. Open space in the community is limited, and the community gardens in the area are typically located on former vacant lots.

**Table 6: Racial and Ethnic Characteristics: Disadvantaged Communities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage White</th>
<th>Percentage Black</th>
<th>Percentage Latino</th>
<th>Percentage Asian</th>
<th>Percentage Foreign-Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allston-Brighton</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenway</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longwood</td>
<td>73.9</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattapan</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Hill</td>
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<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>Percentage of Homes Renter Occupied</td>
<td>Median Home Price 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allston-Brighton</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>$46,542</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>Allston: $370,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester</td>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td>$44,136</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>$365,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenway</td>
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<td>5.4</td>
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<td>89.6</td>
<td>$424,000</td>
</tr>
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<td>Longwood</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>$28,482</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattapan</td>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td>$41,519</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>$308,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Hill</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>$33,432</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxbury</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>$27,859</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>$359,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Socioeconomic Characteristics: Disadvantaged Communities

Communities in the Boston Metro Area

In addition to gardens in Boston proper, I also included gardens from five communities in the surrounding area. I included these studies in large part because I obtained contacts through snowball sampling, and also because they came up at regional gardening events. Due to their close proximity to the city, they were also convenient to study. The five communities outside Boston that I visited included Cambridge, Chelsea, Malden, Somerville, and Watertown. In many ways, these communities parallel the demographics of the communities in Boston. Cambridge, Somerville, and to a lesser extent, Malden have experienced gentrification in recent years, although they remain fairly diverse. In those three cities, the mayors started the community garden initiatives, and the models for running the gardens closely resemble one another and, in fact, served as inspirations for one another. Like many of the community gardens in the more affluent neighborhoods of Boston, there are long waiting lists for the gardens in these cities.
Chelsea is a city with a high population of minorities and the highest percentage of foreign-born citizens in Massachusetts. The Chelsea Community Garden started when a group of citizens transformed a vacant lot in 1997. Today, food security and a youth program are major themes within the garden. Although Watertown as a whole is the most affluent suburbs in my study, the specific community garden that I included in this study was at a housing authority.

Communities Outside Boston

Table 8: Racial and Ethnic Characteristics: Communities Outside Boston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage White</th>
<th>Percentage Black</th>
<th>Percentage Latino</th>
<th>Percentage Asian</th>
<th>Percentage Foreign-Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerville</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watertown</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Socioeconomic Characteristics: Communities Outside Boston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Percentage of Homes Renter Occupied</th>
<th>Median Home Price 2015</th>
<th>Median Rent</th>
<th>Percentage SNAP Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>$75,909</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>$749,000</td>
<td>$1656</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>$48,725</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>$297,500</td>
<td>$1165</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>$55,523</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>$360,000</td>
<td>$1264</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerville</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>$39,643</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>$448,500</td>
<td>$1470</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watertown</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>$83,461</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>$452,000</td>
<td>$1530</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These descriptions of the neighborhoods in which community gardens are located provide a starting point to understanding the types of experiences that their residents may have, although neighborhoods are diverse and complex. Furthermore, within neighborhoods, there are both advantaged and disadvantaged individuals, who experience community gardens in differentiated ways. Nevertheless, the neighborhood context serves as a starting point through which the more nuanced elements of the community gardening experience take place.
Types of Community Gardens

*Neighborhood Gardens*

A neighborhood garden is the most common type of community garden, which allow individuals or households to garden particular plots as they see fit. In Boston, the majority of community gardens follow this model. The community manages them, either under the leadership of a single garden coordinator or a garden board, even if they are under the ownership structure of a non-profit organization such as the Trustees of Reservations. In the larger gardens, as many as 12 people may oversee the garden, and typically there is a coordinator for a particular section of the garden. Despite that many community gardens look aesthetically similar to one another, there are important distinctions in the gardens of people from advantaged and disadvantaged communities.

Gardens that are located in advantaged communities generally had a predominately white population, perhaps with a few older non-white gardeners who had been participating in the gardens for decades. For the most part, these gardens included elaborate landscaping, and many of the gardeners had artistic or creative professional lives in fields such as landscape design or architecture. These gardens typically included many decorations on gardening plots, sitting areas, sandboxes, gazebos, and occasionally sculpture. There was a greater emphasis on the aesthetics of garden, as well as an emphasis of blending into the community as much as possible and not being a nuisance to the neighbors. Although these gardens almost always contained vegetables, fruits, and herbs, they also contained many flowers. Gardening events included cleanup days, educational programs with outside speakers, cocktail parties, and live music.
These gardeners tended to perceive of their neighbors as outsiders and viewed gardening as a hobby.

By contrast, gardens in predominately poor, non-white neighborhoods tended to have a greater emphasis on the capacity of the garden to grow food. These garden events tended to focus on the mechanics of gardening, with an emphasis on troubleshooting and maximizing output. These gardeners held community-centered events, such as potlucks that included food

Figure 1: Sculpture in Northampton Community Garden, South End
such as hot dogs and sandwiches (but not alcohol). Several of these gardens were also created in direct response to a violent situation in the neighborhood and contain memorials. These spaces are more likely to have community art projects where, for example, neighborhood children and youth (often led by an educator) came together to create artwork for the garden. Many of these spaces serve as spaces where the community has intentionally gathered to establish ownership of the space in direct opposition to gentrification in the neighborhood. In these gardens, residents do not try to blend into the community; rather, they use the gardens as spaces for political activism that stands in direct opposition to outside development pressures, particularly displacement threats.
Figure 1: Artwork in Chelsea Community Garden
Communal Gardens

A slight variation of the neighborhood garden were communal gardens, which were gardens without individual plots or where individual plots are only a small section of the space. In some of these gardens, the participants grew food communally to be shared among the gardeners and the surrounding community and allowed access to the general public. These communal gardens differ from the traditional notion of a park in that they are community-controlled spaces. The gardens in my study that fall under this description included the Egleston Community Orchard and Granada Park Community Garden, which are both located in Jamaica Plain.

Figure 3: Painted Fence, Egelston Community Garden, Jamaica Plain
Institutional Gardens

Some community gardens exist as part of an organizational institution, such as a workplace, a homeless shelter, or an environmental organization. Institutional gardens also include those that are located at housing authorities and schools. As a result of the fact that they are owned and operated entirely under the jurisdiction of a private entity or non-profit organization, they are typically closed to the broader community and thus subject to different forms of control than neighborhood gardens. Often, institutional gardens exist only as long as there are a select group of individuals who are willing to care for the gardens. My study included participants from Countway Community Garden, a workplace garden at the Harvard Medical School Library. Revision Urban Farm and The Food Project are both examples of community gardens that also have job-training components and help to employ gardeners through produce sales. Occasionally institutions such as the Audubon will own the land where community gardens are located but are otherwise fairly hands off in the management of the space, such as the Clark-Cooper Community garden, which is located on the Audubon’s Boston Nature Center property in Mattapan. These spaces are community gardens that serve specific, closed communities rather than a geographical neighborhood.
All of the neighborhoods in Boston contain public housing projects, but perhaps surprisingly, community gardens in these spaces are not extremely common, given their history and reputation of providing food relief for the urban poor. The city of Boston owns five community gardens located in housing authority properties. Although I did not speak with any gardeners from housing authority gardens in Boston, I did speak with Judy Fallows, who oversees Nichols Community Garden in Watertown, as well as Lucia Droby of the community-oriented environmental landscape design firm COG Design, whose firm has designed open spaces in housing authorities and other community spaces throughout New England. Lucia Droby commented that there may actually be some aversion to vegetable gardens in public housing, as they require the oversight of staff, and time investments that the lowest income people may not be able to manage in between other obligations.
Although school gardens certainly impact food access and security in their neighborhoods, especially for children and families that are involved in the gardens, I did not include school gardens in my study. Frequently, school gardens come and go from year to year based on the level of interest from individual teachers. They are more of a programmatic, educational tool than most community gardens and do not generally impact land use decisions since they are typically located on school property. Several of the gardens that I visited included youth programs or specific plots set aside for school children. In general, however, school gardens remained outside the scope of this study.

These characterizations of the community garden landscape in Boston serves as a starting point in this study through which we can begin to understand the categorical differences between gardeners and the ways that varying levels of advantage can shape the community gardening experience. Throughout the rest of this study, I will examine the different types of advantage, including access to amenities, food security, threats of displacement, and political voice that community gardeners experience.

Data and Methods

In order to understand the competing perceptions that stakeholders have of community gardens as a land use, I utilized a combination of qualitative techniques, primarily participant observation, semi-structured interviews, content analysis of social media, and review of historical texts about the community gardening movement. My interview subjects included current and former community gardeners, community activists who were involved in the creation and defense of community gardens, individuals involved in the development and maintenance of
community garden space, and non-gardener community residents. My participant observation took place in community gardens, gardening and urban agriculture conferences, garden workshops, and neighborhood events. I also attended the annual meeting of the American Community Gardening Association in Denver, Colorado, in order to gain a sense of how the community garden movement in Boston compares to that in other cities across the United States and Canada. Throughout the course of my research project, I also regularly followed several community gardens, urban agriculture institutions, and non-profit organizations related to my work on social media sites, mainly Twitter and Facebook, in order to stay informed about events and discourses related to my research. Occasionally these sites would post articles that were particularly related to my research questions, which I saved for inclusion in the content analysis.

As a general rule, I found it easier to arrange formal interviews with people who were involved in some type of leadership role in their garden or who worked at an organization that oversaw the gardens. Many of the most valuable insights that I gained about community gardens came about through informal conversations with ordinary gardeners and other community members who happened to be in the garden spaces. This proved to be a more time-efficient way to gather roughly the same information about community gardening from people who received frequent requests for interviews from Boston’s academic community or were otherwise uncomfortable with the formal interview process.

I selected the gardens that are included in my study using a few different methodologies, but I primarily relied on recruitment at major gardening events such as the Annual Gardeners Gathering and two city-wide coordinators meetings. Because I was aiming to understand gardens across the city of Boston, I also targeted garden events in specific areas of the city,
particularly toward the end of my study period. I wanted to make sure that I included gardens that represented as many demographic groups and neighborhoods as possible.

I spoke to 62 individuals throughout the course of my research, 25 of which were in the form of official interviews. In total, I visited 45 community gardens in the Boston area. I made sure to visit all of the biggest gardens in the city, which included the Berkeley Community Garden in the South End, the Fenway Victory Garden in Fenway, Nightingale Community Garden in Dorchester, and the Ed Cooper Community Garden in Mattapan. For a complete list of the gardens included in my study, broken down by neighborhood, please see Appendix A.

The purpose of these explorations was to examine the ways that gardens were utilized as well as the ways that they were situated in the neighborhood even if I did not have a connection to a gardener in that specific location. One of the limitations of studying community gardens in a northern city is that community participation fluctuates greatly with the weather. In order to gain a proper understanding of how community garden spaces change with the weather, I did field work over the course of a full calendar year.

**Sampling**

The primary recruitment method for my study involved snowball sampling. Many of my original participants were people who worked at BNAN/The Trustees of Reservations, but as my study progressed, I began recruiting individuals to participate in my study at events such as coordinator meetings and through workshops and events that took place in the gardens. Typically, after I introduced myself at these gatherings, people provided me with e-mail addresses so that I could follow up with additional information about my study. A few people preferred that I contact them via text message or phone call. For this reason, I carried around
small printed cards containing a description of my study and the ethical rights for participants containing identical language to the recruitment e-mails approved by the Institutional Review Board. Although meeting people in person at events was the primary method for recruitment, at the conclusion of each interview, I asked participants if they had recommendations for others who I could interview, which also resulted in additional interviews. Two of my interview subjects contacted me directly after they heard about my study from other participants. The gardeners in my study came from many different ethnic and class backgrounds and represented gardens from across the city of Boston. For a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of my participants, please see Appendix B.

**Participant observation**

This study combined participant observation at various workshops, conferences, community meetings, and gardening events in 9 neighborhoods in Boston and 5 surrounding cities and towns in the Boston area, which represented a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds. In total, I attended 11 meetings of community organizers, 12 garden events such as potlucks and cleanup days, and 4 conferences related to community gardening. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I interacted with individuals from 19 non-profit organizations, and 4 government agencies.

Many of the gardens hosted individual workshops, which were designed to help educate gardeners about environmentally friendly gardening practices and issues such as plant spacing and selection (based on the soil and sunlight conditions of the particular site), organic gardening techniques, watering tips, and soil and compost building. The workshops I attended covered topics such as Resilient Garden systems, Vegetable Garden Basics, and Healthy Soil and Water.
I also attended several garden social events and parties, such as the Wake Up the Earth Festival in Jamaica Plain, South End Garden Tour, which included three community gardens as well as other private gardens and public spaces in the South End, The South End Pollination Celebration at Berkeley St. Community Garden in the South End, The Nightingale Community Garden neighborhood block party, Celebrating Roots Community Garden Block Party at Northampton St. community garden, and the Harvest Moon Garden Party at Minton Stable community garden. Additionally, I attended work days at the Winchester St. Community Garden in the South End and the Berkeley St. community garden. I also attended several ACE events, including the annual meeting, and attended a Public Art unveiling at a garden on the Fairmont Cultural Corridor, which was sponsored by DSNI. I also volunteered ReVision urban farm, which is a community-based urban agricultural site, where residents of a local homeless shelter are able to grow food for themselves as well as for other members of the community.

Additionally, I attended 5 meetings of the Urban Agriculture Visioning Process, an initiative through the City of Boston’s Office of Food Initiatives, which received a $25,000 planning grant from the Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP), a division of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The grant allows for a planning process that will lead to the implementation of Article 89, which contains language for zoning to allow for Urban Farming within the city limits of Boston. Stakeholders from various backgrounds, including community gardens, participate in the meetings. I gathered pamphlets, brochures, and agendas at many of these meetings and later included them in my content analysis.

All of the events I attended were open to the public, although, as I note in my findings section, some events involved paying an admission fee or a registration fee. As may be
expected, some of the events that I intended to attend were cancelled or postponed due to weather-related concerns. I focused my field notes and conversations in these events on issues that were particularly pertinent to my research questions. Additionally, doing field work was invaluable for finding people who were not directly involved in the community gardens but who lived in the neighborhoods in which they were located. During the course of my field work, I wrote regular field notes. The themes in these field notes reflected my general impressions in the site, observations about my research questions, and comparisons between different gardening sites and experiences (Eisenhardt 2002).

*Interviews*

Throughout the course of my research, I conducted semi-structured, audio recorded interviews with 25 people who had connections to community gardening in the Boston metro area. The use of formal interview guides increased reliability within the study, as the same questions were asked across all participants. I also developed on-going relationships with many of my research subjects, particularly at BNAN/The Trustees of Reservations, which contributed to the validity of the study, as I could ask them for clarification and feedback on earlier conversations that I had with them (Creswell 2013). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. When requested, I presented participants with transcripts of their interviews and asked for clarification when necessary.

My interview subjects included gardeners, community activists, workers at non-profit organizations, and individuals at community development corporations. I developed separate interview guides for each of these groups of people, which were approved by the Institutional Review Board at Northeastern University. Each interview guide contained between 19 and 31
questions, which were related to one of my four main research questions. These questions served as probes to prompt additional details and/or elaboration from the research subjects. I also asked subjects for demographic background information in order to compare responses between different groups of people. This information included their level of education, employment status, profession, and their racial/ethnic identity. These interview guides are in the appendix.

I discovered that my interview subjects did not always fit neatly into one category. Many interviewees from the non-profit organizations, for example, turned out to also have their own personal plots in community gardens. As a result, I often customized questions for the specific person I was interviewing, and sometimes added questions from the gardeners' interview schedule unexpectedly in the middle of an interview. Furthermore, as my research progressed, I often refined the questions that I asked people as I gathered new information about the history, mechanics, and policies related to community gardens around the city of Boston. However, all research participants were asked, minimally, to answer all the questions outlined in the interview guides. Most interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, although a few extended for as long as 90 minutes, with the permission of the interviewee.

Secondary Data Analysis

In order to gage the socioeconomic status of the garden and categorize the gardens, I gathered census track data on the racial composition, educational level, unemployment rate, and income characteristics of the communities surrounding the gardens, which came from neighborhood level Boston Redevelopment Authority data summaries. These data were critical for answering the question of how perceptions of community gardens and ability to shape the
gardens vary on the basis of socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity and formed a basis for identifying a community as advantaged/disadvantaged, which is described in greater detail in the section describing the neighborhoods of Boston. I also conducted a content analysis of the top news articles that appeared on a community garden Google Alert during the time period during which I was conducting my research. I also specifically searched for any news articles that had been written about community gardens in the city of Boston.

Data Analysis

This research relied on an inductive process through which I established a comprehensive set of themes on the perceptions of community gardens as an urban land use, as well as the agency of participants to shape garden use. Throughout the data collection process, I imported my field notes and interview transcriptions into the cloud-based qualitative analysis software Dedoose. Utilizing this software, I identified overarching themes in order to form my findings and analysis sections. Some codes I utilized included environment, food, physical infrastructure, and social aspects of gardening (which included subcategories such as inclusivity, organizational support, privacy, reflection of the community, and diversity).

These methods all serve to demonstrate the ways that community gardens serve a wide range of purposes and people from a diversity of backgrounds. One of the main intentions of this study is to analyze how people from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances view the spaces in their every day lives. Many studies focus intensely on a particular subset of the population or on specific sites for an understanding of the community gardening experience. Although these studies have demonstrated intricate details about the process of community gardening, this study
is distinct in that it is a comparative study of many types of gardens across the broader urban community.
Chapter 4: Perceptions of Use, Purpose, and Entitlement in Community Gardens: A Shift From Environmental Purposes to Amenity Mindsets

The formation community garden has included various motivations and rationales, including economic relief for the poor, food sovereignty (especially during times of war), racial equality, community beautification, and environmental restoration of impoverished urban areas. Although community gardens throughout history have included all or most of these justifications, the prevailing ideologies behind the community gardening movement are continuously vacillating according to dominant cultural discourses, which in turn shape the experiences of the gardeners. I argue that although community gardeners and activists have used environmental discourses as justification for their continued existence, in reality, these motivations are not the primary concern of most gardeners. Instead, ideological struggles, which often reflect neoliberal capitalist approaches to urban development, serve as a framework through which the establishment of community gardens must occur. Although non-profit ownership of garden spaces serves to stop development pressures on particular parcels of land, it can also lead to inequalities in gardener experiences, particularly in regards to access to amenities.

In this chapter, I will begin with an explanation of the broad context of the environmental justice movement and the environmental benefits of community gardening. I will then describe the concept of neoliberalism in greater detail, particularly as it relates to the development of urban space generally and community gardens more specifically. I argue that although the environmental justice rhetoric has historically served as pushback against the redevelopment of community gardens, currently individualist notions such as privacy, have shifted the focus of participants away from communal and environmental mindsets, particularly in gardens that are
located in more advantaged communities. I will also demonstrate that increased non-profit ownership has contributed to unequal experiences for gardeners from disparate socioeconomic backgrounds.

Due to the fact that community gardens represent the intersections of both the built and natural environments, environmental activists have played a central role in the community gardening movement, particularly in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, when community garden establishment was very closely related to environmental improvement of decaying neighborhoods. The emergence of the environmental justice movement, along with concepts such as environmental racism, arose during this same time period, and arguably served as a justification for a renewed focus on urban issues within environmental movements (Melosi 1995). Due to the fact that many community gardens are located in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the environmental justice movement has been heavily involved in the support of community gardens (Emmett 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2010; Irazábal and Punja 2009; Mcilvaine-Newsad and Porter 2013; Soja 2010).

Historically, environmental activism has fallen into two main philosophies on the role of humans in protecting the natural environment. “Preservationist” approaches to environmental activism center on a romanticized notion that undeveloped nature and pristine wildernesses, typically located outside the city, are spiritual spaces that should be protected at all costs. This perspective reinforces an artificial dichotomy between urban space and rural space, rather than viewing all land as being part of a holistic, interconnected ecological system. On the other hand, “conservationist” environmental movements emphasize the responsibility of humans to treat land in such a way that allows for continued economic and social uses of the land through processes
of reuse, replacement, and reproduction, regardless of where that land is located (O’Connor 1998; Taylor 2009).

Both of these approaches had elite, native, and rural biases. Preservationist approaches primarily benefitted wealthy, largely white populations who could afford to live or travel outside the city in order to experience the vast wilderness. Conservationist approaches, on the other hand, greatly benefitted managers and other professionals who held the capacity to extract considerable profits from the exchange of raw materials. Black and immigrant urban dwellers and factory workers were excluded from the benefits of the environmental movement, and in fact, many environmentalists had disdain for the polluting, industrial jobs they held (Shutkin 2002).

Modern environmental activist movements can be understood in two main periods. The first period dates back to Earth Day in 1970, when the formerly countercultural environmental movement brought environmental issues to the attention of mainstream audiences for the first time (Belasco 2006; Warner and Durlach 1987). The second period began in the early 1990s, particularly when the concept of urban environmental sustainability gained particular attention during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. At that time the environmental movement expanded its focus to include not only the preservation of pristine wildernesses but also the creation and maintenance of sustainable environmental practices in urban areas (Gottlieb 2005; Portney 2003; Roseland and Connelly 2005; Shutkin and Brower 2000; Wheeler 2013). Many studies have indicated that communities with a high percentage of racial minorities face significantly higher levels of exposure to environmental risks such as toxic wastes, vacant lots filled with trash, and polluting locally undesirable land uses (LULUs). This disproportionate exposure is known as environmental racism, and the
environmental justice movement began to focus on restoration of blighted urban environments on bringing biologically thriving places back into the city (Bullard 1990; Chavis 1987).

The environmental justice movement seeks to counteract environmental racism and equalize the benefits of environmental amenities across all populations. In particular, environmental justice differs from other types of environmental movements in that it emphasizes the importance of the environment in the places where people live, work, and play (Westra et al. 2013). A central concept of the movement is civic environmentalism or “the idea that members of a particular geographic and political community…should engage in planning and organizing activities to ensure a future that is environmentally healthy and economically and socially vibrant at the local and regional level” (Shutkin and Brower 2000:14). Although traditional perspectives on environmental justice focused on disproportionate exposure to “environmental bads” and causes of environmental injustices on health, more recently, the movement has focused on topics such as the relationship between place and health and connections of environmental justice claims to broader demands and processes (Anguelovski 2011).

Studies have indicated that community gardens have many environmental benefits for the communities in which they are located, such as filtering pollutants from groundwater (Bremer et al. 2003; Sherer 2006), restoration of oxygen to the air (Chicago Botanic Garden and The City of Chicago 2003), rainwater drainage, soil erosion prevention, and reduction of the heat island effect, which helps eliminate the need for air conditioning and energy use (Gardenworks 2012). Other studies have suggested that urban gardens play an important role in maintaining biodiversity in the city (Buckingham 2005; Guitart, Pickering, and Byrne 2012; Hardman 2011; Irvine, Johnson, and Peters 1999).
Community gardens have also played an important role in the lead management of soil in urban communities. In the 1970s, when the dangers of lead became apparent to the American public, studies such as “Poisoned Gardens,” which appeared in the alternative newspaper *The Elements*, alerted urban gardeners to the problem of lead contamination in the soil, particularly on urban lots. Many of community gardeners from worked hard on remediating the soil in order to make it safer for growing food. They used a variety of strategies, including transporting topsoil from nearby communities, growing flowering crops such as eggplants, tomatoes, and peppers, which have a lower capacity to transmit lead into the portion of the plant meant for human consumption, and, especially in more recent years, using strategies such as raised beds in order to isolate the soil in which plants are growing from the ground soil (Lawson 2005).

Although these methods help to reduce human exposure to contaminants such as lead, they do not completely eliminate all risk of exposure. The University of Massachusetts Soiling Testing Lab provided community outreach services in which they tested the levels of lead and other contaminants in the soil using federal grant funds through the Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension System. Their findings indicated that these methods do not completely eliminate the potential for lead to enter the soil, since it is often airborne in old lead paint chips and other forms of historical lead contamination. Nevertheless, the study also showed that there is little risk of lead absorption through gardening, and the number of children affected by lead poisoning in Boston continues to decline (Union Park Press 2010). The issue of lead in the soil also remains a concern in the development of new garden spaces. Of course, not all cities or communities have access to such programs, and the price of testing for lead can be prohibitively expensive, which can lead to unexpected health risks for community gardeners (Kessler 2013).
Community gardens also have many environmental benefits as alternatives to environmentally devastating practices of the national and global food systems, which rely on the government subsidization of commodity monocrops such as corn and soy while providing little incentive to produce crops such as fruits and vegetables (Nestle 2007; Pollan 2009; Schlosser 2012). These agricultural practices lead to unsustainable soil management and increased pollution through the use of petrochemicals to farm and transport food around the world (Elton 2013). In contrast, local food takes less petroleum to transport, leads to greener urban spaces, results in less food waste, and does not lose its nutritional value through a lengthy transportation process (Chase and Grubinger 2014; Cockrall-King 2012; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Winne 2009).

Environmental movements are often direct reactions against neoliberal capitalist forms of governance, particularly given that deregulation often involves limiting environmental policy (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). The most intense shift toward a neoliberal capitalist agenda took place from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, as countries worldwide began to deregulate the economy and eliminate socialist and Keynesian elements of governance, as well as when the environmentalist movement began to have a relatively mainstream audience. Neoliberal capitalism favors the generation of corporate profits and tax revenues and the exchange of capital over the power of a redistributive state and emphasizes the individual experience, market-led development, and public-private partnerships in the funding and management of public spaces. These shifting ideologies have resulted in a system in which environmental and community equality concerns are subordinate to economic efficiency (Harvey 2007).

The shift toward a neoliberal economy has had major implications for urban areas. Many scholars have noted that the process of neoliberalization has perpetuated social inequalities in urban areas. Public intervention in economic development policies frequently takes the form of a
subsidization of private commercial projects and upscale housing developments in lieu of investment in public space and middle-class and affordable housing (Hackworth 2007). These policies have resulted in “glocalization,” in which local development decisions primarily benefit global capital rather than local communities. In the neoliberal capitalist order, global development corporations implement the majority of development decisions in urban settings. Typically, these developers will opt to build luxury units in attempts to generate the best profit. The primary benefits of these developments go to these globally dispersed corporations and the people who can afford to live in them (Sassen 2006).

These development decisions often inadvertently alienate distressed inner city populations by creating spatially and socially isolated spaces that lack many of the advantages that white and middle class people experience (Marcuse 1997). Many studies in environmental racism have demonstrated that access to ecological amenities often becomes a privilege of the wealthy and of white populations (Shutkin and Brower 2000). As a result of the emphasis on economic prosperity and protection of land for the wealthy, the externalities of the cost of capitalist production have shifted to disadvantaged communities and the environment as a whole (Faber and McCarthy 2003).

Although most urban scholars focus on the creation of places such as residences and commercial zones under the rise of neoliberalism, many scholars have noted that the increasing privatization of urban space has also extended to outdoor spaces such as parks, playgrounds, and community gardens (Kohn 2004). The neoliberal model of urban development emphasizes an entrepreneurial approach and necessitates that public places such as parks are financially self-sustaining, which means they are often funded through non-profit organizations and private organizations such as homeowners associations (Loughran 2014). The overarching perspective
on open space in urban areas is that it is a scarce resource and therefore a consumable good, which is accessible only to those who are able to pay privately for the privilege of such space (O’Connor 1998). The turnover of formerly public spaces to private and non-profit organizations has held serious implications for the free exchange of democratic ideas in a public forum, and has particularly limited the ability of residents to have agency over a social process of production of spaces in their communities. Although public space once served as the primary location for public discourse, over time, the free exchange of ideas became less protected as private organizations began taking over the management of outdoor space. Managers and officials often limit the expression of free speech in public spaces when they feel that doing so takes precedence over public safety or the image of the organizations that oversee those spaces (Kohn 2004).

A handful of previous scholars have noted a shift in which community gardens have reflected an increasing number of elements of neoliberalism. Since their inception in the late nineteenth century, community gardens have had an undertone of “helping the poor help themselves.” Many studies have indicated that gardens and parks in urban areas emerged as a strategy to prevent excessive Sunday drinking and other forms of “moral malaise” among the working classes (Warner and Durlach 1987; Winne 2009). Especially in school gardens and jails, community garden rules serve to reinforce values such as a strong work ethic and obedience to authority (Pudup 2008).

Prior to the period of intense deregulation and public austerity measures of the Reagan administration, the public sector provided much more support for gardens. For instance, the city of Boston formed a program in 1976 in which the public sector employed 21 unemployed residents to participate in the construction of a community garden and greenhouse under a grant
known as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) (Warner and Durlach 1987). Although this program lasted only a year, it nevertheless represents an enormous commitment of public resources that would be unlikely to occur under current circumstances. Like many other social services in the city, the intense period of neoliberal deregulation in the 1980s meant that public agencies suspended most of their financial support for community gardens, and non-profit organizations began to almost exclusively oversee their management and protection. Gardeners had to campaign aggressively for access to basic city services such as trash pickup at their garden (Lawson 2005).

Community gardens reinforce the neoliberal ideal in which the shaping of public space is entirely in the hands of private citizens and non-profit organizations while governmental organizations play a limited role in the development of urban areas (Addie 2009; Douglas 2014). Gardeners are almost entirely responsible for all security and maintenance of the spaces, which makes community gardens a particularly attractive land use due to the limited number of public resources that the city needs to provide for their maintenance (Hersh 2010). One study indicated that the surrounding community may also hold a more favorable impression of the garden when it is used for privatized events that may indicate the status of the space (Hou, Johnson, and Lawson 2009).

Mary Beth Pudup’s (2008) study closely links neoliberalism and community gardens emphasized self-sufficiency and social control that the spaces represent, particularly among the organizations that oversee the spaces. They emphasize the capacity for individuals to become self-actualized and express “personal responsibility” as well as “individual empowerment.” Gardeners theoretically achieve these idealized goals through direct contact with nature and the capacity to produce their own food, which reduces reliance on welfare oriented food programs
such as food banks and food stamps. Pudup argues that community gardens would often be
better characterized as “organized garden projects,” as the term “community” implies a sense of
collectivity that is not necessarily present in the spaces, given that the sense of ownership is
limited to a select group of participants rather than the community at large.

Despite that community gardens, like other land uses in urban areas, reflect components
of the neoliberal ideology, many studies have described the ways that development pressures
frequently threaten the continued existence of gardens in urban areas. Many city officials and
developers view community gardens as temporary land uses that should only exist until higher
and better uses of the space can occur. The significant investment of volunteer labor required to
turn a vacant lot into a community garden remains uncompensated, both financially and in terms
of land security (Rosol 2010).

Many proponents of neoliberal development practices frame spaces that do not fall under
the direct control of private entities as being a direct threat to the advancement of the capitalist
agenda, and the notion that community gardens are a reflection of socialist ideals has some
degree of validity. Socialist societies such as Cuba have many community gardens, and serve as
one of the government’s main strategies to prevent widespread famine as a result of trade
embargo (Moskow 1999). The modern day community vegetable garden shares many
commonalities with the allotment gardens of socialist democratic countries such as Sweden,
where the right for laborers to farm municipally-owned land was a central design component of
urban areas (Barthel, Folke, and Colding 2010).

Conflicts over community garden space often reflect ideological differences as much as
they represent pragmatic differences over land use. For instance, in the mid 1990s in New York,
Mayor Rudy Giuliani very much embraced the neoliberal spirit of development and aimed to
turn over as much public land as possible to private development, including 113 city-owned parcels of land on which residents had established community gardens. Giuliani’s office moved jurisdiction of the parcels from the Parks Department to the Department of the Housing Preservation and Development, while simultaneously legally prohibiting the establishment of any more garden sites. Giuliani intended to sell the lots to the highest bidder in order to encourage new development and maximize tax revenue for the city of New York (Lawson 2005). A Washington Post article from 1999 noted that one of Giuliani’s statements on the potential sale of the gardens was “This is a free market economy. Welcome to the era after communism” (Grunwald 1999:A1).

These actions showed little concern for the gardeners or the sweat equity and capital investments that they had placed into their community gardens and framed the gardeners as idealists on the losing side on the progression of modern society. Nevertheless, many activists have been able to argue for the continued protection of community gardens in such a way that situates the spaces within a neoliberal framework, rather than against it. One of the major strategies used to justify and protect community gardens was to situate them within the broader environmental movement, which had many proponents from upper-middle class, and thus empowered, backgrounds. On one hand, this political and economic support for community gardens has likely served as the force that has assured their continued existence throughout particularly threatening periods of rapid urban development.

As Laura Lawson (2005) documents in her comprehensive history of community gardening in the United States *City Bountiful*, during the period of the 1990s to the early 2000s, the ecological significance of community gardens was a primary focus of the movement. In Seattle, community gardens were included under the comprehensive city-wide planning Toward
a Sustainable Seattle. The organization Philadelphia Green focused on community greening initiatives such as the establishment of sitting parks, street trees, and public container gardening projects that utilized recycled materials such as old tires, window boxes, and wine barrels. The San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) began to teach classes promoting environmentally friendly topics such as drought-tolerant gardening, erosion control, composting, and native plants (as well as ways to increase accessibility for the physically disabled). Boston’s community gardeners likewise emphasized the environmental benefits of turning vacant lots into natural open spaces.

In the New York case, community gardens were ultimately protected based on their environmental impacts on the community. Three of the five major organizations that defended the continued use of community garden space were environmental organizations Green Guerillas, the New York Environmental Justice Alliance, the Natural Resources Defense Council. The other two were the State Attorney Office of Eliot Spitzer and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund. Despite Guiliani’s efforts to develop the gardens, the New York Supreme Court stopped the auction the day before it was scheduled to take place, ruling that the gardens couldn’t be torn down because “the city could not demonstrate that there would be no environmental harm from the sale” (Lawson 2005: 262). In the end, two non-profit organizations took ownership of the gardens. The Trust for Public Land bought 62 of the gardens, and New York Restoration, an organization headed by Bette Midler bought the other 51 gardens for a total of $4.2 million. Although gardeners and community organizers were relieved that developers did not buy the gardening spaces, a spokesperson for the Guerilla Gardeners remarked, “We simply cannot allow this to become the model for garden preservation in New York City. Community gardeners and garden supporters must continue to press on with
demands for public policies that preserve and protect community gardens without private money” (Lawson 2005:263).

This transfer of land from public to non-profit ownership is extremely emblematic of neoliberalization of urban space. Under neoliberal capitalist urban environments, the preferred method for service provision, especially for marginalized populations, occurs through public-private partnerships or by shifting responsibility to community-based organizations (CBOs) and other non-profit organizations (Purcell 2008). Nonprofit organizations have played a central role in national urban development policy since the 1960s, when as part of the War on Poverty, the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson established the strategy of relying on a system of local CBOs to oversee the development and management of urban communities. One of the primary roles of CBOs is to serve as mediators between residents and the political and economic structures of cities, states, and the federal government. Networks between these various organizations are often crucial for the success of community development projects (Marwell 2007). Non-profit organizations, community development corporations, neighborhood associations, and volunteer organizations have largely replaced, not supplemented, many of the functions that formal governments used to serve (Purcell 2008).

This shifting of social services away from the public sector has resulted in a system in which people with access to capital have the best ability to control their communities. In the following sections, I demonstrate that although some gardeners still focus on the environmental justifications for community gardens, the overarching motivations for community gardens tended to have shifted away from environmental and communal concerns and instead focus on individualist motivations such as physical and mental health. I also demonstrate that many community gardeners see their plots and gardens as extensions of their own private space, and in
fact reject the notion that the space should be communal. I also explain ways that a
predominately non-profit management system of community gardens has created unequal
experiences of community gardening between neighborhoods of varying socioeconomic
backgrounds. Although the ownership and protection of the land through non-profit
organizations can address land tenure concerns, they also have a tendency to prioritize the
revenue generating potential of the gardens over their community benefits.

**Shifting Perceptions on the Importance of Environmentalism**

Although many studies discuss the environmental benefits of community gardens, I
discovered that in general, gardeners were not particularly motivated by these environmental
benefits. Most gardens have rules about using organic fertilizers and methods of pest control,
and BNAN/The Trustees strongly encouraged gardeners to use organic methods through training
programs such as the Master Urban Gardeners (MUG) program and local workshops. For
instance, BNAN and The Trustees also put on many workshops emphasizing environmentally
friendly gardening practices. One such workshop was called Resilient Garden Systems, where
participants learned about issues such as the importance of designing gardens to increase
biodiversity and the best ways to compost and mulch using locally available, highly renewable
plants such as salt marsh hay, which both protects plants in the winter and also adds nutrients and
minerals to the soil, since it grows next to the ocean. The Berkeley Street garden hosted a
Pollinator Parade and Celebration, where they invited a representative from the New England
Wildflower society to give a talk about pollinators and the native plants that attract them.

One gardener who was particularly motivated by environmental concerns and had
worked in community development and environmental organizations commented that one of his
main motivations to participate in community gardening was to help rebuild soil in urban communities. He commented:

“I think we have the potential as humans to repair the earth, literally, and to keep up the soil so our kids don’t play in contaminated soil and so that the food that they eat is a legacy and an asset for urban communities for generations to come.”—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

Nevertheless, despite the environmental motivations of organizations and specific gardeners, most gardeners viewed these ecologically centered practices as optional, as long as they did not interfere with their ability to shape their garden plots as they saw fit. Occasionally in the gardens, younger people seemed to emphasize the importance of organic gardening practices more than the older gardeners who had always used synthetic pesticides. One gardener called his pesticide powder of choice “el polvo mágico” (the magic dust) and insisted that he would continue using it despite attending a workshop about organic methods of pest control. Furthermore, some of the gardeners made environmentally unsound aesthetic choices in their garden plots, such as cutting down trees in order to allow more sunlight to reach their plots.

Very few gardeners cited the environmental benefits of community garden space as a main motivation for participation, and most people did not really feel that being in the garden had changed the ways that they thought about nature or environmental issues. One of my interview questions was, “Has your time in the community garden changed the way you think about nature or environmental issues?” Most of my research participants did not have a lot to say about this topic, and when they did answer this question, concerns for the environment were often portrayed as afterthoughts and often related to the local food aspect of environmentalism. Comments from gardeners included:
I mean, I’ve learned a lot about how things grow, I’ve learned a ton. Every year I learn something new, so yes, in that respect, but I still… I need to get more involved in nature.—Gardener, East Boston

[Participating in the garden has] definitely [made me think] about wasting food and how much food actually goes to waste.—Gardener, South End

Notably, one gardener, in response to the question on the environment, began to discuss the connections between an improved environment and rising property values in the neighborhood.

This garden has gotten much better looking over the years. It has gotten much more productive. They planted trees, and those trees have gotten bigger… It absolutely drives up property value… This is undevelopable land. That is absolutely unattainable in the city. I think people find that there’s a benefit, even if they are just looking at it.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

**The Paradox of Valuing Privacy in Community Gardens**

Because Boston is a very expensive city, many people, especially young adults, live with roommates or in very small apartments. Several of the 20-something year old gardeners in my study expressed that their community provided a space where people can escape crowded living conditions and clear their head. People from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds reported that the community garden was one of the few places they have access to outdoor space in their neighborhoods and discussed the physical and mental health benefits that they had experienced as a result of their participation in these spaces. One gardener in Dorchester remarked that after spending her days as a case manager in a heroin recovery center, the garden was the place that she came in order to relax and clear her mind after a long day at work. Another gardener commented:

Just being out there is good for the soul, good for the spirit, good for the stress level. I think that pulling weeds and being in there, especially when no one’s there, is definitely a good way to release stress. I know another girl who is in the garden, she just realized the benefits of it as well. She’s a school teacher so she is home and she didn’t realize she had never gardened before. She started getting into it and she’s like, ‘I love gardening’ and I said, ‘I
know, it’s really great. It’s actually a lot of hard work too, if you are really putting the effort into pull the weeds and to do the maintenance; it’s a workout.’—Gardener, East Boston

Another important theme for the gardeners was privacy. Many gardeners live abutting their gardens, and these residents in particular viewed the spaces extensions of their own private residences, like another room in their house. Because community gardens are mostly fenced in and are land that cannot be developed, they became semi-private places where people can have access to a great deal of land, which is rare in the densely populated city. Through the course of my study, I found that several gardeners who lived adjacent to the gardens had built staircases or paths that connected their houses and apartments directly to the garden. One interviewee in Jamaica Plain told me that it was very common for neighbors to use the spaces as extensions of their own back yards when they were having celebrations such as Memorial Day cookouts or a birthday parties. Another gardener who lived next to a garden in JP wanted to put bees in the garden, but because she did not know how other gardeners would react, she put them in her own backyard, reasoning that they would still be able to benefit from being located next to the garden, on private property.
Gardeners in these spaces also expressed that they felt a sense of privacy in the space, and did not like when they felt their privacy had been violated, either by abutters or by people who were passing by the garden who wanted to come in and pick the produce. One gardener remarked:

The garden would be better if it had just a little more privacy just to feel like you are a little bit more in nature. There’s a big three-level house [next to the garden] and I can hear them talk; they can hear me talk. To be honest, it’s not bad in terms of privacy but that house and the sidewalk and being on the main street is pretty exposed but I’ll take what we can get.—Gardener, East Boston

Occasionally, the sense of privacy took on a pragmatic approach, and the main reason to keep out the community at large was in order to protect the investment that the gardeners had put in their crops. Gardeners commented:
See those kids pushing on the gate? They want to come in. They are coming in to pick the raspberries. The gate’s open so people want to come in. I don’t like to tell people they can’t, but that’s someone’s plot.—Gardener, East Boston

We don’t necessarily want to cut off the community, but we put in the work and we want to feel safe in this space. We watch the zucchini grow every day and want to enjoy the fruits of the labor.—Gardener, Mattapan

Gardeners also expressed a great deal of ambivalence about the extent to which garden spaces should serve communal purposes. Although many gardeners came into community gardening spaces as a result of pre-existing social networks, they did not necessarily know the names or “life stories” of their fellow gardeners. Although gardens may have community work days, people come at different times and usually the tasks are divided so that people are largely working independently of one another. Additionally, in some gardens, people express their ownership over the space through labeling their individual plots with family names or individual decorations. In this way, community gardens uphold the American neoliberal value of individualism.

The garden tends to be where I go to get some peace and quiet. I do a little bit of socializing, but I don’t necessarily want to hang out with my neighbors and probably their kids. I do enough babysitting to realize that unless you have kids, you don’t often participate in events in the neighborhood. It’s just not always worth my time.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

Many people commented that they viewed the garden as a place to escape from the city, not necessarily a place to socialize. The extent to which gardeners viewed a space as being communal depended on whether or not community residents had access to other forms of community space in the private sector, such as bars and restaurants. Among affluent populations who can afford to buy goods and services, socializing often takes place in private establishments such as bars and restaurants. One gardener in East Boston mentioned that she very rarely interacted with gardeners in the garden itself but would occasionally meet other people for drinks.
after gardening. On the other hand, at one garden in Dorchester, both gardeners and non-gardeners alike noted that they met in the garden because there were few other places in the community where they could see their neighbors. They expressed feelings of isolation within their buildings, since most people spend most of their time in the privacy of their own homes.

**Limited Public Support and A Shift in Responsibility Toward the Non-Profit Sector**

In addition to individualistic attitudes in garden space, the control of community gardens in the private sector has lead to unequal experiences for gardeners in disadvantaged communities. The city of Boston does provide limited support for community gardens, but for the most part the management of the gardens, including liability insurance and the onus for most capital improvements is the responsibility of gardeners or non-profit organizations.

The limited public city support for the gardens primarily comes from The Grassroots Program in the Department of Neighborhood Development, which issues Community Development Block Grants to support the conversion of vacant lots into community gardens and the improvement of existing gardens. The city’s Parks Department maintenance division also supports spring and fall garden clean ups by providing gardeners with materials such as trash bags, tools, and wood chips. The city’s greenhouses supply community gardeners with a limited supply of annuals, seeds, and seedlings. Additionally, the sanitation department picks up trash and yard waste from the gardens. Although these provisions are more than other cities provide for their gardeners, they are still relatively limited, especially when compared with the level of support that the gardens received before the period of intense privatization in the 1980s.

The city also provides a small degree of fiscal support for the gardens, depending on the political climate and budgetary constraints of a particular period. In 2011, the city set aside $75,000 to “increase local food growing opportunities or neighborhood open space through the
renovation and creation of community gardens or other open space projects which directly serve neighborhood residents” (Shumaker 2011). These grants were only issued to non-profit organizations with a 501( c)( 3) status, and each site could receive between $10,000 and $25,000 for a capital project. Some of my research participants mentioned using these funds for projects such as tree maintenance and fencing. Although these grants were certainly helpful to the gardens who received them, they were awarded on a competitive basis and only began to put a dent in the approximately $5 million of capital improvements that are estimated to be necessary across the city (City of Boston 2014). Additionally, since the city only provides grants to 501 (c)( 3) organizations means that gardens the knowledge and resources for establishment as a 501 (c)( 3) are able to benefit from these resources.

At the annual meeting of the American Community Gardening Association in Denver, most gardeners reported that their cities provided free access to water for community gardeners; however, this is not the case in the community gardens in Boston. The Water Department charges gardeners for the water that they use, and also charges a fee to turn on the water each spring and empty the pipes and turn off the water each fall. Additionally, the price of connecting to the city water main is about $35,000, which gardeners must raise on their own. Although most gardens in the city had direct access to water as a result of historical activist work, the newer community gardens in low-income neighborhoods often have to jury rig temporary solutions to supply their gardens with water. For instance, in La Jardin de la Amistad in Roxbury, where many of the gardeners are migrants from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the gardeners must run water through a hose connected to a building that is owned by the Nuestra Comunidad development corporation next door. The gardeners have to go into the building to turn on the hose that runs to the garden, which is inconvenient. Furthermore, the
gardeners reported that the building would be renovated in the near future, and there were many concerns about the impact this construction would have on supplying water to the garden.

In all community gardens, gardeners must pay an annual fee, most of which goes toward costs such as water and maintenance. The fee varies by garden and is typically around $15 or $20 in low-income neighborhoods, while in pricier neighborhoods, the fee can be as high as $75. These high fees may serve as barriers to entry, particularly for low-income people living in wealthier neighborhoods, although many gardens do provide subsidized plots for low-income people. Nevertheless, gardens with higher fees have budgets that allow for amenities such as gazebos, storage sheds, and grills, which are unaffordable for low-income people.

Furthermore, the privatization of community gardens has lead to a situation in which non-profit organizations, which must depend on the donations of private organizations and citizens. Although organizations do the best they can to maintain quality garden spaces, they must operate on very tight budgets. One of my research participants who worked at BNAN/The Trustees of Reservations commented, “Community gardens don’t have a lot of funding, so we have to get creative about where we find it.” One of the major fundraisers for The Trustees of Reservations is an annual tour of gardens (including, primarily, peoples’ private home gardens), and the revenue from this event is heavily dependent on the weather.

Occasionally the organization has had success in securing funds from new developers who try to build next to established gardens. In exchange for an expedited public approval process, developers provide funding to gardens to help offset the value of some of the resources that they take away from the garden, such as land or sunlight. Of course, this arrangement assumes that the garden is one of the protected spaces, and does not apply to newer gardens that don’t have the same level of historical protection.
The non-profit oversight of community gardens has also lead to the exclusion of community members who previously held access to various community events, where non-gardeners were invited to share food through events such as harvest parties or attend concerts featuring musicians from the community. As more community gardens have fallen under the jurisdiction of non-profit organizations that must depend on private donations for their continued existence, formerly free community outreach events have become fundraising events for the organizations that own the spaces. Several of the gardening events in the earlier stages of my research took place in gardens in all types of communities and were almost always free and open.
to the public. By the end of the study period, there was a noticeable shift for garden events to take place both in more affluent areas and to cater to higher income populations. Garden events often involved herbal-infused cocktails and locally sourced alcohol, catered food, professional musicians, and a $25 admission fee. These events stood in stark contrast to the events in the earlier part of my study, which were primarily educational.

Figure 7: Sign for a Garden Event, South End

This emphasis on the profit-making potential of the gardens goes directly against the motivations of non-profit organizations, both at an organizational level as well as an individual level. One of my informants commented that her reason for wanting to participate with an organization that was involved in community gardening was specifically to cater to people from a wide range of backgrounds. She said: “I’ve been growing and farming for a long time at
educational farms and I wanted to be back in the city. I was outside of the city and I wanted to be working with more diverse, economically and ethnically, populations than I was.” Although there are many services that cater to affluent populations, there are relatively fewer organizations that specifically focus on the needs of people who are less advantaged.

The reliance on large organizations to provide land security for community gardens has resulted in an inevitable situation in which local community control of the garden spaces has been diminished. The Trustees is a large, statewide organization with a broad-reaching agenda and a land ownership portfolio that is primarily concentrated in the Western part of Massachusetts. Community gardens in Boston are therefore one of several competing demands for the organization.

Gardeners, particularly long-time activists in the community gardening movement, felt that the city should be more proactive in caring for the spaces. They expressed frustration at having to trade local community control for permanency of the gardens and expressed a desire for true public ownership of the spaces, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. One garden activist commented:

“There needs to be neighborhood advocacy to shame the city Parks Department into taking [responsibility for the gardens]. Our city for too many years had the policy no new parkland. We can’t take it on. So then of course, the first new park that they take ownership of is none other than on Beacon Hill because you have a rich neighborhood ... To this day, I hate Ronald Reagan because he is the one who started this, ‘We’ve got to get government to stop doing what government is supposed to be doing.’”—Long Time Garden Activist, South End

Additionally, shifting land ownership of gardens from the public sector to the non-profit sector has meant that both sectors feel that the other should hold the primary responsibility for the gardens, and both claim limited availability of funding as major limitations to support the gardens more. Although BNAN provided support services for all of the community gardens in
the city, several of the employees at The Trustees of Reservations noted that they had made a decision to cut services such as compost deliveries and maintenance to those gardens that were not owned by the organization. One of the employees commented “We’re trying not to abandon [helping other the gardens] but we want to see if the city can step in in some way. It really should be them anyway.”

The website of the city of Boston that mentions community gardens directs visitors to The Trustees website for more information, despite that the city itself owns several of the gardens (City of Boston, Office of Food Initiatives 2015). The Grassroots program, which channels federal funds to neighborhood groups, used a large portion of the funds to convey property to non-profit grantees rather than directing the funds to their own gardens. They also list one of their major goals as “Encourage other non-profit organizations or groups, such as Community Development Corporations, to become garden owners or partners with a public agency owner.” (City of Boston 2014). This emphasis on non-profit partnerships indicates that city agents hold the perspective that community gardens are not entirely their responsibility.

Discussion of Findings

Community gardens have many different meanings for their participants, and the fact that community gardens are semi-private spaces has meant that citizens have developed self-interest in protecting the spaces from the community at large. Although this sense of ownership is important for the maintenance and continuation of community garden spaces, it has also served to shift the focus away from the environmental and communal purposes of the garden. Many of the environmental benefits of community gardening may be happening in a de facto way, and official channels do support the notion of continuing environmentally friendly practices. These
efforts are commendable, but they have nevertheless become subordinate to the idea that community gardens are essentially an extension of private space. To some degree, the move away from environmental concerns may be a testament that past efforts at environmental greening have been successful and that urban residents at least in affluent communities take these amenities for granted. Many community gardens that were originally formed through environmental justice activism no longer contain that focus, particularly in communities that have experienced high rates of gentrification.

Many scholars have noted that one of the main advantages of access to financial resources is access to environmental amenities and private spaces. When people live in overcrowded conditions with limited access to public space, they experience worse mental health outcomes (Guite, Clark, and Ackrill 2006). Many of the gardeners, from all types of backgrounds, expressed the importance of community gardening for their own personal well-being rather than a sense of personal devotion to environmental causes. Many gardeners expressed not only that they did not interact with other gardeners, but also that they preferred being in the gardens when other people were not present. Affluent gardeners in my study particularly tended to emphasize values such as privacy and personal well-being and saw the spaces as personal amenities, and they indicated that their experiences were largely devoid of a sense of environmental activism or community empowerment.

Although disadvantaged gardeners also emphasize the personal benefits they receive from the spaces, they were much more likely to recognize the importance of gardens to the formation of community. They were likewise more likely to have to struggle both for the ability to protect community gardens as well as to receive the same amenities in their gardens. As I will describe in greater detail in Chapter 6, low-income communities tend to view community
gardens as spaces of resistance against neoliberal development practices, particularly the forces of gentrification that result out of an urban policy perspective that largely focuses on the generation of profit for developers.

Although in many ways, the future security of community gardens may not be feasible without non-profit protections (i.e. land trusts) that stand in direct opposition to the imperatives of the growth machine, a reliance on non-profit ownership has lead to a situation in which the experience of community gardening has become unequal for populations of differing socioeconomic backgrounds. As non-profit organizations must focus on fiscal stability and oversight of multiple stakeholder interests, those gardeners with less visibility and fewer resources receive lower levels of support. In partnerships between the public and non-profit sectors, a danger is that neither partner claims responsibility for supporting the community. Furthermore, when non-profit organizations take over community garden space, particularly when those organizations are not community based, a sense of the social production of space can be lost when gardens are used for revenue rather than for the creative expression of community residents.

One of the ways that municipal and non-profit organizations can assure that all gardeners have access to the same resources is to have clear communication about which partner will have specific responsibilities for the management, care, and maintenance of the gardens. The public sector in particular has low-cost options for ways to reduce inequalities in gardening spaces. As I discovered at the annual meeting of the American Community Gardening Association, the majority of cities across the country provide water to community gardeners free of charge; Boston is one of the few cities that charges gardeners for water. Since access to water is particularly problematic for low-income gardeners, the city should work to find a way to provide
water hookups the lowest possible cost. Additionally, since low-income communities in particular continue to establish community gardens, the city should plan to include these spaces as a vital component in the urban landscape rather than viewing them as temporary uses that will only exist until higher and better uses can be achieved. The current level of financial support that the city provides for community gardens is minimal compared to the benefit that the gardens provide for the citizens of Boston. An increase in overall public support, both ideologically as well as fiscally, would relieve the burden both on gardeners as well as the non-profit organizations that oversee them.
Chapter 5: Can Urban Community Gardens Improve Food Security?: Barriers to Access for Immigrants, Racial Minorities, and Low-income Residents in Boston

In addition to a new discourse that focuses on the individual benefits of community gardening, the relationship between community gardens and alternative food systems has been a focus of many scholars. In fact, the issue of food has come to be one of the primary ways that gardeners have continued to justify the continuation of urban gardening, both rhetorically and through funding opportunities. Throughout history there has been a cultural perception of an urban/rural divide, in which people in the agricultural countryside produce the food for the consumers in the city. However, this perceived division between the respective roles of land in urban and rural areas overlooks the fact that for over a century, in many urban areas in the United States and around the world, people have been growing their own food, in their backyards, on rooftops, and in containers on decks, balconies, and patios. Community gardens, however, have been one of the most popular choices for how to grow food in the inner city, and particularly in recent years, many cities have begun to develop strategies for improving the nutritional needs of urban residents in which community gardens play a central role.

Providing affordable food to urban residents has served as one of the main purposes of most community gardens throughout history. Most community gardens have their origins in mobilizations by working class people, particularly minorities who sought to turn abandoned vacant lots into a productive space in which they could simultaneously reclaim space in their communities as well as supplement their diets with extremely affordable, self-produced food (Hynes 1996; Lawson 2005; Martinez 2010; Warner and Durlach 1987). In cases where people cannot afford access to traditional health care, medicinal herbs can dramatically improve quality for life of poor residents through pain reduction and symptom management, and may in some
cases, be matters of life or death (Purcell and Tyman 2015). However, as new developments came into the central city, there was no longer unlimited space upon which gardeners could establish their gardens, and although they stood to benefit enormously from the cost savings associated with growing their own food, low-income residents had less of a chance to continue gardening (Zukin 2010).

Previous literature has suggested that community gardens play an important role in improving food security for low-income populations, racial and ethnic minorities, and immigrant groups, but few studies have analyzed the types of barriers that many urban residents face in accessing the spaces initially. In this chapter, I will explore the background of the community gardening movement, particularly as it relates to the provision of food for low-income communities. I will describe ways that the rhetoric of organizational support for community gardens since the early 2000s has centered around issues of food and food security. I will also demonstrate the importance of community garden crops for people with food insecurity issues, and the relative lack of importance for food among more advantaged populations. My findings indicate that while community gardeners from disadvantaged backgrounds are substantially more likely to focus on food output from their gardens than are advantaged members, high demand for garden plots and policies that inadvertently favor socioeconomically advantaged members of society serve as barriers to access for poor, non-white, and immigrant populations. These barriers are especially prominent for people who rent rather than own their homes.

Community gardens are often understood as one strategy within a broader alternative food system that stands in direct contrast to the more conventional food system in which large agribusinesses produce most of the food that we eat. Previous studies on alternative food systems have explored the question of who most benefits from this political shift toward a local
food system, which includes such strategies as farmers markets, community kitchens, community supported agriculture, food cooperatives, and urban farming (Belasco 2006). These studies have demonstrated that access to community gardens can be particularly important for economically and politically disempowered populations with limited access to land and its associated benefits, such as the ability to produce food for sustenance and the ability to form community around the consumption of food (McCormack et al. 2010; Naimark 1982). One study indicates that alternative food systems including community kitchens and community gardens, which allow users to take a long-term and proactive approach to nutrition, better serve the food access needs of vulnerable populations than do traditional food security interventions such as food pantries, which may hold a stigma of emergency and charity (Roncarolo et al. 2014). Furthermore, many studies have indicated that community gardens in particular lead to increased vegetable consumption and a greater feeling of food security for urban residents (Alaimo et al. 2008; Carney et al. 2012; Macias 2008; McCormack et al. 2010).

Community gardens may be particularly beneficial for the food security of immigrants, especially those with extensive first hand agricultural experience prior to migrating to the United States. In many cases, growing the food of their homelands in gardens may be the only way that immigrant communities can access their preferred cuisines (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Migrant groups may also share their knowledge of how to grow crops unique to their heritage as a method to form bonds with other gardeners, thus accelerating the assimilation process and leading to increased feelings of belonging in their new communities (Baker 2004; Eggert et al. 2015; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004).

Somewhat paradoxically, access to local food sources often holds a reputation as being a privilege of elite populations who can afford to pay for organic food, which often costs
significantly more than conventionally grown food (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Community gardens may represent a form of simple living that attracts wealthy people who value authenticity and nostalgic views of nature (Zukin 2010). Many urban development proponents of community gardens focus on their ability to attract members of the professional, upper and middle “creative” classes to neighborhoods that are currently in economic decline. These economic development proponents emphasize that community gardens represent a simple, natural lifestyle, which is very attractive to white collar workers who spend their days in office settings (Gallagher 2010; Lovins et al. 2007; Rocky Mountain Institute 1998). One study, which relies heavily on a GIS analysis of community gardens in Boston, has demonstrated that some of the most food insecure neighborhoods in Boston are also lacking in community garden spaces. The study calls for additional qualitative research to explain the experiences of gardeners and community residents in accessing food in those spaces (Mastrobuoni et al. 2014). My study addresses these very concerns.

Although the literature on community gardens seems to demonstrate that participation in community gardens leads to increased consumption of food and vegetables for garden participants (as well as numerous other benefits), current studies do not directly address the barriers that low-income populations, immigrant groups, and racial minorities face in accessing gardens, in spite of the increase in the quantity of community gardens over the last two decades. While some studies have addressed the capacity for alternative food systems in general to reduce food insecurity, few studies have analyzed the role of community gardens specifically. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that while many low-income people continue to depend on community gardens for affordable access to fresh produce, the popularity of community
gardening across many sectors of the urban population serves as a restriction to garden access for the most food insecure people in urban areas.

The Rhetoric of Food In Community Gardens

One of the main ways that we can observe the shift toward a very food-centric community gardening movement is through an analysis of who the major players have been in the gardening movement in recent years. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the main city department that was concerned with the protection of community gardening spaces was the Boston Redevelopment Authority, which worked closely with community gardens in order to turn over ownership of lots to the non-profit organizations that oversaw them. More recently, however, the city department most concerned with the oversight of community gardens and other sites of urban agriculture has been the Office of Food Initiatives, which came into being in 2010 (City of Boston 2013b). The United States Department of Agriculture has also begun to pay much more attention to the production of food in urban areas, particularly since 2008, when Congress passed The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, a bill to address disparities in food distribution and access (Walker, Keane, and Burke 2010). Even non-profits organizations, such as The Trustees of Reservations, which have historically focused on the protection of open space launched a food-centered initiative through its creation of a kitchen in the Boston Public Market, a year round indoor farmers market that was established in 2015. The kitchen hosts a variety of programs, including cooking demonstrations, lectures, family activities, and community events (The Trustees of Reservations 2015). One long-time activist in the community gardening movement in Boston noted, in regards to the Trustees that “food is definitely driving their interests.” An employee of the organization commented:
I think Michelle Obama’s impact was definitely felt. A lot of funding was released all over the cities and states all over the country. It has spread a lot of dialogue, a lot of talk around local food. Our partnership with the Boston Public Market was huge and the Trustees have been pursuing it for a good number of years, almost three years, if not more. And we own farms also across the state so there was a lot of, I think, coming together of issues around local production and what it means.

Furthermore, the American Community Gardening Association annual meeting in 2015 hosted plenary sessions regarding the reduction of food waste as well as improving nutrition among school children.

Likewise, many of the gardens that have been established in recent years have been collaborative efforts with non-profit organizations concerned primarily with food. Since the beginning of the 21st century, organizations such as The Food Pantry, The Boston Food Forest, and the Mattapan Food and Fitness Council all started community gardens. The issue of food also comes up frequently at community meetings, which often involve coalitions of organizations such as DSNI, ACE, and Nuestra Comunidad, a community development corporation “devoted to building the wealth and enhancing the physical, economic, and social well-being of Roxbury and other underserved populations in greater Boston through a community-driven process that promotes self-sufficiency and neighborhood revitalization” (Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation 2015). At community meetings with these organizations, residents of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester discussed ways of repurposing vacant lots. Although housing and/or maintenance of the lots was important to many of the residents, they also were also interested in using the spaces to bring better food access to the community. An employee at Nuestra discussed the relationship between providing healthy food to the community and the problem of vacant lots to community residents. He commented:
Yeah, housing is one thing that comes up. People mostly just want the city or the owner of the lots to keep them clean. I know that in a meeting the idea of having some more community gardens has come up…having a community garden where people can go and grow or also having a place where there can be farmers markets or have people who come and sell food. I know that on Blue Hill Ave, people talk about this empty lot where there is a person who is there throughout the summer selling fruits and vegetables. Basically, he is permanently there throughout the summer months. Not just once a week. He is there every day. He has a permit there.—Employee, Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation

Additionally, the youth division of ACE, known as REEP (Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project) runs a food justice campaign known as Grow or Die. In the ACE 2015 Annual Report, the organization emphasizes the campaign to highlight food disparities in the neighborhood, where fast food outlets proliferate, while fresh food is difficult to find. Through a summer camp program, middle schoolers and high schoolers organized a symbolic protest against food injustice in front of McDonald’s, carrying signs with slogans such as “I’m hatin’ it” and “When you eat the gross food, it puts us in a bad mood” (Alternatives for Community and Environment 2015). The Grow Or Die platform heavily emphasizes the right to food through its establishment of community gardens. The platform emphasizes that citizens have a right to change the food system in their neighborhoods by growing their own food and reclaiming the vacant lots in their neighborhoods, which exist as a result of racism and classism in the neighborhood. This division of REEP has established six community gardens in Roxbury, with a total of 100 raised beds, and these gardens represent not only access to fresh food, but also symbolic ownership of the community, an issue that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6. One activist-gardener commented in the ACE Annual Report, “It feels so good to shop for free. We are growing tomatoes—we love tomatoes—and greens. The stuff that we grow, we eat. We’re enjoying it” (Alternatives for Community and Environment 2015).
Throughout the course of my research, I found that personal food security was a common motivating factor for community garden participation among low-income residents, who were often, but not always also racial minorities. Many gardeners emphasized the importance of growing food in their gardens to supplement their nutritional and health needs. For example, one gardener who had been a long time, low-income resident of the community noted that she heavily relied on the food from her garden plot and expressed frustration with the affluent members of her garden, who would often let food rot before it was harvested or allow weeds to spread. She said, “I’m seeing this plot getting taken over by weeds and it’s really a waste of land. I could be growing food in there. I grow food to feed myself.” Additionally, although it was technically against the rules of the garden, she would take over neglected plots and use techniques to grow food through as much of the year as possible, including into the winter.
months. Many gardeners showed off food that they produced as part of their daily nutritional needs, which often reflected the cultural heritage of the gardener. For example in a garden in Dorchester, a currently unemployed Haitian immigrant said that in the summer he subsisted almost entirely off of the black beans, squash, and lalo (a type of leafy green similar to spinach) that he grows in his garden. He focuses on using successive planting in order to maximize the harvest from his plot.

![Image of garden]

**Figure 9: Lalo and intensive growing practices at Nightingale Community Garden, Dorchester**

Throughout the city, people from various cultural backgrounds grew food that was inaccessible through other means, either because it was unaffordable or because it was simply not available for purchase in supermarkets or through other traditional means. Black gardeners grew crops such as collards; Latino gardeners grew tomatillos and cassava; Native American gardeners held a plot in which they grew the three sisters (corn, squash, and beans), and Asian
people grew winter melons. Even in instances where foods were available in local stores, gardening culturally specific crops was substantially cheaper than buying them. Gardeners are aware of how this access to culturally appropriate food also relates to a lack of access to fruits and vegetables in their communities. One African American gardener commented:

In our community, access to real, fresh food is a concern. The food at the market is not always fresh, and we don’t have a farmers market, although we are getting one this year. The neighborhood is predominately West Indian, and a lot of people are used to having their own garden. It’s a cultural thing, being around your community and growing something fresh to bring back to your family. Even collard greens. We keep on talking about how many family members we gave greens from our garden last summer. I think everyone wants fresh food, and everyone wants food that’s readily available. I think that a community plot only helps that because it’s all the aunties and grandmas doing the plot and bringing it down to their youth and to their husbands.—Gardener, Mattapan

Figure 10: Winter Melons at Berkeley Street Community Garden, South End
Besides food, many gardeners expressed that they utilized the herbs from their gardens in order to relieve symptoms from various medical conditions. The medical community is beginning to explore and embrace the importance of alternative and supplemental therapies such as herbs to aid in the healing process of many illnesses. During the course of my research, I discovered that Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy share a community garden plot in which they grow many types of herbs with medicinal purposes. These herbs can be very pricy and hard to come by in natural food stores, so many gardeners grow the herbs themselves. One African American gardener utilized chamomile, mint, lavender, and oregano to make a tea that reduced her lupus symptoms. Another Latina gardener who was diagnosed with breast cancer began eating food exclusively from her garden, including anticarcinogenic plants such as nasturtiums and squash, and insisted that the pain from her treatment disappeared as a result of this dietary change. These people both expressed the therapeutic healing of the gardening process as well as the fact that accessing the herbs through another method such as a natural food store would be prohibitively expensive.

Despite that community gardening has historically either been targeted to economically struggling people (i.e. in allotment gardens and Victory gardens) or been a project of disenfranchised urban populations (i.e. during the beautification movements of the 1970s and 1980s), in recent years, the gardens have seen a tremendous influx in the numbers of young, urban professionals in the spaces. Several of my participants noted that there has been a resurgence of interest in the gardens as a result of the current trendiness of community gardening. Two workers from The Trustees commented that this was one of the major changes they had noticed in the garden. One worker particularly noted that the crowd was increasing
younger and also that in certain gardens, most of the minority population tended to be older gardeners who had been in the garden for decades. She noted:

I think the younger crowd is picking up on it so when you go to the gardens, actually, you’ll see the demographic is either 60+ or, like, in their 20’s or early 30’s. The middle is missing… I think there are more non-white seniors using the gardens probably.

Another employee noted that access to nutritious foods was certainly a motivation for some gardeners, but that a perhaps more influential motivation was the current trendiness of the local food movement.

I think the nutrition factor is a big [motivation why people are involved in community gardens], but I don’t think that’s the only one. That’s the one that I hear a lot of but I think it’s also just growing your own food and gardening is kind of cool right now. Local food, etc. there’s a lot of interest because of that.

Gardeners also noted the increase in the percentage of people who seemed to be motivated strongly by a partially romanticized notion of growing their own food. She described the demographics of her garden in the following way:

A lot of them are plucky white hipsters, like me…I know a lot of people do it because it’s cool…I think it’s happening a lot more this year than usual. I think in the very beginning 20 something years ago, there was not a lot of enthusiasm in this neighborhood for community gardening.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

Although many of the more advantaged garden members also incorporated food from their gardens into their cooking, growing food was often a secondary motivation for garden participation. For people who were not food insecure, the primary importance of the garden was as a space that they could utilize for recreational purposes such as socializing, networking, or to capture a moment alone with their thoughts. These gardeners commented:
For me, the most important aspect of the garden is having access to the space and to the community. Sure, it’s also nice to have the extra food and fresh herbs, but it isn’t the main priority for me.—Gardener, South End

Okay, so to me, community gardening isn’t just about food. It’s about community. It’s about creating a space for people to get together and get to know each other…That was the most important thing to me, and that continues to be what I see as a really valuable experience. And maybe it’s the hippie dippy side of me, but I just love having a communal space where everybody feels a sense of ownership, and everybody can share things. … So, I always seek out opportunities to figure out who my neighbors are. Figure out who my colleagues are, and I want to know what their skill set is. What is something that they’re passionate about that I could learn from and benefit from, and what can I offer them that might also benefit them? I love feeling like I’m in a small world.—Gardener, Fenway

Paradoxically, community gardening can often result in significant amounts of food waste, an issue that was a main focus during the annual conference of the American Community Gardening Association’s annual meeting in Denver, Colorado. The conference included a plenary session by Gary Oppenheimer, the Executive Director of Ample Harvest, an organization that aims to connect gardeners with food banks and other places to donate fresh produce. He started this initiative in response to the fact that gardeners (including those in private gardeners) in the United States grow approximately 5.7 billion pounds of excess produce each year, valued at approximately nine billion dollars. His team has found that approximately 31% of people have tried unsuccessfully to donate excess garden food and that 63% of people would grow more food if they knew where to donate it. He developed a system in which people could place a yellow flag on any crops that they wanted to be harvested and donated to food pantries and a blue flag on any crops for which they wanted to donate the entire crop, and the appropriate members of local food pantries would come around to harvest the food. Approximately 20% of food pantries in the United States have utilized this system to supplement their offerings, and approximately 70% of these organizations are faith-based.
In the gardens I visited in Boston, many affluent gardeners said that they wished they had more information on how to donate food. They expressed some level of guilt regarding the food that they did not have time to harvest or that they were unable to consume themselves.

Gardeners made comments such as:

I had a lot of extra and I would bring to work, I would just bring, like, a plastic baggie full of, like, cherry tomatoes and just give them to people at work, or with carrots, a big bag of carrots. I try not to [waste food] but I definitely threw some stuff out too that I had in the house.—Gardener, East Boston

Is there food that goes to waste here? There's no question about it. Sometimes you get people that want a plot; it's a romantic notion. Then their stuff just kind of sits there. They don't really harvest at all. And then there are others who take care of every single thing. People are allowed to do what they want to do, but it's [donating food] something that we certainly try to encourage.—Gardener, East Boston

Although BNAN led a Produce to Pantries program to collect excess produce, most individual gardeners either did not know about the program or were unclear how to participate. Interestingly, the gardens that mentioned having communal plots for the specific purpose of donating to Produce to Pantries were located in low-income gardens such as Nightingale Community Garden in Dorchester and Woolson St. Community Garden in Mattapan. Michelle DeLima, who runs the Produce to Pantries program, acknowledged that the program could definitely be strengthened. She commented:

We’ve lost capacity this year, for sure. We tried running it with just an intern. It’s running so we are still doing it, not as effective as we would have liked but I’m hoping that as the years go by, we’ll bring it up again because this year has been tough with the different merger stuff happening. We’ve had a change in leadership twice over; we had staff leave; we’ve had new staff hired. There’s training going on so it’s definitely a challenge, education around mergers. I don’t think we’ll get rid of it.

It is notable that the only properties that The Trustees owns in the city of Boston are the community gardens and The Kitchen in the Boston Public Market. These are two endeavors that
are very heavily focused on food. This focus provides an opportunity for the organization to address the issue of food waste in a very constructive way.

**Pragmatic Barriers to Access: Long Waiting Lists and Unavailability of Gardening Space**

Although low-income people, immigrants, and racial minorities depend much more on their gardening plots for food security, many of my research participants noted that there were often significant barriers to access to the garden. Some of these obstacles included unclear procedures to become involved in the garden, long waitlists, and perceived cultural barriers. Many community gardeners noted that they would otherwise lack access to a space in which to grow plants. Although some urban residents have options such as rooftops or balconies in which to grow food, it is particularly uncommon for low-income residents to have access to such a space. In methods such as container gardening, access to required elements such as sunlight and drainage can pose real obstacles for growing food. Furthermore, although it is possible to grow certain edible plants in containers, it can be challenging to produce the same quantity and quality of crops as those which can be grown directly in the ground. One research participant noted,

Yeah, I get a ton of light [at home] at a certain period of time, but it’s not long enough. I tried to grow tomato plants at one point, and they grew like six feet tall, but there were just two tomatoes. So, [having access to a community garden] is wonderful for me, and I think that’s the case for a lot of people. Either gardening doesn’t fit into their life or they don’t have the access to the space [privately], and this is their opportunity.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

Many people in my study expressed that they had waited many years to become involved in the gardens. Almost all community gardens in Boston have a waitlist that takes several years, even in low-income communities. At many of the regional garden conference events, I met people who wanted to start community gardens in their own neighborhoods, and they were there to learn the technical knowledge required for such an undertaking. The demand for community
gardens is far exceeding the supply, even in communities where many gardens are already located. Gardeners both acknowledged that there was a need to include more people in the gardens but also expressed gratitude that their spots (and produce) were secure within the garden. One gardener at a garden that was less than a year old remarked:

Then there’s another neighbor, he is about two houses down from the garden, and he was like, oh, how’s the garden coming along? I was waiting for you guys to start planting. I was just wondering how this works. Can I just come by and grab what I want? If I want a tomato can I just come by and grab one? And we were like, no, that’s not how it works. I think that’s how it should work. I wish that it was bigger. I wish it was accessible like that. Oh, just take what you need. We are going to have one day a month, where we put it on our billboard, where people can come by and grab something after our harvest. But I think that just the fact that people are interested in this garden, you know, people are watching it, and people definitely want the food. I’m glad we have that fence.—
Gardener, Mattapan

The fact that community gardens have such long waiting lists is a function of the fact that there are simply not enough plots in the city to meet the demand. Although many of the community gardens in Boston are protected through land trusts, many of the newest gardens do not have the same protections from development as other gardens, and city officials and developers continue to relocate and displace gardens, particularly in low-income neighborhoods where food insecurity is the biggest obstacle. Meanwhile, it is hard to develop in neighborhoods that are gentrifying because the city reasons that those neighborhoods already have allotted space and developing more would only be redundant. One gardener told a story about guerilla gardens that she had seen in the community that were forcibly removed. She spoke about this inequity in the following way:

I also think that there were plenty of community gardens in the city of Boston that have been shut down as a result of the more standardized approach to community gardens. There were people, typically of a lower socioeconomic status, people of color, who were growing food for their neighbors and for the children of the community, for no other reason than to grow food for their communities. I don’t know [who it was], but people
have come in and told them to stop it, and they have been shut down.—Gardener Jamaica Plain

Furthermore, a disproportionate number of participants in my study owned their homes, since renters tended to move around more and thus have greater difficulty securing the required years of tenure in a neighborhood that are required to make it to the top of a waiting list. In fact, many of the research participants who were renters expressed that they had gotten into the garden through unofficial means such as sharing a garden plot with a friend, neighbor, or family member. At least nine people who participated in the study mentioned that either they or someone they knew gained access to the garden through unofficial means. After reporting on the length of the waitlist, and saying that she was co-gardening, one respondent said:

There are 24 plots, and approximately 32 people on the waiting list. People really want to be in this garden. The majority of gardeners and people on the waiting list are home owners, and I think that’s a function of the fact that it takes time for them to get into the garden. I just this past winter verified the waiting list. At first it had 43 people on the list. I wasn’t taking care of the waiting list until this past year, and to be honest, it was somewhat of a mess. I wanted the policies to be transparent and clear. We kind of had a reputation in the community I think of passing garden plots on to family members. And that hadn’t happened, I think, in a long time, but that was out there, and because the person doing the waiting list wasn’t really organized, people felt like they were on the list, and it turned out they weren’t. So I went through and contacted them, first by e-mail and if I couldn’t reach them by e-mail, I tried to contact them by telephone, and if not by telephone, then I sent mail. In that process, I think 13 people dropped, and they were people who were not long term people in the neighborhood. So, for the most part, they were renters, as opposed to owners. There are some long term renters in here, but for the most part, it is people who are owners than not.—Gardener, East Boston

I don’t know how it worked out. [My friend] got the plot. I don’t know how he got the plot, but he is asking if I will co-garden with him. So I don’t really [know how he navigated the waitlist or how long he had to wait], but most folks in JP are waiting years. I really wanted to get on a waitlist and I was told not to bother. It might be 3-5 years. And I’m a renter, so am I going to be around for three years? I don’t know. Is my landlord going to jack up the rent so that I have to go somewhere else? Probably.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain
People also expressed that once they had a garden plot, they would keep it, even if they moved to a different part of the city because obtaining a new plot would take so long. I first heard of this situation when I attended a garden cleanup day at a garden in the South End. One gardener lived and worked in the North End, where he had moved after the South End became too expensive. He mentioned that he would come to the garden before and after work, as it provided a place for him to get away from the very busy urban environment of the North End, where open space is relatively lacking. He was very active in the garden despite that going there was out of the way. Another mentioned that she would incorporate visiting the garden, located about a mile away from where she lived into her daily bike commute between Jamaica Plain and Downtown Boston.

[The garden is] about a mile from my house. And if I ride my bike to work, which I’ll do frequently when it’s gardening season, it’s right on my way, so it’s easy to water and harvest on my way to and from whatever…It’s so hard to get a plot that I’m willing to ride my bike a few minutes to get there.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

However the fact that gardeners often must live far away from their plots can also be problematic. At one garden in the South End, gardeners mentioned that it could be problematic if people lived in different parts of the city because it would be less convenient for them to tend to their plots and they would become overrun with weeds. He suggested that there should be a policy that gardeners had to live within ten blocks of the garden in order to participate.

We do have a woman now who has been renting in the neighborhood for about ten years and has recently moved to the South End and says that she is going to keep the plot, and it’s not really going that well. We do have a system of three violation notices and your membership is ended. That’s for things like not weeding, not active gardening. We have another woman who was one of the early members of the garden, or at least her mother was an early member and she kind of took over the plot, but she’s been in here for about 30 years. She moved to Revere, so technically she should be removed [because the rules of participation in the garden state that participants must live or work in Boston], but
decades ago they grandfathered her in. Someone said she could keep doing it, but for the most part, people live within walking distance.—Gardener, East Boston

**Cultural Barriers to Access**

Many gardeners expressed that the lack of a transparent waitlist served as a barrier to access. Many gardens also lack signs or information about how to become involved in the garden and do not necessarily include signage in languages other than English. Several people in my study expressed that they were not sure how to go about joining the gardens even if they wanted to. One gardener very candidly told me:

I think our waitlist would be a lot longer if it were clearer how to get on the waitlist. That’s one thing that we’re about to change. We’re about to put up a sign that says this is the name of this garden, if you want to contact someone. Right now it’s just a total mystery. You could live in that neighborhood and have no idea how to get on the waitlist unless you saw one of the coordinators.—Gardener, East Boston

Some gardeners expressed a desire to reach out to diverse populations, but expressed frustration in knowing how to do so. In addition to language barriers, generational barriers prevented access.

There are still plenty of people in the neighborhood who speak Spanish. But at the end of the day, nobody in charge is fluent enough in Spanish that we could appropriately foster that connection. One time somebody came in and was stealing vegetables. I know enough Spanish that we were able to have a decent conversation, but she hasn’t come back because she had been told enough times that she shouldn’t be picking other peoples’ vegetables. I did invite her to be on the waiting list. She was an older woman, although not quite a senior citizen, but the best way to get in touch with us is by e-mail. So, if she doesn’t have access to a computer or doesn’t feel fluent in e-mail, what are we going to do? The tricky thing is, I really wanted to encourage her to apply to get a plot of her own, but neither of us had a pen.—Gardener, Jamaica Plain

One man confirmed that there was an unspoken cultural divide that prevented access to the garden for minority populations. For example, at one garden, located in a racially mixed
neighborhood, I asked a person who was not involved in the garden what he thought of it. He replied,

I like it, but I don’t get how I can be included in that process…It seems like one of those things, where yuppies will be all super about it, but never go out of their way to make other people, especially brown people, feel like it’s something they can be involved in…A lot of the time, when white people are trying to be inclusive, it’s understated that this is ours, let’s share with other people, and want to be recognized and applauded for being willing to share. That is nice, but most brown people, myself included, would rather not get involved if it means having to do something on someone else’s terms.—Community resident, Malden

**Discussion of Findings**

In this chapter, I have argued that there has been a shift in discourse to make food a central theme in the justification of community garden spaces. Many of the organizations that have established community gardens in recent years have food as a central component in their mission. Furthermore, as indicated in much of the previous literature on the topic, my evidence suggests that community gardens can improve access to fresh food for food insecure people. Nevertheless, there are still many ways that gardens can be optimized to improve food security for disadvantaged populations. There are a variety of barriers that prevent access to the spaces, including high demand for the spaces, an insufficient number of garden plots to meet demand, concentration of community gardens in particular neighborhoods, and cultural barriers that make it more difficult for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in community gardening.

The notable geographer David Harvey has argued that the neoliberal production of space has been primarily redistributive to elites in society, rather than generative for society as a whole. Through this “accumulation by dispossession,” privileged members make development decisions that by nature take away public resources and open space in order to create exclusive, private spaces (Harvey 2006). To some extent, the trendiness of community gardening and local food
general has served to dispossess disadvantaged populations from accessing community gardens. The influx of affluent people to community garden spaces, despite the fact that they are more likely to have access to private space, is a reflection of the fact that homeowners are at a significant advantage in securing (i.e. accumulating) plots in community gardens. As was noted in the Garden Futures pamphlet in 1997, “for renters, a plot to call one’s own takes on added significance, and offers an important sense of connection and control” (Garden Futures 1997:6). However, if homeowners effectively have priority in accessing community gardens, renters have little chance in accessing the advantages of having a space in which to grow food.

It is particularly notable that gardeners who have the best access to food also report uncertainties about how to donate their surpluses. Instead, low-income communities are producing food not only for their own individual needs but also for the community at large. The reason for this disparity may be that low-income communities are more likely to have donation programs set up due to the fact that gardeners are more in touch with issues of food insecurity, having experienced themselves or knowing neighbors or relatives who suffered from food insecurity.

Furthermore, although many community gardeners insist that their gardens are diverse, many of the people who make up their diversity are people who have been gardening in the spaces for decades. This situation was particularly apparent in neighborhoods with high levels of gentrification such as the South End, East Boston, and Jamaica Plain. Although gardeners expressed a desire to reach out to all residents in their communities, including recent immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities, many of them seemed to be at a loss for how to do so and acted as if the lack of access was out of their direct control.
I suggest that there are several ways to improve access to community gardens, particularly for immigrants, low-income people, and racial/ethnic minorities. Given that so many community gardeners aim to maximize the vegetable output of their gardening spaces, it is important to continue offering educational programs for these populations, including technical information for growing fruits and vegetables, utilizing environmentally sound practices such as biodynamic gardening, which assures that plants are grown in such a way that both maintains soil integrity and yields healthier crops. Programmatic efforts should also focus on reducing food waste and donating food, particularly in more advantaged gardens.

Second, non-profit organizations and/or city governments should help to assure that more citizens who are food insecure have access to community gardens. One way that they may be able to achieve this goal is through the development gardens exclusively for renters, in which gardeners receive access to a plot based on a lottery system rather than tenure in the neighborhood. Community organizations should also make concentrated outreach efforts to include people from diverse cultural backgrounds. One of my participants acknowledged that they could easily provide signs in both English and Spanish in order to better reflect the composition of the surrounding neighborhood. Furthermore, gardeners should include signs that make it clear how to join the garden as well as who they should contact in order to be involved.

Third, city officials and developers need to begin seeing community gardens, as well as other urban forms of alternative food systems, as a permanent feature in the urban landscape, which are environmental amenities necessary for human thriving. In making development strategies, provisions for open space should be incorporated. A better geographic dispersal of community gardens throughout the city may also help to reduce the issue that gardeners often have to hold onto their plots in other neighborhoods after they move. Increasing the number of
community garden plots can be achieved in creative ways, such as splitting plots in order to give more people a chance to access the garden. Furthermore, when making development decisions, housing and garden space do not have to be an either/or choices. It is possible to develop both housing and garden plots on many vacant parcels of land.

Many studies have mapped out locations that are optimal for creating urban agriculture across the city. During the Article 89 zoning process, which allowed for the establishment of urban agriculture anywhere within the city of Boston, the city mapped out parcels of land that are available for development. Although there is some dispute between for-profit urban agriculture organizations, development corporations, and community gardeners about the best purposes for these parcels, many of the lots are not ideal for either residential or commercial development. The city and non-profit sectors should prioritize these parcels in particular for the establishment of spaces that can alleviate food security, either through community gardens or other purposes such as farmers markets. Another study suggests that the neighborhoods most in need of targeting for community garden development are West Roxbury, Brighton, East Boston, and Mattapan (Mastrobuoni et al. 2014). Although it will certainly help to improve access to establish community gardens in these neighborhoods, it is not enough to merely establish gardens if the people who most need to access the spaces are unable to gain access through other types of barriers. Through this chapter, I have demonstrated many of the considerations that must inform decisions about how to best improve access to community gardens, given that they are effective strategies to improve food security in urban areas.
Chapter 6: The Community is Changing But We Have a Right to Remain: Oppositional Community Gardening As a Statement of Democratic Control

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of theories related to symbolic ownership of space, particularly as a form of dissent against neoliberal development practices. I will provide a background of Henri Lefebvre’s Right to the City movement and how it pertains to community gardens in Boston. I will demonstrate the various ways that citizens employ a variety of political strategies and collective activism to show symbolic ownership through their community gardens. I will describe ways that gardeners and other community activists use art in the spaces to demonstrate their positions on land tenure issues, transportation policy, and a reclamation of space from violence and crime. I will also explore ways that competing symbolic interests come up in the gardens as well as the neighborhood at large. I will then conclude by demonstrating that in spite of conflicts, there are ways that participatory bottom-up forms of spatial praxis can occur.

Some urban scholars idealize public space as the last great equalizer, where “…the middle and upper classes…confront the common humanity of fellow citizens usually avoided and stigmatized as the other” (Silver 2014:1). The symbols and images in urban spaces contribute to cultural perceptions of reality and expose the spatial causality of justice and injustice (Soja 1980). Many have argued that best way to counteract the forces of neoliberalism that result in unequal exposure to land uses is through the direct involvement of social movements, grassroots organizations, and neighborhood coalitions (Gottdiener 2010). Planning strategies frequently include a process of consensus building, through which powerful participants can incorporate the concerns of weaker interests in development decisions (Innes 2004).
In reality, the process of consensus building is frequently severely limited and allows the process of neoliberalization to continue in a more or less uncontested fashion. Too often, developers view resident participation as a required means to an organizational end rather than a point of true collective effort (Purcell 2008). Urban decision-making structures are infrequently open to democratic debate, as cities feel that they must compete with one another and thereby act quickly in the implementation of development projects. The inclusion of citizen participation in the democratic process is frequently messy, complicated, and slow. As a result, urban decision making processes are rarely transparent to the public (Miller 2007). Furthermore, in many instances, non-profit organizations do not directly represent the needs and desires of the populations that they are trying to serve because they have instead had to take on a “business model” that closely reflects other neoliberal institutions that must make decisions based on the market rather than the community (Evans, Richmond, and Shields 2005). Although the public realm is the space where people from all classes, races, cultures, and backgrounds gather, public space remains unequally resourced, safe, attractive, and shared. As a result, privileged people frequently exert symbolic ownership over the public spaces where they congregate (Douglas 2014; Trouille 2014).

Coalitions of business owners, who operate through closed-door regimes, make the majority of contemporary urban development decisions (Hackworth 2007; Stone 1989). These urban development projects frequently involve international corporations that develop socially isolated spaces for the capitalist class, which have with little cohesion with the rest of the city (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003; Swyngedouw, Moolaert, and Rodriguez 2002). These projects are effectively the opposite of community gardens, which under ideal circumstances represent the collective will of local citizens, who are able to shape the land according to their own needs and
desires. These strategies encourage top-down development decisions, which exclude the voices of community residents. The concept of neoliberal democracy shifts the power of decision away from the state and democratic citizens, and instead favors private market forces, corporations, and the exchange of capital. It is thus not a pure form of democracy shaped by the will of the people (Purcell 2008).

Many scholars argue, effectively, that these types of development practices are inevitable or perhaps even desirable. Robert Park’s classical study *The City* argued that the ecological form of the city takes its most rational form after negotiation between actors with differential interests and divisions of labor. As a result of competition between local constituents, each parcel of land represents a collective will reflecting optimal societal use (Park and Burgess 1967). Later scholars placed such significant confidence in the capacity of the market to determine the optimal urban form that they encouraged local governments to remove themselves from decision making processes and allow a network of business developers and other local stakeholders to negotiate the urban form amongst themselves (Peterson 1981). However, such approaches to development are particularly problematic for land uses such as community gardens, which are rarely, if ever the “highest and best” land use, according to the metric of profit generation alone.

Even when citizens do directly participate in land use decisions, they often have better human, social, and cultural capital than other members of society who are not invited to the planning table. As a result, minorities are less likely to have a truly participatory role in economic development decisions (Dahl 2005; Fung, Wright, and Abers 2003; Portney 2003). Much of this redevelopment of urban places for the wealthy has resulted in gentrification, a process through which “higher income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood” (Kennedy and
Leonard 2001). Gentrification most often occurs as a process of investment in a neighborhood by an outside, profiteering force. These investors frequently have the revanchist attitude that they are reclaiming the inner city from the social disorder of the impoverished classes and are restoring the city to its “rightful” owners in the middle and upper classes (Smith 2005). This elitism targets a specific class of consumers over another through development choices that allow consumers of luxury housing to live in relative isolation from poor people (Davis and Monk 2008). Although the consumers do not directly cause the process of gentrification, they nevertheless participate in it (Wharton 2008).

Studies suggest that racial minorities are frequently displaced in the gentrification process, which perpetuates racial inequality and segregation (Kirkland 2008). Spatial racism uses relational boundaries to maintain and reinforce the racial hierarchies and white privilege, which relies on the devaluing of space in which people are predominately a race other than white (Powell 2007). Through a process of symbolic territorial degradation and defamation, residents in disadvantaged communities remain on the margins of the formal capitalist economy. Physical dilapidation, social decay, and depopulation in urban settings all serve to stigmatize and demoralize the most disadvantaged populations and create a sense of otherness that reinforces a perception that poor people are in their situations due to personal moral failings rather than systematic realities such as differential access to opportunity (Wacquant 2010). Community gardens serve as a way of instilling dignity on communities that have fallen into deteriorating conditions as a result of neglect through processes such as structural racism. They seek to equalize their communities and demonstrate that all people, regardless of their socioeconomic background, deserve dignity. However, when residents are displaced from their neighborhoods
through a process of gentrification, they often lose their own past attempts at reclamation through community gardening (Lawson 2004; Martinez 2010; Zukin 2010).

Environmental gentrification can be a particular concern in the establishment of open spaces. Environmental gentrification is a distinct set of “environmental improvements [that] result in the displacement of working-class residents as cleanup and reuse of undesirable land uses make a neighbourhood more attractive and drive up real estate prices” (Curran and Hamilton 2012, 1027). Often these strategies of environmental gentrification lie behind marketing terms such as “sustainable” and “green,” which can often imply whiteness and affluence. On occasion city led initiatives to promote green development may place a bigger threat to community stability than the presence of more explicitly environmentally polluting land uses (Anguelovski 2011; Checker 2008; Dooling 2009; Gould and Lewis 2012; Pearsall 2012).

Although previous literature has suggested that community gardens may lead to a type of environmental gentrification and that the resistive politics are mainly a reaction to this gentrification, the results of my study indicate that urban residents have begun using a strategy where they establish community gardens for the specific purpose of preventing gentrification. Activists who are establishing new gardens in the city use intentional resistive strategies to demonstrate their symbolic ownership of their neighborhoods. This movement directly emerges from The Right to the City movement, which is an international movement emerging from the work of Henri Lefebvre. The movement works not only to combat environmental gentrification, but also to spatially balance environmental goods throughout the city (Anguelovski 2011).
The Right to the City

The counterpoint to the dominance of neoliberal capitalist interests in urban politics is a system of “empowered participation,” which allows ordinary citizens to become engaged in a democratic process and reduce social inequalities (Fung and Olin Wright 2001). Lefebvre’s concept of the right to the city is effectively a spatial interpretation of empowered participation. The right to the city is closely related to the concept of the production of space, in which citizens should shape their communities in accordance with their every day experiences and that these perceptions should take precedence over the conceptions of powerful economic actors who will not experience the spaces directly. The right to the city effectively wrestles control away from capitalism and places it in the hands of those who do not currently have it (Lefebvre, Kofman, and Lebas 1996; Mitchell 2003).

As Peter Marcuse points out, analyses of the Right to the City and the best approaches for its implementation must include answers to the queries “What does the Right to the City mean? More specifically: Whose Right are we talking about? What Right is it we mean? What City is it to which we want the right?” (Marcuse 2009:189) Arguably, certain people already have the right to the city, such as those with financial powers, real estate owners and speculators, politicians, and the media. Those that are fighting for the right to creative expression in the city are from those who do not currently have the power and include the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, and gender, racial, and class minorities. These people most acutely experience oppression under the current system of capitalism because they are unable to fulfill their most immediate needs. In order to move from this theory of the right to the city towards the radical urban practice of expressing symbolic ownership of space, citizens must not only work within the current system of capitalism, they must also directly confront it and oppose it. During this
process, they expose the roots of their problems, propose solutions to these problems, and politicize their desires through organization, reliance on the media, political connections, and peer networks. The Right to the City is not so much a legal right as a moral right. One solution to this unequal balance of rights to the city is to create sectors of society that are not driven by profit motives, which would ultimately serve to eliminate hierarchies between spaces (ibid).

Some scholars have begun to question whether the process of gentrification is effectively a human rights violation. For example, Jonathan Wharton argues that gentrification commits many of the same human rights violations as colonization has in past centuries. He writes, “Similar to colonialism, gentrification not only usurps local and economic power to newer and often wealthier residents, there are also implied class and racial components attached to it as well. A number of individuals amass wealth and power through gentrification and they must be further analyzed since they profit from the process and serve as significant players in redeveloping cities, while scores of urban residents are displaced” (Wharton 2008). The Right to the City includes the ability for urban residents to stay in the places where they currently live unless they choose to move. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights asserts that everyone has the right to be protected against “interference with his... home.” The UN the communications director for Right to the City, Lenina Nadal, argues that the movement hopes to guarantee citizens a right not only, “a decent, sustainable home, but also to the community they created in their city” (Knafo 2015).

For this reason, among poor and minority populations, community building between grassroots organizations to negotiate control over development decisions becomes critical for the success of organizations. Community based organizations have the capacity to influence economic and political “fields” that determine outcomes in housing, government spending, and
employment opportunities, particularly for poor residents in an urban community. The motives of CBOs are often revealed through symbolic actions, such as collaborating with external organizations in order to reshape the conditions “on the ground” in their neighborhood (Marwell 2007). Scholars have emphasized the importance of assuring that these coalitions of organizations remain in community control. For citizens to gain the most control over development decisions, they must have a collective voice against powerful growth coalitions, and the best way to achieve these ends is through the formation of bottom-to-bottom networks (Anguelovski 2011). Due to the power of development organizations, citizen participation must be extremely well-organized, continuous, and prominent in the community. Mark Purcell summarizes it nicely when he writes, “Disconnected social movements will not unseat an overarching hegemony like neoliberalism” (Purcell 2008:81). Many activists agree that top-down approaches to community garden development do not work. However, if bottom-to-bottom approaches are to be successful, authorities in the public realm must respond to and respect their efforts.

**The Right to Remain, Community Gardens, and The Role of Bottom-to-Bottom Networks**

A great deal of the activism in the Right to the City movement focuses on the rights of low-income communities and communities of color to have access to the same environmental amenities (such as open space) as wealthier communities, without the fear of displacement. In the last twenty years, the median home price in Boston has nearly doubled, which is worrying to many longtime low-income residents. In Boston, the Right to the City is called The Right to Remain because housing affordability and threat of displacement are two of the biggest concerns. This movement consists of a coalition of many organizations including Boston Tenant Coalition,
Alternatives for Community & Environment, Boston Workers Alliance, Chinese Progressive Association, City Life/Vida Urbana, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Fairmount Indigo Line CDC Collaborative, Greater Four Corners Action Coalition, Jamaica Plain Progressives, Neighbors United for a Better East Boston, and New England United for Justice (Right to the City Alliance 2016). The establishment of new community gardens takes place as part of a larger strategy within the Right to Remain campaign, which also focuses on issues such as the creation of affordable housing, especially in rental units, advocating for a just cause eviction ordinance, providing affordable access to public transportation, and creating energy efficiency improvements in the existing housing stock.

The Right to the City movement has its origins in previous community gardening movements in Boston. In the late 1990s when the gentrification of downtown Boston began, there were only a handful of cases where gardens were destroyed in Boston. These instances served as somewhat of a wake-up call for the gardeners to mobilize and protect their gardens. As a result of this mobilization, most of the community gardens in Boston are now protected legally against conversion into other uses.

These agreements came into place as a result of decades of protests and cooperation with agencies that held political clout and, in some cases, involved direct lobbying to specific politicians. Although these historic gardens, many of which are located in extremely gentrified neighborhoods, are now protected, the newer gardens, which are almost entirely in low-income areas of the city, are not protected.

The fact that community hearings are frequently part of the development process can be a powerful resource that citizens deploy in order to move forward with their own agenda and
goals. In the community gardening movement citizens worked very strategically with particular politicians who would be sympathetic to their cause. Often this involved relying on tenuous race relations in the city and the fact that many mayors were trying to resolve these issues any way that they could. Race relations were still relatively tense under Mayor Flynn’s leadership in the 1980s, and he had to carefully balance the desires of his mainly Irish constituency with the demands of Boston’s predominately black gardeners. Due to Mayor Menino’s Italian heritage, which already set him apart from the old-school network of Irish mayors and other prominent politicians in the city, already had experience with supporting a wider range of ethnic groups (Anguelovski 2011).

One of my research participants discussed the shifting political strategies of the movement as it progressed through different mayors, although she suggested that the main drawback during Mayor Flynn’s time in the office had more to do with financial strains than cultural conflicts.

At the beginning, under Mayor White, there was a revival program and that was after the [race] riots [that occurred as a result of integrating the school system] and so, not to be too cynical because it did a lot of good things and I knew people in that administration who really…came out of the right place. That was the beginning of establishing gardens to improve neighborhoods by putting in some infrastructure but it was a one-time, ‘Let’s throw this money at this and see if we can kind of damp down on the push-back around red-lining or loaning property or riots, all that stuff.’ And that all began to degrade and so Mayor Flynn did a lot of stuff in the neighborhoods as well but it was a different time. He was definitely pro-garden, without a doubt, but Menino went even further in terms of having the resources and the buy-in because there was more money and more infrastructure in the city to do that.—Long Time Garden Activist

Despite that activists must frequently call upon politicians for political support, a key component of The Right to Remain movement is that it is a bottom-to-bottom network. Given that community gardens require a great deal of investment from their participants, the gardeners themselves should start them. In the past, many community gardens shut down due to lack of
interest (Lawson 2005), and so, in many ways it is vital that the spaces be community led projects. In fact, one landscape designer that I spoke to indicated that as she was designing an open space for a housing authority in Boston, they specifically asked that it not include vegetable gardening because the residents had no desire for one.

Another long-time activist emphasized the importance of community enthusiasm in the establishment of community gardens, but also cautioned against people who tried to act without the support of the broader community or a supporting partner such as a non-profit organization. She commented:

> From the point of view of ACGA, we had to say over and over again…a sustainable garden is still bottom [i.e. grassroots]. Build it and they will come has just not, historically, been a sustainable community garden movement…The easiest part of starting a community garden is putting that shovel in the ground. It’s keeping the infrastructure, the organizational infrastructure in place that will keep it going. And is that having a non-profit partner? Is that having a strong enough neighborhood association? Probably.—Garden Activist, South End

The initiative for community gardens must start from the community, but ultimately, gardeners should also be prepared to form alliances with existing, stable non-profit organizations in their communities. Although it is important for the initiative and vision to come from the people who will be in the garden, protecting the longevity of the garden is best achieved with collaboration with non-profit organizations. The key to maintaining community control when non-profit organizations are involved is for gardeners to run their spaces with as little interference as possible. The organizations should not be shaping the vision of the garden. An employee at BNAN/The Trustees noted that in her ideal vision, the garden would be as self-sufficient as possible. She commented:

> I think as much as it can be self-governed, that’s great because it’s the people that have the most stake in what they’re doing. I think organizations like ours and others are very useful as liaisons with the city, where that’s needed, just because it’s more efficient and we have the connections and very useful for helping get things started, for the same
reason. If there’s a community that’s interested, we can help facilitate that, but I think once a garden is running, the more self-sufficient the better.

Nevertheless, many residents do want community gardens, as evidenced by the long waitlists, and they frequently use the spaces in order to demonstrate resistance against gentrification by working closely with many of the well-established non-profit organizations and broader social movements in the city. Although the The Black Lives Matter campaign primarily focuses on the prevention of police brutality against black people, the movement also engages in many other types of activism with an emphasis on the creation of supportive and equitable black communities. Black Lives Matter has attempted to bring attention to issues of the ways that black communities can advocate for improved access to healthy foods and to use urban agricultural spaces to fight racial injustices (https://www.facebook.com/BlackLivesMatterBOS January 21, 2016).
In March 2016, the environmental justice organization ACE officially joined the Right to the City campaign to balance the needs of gardens and community space with the need to maintain affordable housing units in the neighborhood and prevent the displacement of current residents. (Alternatives for Community and Environment 2016). The neighborhood of Roxbury has been heavily advocating for changes in the neighborhood over the last several decades. They have had campaigns aimed at reducing air pollution, vacant lots, and assuring that the city pick up trash in a timely manner. Unfortunately, these changes, which were largely community-led efforts, have made the neighborhood more desirable and thus less affordable. One of the members of ACE commented:
I like some of the changes—overall, Dudley is less grungy and dirty. I would love more opportunities, jobs, and plenty of parks for the kids to play in, for adults to go out and exercise. What about the poor people? They deserve to live nice too. But does that mean I have to go live somewhere else because the area is being built up [with apartments that cost $2,000 a month to rent] and I can’t afford to stay?--ACE member (Alternatives for Community and Environment 2015)
One of the main tenants of ACE’s Grow or Die Campaign, which has established six community gardens in Roxbury, is that “residents should be able to use community land to meet community needs.” Activists purposefully and intentionally use crops and planting strategies that publicly reflect their cultural backgrounds. Planting food from their cultural heritages communicates symbolically the presence of that cultural group in the neighborhood. Activists have latched onto increased awareness about food insecurity and the establishment of local food systems in order to better justify their gardens. Some gardeners occasionally will go so far as to ban flowers in their gardens, as these are associated with gentrifying populations, and they want to demonstrate the pragmatic functionality of the spaces. Under the current neoliberal urban form, a homogenous global aesthetic runs through most affluent areas, as they are built according to the desires of a generic, privileged class of people. Opportunities for diverse self expression and cultural representation are rare. Gardeners understand this aspect of gardening that allows for a creative outlet and also a small expression of control. One gardener at ACE commented:

Our gardens are more than just good, local vegetables and herbs—each raised bed built on a once-vacant lot is a step towards community control of land and climate justice in our neighborhoods.—ACE Gardener, (Alternatives for Community and Environment 2015)
The establishment of community gardens plays an important political role in projecting black, Latino, or Asian ownership of the space. Often artists or local school children are included in the process of designing community gardens. Artists, including landscape designers, construction workers, painters, and sculptors are particularly concerned with beautification efforts and have the skills required to build the spaces. Gardeners use murals which depict Latino and black residents surrounded by trees and other types of plants to demonstrate what a healthy community looks like and that people of color belong in those communities. In one instance, there is a public art project that uses gigantic wooden letters that state Our Tierra Livri. This translates into Our Free Land and incorporates English, Spanish, and Portuguese (which represents the Cape Verdean population) of the neighborhood and literally states ownership of the land. Many garden plots also are decorated either with symbolic representations of the culture of the gardener, such as a flag or a religious icon, while other gardens contain the names
of the gardeners, which are written on plaques or signposts in their individual plots. In the South End, which has a large gay population, many people had gay pride flags on their plots. The community garden serves as a visual indicator that people are out and involved in the community, which may instill feelings of inclusiveness and community cohesion.

Figure 14: Our Tierra Livri public art at the DSNI Greenhouse, Roxbury
Additionally, community organizing frequently begins in community gardens, since activists post flyers on garden bulletin boards and pass out information about their upcoming meetings concerning community issues at garden events and workshops. There are many instances where artists create temporary political demonstrations in community garden spaces, protesting issues such as displacement and pesticide use in their communities. Occasionally, these demonstrations are incorporated into larger community events such as Jamaica Plain’s Wake Up the Earth Festival, which takes place in Southwest Corridor park, adjacent to three community gardens. This festival takes place every May and originally began as a form of
protest against the expansion of I-93, which would have cut through the neighborhood. It is still a celebration of the rights for people to connect to their communities and to have fair labor practices. The event features traditional spring activities such as a Maypole dance, lawn games, community art projects, and food trucks, but it also has a decidedly community activist component as well. For instance, there was a chalkboard upon which community residents could write ways that they would like to shape their community.
Relationship to transportation networks and transit justice

Many gardeners also use their spaces as staging for advocacy to bring about improved transit accessibility and walkability in their communities. Many of the community gardens in Boston have strong ties to transportation infrastructure. Several of the community gardens are located on the Southwest Greenway in Jamaica Plain, which was a space that is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. In East Boston, the community garden spaces are directly adjacent to Massport park, where residents are in heavy negotiations with the airport. In Mattapan, residents formed the Fairmont Greenway, in which residents will have access to safe and secure green space within a half mile of the Fairmont railroad line, currently under construction. The community garden on Woolson Street is one of the stops along this tour. The South End Garden tour (which is a walking tour that also serves as a major fundraiser for the Trustees) also included four community gardens as destination sites. These events bring commerce to the surrounding neighborhood as people stop for lunch, coffee, drinks, etc.

Community gardens serve as a place for beginning conversations about transportation infrastructure. They can also serve as staging areas to promote improvements in transportation infrastructure for low-income residents. At one of the garden workshops I attended, one of the members handed out fliers in order to spread the word about a transportation study aimed at improving bus service in Roxbury. Often, the form of transportation most related to community garden spaces is pedestrian traffic.

Many of the newer community gardens emerged as projects that were related to the creation of bike paths and the promotion of physical fitness and health. Community gardens are frequently located on places through which many people pass by foot, and community gardens
are often designed to preserve these natural footpaths. As many transportation planners have previously indicated, the healthiest communities allow many people to be on the street as pedestrians, which encourages face-to-face communication, familiarity, and ultimately, a feeling of trust and in communities (Jacobs 1992; Newman 1973).

![Image of Malden Community Garden, Situated Along a Bike Path](image.jpg)

**Figure 16: Malden Community Garden, Situated Along a Bike Path**

**Crime, security, and reclamation of land**

The literature on whether community gardens reduce crime is inconclusive because many confounding factors contribute to variations in crime within neighborhoods. Some studies have indicated that community gardens have little to no impact on crime rates in neighborhoods (Gorham et al. 2009; Mastrobuoni et al. 2014), while other studies suggest that the impact of converting vacant lots into garden spaces greatly reduces the amount of crime in the
neighborhood in general (Hynes 1996; Kuo and Sullivan 2001; Luke 2013; Winne 2009). Regardless of whether community gardens serve to reduce crime in neighborhoods, my evidence suggests that at least at an individual psychological level, community gardens have tremendous therapeutic qualities for helping people recover after crime has occurred. These gardens became symbols of peace and neighborhood resiliency. Studies have shown that outdoor spaces can be very therapeutic and healing for people who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and one of the most important ways that people can work through the healing process is to create something collectively within their communities (Gerlach-Spriggs, Kaufman, and Jr 2004). Gardeners expressed that the symbolic attachment they felt through the process of creating something new led to feelings of safety and a collective community spirit of reestablishing identity and trust.

One of the most well-publicized community garden spaces in Boston is the Woolson Street garden, the former site of a mass shooting, in which four people, including a young child, were murdered in front of a vacant lot. This event left deep scars on the psyches of the residents of the neighborhood, and they decided to reclaim the space for the community through the establishment of a garden. Over the course of the next several years, the community worked together with the city as well as BNAN and the Mattapan Food and Fitness Council to develop the space into a community garden. I spoke with one of the gardeners there, who shared the following with me about the experience and what the garden meant to her. She mentioned that in the weeks after the shooting, there were police everywhere, and it was the safest she ever felt in the neighborhood. However, their presence was temporary, and the community was left largely on its own after the initial response. She commented:
“I think that the garden was a good idea we could put together … because there’s no one we can go to. People don’t really go to therapists. You still have to go home even if you are afraid. So, sometimes something visible helps, something beautiful helps.”

Another gardener added that the space was critical for the community to create a sense of place again and for identity politics. She said:

“When we have a garden, and we have something that is productive and useful and something that is really positive. It helps to create a identity in our community. It helps us to stand out in terms of, this isn’t just this one incident, but we are living, breathing human beings that live here, and this is something positive that we can represent for our community. I think that is important for moving forward and for being a center of enterprise and business and a center of safety and healthy initiatives. I think this is a positive step to create that identity in this community.”

Figure 17: The fiddlehead design in the pavement at Woolson St. Community Garden, Mattapan, represents growth and healing
The Egleston Community Orchard in Jamaica Plain likewise had a shooting occur in front of it, and annually family and friends of the victim came to pay their respects. The site is located at the former intersection of two Dominican gang turfs, who were continuously in conflict with one another. Orion Kriegman, the coordinator at the site, told me the following story, which nicely illustrates the power that a healing garden can have on the overall ethos of a community:

“They all come from the same town in the Dominican Republic… and a lot of the neighbors knew these kids as they were growing up, and they’re angry at them. They’re like, we fed these kids lunch and had them running through our house, and they repay us with bullets over our doorstep. So there’s tension within the Dominican community over these folks and they are doing bad things, in terms of drug dealing and prostitution and all that sort of stuff. So, there are reasons why there’s a lot of hostility and fear. What’s interesting is that when this murder took place, what was forefront in our minds was wow, we don’t want a back and forth gang war on our streets. But also we don’t know these people and I don’t know how involved I want to get in their business. But my wife was like, they’re mourning. They lost someone they love…I think her ethos was we’re going to make them soup and bring it to them. And so, she really pushed my boundaries and we did it, and then we brought them water because when you’re mourning, you are supposed to stay well hydrated. And then we put out a cloth and wrote the word ‘paz’ on it, which means peace in Spanish, and invited them to write something on it in memory of their friend. And we invited them to plant a blueberry bush in his honor, and I think those gestures of white gentrifiers talking to gangbangers mattered to us and them and also other people witnessed it, and it mattered to the whole community and people got reinspired in ways that they hadn’t been. And so the Egleston Square parade used to meet up with the Wake Up the Earth festival. Well, it got relaunched that year in part because of the ripple effects of what we had been doing. And a guy who used to run an annual Halloween house but had been so discouraged by the violence in the neighborhood, he got that going again because he saw other people taking care of the neighborhood again. And then the peace pole showed up in the space. San Maria de las Iglesias, Sister Virginia, who leads an annual peace tour of the neighborhood now includes this spot. So, it became, in the minds of people who lived through that moment, this resonated as a peace building gesture, not just as a garden or even a community space.”
These gardeners have demonstrated that community gardens take on deep and therapeutic meaning within their communities. For many people, and community gardens become safe havens and places of escape. Most gardeners indicated that crime within the garden itself was a rare instance and most frequently involved vegetable theft, with occasional instances of tool theft, public drinking, and marijuana use. One of my participants commented that public drinking was “not that illegal,” and it is also worth noting that although alcohol use is generally prohibited in community garden spaces, there were occasionally garden events involving wine, beer, and cocktails. Rules about drinking were thus only enforced selectively. A few women mentioned that occasionally there would be homeless people or drug users outside the garden who made them feel uneasy, but they also commented that they felt generally protected and safe within the gates of the garden.
Competing symbolic ownerships

Although many scholars have demonstrated that citizen ownership of community gardens is a critical component to their success, there do remain questions about who belongs in community garden spaces as well as who has the right to determine what happens in a space. For affluent community gardeners, the space does not carry particularly political significance, although they still represent spaces where citizens can expressively create their own community space.

Although some gardens are open to the public, the majority of community gardens are essentially spaces only for the gardeners. They are locked, and only the gardeners are allowed inside. Although most of the community gardens have some sort of gathering area for participants, the expectation is that, in general, community gardeners will spend the majority of their time shaping their individual plots. In these types of gardens, the spaces are truly a lot like extensions of personal space. They become a way for gardeners to separate themselves from the broader community, which, in some cases may be necessary to achieve a feeling of security.

Community gardens and parks increasingly contain structural features such as gates and fences, which serve to demarcate certain open spaces as exclusive to particular populations (Kurtz 2001; Pudup 2008). These features essentially serve to turn a garden into an urban fortress, a space with design features such as gates and fences that make it difficult or impossible for outsiders to enter. These spaces are often intentionally designed to allow privileged members of society an escape from “undesirable” people and behaviors (Davis 1992; Dreier et al. 2004). One of the employees at The Trustees noted:
One of the things I learned very early on in my time here is beautification of open spaces is a tricky slope because beautification or enhancement, you’re contributing to the price of the adjacent house in some ways or when you’re doing your greenway. I have…not in Boston specifically…but in other cities, seen resistance, even for cleanups because they’re like, ‘You’re going to price us out of this place’ which is unfortunate but that does happen.”

Figure 19: Seating Area, Community Garden Plot, Fenway

Previous scholars have demonstrated that there are often competing rights to the city, as different residents different ideas concerning the optimal ways to shape a neighborhood (Deener 2012; Rosen and Shlay 2014). The expression of rights to the city may exacerbate racial and class inequalities (Fischel 2004). As we have seen in the case of New York’s gentrifying community gardens, conflicts about the optimal use of space are particularly relevant in gentrifying neighborhoods, even in cases where displacement does not occur (Martinez 2010). Although gardeners frequently expressed that the garden was a place for them to escape from the
rest of the city, neighbors would occasionally view the gardens as undesirable. Some neighbors complain that community gardens attract “unwanted” people such as homeless people and drug users or other unwanted elements such as trash, rats, bugs, or the odor from a poorly maintained compost pile. It is worth noting that most of these issues can be resolved with proper maintenance of the garden, and in the case of rats in particular, usually the presence of rats in a neighborhood would occur regardless of whether or not there was a garden. As one of my interview subjects noted, “It’s a city. Rats happen.”

Occasionally, gardeners will have disputes among themselves, and these cases are also expressions of competing symbolic ownerships. Debates about the public and private use of space often include subtle class warfare that dictates what is or is not acceptable in public spaces (Kohn 2004). At the Berkeley Street garden at the intersection of the South End and Chinatown, there was a dispute between many of the long-term Chinese gardeners, who collected cans for recycling, and other gardeners and community members. One of the gardeners I interviewed mentioned that she did not think the gardeners really needed the money; it was just a hobby. Nevertheless, the garden board made rules against bringing cans into the garden, despite that many of the Chinese gardeners had been in the garden for decades and had been collecting cans for the majority of their tenure there.

Another example of a dispute between different types of gardeners occurred in Jamaica Plain. One example of the contestations that occurred happened in a garden where, unlike many others in the area, there are only about 12 plots and the garden is open most of the time to the public, rather than being gated. The lot has a large open field, and for several years, the predominately white gardeners were in conflict with the predominately Hispanic youth who used the space for football and tore up the grass. Many gardeners also have disputes about whether or
not dogs should be allowed in the garden. Most people who have dogs would like to be able to bring them along while they are working in the garden, while other gardens were concerned that the dogs would dig and trample plants and leave behind messes in the garden.

Figure 20: Granada Park Community Garden, Jamaica Plain, has a few plots but is mostly open space

One could argue that community gardens closely parallel Elijah Anderson’s concept of the “cosmopolitan canopy,” in which people from differing backgrounds often have hesitant relationships with one another. Often as a result of what Anderson terms “provisional status,” blacks or other racial minorities may feel that they only tentatively belong in a space, especially in the beginning stages. They may feel their membership in a place is defined primarily in terms of their minority status. Provisional status can lead to a feeling of marginality among ethnic
minorities where they don't truly belong in the predominant culture and must therefore exist at its edges.

Nevertheless, the cosmopolitan canopy is a public space that offers a pocket of racial diversity within the urban setting. People go to the canopy not only for instrumental reasons but also for the experience of being among other people. Seeing people from diverse backgrounds can be a humanizing experience that improves civility as people become exposed to a variety of cultural experiences. Individualistic expressions of self are also a central component of the cosmopolitan canopy, and conflicts can arise when people from vastly different backgrounds are within close proximity of one another (Anderson 2012). Community gardens serve as an archetype of the cosmopolitan canopy. Neighbors who would not otherwise intermingle can do so, albeit these interactions may be strained and hesitant.

Historically many of the land use conflicts surrounding community gardens have not only been between luxury housing developers and gardeners but also between people who envision different uses for the same space. A way around this is for activists with different causes to work closely with one another to settle disputes about optimal land uses. Housing advocates and garden activists have worked closely with one another, and these connections continue today. The Boston community gardening movement works together with housing advocates and the Department of Neighborhood Development to create community plans to determine where there should be garden space and where there should be affordable housing. In this way, disputes over space are minimized as community members engage in dialog with one another.

In order for community gardens to continue in Boston, it is important for advantaged and disadvantaged members of the community to work together. When gardeners have disputes among themselves or with other members of the community, they are effectively undergoing the
important consensus-building process that is described in so much of the literature on the establishment of community-controlled space. It is critical that these points of consensus building occur away from the view of powerful institutional players in the city. New community gardens are still displaced, particularly in low-income communities, and efforts at mobilization are strongest when they can have a united front.

The neoliberal agenda continues to impact the stability of community gardens and open space in Boston, even though many of them are protected through land trusts and other legal agreements. These decisions often impact vulnerable populations the most. In the course of my research, I came across two examples of situations where the voices of community members were effectively ignored by developers. One such example of destruction occurred at the ACE community garden at Shawmut Street, which, without warning to the gardeners, developers plowed over in October 2015 in order to turn the lot into housing units. Since the garden was located on city-owned land, there was little the organization could do to stop it.

Although it is not a community garden in the traditional sense, another extremely high-profile case in which developers and garden activists fought against one another took place in the Prouty Garden at Boston Children’s Hospital. This garden was established in 1956 when the wealthy benefactor Olive Higgins Prouty provided funding for the creation of a healing garden at the hospital, with the contingency that it should remain in perpetuity. Despite that the garden space is a therapeutic healing site and a de facto memorial for many children who died at the hospital, the hospital has plans to demolish the garden in order to expand the hospital and thus, generate more revenue. Despite an enormous collective effort to preserve the garden space and use other nearby sites to expand the hospital, governor Charlie Baker approved the project in October 2016. Although the protest group Save the Prouty plans to appeal the decision, it seems
likely that they will not be able to save the garden. In an opinion piece in the Boston Globe, a supporter of the garden, wrote that this decision happened through “old-school Boston politics and intrigue, stirred by a dose of intimidation” (Vennochi 2016).

Community activists frequently spoke in private at garden and community meetings about their frustration with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, who they felt frequently ignored their requests for additional open space, including additional community gardens. In September of 2016, the Boston Redevelopment Authority changed its name to the Boston Planning and Development Agency. The Boston Globe ran an article about the change, which stated that a main reason for the change was to have “more community outreach and zoning rules that reflect what Bostonians want on their blocks, instead of responding piecemeal to proposals from developers” (Logan 2016). The article also reflected the two viewpoints that are often represented in discussions on land use in the city. On one side of the argument, Mayor Marty Wash commented “When some of you developers go into a neighborhood, people are already ‘No.’ We have to get them to ‘Yes,’ … We can’t always start at ‘No.’ ” On the other hand, community activist Danielle Sommer noted “All the feedback we get from the city is ‘We don’t want to do that to developers… That does not make it sound like their priority is people” (ibid. 2016).

Through neoliberal capitalist practices in urban development decisions, democratic control of the city has largely disappeared. Community gardens remain one of the ways that citizens can continue to have a voice in their communities. For this reason, even people who do not participate in gardening should have an interest in protecting gardens from development because they represent the ideal of community ownership and a form of resistance against
powerful political and economic forces that disempower all but the most wealthy of urban citizens.

Discussion of Findings

One of the main goals of a just city is to “imagine democratized approaches to urban planning that begins with the people, not the corporate class” (Griffin, Cohen, and Maddox 2015). The Right to the City begins with the idea that members who inhabit the city, not those who own the city, are the ones who have the principle right to land. At the core of the argument of the right to remain is the capacity for ordinary citizens to reclaim the every day life experience from the dehumanizing system of neoliberal capitalism. As I have demonstrated, community gardeners frequently use their spaces in order to express their authentic life experiences and to represent their right to exist in a system that often erases them. This is perhaps especially true for the traditionally disadvantaged populations of the inner city, although it is also true for those with access to capital. All gardeners expressed the importance of the garden to escape from the stresses of life, to clear their head, and to relax in a place that was separate from the constant profit generation motives of the dominant society. A community garden plot is a place where people can shape the space as they see fit and can tailor the space to their own needs, within certain guidelines that are intended primarily to assure the overall harmony of the garden.

Community gardens represent alternative land uses in the city that may disrupt the common social order of neoliberalism, and it is for this reason that they are valuable assets in urban settings. Spaces that exist in contradiction to the conventional order of space are what Foucault refers to as heterotopias, which have a certain air of “otherness” about them. Although heterotopias often refer to a space that characterized by crisis or deviance (such as a hospital, a
military barracks, a prison, or an asylum), certain heterotopias imply pleasure, such as rock clubs, libraries, and the cinema (Foucault 1997). It is the presence of these “unexpected delights” within an urban space that provide an element of chance and adventure in the city (Barthes 1997). Places such as unofficial skate parks or alleyways with graffiti demonstrate the subjectivity of the urban form, through which groups of people are able to take what are effectively blank spaces and convert them into a disruptive, tactical use of place to display ownership (Certeau 2011). Community gardens are exactly this type of land use, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities and low-income people. These urban forms are what make the city exciting. Without them, urban life is predictable and sterile.

Although people from all backgrounds can benefit from community gardens, like many aspects of an unequal society, the experience of community gardening holds extremely distinct meanings for people from different backgrounds. Gardeners from disadvantaged areas must organize and fight politically in order to have the same amenities as people who live in other areas of the city. Structural racism has impacted minority experiences in land control, food justice, access to public transportation, and feelings of security for centuries. The Right to the City movement, which includes the community gardening movement, is largely a response to this history of structural racism and is effectively a movement rebuilding democracy at a local level (Purcell 2008). Many of the newer gardeners that I spoke to in the more affluent gardens were unaware of the history of activism and struggle that had gone into the creation of their garden spaces. This separation from the countercultural aspect of gardening was effectively another form of privilege for these gardeners.

The process of gentrification in urban areas has played a major role in the experiences of community gardeners, particularly over the last three decades. Policymakers have suggested that
it is possible to prevent gentrification by improving a neighborhood to reflect the identity of the current residents. The key to creating just neighborhoods is to make them cleaner and safer, but not to make them hip, trendy, and flashy (Jacobus 2013). This strategy can help to reduce the likelihood for environmental gentrification and instead create the framework for bringing environmental amenities to all communities, regardless of the social class of its residents.

Although some residents may feel that the presence of community gardens in their neighborhoods can lead to gentrification, it is always important to note that the true forces of gentrification occur as a result of outside development pressures, aimed at profit generation. Community gardens can help to improve a neighborhood while still preserving its social character. In the case of the Right to Remain movement in Boston, activists are attempting to use neighborhood improvement, including community gardens as tools to prevent gentrification. When residents can take ownership of the space and demonstrate land uses that resonate with their own creative social, economic, and cultural experiences, they are able to express themselves in opposition to an outside, largely homogeneous, globalized development agenda. Although community gardens serve the traditional purposes of being places to grow food, escape the city, and be in nature, they also serve important political functions and serve as points of community collectiveness and dissent against gentrification.

These findings show the symbolic importance of community gardens and make a strong case in support of allowing continued access to these democratically controlled spaces. As Peter Marcuse has stated, the best way to accomplish the goal of a just city is for municipal planning organizations to separate profit-generating land uses from places in which people can express their democratic views. The mechanisms through which community gardens use dissent and differentiation to establish the spaces against traditional development involve bottom-to-bottom
networks, which must involve strategic planning and great energy input from their activists. Those organizations that are most successful in organizing community gardens must be run not by top-down organizations who make plans for their communities, but rather, they must involve direct community support. Organizations that do not hold the Right to the City at the center of their mission are effectively still denying community residents control.

In urban settings, space represents community. The dominance of neoliberal capitalism in urbanism means that the community of the privileged often squeezes out other communities, providing them with very little access to space of their own. Community gardens are just one of the ways that urban dwellers can stake claims to a place in which to express their own identity and have the ability to physically shape that space with whatever function they feel is best. Every public space has its own set of norms governing its appropriate behaviors and uses. Public parks and gardens provide a stabilizing and even healing influence in urban communities. My findings suggest that community gardens and other open recreational spaces may provide a sense of safety among people in communities with high rates of violence, crime, and other forms of social disorder, even if the evidence that they reduce crime is inconclusive.

Although there are certainly instances where the community does not mobilize to create public space in their community, in instances where they do, developers should honor examples of collective ownership, such as community gardens, and establish development projects elsewhere. If community-controlled development projects are to be successful, they must be done on the terms of community residents, not on the terms of city officials and developers.
Chapter 7: Policy Recommendations and Analysis

The aim of this research project was to situate the land use of community gardens within the broader urban fabric of Boston. Throughout the course of my research, I consulted many texts to understand the historical progression of the community gardening movement and compared these earlier findings in the research with the current experiences of community gardeners. My research project is a contemporary snapshot that captures how the community gardening landscape has progressed up to the current moment. Throughout the course of my study, I witnessed the pride that gardeners take in cultivating their own spaces. I had the opportunity to view the behind the scenes activism of gardeners at organizational meetings and events such as the Annual Gardeners Gathering and community meetings, where gardeners shouted, cheered, and occasionally even sang about the importance of the spaces in their lives. I listened to technical information about ways to grow crops more sustainably and intensively and learned information such as the types of plants that would be best to grow in different soil or sunlight conditions. I visited gardens and enjoyed observing the bees, birds, and butterflies that had a place to live as a result of the pockets of nature in an ecosystem that is all too frequently dominated by steel and concrete. I observed what types of crops the gardeners were growing as well as the ways that they expressed identity. Community gardens are essentially community art projects with a biological purpose. They enrich the urban landscape and make places much more intriguing. Every community garden is a unique asset in its community, and there are truly no two gardens that are alike.

In this study, I have used an analysis of community gardens to demonstrate how neoliberal capitalism has impacted the experiences of ordinary citizens who live in urban areas. The experience of community gardening has shifted away from an environmental mindset
toward an emphasis on the more privatized elements of the gardening experience. Many of the
gardeners view the gardens as extensions of their own private spaces. The shift in management
of community services from the public sector to non-profit organizations has manifested itself in
differential experiences for gardeners from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Garden
features that are taken for granted in privileged gardens, such as access to water, remain sources
of struggle for gardeners in more disadvantaged communities. In many ways, the shift in
popularity, especially among affluent populations, has changed the fundamental nature of the
community gardening experience. Although community gardens in affluent neighborhoods in
Boston are very well-protected and resourced, low-income gardeners do not always experience
the same level of ease in gardening their spaces.

Local food activism has moved from being a primarily countercultural concern towards a
mainstream trend, which has increased the popularity of community gardens at a rate in which
the demand far surpasses the supply. Long waiting lists and cultural barriers have served as
obstacles for many low-income people, immigrants, and racial and ethnic minorities who still
depend on the gardens for dietary reasons. These barriers were especially true for immigrants
and other racial and ethnic minorities who had recently moved into their neighborhoods. Older
residents who had participated since the founding of the gardens in the 1970s and 1980s
accounted for a significant portion of the diversity within certain gardens. Newer gardeners
seemed unsure of how to incorporate diversity into their gardens or how to prevent food waste
and properly disperse excess produce to the right people. For these reasons, there were
limitations in the effectiveness of using community gardens to reduce food insecurity.

Finally, I demonstrated that community gardens have the capacity to be used as political
tools in broader social justice movements, such as the Right to the City. Through a series of
bottom-to-bottom coalitions and a process of displaying symbolic ownership, gardeners claim the right to remain in peaceful communities in which they are able to display their cultural identities. In spite of certain elements of community gardening that are in line with neoliberal capitalist ideologies, among low-income minority populations specifically, community gardens serve as a tool of resistance against displacement and gentrification, particularly when they are strategically and intentionally utilized alongside other community-led advocacy projects such as housing affordability and transit justice. The ability to shape their communities and display ownership is a much more deliberate process than it is in more affluent communities. Although all types of people are to some degree powerless against development pressures that aim to displace unprotected gardens, the consequences of losing community gardens are much higher in disadvantaged communities. In this analysis section, I will explore some of the implications of this research project, both as they relate to community gardens specifically, but also as they relate to other urban development practices. I will suggest some tangible ways that people who make decisions about community gardens can act in order to maximize the benefits of community gardening and refocus the effort to create just communities through community gardening practices.

    Community gardens frequently serve unintentional environmental purposes, although they have, in the past, served very explicit environmental functions. Patricia Klindienst wrote in her book *The Earth Knows My Name*, an observation of the ethnic practices of gardeners across the United States, “This, I felt, was a little-noticed or little-understood aspect of the contribution of ethnic peoples: in refusing to assimilate fully to mainstream American values, ethnic gardeners keep alive, and offer back to us viable alternatives to the habits of mind that have brought us to our current ecological crisis” (Klindienst 2007: XXIII). Although gardeners did
not always explicitly acknowledge the environmental contributions of their spaces, gardeners actively shaped the land and passed along knowledge about the earth that spanned many generations. However, even though these spaces did have environmental benefits, in reality, contemporary community gardens are, for most gardeners, primarily spaces to both preserve and produce culture and to have an individual experience.

In many cases, environmental concerns within community gardens tended to be a greater concern of the organizations who oversee the spaces than of the gardeners themselves. This shift away from environmental concerns should be alarming in certain ways. Without preserving the environment of the inner city, urban areas will become increasingly less desirable and less livable. Although it is frequently possible to frame community gardens as a benefit for the economic prosperity of a place, reducing the gardens to a tangible market value very much plays into the neoliberal capitalist system and leads to a situation in which community gardeners view their access to the spaces as just another commodity that can be purchased and thus regarded only in terms of its individualized benefits.

In his book, *Livable Cities*, Peter Evans writes that “if the quest for jobs and housing is solved in ways that progressively and irreparably degrade the environment of the city, then the livelihood problem is not really being solved” (Evans 2002: 2). Evans contends that for cities to be truly livable, they must also be sustainable. The concept of a sustainable community centers around the goal of economic, social, and environmental equality and opportunity for all people, regardless of their socioeconomic or racial background. Cities and their citizens cannot continue to ignore the environmental consequences of economic development or of any land use, for that matter (Evans 2002). Although most traditional economists do not consider the natural environment (i.e. open, biodiverse spaces within the urban environment) to have economic
benefits, many scholars have demonstrated that they do in fact hold tremendous value in the exchange rates of places. Most people are willing to pay more for the amenity of access to nature within their communities. Furthermore, many environmentalists argue that natural processes directly contribute to our economic system and should thus be considered crucial elements of a livability strategy (McKibben 2008, O'Connor 1998).

Community gardens make cities more livable spaces. It is critical, however, that we keep in mind the notion of equity and do not allow studies to focus only on the economic benefits of community gardens for affluent populations (including homeowners, developers, and real estate agents), but also consider the valuable environmental contributions they make. One of the participants in my study summarized this point in the following way:

“I’m pretty passionate about high density human habitat and transforming it. I don’t think cities have to look or feel the way they’ve been designed. They’ve been designed in a for profit system, where the primary value was how the developer would make money from it, not so much serve the neighborhood. So, I think the ideal space is thinking about the social interactions and the urban interactions around it. So, it’s not just the physical environment or the living plants and animals but it’s also the people piece and the sociological reality and giving people a sense of their own agency in shaping their own neighborhoods.”

The interpretations that community gardeners bring to their gardens vary widely, but they have had a tendency to become somewhat focused on individual level benefits, which may mean, in affluent communities in particular, that the sociological interactions that occur in community gardens have been in decline. This focus on the individual rather than the community at large may mean that the voices of disadvantaged populations are lost. Many studies have shown that the people who are best able to participate in land use decisions have better access to human, social, and cultural capital. As a result, the voices of minorities, who have lower levels of all forms of capital, are less likely to participate in economic development decisions (Dahl 2005; Fung et al. 2003; Portney 2003). Residents of cities are often at a disadvantage for making
neighborhood-based improvements unless they already have a solid and diverse economic base and the local resources to create amenities. Furthermore, the benefits of development do not always extend beyond the immediate neighborhoods in which they are located (Brenner 2004). The development of community gardens has historically been a counterpoint to this overarching tendency for well-resourced people to make land use decisions in a neoliberal society. Although gardeners have frequently had to be very politically organized in order to claim a right to these spaces and, in a handful of cases in Boston, did not have the capacity to resist powerful development forces, they have nonetheless managed to hold some type of control over the spaces.

Like so many other urban artistic amenities, affluent populations have begun to appropriate community garden spaces, through the process of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2006). The influx of affluent gardeners has in many ways erased the struggle of previous gardeners to establish the spaces. Although most community gardens in Boston are protected through land trusts, the question arises “For whom are they protected?” The answer frequently seems to be, for people who can afford home ownership and long-term stability within a community, since participation in a community garden often involves an extensive period of being on a wait list or in some cases, having connections to other residents in the community. I do not mean to suggest that affluent gardeners should not be allowed to participate in community gardens. They can equally benefit from the therapeutic healing qualities and right to form the urban landscape as other gardeners. In many cases, these affluent gardeners are valuable allies in the community garden movement, given their access to political, economic, and cultural resources.
One of the struggles for community gardeners has been including people from outside the gardens in the spaces, and this problem can be addressed in a number of ways. One potential way to include outsiders into the community is to create a sense of connection and exploratory adventure between relevant community spaces. Using signage and documentation of how spaces within a community connect with one another, people from outside the garden can feel included within them, or, at the very least, understand the place of the community garden within the broader neighborhood. An example of this strategy is the Fairmont Cultural Corridor in Mattapan, which highlights local green spaces and cultural assets along a former transportation corridor. This project has helped to create a sense of place and community, and Woolson St. community garden is one of the places that is highlighted on the route.
The idea of opening up gardens to outsiders, who could potentially harm the vegetables and other plants growing in the spaces, has somewhat understandably lead to many community gardeners being wary of inviting outsiders into the spaces. Despite that many community gardeners feel territorial about their gardens and the vegetables they produce, there are ways to incorporate the broader community. One of the most obvious ways to accomplish this goal is to create communal spaces in the garden, where socializing, away from the crops, is the clear objective. Furthermore, since there are only certain times of the year when harvest is optimal, gardeners can schedule community events during periods where vegetable theft will be less likely to occur. Perhaps most importantly, garden events should also be open to the community.
at large free of charge (or inexpensively, at a price that is no higher than the cost of the event) and should not include fiscal motives.

One of the most important resources that community gardeners have today is access to non-profit organizations, particularly given the popularity of public-private partnerships. However, many scholars have cautioned that the extent to which public officials have come to rely on public-private partnerships is problematic, particularly for the creation and maintenance of just communities. When profit motives take precedence over the wishes of the community, the involvement of non-profit organizations can mean that services that were originally intended for one population become the de facto amenity of a more advantaged group of people. This scenario is particularly likely to occur in circumstances where the involvement of the organization is largely top-down, rather than a community led bottom-to-bottom network. In the case of community garden mobilization in particular, a key way of expressing justice is to acknowledge the democratic will of a community to control a space. People in positions of political power should work with the community as much as possible to honor their demonstrated investment in community care and improvement projects. Although community gardens must have a core base of invested members in order to be successful, in cases where collective action occurs, the public sector should reward such momentum with a prioritization in the ability to obtain permanent ownership of the space.
Government officials should support the will of the people who have elected them. Traditional urban development growth machines are often harmful, both to the environment and to the fabric of community. They prioritize the desires of empowered populations and often result in placemaking that is devoid of the will of the people. Recent years have seen an influx in the number of people who live in central urban areas, and one of the main appeals of these spaces is access to unique cultural amenities. Cities must take care to preserve the spirit of originality, as it is one of their main competitive advantages over places such as the suburbs. More importantly, the city should protect the rights of minority groups to have their own spaces
for the formation of collective identities. Privatized spaces may be an exclusive place for the rich, but the public space, especially healthy public space, should be a right for everyone.

One of the most prevalent discourses surrounding advocacy for community garden space is the role that they play in providing access to fresh, healthy, and local-sourced food, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. Many activists who have been involved in community garden activism for decades commented that this shift towards the food element of gardens has occurred in the last five years as consciousness about food security has become more prevalent in public discourse. Alternative food systems, which include emphasis on local and organic food, are frequently framed as just another consumer choice, albeit a choice that is primarily accessible to people with access to financial resources. Our society currently has differentiated food systems, in which wealthy consumers have much greater access to fresh meat and produce, while low-income consumers frequently must develop creative means through which to access these goods, since they are frequently not readily available in their neighborhoods at an affordable price.

Community gardens have the capacity to provide low-income, immigrant, and racial minority populations with better access to healthy food and can serve as a low cost strategy through which they can offset some of the costs of organic produce by investing their own labor into the production process. However, low-cost access to fresh produce is typically a central concern only among community gardeners who have financial restraints. More affluent gardeners are more likely to view the food as primarily a hobby, as they would typically be able to afford purchasing the products of their garden through a grocery store or farmers market. As one of my research participants noted:

“I think definitely the cost and wanting to grow food, wanting to eat better quality food
than you can really afford, is obviously more of a driver for some groups than others and for some neighborhoods than others.”

Although food security is a major benefit of community gardening, an important caveat is that urban agriculture can not provide all of the food that urban centers need to survive; there must be some reliance on traditional, large scale agriculture, particularly if people desire access to a variety of foods (Allen 2013). It would be nearly impossible for a single community garden to provide all of the recommended fruits and vegetables for an optimal diet. This reality is especially true in cold climates such as Boston, where it is extremely difficult to grow food year round.

In many communities, issues of food justice are closely related to issues of racial equality. The placement of food in gardens plays an important political role that expresses black, Latino, Asian, or Native American ownership of a space. The establishment of community gardens in poor communities is often directly related to other forms of social activism, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement has begun to draw parallels exist between targeted police brutality and other forms of racism, such as the displacement of minority populations in gentrifying communities and the lack of fresh food access in black communities. The webmagazine Yes! Magazine, featured an article about using fresh food access as a tool to fight racism and The New Jim Crow, in which a disproportionate number of black people have been incarcerated. They wrote:

We have a two tiered food system where certain populations have access to fresh food while the rest have subsidized access to low quality food…Land and food have also been used as a weapon to keep people of color in second-class citizenship… Malcolm X wrote in his 1963 speech Message to Grass Roots: ‘Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality.’ Historically, white people took land away from the Native Americans, who used the land for buffalo, and United States Department of Agriculture and the Federal Housing Administration denied access to farm credit and other resources to any black person who joined the NAACP, registered to vote, or signed any petition pertaining to
civil rights. ‘Police shootings are modern day lynching, and lynching was the tool used by white supremacists to drive black folks off of their valuable land and out of Mississippi,’ says Dr. Monica White, president of the board at the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. ‘We still see a systemic failure to value black lives, in terms of policing, access to food, education transportation, etc. The issue is privilege and oppression. It’s the same communities dealing with policing issues and bad food.’ (Aplerku 2015).

One analysis of the relationship between growth machines and the uneven development of urban public spaces states that “contemporary parks and public spaces are best analyzed on a continuum of privilege” (Loughran 2014:49). This statement is true not only of traditional parks but also community gardens. Frequently, the most protected community gardens were also located in neighborhoods that experienced a rapid rate of gentrification. This unequal distribution of resources meant that some of the most food insecure populations experienced significant barriers in access, both for pragmatic reasons such as long wait lists that made garden access most feasible for homeowners as well as for cultural reasons such as language barriers or a simple feeling of marginalization for minority members of the community.

Food, however, is not the only benefit of community gardening. Although the food access benefits of urban agriculture should absolutely be taken into consideration, and care should be taken to assure that minority populations can access community gardens, the real benefits of gardens are social and community benefits. The social fabric created in community garden spaces is more central to the majority of stakeholders than maximizing output. Among the handful of for-profit urban farms in Boston, community support and education are central to their mission. The Urban Farming Institute (UFI), for instance, seeks “…to develop and promote urban farming as a Commercial sector that creates green collar jobs for residents; and to engage urban communities in building a healthier and more locally based food system.” Their programs
include farmer training, youth involvement, and public education about the food production system. Bobby Walker, a farm trainer at UFI noted that the institute could be more profitable without the training and education programs, but also emphasized that they were central to the mission of the organization and thus would continue to be an integrated element of their business model. This prioritization of the needs of the community stands well outside the traditional neoliberal capitalist model, which would seek to maximize profits at any cost. It is worth noting that most farmers, including urban farmers, struggle to make ends meet, and for this reason, they may be more in touch with the needs of their surrounding communities in order to fulfill basic human needs.

Community gardens and other forms of community-based urban agriculture theoretically give minority populations access both to redeveloped land and fresh food. Although some urban populations have access to space in which they can grow food privately, many people expressed that having a community garden is the best way to maximize the capacity to grow the most food for themselves and for their families. Community gardens in the most disadvantaged areas of the city served many of the typical benefits of community gardens, such as allowing for food security, political organization, and neighborhood cohesion, but they were less secure in their permanency. Gardeners also reported that having a formalized structure in place to preserve gardens made it very difficult to create new gardens through tactics such as guerilla gardening because they were not legitimized through the formal non-profit infrastructure of other gardens.

Community gardens represent one type of recreational use among many. Most urban open spaces have some form of specific use, such as a tennis court, a playground, a bike trail, or an outdoor theater. Community gardens should not be the only type of community controlled space, merely one form among many. Green spaces alone are just one part of a broader toolkit
aimed at creating just and livable communities. Many participants in this study indicated that they had a desire for the spaces in which their gardens are located to be multiuse. An important element of development strategy for many of the gardeners was to use a specific lot for a multiplicity of uses as it was being developed. Often the development of community gardens is framed as an either/or land use decision, but it is frequently possible to include housing, parking, and open space on a single parcel of land.

Figure 23: Bremen Community Garden, Next to the East Boston branch of the Boston Public Library shows how multiple uses can be incorporated into one space

In the course of my study, I learned of a vacant lot on Edson St. in Dorchester, and the community group had a meeting to try to determine the best use of the space. The developers wanted to create two three story housing units, which would have to include parking. Instead,
the community advocated to develop the parcel into one three family house (with parking) and use the remainder of the space for a community space, possibly a garden. In a place like Boston, where space for new development is limited, developers can creatively incorporate citizen demand. Another example of a type of creative land use sharing occurred at the ACE Magnolia Street Gardens, which were developed on two separate parcels of land across the street from one another. These spaces were both put up for sale and development, but the organization lobbied hard to turn one of the lots into a permanent garden (hopefully with ownership protection from DSNI, which was pending at the time of this writing) and the other lot for affordable housing.

Figure 24: Edson St., Dorchester vacant lot, from Google Street View

Community gardens are just one use of urban spaces, and yet they can be used to bridge the gap between the local and the structural in a way that other urban spaces might not. Since gardens can provide a variety of benefits to the communities in which they are located, they can seek out the support of a wide variety of organizations, centered around a broad range of issues, including food security, public safety, the preservation and creation of affordable communities, community development and real estate planning, education, and environmental justice. This
diversified network of support has been critical to the continued existence of community gardens. Nevertheless, it is vital that these organizations reflect grassroots organization, not top-down approaches to garden management.

One of the main problems with consensus building is that it is frequently lead by economic and political elites. The actions of people in community gardens are microlevel reactions to political and economic situations. Community gardens represent a form of Castells’ spatial praxis, a way for gardeners to physically shape their communities, outside the realm of traditional capitalist mechanisms. Through an analysis of how the movement utilizes community gardens as a tool in the broader context of resisting gentrification and allowing themselves to stay in their communities, we can apply the strategy of democratic participation to other land uses.

Peter Marcuse wrote, “Neither cities nor places in them are unordered, unplanned; the question is only whose order, whose planning, for what purpose?” (Marcuse 1995) Community gardeners, along with their community partners at organizations such as ACE, DSNI, the Mattapan Food and Fitness Council, and the Food Project, fight hard to assure that all people, not just those with access to political, economic, and cultural capital, have continued say over the order, planning, and purpose of their communities. Particularly among communities with a high percentage of racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and low-income residents, community garden spaces are political spaces and tools in a broader fight back against gentrification and displacement. Public dialog and community organization are very common social activities in gardens, particularly in disadvantaged communities. In these spaces, community gardens become symbols of community ownership, and a continuation of earlier environmental work focused on improving the circumstances of citizens in low-income, high minority
neighborhoods. Social movement theorists have supported the notion that activism should occur through grassroots mobilizations rather than through state or private control. In instances where systems of control are closed off from the general public, confrontation and violence are more likely to occur (Tilly 1978). As Mark Purcell has commented, “The right to the city must always remain a political claim made by mobilized groups” (Purcell 2008: 99). Passive community involvement is not an option under neoliberal capitalism, and community gardens likewise require a high level of active involvement, which is perhaps why the two movements of the Right to the City and community gardening fit together so well.

The production element of community gardens allows people in a post-industrial, post-manufacturing economies to participate in creative processes. Jobs in real estate, construction, electrical work and plumbing, architecture, and landscaping are place specific and cannot be outsourced, and likewise, participation in shaping community spaces such as community gardens allows urban residents to demonstrate their local identities in an increasingly globalized society. However, the capacity of the average citizen to make land use decisions in their community, no matter their social class, is extremely limited. There are rare cases, often involving tremendous political will and organization, where ordinary citizen have a say in the process of shaping their communities, but citizen input into most development decisions often depends on the benevolence of specific people acting in specific political contexts. It is not the every day citizen who decides how land is produced. This decision is entirely left to developers and city officials, and thus even the most privileged members of society may feel relatively little power over land use in their neighborhoods. Even though elite consumers enjoy community amenities such as community gardens, elite producers do not like to create these amenities because they do not directly generate profits.
Many proponents of gentrification argue that development projects are necessary to turn around high crime rates and to make dilapidated areas of the city habitable. They frequently accept the displacement of current urban residents as an inevitable side effect of neighborhood improvement. However, there is an important distinction between the creation of new space, which is devoid of the cultural context of a neighborhood, and improvement of an existing space, which can better incorporate the current socioeconomic context of a neighborhood. The former often occurs through large scale development projects, which have ties to large amounts of capital or multinational corporate support, while the latter occurs as a result of local community initiatives which account for current social dynamics. A major difference exists between improving a neighborhood and making a neighborhood trendy (Jacobus 2013). Often development schemes have a focus on amenities, which allow their projects to compete against other projects in the area. However, the goal of community development should be to allow people from all backgrounds to blend into one urban fabric. Gentrification has deeper roots than the housing quality or cultural amenities of a neighborhood. It is the result of racism and classism, which has created stratification of neighborhoods and places.

The concept of neighborhood is particularly important for marginalized groups (Clark 1989, Manzo 2003, McAuley 1998, Pattillo 2007, Falk 2004), given that they do not have the same levels of access to material goods and privatized space. Revitalization without displacement has become a central theme in modern environmental justice movements. The right to the city movement works to combat environmental gentrification and prioritizes the spatial balance of environmental goods throughout the city (Anguelovski 2011). If amenities such as open space are available everywhere, they no longer become an exclusive right of people who can afford to live in expensive neighborhoods.
Because community gardens are often healing spaces for the communities in which they are located, they should be valued for their capacity to not only prevent crime, but also to aid in the recovery process after traumatic events have occurred. One way that the city can help to enhance the meanings of these spaces is to direct funds to revitalization projects in areas where community gardens address the psychological dimensions of environmental health, particularly in communities where people experience trauma, recovery, and security issues.

From a policy perspective, these findings may inform decisions concerning land use and zoning in urban settings, particularly as they relate to preserving open space in disadvantaged communities. Policies at the national, state, and city level have a major impact on urban residential communities, in the form of tax breaks, permitting, and more communicative public-private partnerships. Many gardeners and advocates for other types of urban farms emphasized that the creation of urban agriculture should occur in collaboration with city residents and organizations aimed at supporting a variety of environmental and spatial justice concerns, including access to affordable housing, public health, and the right for low-income residents to remain in the city. The history of community garden development in Boston frequently took place through coalitions between neighborhood organizations who wanted both affordable housing and open space in their neighborhoods. These activists did not see vacant lots of land as having an either/or use. Instead, they developed the land in such a way that both housing and open space were incorporated into the design of the urban landscape. Many of the participants in my study indicated that the best practices for the design of community garden space incorporated multiple uses in one space, which could help to reduce feelings of exclusivity and enhance community support. Community gardens can play a role in shaping holistic neighborhoods, where multiple interests and uses are reflected in the spaces.
Community gardens represent a specific type of space that is both a reaction to the progression of capitalism and a resistive force against capitalism. They are relatively unique in that they are separate from the types of elite control of space associated with most other forms of urban development. Although these spaces do represent freedom of expression to some degree, they are still situated in the broader context of the political, social, and economic realities of the broader society. Other types of urban production that involve participation of the citizens include public art such as graffiti, performance art such as busking and street performance, and organized political demonstrations. The study of these phenomena is extremely valuable in that it represents a counterpoint to the focus on hegemonic power and growth coalitions that has dominated urban studies for so long. Studies of such phenomena are not meant to replace these perspectives; they are meant to complement them by showing how organizational power and the will of the people can maintain power in spite of very dominant political and economic social contexts.

Community gardens, or any other singular form of land use cannot single handedly transform power relationships within society, but they may serve as a point for individual people to have a sense of control in their communities. Community gardens should not become the exclusive domain of elite citizens. The ability to live in an urban context, rich with stimulation and the capacity to interact with members of one’s social group should not be an exclusive right of well-resourced individuals. For this reason, it is critical that policymakers assure that access to community-controlled spaces such as community gardens remains a possibility for everyone, but most especially for traditionally disadvantaged populations such as low-income people, immigrants, and minorities. Community gardens represent one form of space that, by and large, very directly promotes healthy communities, by allowing people to access healthy foods and a
method of exercise, replacing undesirable land uses, promoting a sense of community, and allowing people to regain a sense of ownership in the spaces.

In spite of the benefits of community gardens, it is important to note that they are not a panacea to solve urban social problems; they should not be used as all-encompassing solutions to broader societal issues such as food insecurity, racial inequality, and environmental racism. They may help in small ways to address these problems, and they have significant impacts on the lives of people who utilize them. Nevertheless, they should certainly not be treated as the only way that citizen participation in land use can occur. Additionally, they cannot be considered substitutes for other community resources such as affordable housing, job opportunities, and fair transit policies.

It is also important to note that participating in a community garden involves a certain degree of time management and commitment. The most common reason that people become less active in community garden spaces is that they are too busy or do not realize how much work it is to care for a garden. Many people who are very active in community gardens, particularly those in leadership roles, have flexible schedules, which they rearrange in order to more effectively manage the garden. People with less flexible schedules may not have as much time to spend in the gardens, and they go there much less frequently than people who are in a position for a more flexible schedule. If a person is working two or three jobs, a community garden may not be the best strategy to address issues such as food insecurity or access to open space. For this reason, it is vital that urban areas include alternate food systems that include a multitude of food provision strategies, (i.e. farmers markets, reliable and affordable produce in corner stores, and programs that allow for acceptance of food stamps across many types of businesses) as well as multiple types of open and recreational spaces.
Community gardens represent a struggle between economic development and community preservation. City officials may argue that development is necessary for fiscal stability and the generation of tax revenue for the city. Although many mayors in the past have been relatively supportive of urban gardening, Mayor Marty Walsh has placed a particular emphasis on stimulating development across the city. These prioritizations overlook the economic benefits of creating community-controlled spaces. Although individual lots may not be put to their “highest and best use,” the fact that adjacent properties experience increases in property value can help to make up for some of the losses in revenue. Given that studies have shown that community gardens have little effect on the prices of housing in community as a whole, their presence does not result in a situation where the entire neighborhood becomes unaffordable for the residents who live there. It’s also often overlooked that new development often brings new costs to the city and that fiscally, community gardens are one of the cheapest forms of open space for a city to maintain.

Urban scholars who approach land use decisions from a variety of perspectives have argued that a minimization the role of the state and corporate powers is the best means to achieve democratic control of land decisions, but these theorists disagree on the best practices to balance the influence of various stakeholders to optimize land uses in the city in order to create just, livable communities. Through this dissertation, I have demonstrated, using community gardens in Boston as a lens through which to study land use decisions, that a neoliberal redistribution of power has created a partially exclusionary community garden landscape, where environmental concerns are subordinate to individualistic pursuits such as access to semi-private space, physical and mental-well being, and participation in the currently trendy local food movement. Nevertheless, in spite of changes social dynamics in the spaces, many community gardeners and
other community activists use targeted, strategic, and transgressive organization to resist the
dominance of powerful development forces through the establishment of community garden
spaces.

Even though justifications for community gardens have undergone a number of changes
since the end of the 19th century, the spaces have remained firmly embedded in the urban social
fabric since that time. This immutability speaks to the ongoing relevance of urban gardening to
various populations, regardless of their specific social circumstances. As such, both the public
and private sector must accept that the spaces are essentially permanent features of the urban
landscape. Political and economic elites must accept community gardens as an integral
component of a healthy and just community, rather than treating the spaces as temporary
placeholders in a capitalist society that myopically focuses on profit motives for land use
decisions.
Appendix A: List of Gardens in the Study, By Neighborhood

**Allston-Brighton:**
Christian Herter Community Garden

**Charlestown:**
Charlestown Sprouts

**Dorchester:**
Nightingale Community Garden
Magnolia Street and Lebanon Street (ACE Garden)
Magnolia Street and Woolford Street (ACE Garden)
Leyland Street Community Garden
Lucerne and Balsam Community Garden
Spencer Street Community Garden
Wheatland Avenue Community Garden

**East Boston:**
Bremen Street
Hynes Street
Joe Ciampa Community Garden

**Fenway:**
Fenway Victory Gardens
Symphony Rd. Community Garden

**Jamaica Plain:**
Day Hill Community Garden
Lamartine Hubbard Community Garden
Minton Stable Community Garden
Egleston Community Orchard
Granada Park Community Garden
Lawndale St. Community Garden

**Longwood:**
Countway Community Garden
The Prouty Garden

**Mattapan:**
Woolson St. Community Garden
Clark Cooper Community Garden
Revision Urban Farm
City Natives
Guerilla gardens

**Mission Hill:**
Oscar Parker Community Garden

**Roxbury:**
Jardín de la Amistad
Dudley Greenhouse (Food Project/DSNI garden)
Dudley Square garden (ACE Garden)
Ellington St garden (ACE Garden)
Maple St. garden (ACE Garden)
Shawmut St. garden (ACE Garden, bulldozed)

**South Boston:**
South Boston Open Garden

**South End:**
West Springfield Community Garden
Northampton Community Garden
Shawmut/Rutland Community Garden
Warren/Clarendon Street Garden
Berkeley Street Community Garden

**Outside Boston:**
Malden Community Garden
Nichols Community Garden (Watertown)
Chelsea Community Garden
Somerville Community Growing Center
Squirrel Brand Community Garden (Cambridge)
Appendix B: Summary of Demographic Data Among Interviewees

Participants by Role in the Garden

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Gardeners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinators</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gardening Activists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational Affiliates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Gardening Community Members</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants in Multiple Roles</td>
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Participants by Neighborhood

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<tr>
<td>Charlestown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Boston</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenway</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica Plain</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattapan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North End</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxbury/Mission Hill</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Boston</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South End</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watertown</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerville</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the study area/unknown residence</td>
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Participants by Race/Ethnicity

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (any race)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/mixed race</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**Participants by Gender**

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
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</table>
Appendix C: Signed Informed Consent Document and Recruitment E-mail Text

Informed Consent Document

Signed Informed Consent Document for Interviews

Northeastern University, Department of Sociology
Name of Investigators: Daniel Faber, Principal Investigator; Jill Eshelman, Student Researcher
Title of Project: Community Gardens and Spatial Justice: Stakeholder Perspectives on Urban Land Use

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep. You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because of your involvement in community gardening or other land use decisions in the city of Boston.

Why are you doing this research study?

The purpose of this research is to gain a more complete understanding about peoples’ perceptions of land use, particularly community gardens, in urban areas.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you a series of questions. These questions include topics relating to your personal experience with community gardening, including the ways that it has impacted the environment and social relationships within the surrounding community. The interview will be audio recorded for analysis and transcription purposes only.

During the interview you may request to stop recording at any time to discuss or clarify how you wish to respond to a topic before proceeding. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview.

In some instances, the researchers may also be interested in taking photographs of participants in their gardens. This would only be done with your permission.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

You will be interviewed at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will take about one hour.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are not any reasonable foreseeable risks, harms, discomforts or inconveniences anticipated in this research.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information gathered from this study will allow researchers to gain a more complete understanding of social interactions within public spaces such as community gardens.
Who will see the information about me?

We hope that you will consider speaking on the record about your experiences related to community gardening, meaning that your name will be attributed to your comments. If you choose to have your name attributed to your comments, identifying information such as name, occupation and location may be identified and quoted in reports and publications based on this research. I will provide you with a draft copy of the transcript of the interview or selected quotes so that you can review its content and add any clarifications and corrections that you feel are necessary.

However, you may also specify that your name not be attributed to some or all of your comments and that your part in this study be handled in a confidential manner. If so, only the researchers will know that you participated in this study and your responses will be coded and given a pseudonym. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only de-identified information and will not identify you as being part of this project.

The digital files of all interviews will be destroyed following transcription. Photos may be archived by the researchers for possible future educational use, reproduction, exhibition or distribution.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, your information will not be included in the final analysis and report. In addition, the recording of the interview will be destroyed and no transcription will be made.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

The researcher may be contacted at: Jill Eshelman, Northeastern University, 500 Holmes Hall, Boston MA 02115, 774-722-2770 (cell), eshelman.j@husky.neu.edu.

The Principal Investigator overseeing this research may be contacted at: Daniel Faber, Ph.D., Northeastern University, 500 Holmes Hall, Boston MA 02115, 617-373-3856, d.faber@neu.edu.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University Boston, MA 02115 tel. 617-373-4588, email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?

There is no payment for participation.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There are no anticipated costs to you as a participant.

I agree to take part in this research. My preference regarding the use of my name and being digitally recorded is as follows:

- I agree to be identified by name in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this interview.

- I wish not to be identified by name in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this interview.
____ I agree to allow the interviewer to digitally record this interview for transcription and analysis purposes only.

____ I wish not to allow the interviewer to digitally record this interview for transcription and analysis purposes only.

Signature of person agreeing to take part __________________________

Date

Printed name of person above

Signature of person who explained the study the to the participant above and obtained consent __________________________

Date

Printed name of person above
USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

This consent for the use of photographs is entirely separate from your consent to participate in the study. Please note that if you do not wish to give your permission for this, you may still participate in this research project.

I hereby authorize Northeastern University (Northeastern), and those acting pursuant to its authority to:

a) Record my likeness on a photographic medium.

b) Use my name in connection with these photographs.

c) Use, reproduce, exhibit or distribute in any medium (e.g. print publications, video, internet/world wide web, and/or other media formats and platforms) these photographs for any purpose that Northeastern, and those acting pursuant to its authority, deem appropriate.

I release Northeastern University and those acting pursuant to its authority from liability for any violation of any personal or proprietary right I may have in connection with such use. I understand that all such photographs, in whatever medium, shall remain the property of Northeastern. I have read and fully understand the terms of this release.

Name
______________________________________________________________________

Address
______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Street

City State Zip

Phone
______________________________________________________________________

Signature _____________________________________________________________

Date________
Appendix D: Recruitment E-mail

My name is Jill Eshelman and I am conducting research on the community gardens around the city of Boston for my dissertation at Northeastern University. (After a prior attempt to contact you, I am following up to see if you would be available to speak with me regarding your interactions with the community.)[I received your name and contact information from ______.] I am currently recruiting individuals for interviews. I am asking you to participate in this study because of your involvement with a community garden (role in city planning, role at your organization, role in urban development.)

The purpose of this study is to understand how gardeners and non-gardeners in the city of Boston perceive community gardens as an urban land use. It is my intent to use this information to analyze how stakeholders from various backgrounds experience community gardens. I hope that you will consider speaking on the record about your experiences related to community gardening, meaning that your name will be attributed to your comments. If so, I will provide you with a draft copy of the transcript of the interview that you can review its content and add any clarifications and corrections that you feel are necessary. However, you may also specify that your name not be attributed to some or all of your comments and that your part in this study be handled in a confidential manner.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate. I will be conducting interviews in Boston ______ through ______ and will be able to meet with you at a convenient public location of your choice. The interview will take about one hour and may be audio recorded for analysis and transcription purposes only.

My study was reviewed and approved by the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (#14-07-18).

Please contact me at: eshelman.j@husky.neu.edu to let me know if you are interested in participating in this study.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Jill Eshelman
Department of Sociology
900 Renaissance Park
Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Email: eshelman.j@husky.neu.edu
Appendix E: Interview Schedules

Part I: Interview Schedule for Gardeners

Demographic questions

1. In which neighborhood in Boston do you live?
2. How long have you lived there?
3. Do you currently own or rent a home?
4. What is your gender?
5. How would you describe your race or ethnicity?
6. Are you currently employed?
7. What is your profession?
8. What is your age?
9. What is your marital status?
10. Do you have any children?

Gardener experiences in the community garden

11. What made you decide to become a member of the community garden?
12. How long have you been involved in the community garden?
13. Please tell me about your involvement in the garden. How often do you come here? Are you in any leadership roles?
14. What is the leadership of the garden like?
15. Tell me about how the community garden experience compares to your expectations when you first decided to join the garden.
16. Has your time in the community garden changed the way you think about nature or environmental issues?
17. Do you spend time in other natural areas in Boston? Which ones? What do you do there?
18. Do you have any stories about a time when the rules or organization of the garden changed?
19. How is the garden governed? Do you feel that you have some control over what happens in the garden? Why or why not? Can you give me an example?
20. Who do you normally see in the garden? What are interactions like in the garden? Who do you interact with in the garden? How often? What are those interactions like?

Perspectives on the role of the community garden in the surrounding community

21. How do you spend your time in the garden? Can you walk me through a typical day?
22. Where else do you tend to spend time in the neighborhood? What do you do there?
23. Have you spoken to people from the surrounding community about the garden? What are their impressions? Can you provide an example of a conversation you have had?
24. What are some ways that you notice members of the surrounding community interacting with the garden? Can you provide an example?
25. From your experience, does the community garden create a sense of belonging in the surrounding neighborhood?
26. Do you feel that the community garden has improved the neighborhood as a whole and made it a better place to be?
27. Are there any ways that the community garden has contributed to conflict in this neighborhood? If so, how?
28. Do you feel that the community garden improves security in the neighborhood? If so, how?
29. Do you have any suggestions for ways to make the community garden better?
30. What does the ideal community garden look like?
31. Are there other people who might be interested in participating in my study?
Part II: Interview Questions for Community Organization Workers

Demographic Questions

1. How long have you been involved in this organization?
2. What made you decide to work here?
3. What other experiences have you had working in community development or environmental issues prior to working here?
4. Do you currently live in Boston? If so, which neighborhood?

Interview Schedule

1. Could you tell me about the work that your organization does with community gardening or urban agriculture in Boston?
2. Do you observe any variations in how people from diverse backgrounds utilize community gardens?
3. Do you feel that community gardens play a role in the development of affordable communities?
4. Have you observed any disagreements about the way land has been used in the city of Boston? Could you please provide an example?
5. Do you feel that community gardens improve security in the neighborhoods in which they are located? Why or why not?
6. Do you have any stories about ways that people from the surrounding community, who are not involved in the gardens, interact with the gardens or the gardeners?
7. To your knowledge, are there any ways that the community gardens have contributed to conflict within the neighborhoods in which they are located? If so, how?
Appendix F: Works Cited


