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Lea Hoyer

‘Plant a Seed: Grow a Community’

An ethnographic exploration of community gardens in London

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Lea Hoyer: 'Plant a Seed: Grow a Community'. An ethnographic exploration of community gardens in London

Zusammenfassung

Dieses Arbeitspapier entwickelt ein Model von *Gemeinschaft* in Gemeinschaftsgärten und beschäftigt sich mit der Frage mit welchen Praktiken die verschiedenen Teilnehmenden *Gemeinschaft* in Gemeinschaftsgärten kreieren und dauerhaft erhalten. Darüber hinaus werden die verschiedenen Charakteristika, Rollen und Motivationen der Teilnehmenden analysiert und verschiedene Ebenen der Partizipation herausgearbeitet. Als Fallbeispiel dienen zwei Londoner Gemeinschaftsgärten. Das Arbeitspapier beschreibt nicht nur die Entstehung, Struktur und Organisation dieser zwei Gemeinschaftsgärten, sondern setzt sich darüber hinaus auch in einer kurzen theoretischen Einleitung sowohl mit dem Begriff der Gemeinschaft selbst, als auch mit dem des Gemeinschaftsgartens auseinander und gibt einem kurzen geschichtlichen Überblick über die Entstehung von Gemeinschaftsgärten in England. Die Beobachtungen, Analysen und Interpretationen basieren auf einer sechsmonatigen Feldforschung, welche die Autorin in London im Jahr 2013 durchführte.

Abstract

The aim of this working paper is to develop a model of community in community gardens, addressing the question with what kind of practices the different participants create and maintain a community in community gardens. Taking two London community gardens as in-depth case study, the paper analyses further also the different roles and motivations of the participants for their involvement in the community and different levels of participation in the community gardens. The working paper does not only describe the origin, structure and organisation of these two community gardens but deals furthermore with research about community gardens in general, with the origin of community gardens in the UK and with different theories and concepts of community. The basis for the description, analysis and interpretation are six months of field research conducted in London in 2013.

Zur Autorin

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UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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1 Introduction[1]

Plant a seed and grow a community.

(Motto of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens)[2]

The UK is famous for its gardens and parks; London, in particular, offers a variety and diversity of green spaces that make the hearts of passionate gardeners beat faster. Being a passionate gardener myself, on my first visit to London, in November 2012, I was immediately captivated by the enormous range of gardens and parks on offer. Wandering through the city, I discovered not only a multitude of garden squares, parks and allotments, but also the sometimes hidden, small to medium sized pockets of land called "community gardens". The diversity of these community green spaces was fascinating: I knew about the phenomenon of community gardens, and had already visited some in Berlin, but the variety of the community gardens in London was completely new to me.

At a first sight, each community garden appears quite unique. The gardens are distinct in their structure, organisation, origin, focus and location, yet, despite these ostensible differences, they all refer to themselves as "community gardens". When contemplating the word "community garden", therefore, I wondered about the meaning of *community* and how it could be developed in the gardens. It seemed as though the gardeners not only sowed seeds to grow plants, but also to grow communities - as the motto of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, included at the beginning of this chapter, so conveniently suggests. But how exactly could the gardeners "grow a community"?

The aim of this M.A. thesis is to develop a model of community and to analyse the aspect of *growing a community* in community gardens, taking two London community gardens as in-depth case studies. The question I want to address here is how - or, to be more specific, with what kind of practices - participants *create* (and maintain) a community in a community garden. I will describe and analyse elements that can be interpreted as fundamental for the creation and maintenance of a community in the community gardens. Analysed will be further also the different roles and motivations of the participants for their involvement in the community and different levels of participation in the community gardens.

The basis for the description and analysis is field research conducted from mid-June to mid-December 2013. I focused mainly on two community gardens during this research; the present M.A. thesis, therefore, can only be considered the beginning of an analysis of the community aspect in London community gardens. With my descriptive and inductive

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1 The present paper is a slightly revised version of my M.A. thesis, which I submitted in September 2014 at the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies.

2 Homepage of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens: https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/. Last access: 21 May 2014.

approach to the field, I took an ethnographic approach to research design. My thesis can be understood as an ethnographic exploration of the topic, as suggested by the subtitle "an ethnographic exploration of Community Gardens in London".[3]

1.1 Theoretical frame and state of research

Following the leading questions of my thesis, two different theoretical frameworks arise: one dealing with research and theories about community gardens in general, and the other dealing with research, theories and concepts of community in particular.

Community gardening is often perceived to be a recent fashion, and is frequently presented as such in the growing academic and non-academic literature concerned with the phenomenon. After an overview of the existing research on community gardens, however, I will give an insight into their historic development and show that community gardens are not a recent fashion at all. In the literature review, I will focus exclusively on literature concerning community gardens in urban settings, as my own research, being London-based, took place in an urban setting.

The examination of communities is a classical subject of social anthropology, sociology, as well as being integral to other social sciences. The corpus of existing concepts, definitions and theories relating to "community" is therefore as stunning as it is overwhelming. A review of the existing concepts would be far beyond the scope of this thesis; instead I will point out different elements that have been used to describe communities, and which lay the groundwork for my own analysis.

It almost goes without saying that the present study could be approached through alternative or additional theoretical frameworks to the one introduced above. As the setting is an urban area, concepts from urban anthropology and sociology would doubtlessly unfold interesting insights, especially those concerning theories about space and place. While I make reference to such theories in a couple of footnotes throughout, in the interests of maintaining the focus of the thesis, I have had to largely exclude them from the analytical frame.

[3] The present work is an empirical work with ethnographic techniques and my fieldwork as a major source of my data. As fieldwork is exploratory in nature, as Fetterman (1998: 8) states, I gave the thesis the subtitle of an "ethnographic exploration".

Community gardens

[I]t really depends on what people mean by a community garden. Because there isn't really a […] universal definition of a community garden. People use that term for all sort of things.

(Catherine Miller, 5 December 2013)[4]

Community gardens are recognised as a worldwide phenomenon, existing both in rural and in urban areas (Ferris, Noran, Sempik 2001: 560). There is an elaborate collection of non-academic literature on the subject, mainly consisting of manuals about how to start a community garden and reports rich in splendid pictures, emphasising the extraordinary of the different community gardens compared to other kinds of (main-stream) gardening. The existing academic literature gives attention mainly to the structure, organisation and history of community gardens and the benefits people can gain through participation.

Surprisingly not many of the publications question the definition of the term "community garden" itself; some even lack a definition of the term entirely. A few authors, on the other hand, maintain that the term community garden is controversial: For example, Ferris, Noran and Sempik (2001: 561) state that it is not useful to offer a precise definition of community gardens, as that would impose "arbitrary limits on creative communal responses to local needs". Moreover, Firth, Maye and Pearson write that the definitions of community gardens are unclear, with multiple possible meanings. From individual plot cultivation to collective gardening in public spaces, schools and prisons – many different forms of gardening have been interpreted as community gardening. (Firth, Maye, Pearson 2011: 556) Authors that *have* attempted to define the term community garden tend to remain vague, in order to be able to describe the diversity of the different community gardens. Hou, Johnsons and Lawson (2009: 11), for example, state that community gardens can be best understood as a "defined area of tillable land made available to groups of individuals, households, classes and others to garden" of which "size, location, participation and programmatic elements can vary widely". Glover (2004: 143) defines community gardens as a "collective venture," which brings collective resources of neighbours together to address neighbourhood issues.

The controversial definitions show that the places falling under the umbrella term of "community garden", can be extremely various. That is, both the people forming the *community* of the community gardens and the *garden* itself as a physical place, are diverse. An interesting question is also whether the community garden is "run for the community, by [the] community, or […] they just happen to be located in certain communities" (Firth, Maye and Pearson 2011: 557). It is a question that describes the problems with defining the term, and a question that I will address and try to answer throughout my thesis.

[4] Quote from the Interview with Catherine Miller, the London Coordinator of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, 5 December 2013.

The structure and organisation of the community gardens represented in the literature reflect the diversity even further: community gardens can appear as features of community centres, parks, schools, prisons, hospitals and retirement homes (Hou, Johnson, Lawson 2009: 11). They can be established by groups of individuals, by institutions (such as schools and prisons), by non-profit organisations, or by public or even governmental agencies (Hou, Johnsons, Lawson 2009: 15; Schukoske 2000: 362). Some community gardens even involve participants who involuntarily participate as part of state programs (Lawson 2005:4). The access to the gardens may be open or limited. Some community gardens offer job trainings, or educational and therapeutic programmes; others do not (Hou, Johnson, Lawson 2009: 13; Ferris, Noran, Sempik 2001: 564f.). Community gardens can vary widely in their size: Some community gardens look like parks, others look like an allotment garden with individual plot cultivation, and others have one big communal area that is collectively cultivated by all of the participants. Anything, from vegetables to fruits to flowers, may be grown in these gardens. The harvest may be divided among the participants, or sold at farmers' markets, or to restaurants, or as vegetable boxes to neighbours; it may also, in some cases, be donated to other projects (Pudup 2008: 1231). Whereas in many urban and rural areas of the non-western world, gardening as subsistence economy is still often a necessary source of vegetables and fruits, the recent resurgence of urban gardening in western countries has been almost celebrated and presented, especially in popular literature, as something "alternative," innovative, sustainable and fashionable.

It seems apparent, by this stage, that the variety among and within community gardens is almost endless. In this thesis, therefore, I follow Christa Müller's (2010: 37) idea of community gardens as an "undefined terrain". Müller points out how, especially in cities, community gardens can be an important rediscovery of "undefined terrain". The majority of places in urban settings, according to Müller, are clearly defined in their purpose: people know what they mean, and what they were made for. On the contrary, community gardens are undefined places and the amount of their possible uses as a space increases with every participant (Müller 2010: 37).[5] All the different community gardens have in common the fact that they are "multifunctional" and that they can act as a "transmitter, medium and platform" for many different issues such as ecology, neighbourhood organisation, transfer and exchange of knowledge and different cultural backgrounds (Müller 2010: 32).

Müller's idea of community gardens as multifunctional undefined terrain that can act as transmitter and platform is one of the fundamental theories that will be important for my

[5] I'm following the relational model of space that understands places as constructed through social processes. After the spatial turn, *space* became a sociological category and it became clear that places had to be understood and studied not as a "container" but as the condition and result of social processes. A place is in this relational model of space a constituted and created one and not an a priori natural fact. (Löw 2008: 37)

analysis. In considering community gardens from this perspective it is not my aim to highlight one of the myriad definitions of community gardens as the most "truthful" or definitive, or to add yet another inadequate or generalised definition of community gardens to the pile. In my research I focussed on projects that define and understand themselves as community gardens through their name and constitution. I don't intend to doubt the validity of the self- ascription of the projects as community gardens. Instead, I will take the self-ascription as the basis for a later analysis of how community in the community garden is created and maintained.

The research on community gardens focuses also on the benefits people can gain from their participation. Several authors mention that community gardening can lead to a transformation of both the individual and the community (See for example Wooley 2010; Pudup 2008; Armstrong 2000; Howe, Wheeler 1999). One effect community gardening can have is the creation of a community. According to some authors, social networks and a sense of community can be created by bringing people together (Wooley 2010: 16; Hou, Johnson, Lawson 2009: 25; Grünsteidel 2000: 132; Landman 1993: 118). Although the aspect of community gardening as an important tool for community creating is mentioned throughout in the literature, it has been a topic of research and analysis in only few works. Some authors have tried to use the analytical framework of "social capital" to interpret the community aspect (Firth, Maye, Pearson 2011; Glover 2004; Twiss et all 2003). Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011: 557) refer to social capital as the social structures, institutions and shared values that constitute communities. Inspired by the interpretations and definitions of Alexis Tocqueville (1984) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977) they understand social capital as the different connections among individuals and networks, and the feeling of trust that is evoked by such connections. The central idea is that strong social networks and powerful relationships may benefit group members (Firth, Maye and Pearson 2011: 558). Social capital is, according to Glover (2004: 145), the collective asset that grants members social credit resulting from a former investment, an interesting analytical framework that brings Marcel Mauss' idea of the "gift-exchange" to mind (Mauss 1990). The authors state that social capital is a necessary element to create a community. As elements that create social capital and thus a community, the authors mention volunteering, as a way of bringing together people with a common purpose; the community garden as a meeting place where people can gather, network and identify with one another; and the activities of the garden enabling people from different backgrounds to interact with one another. These three aspects (volunteering, the community

garden as a meeting place, and activities) and the core idea that social networks have value are very important elements for my later analysis.[6]

History of community gardens in the United Kingdom

Although most literature focuses on the history, structure and organisation of community gardens in the United States of America,[7] there are also some authors who address the development of community gardens in the United Kingdom (UK). Irvine, Johnson and Peters (1999: 36) suggest that English allotment gardens from the early 19th century are significant precursors to modern-day community gardens. The origin of these English allotment gardens, in turn, is connected with the enclosure of the commons in the late 18th century. When the former common land was turned into commercial farms, many labourers and small farmers were left with no land and no possibility to grow their own food. Wealthy landowners leased small parcels of land and allotted them to the villagers – the first so-called "allotment" gardens. The allotment gardens were encouraged by the government as they meant a cash relief for the state. (Wooley 2010: 3) Allotment gardens thus provided agricultural land in the city, especially for migrants from the countryside, who had used the common land before. Howe and Wheeler (1999) describe in detail these early examples of urban food growing movements. They report that, prior to the development of transport systems, people had to grow their food wherever they lived. This close relationship started decreasing with the onset of the industrial revolution; by the end of the 19th century, the inhabitants of big industrial cities were almost completely divorced from food production. Urban allotment gardens were rediscovered and redeveloped by the government at the end of the 19th century, along with municipal parks, as part of an effort to try to improve unhealthy urban living conditions. (Howe, Wheeler 1999: 13) Economic instability has also been a reason for urban food growing projects, as in the case of both world wars. The threat of starvation during war-time prompted "dig for victory" campaigns to increase the national food output through urban food production. Later, with the increasing prosperity of the post-war time, urban food production sharply declined again, as people no longer needed to grow their own food. Urban food growing activity increased again in the 1970s, along with a higher level of environmental awareness (Howe, Wheeler 1999: 14). Along with allotment gardens, city farms and gardens with the name "community garden" started to emerge, especially in London.

---

6 Although I'm not directly using the concept of social capital for my analysis of the community aspect, it is, nevertheless, an engaging analytical concept that I could extract some key elements from.

7 See for example: Firth, Maye, Pearson 2011; Hou, Johnson, Lawson 2009; Lawson 2005; Ferris, Noran, Sempik 2001; Schukoske 2000.

Urban food production or civic gardening projects, as this historical outline demonstrates, are not recent phenomena or fashions, at all. Instead they are closely intertwined with political and economic events, and the social changes these events bring about at different points in time.[8] The problem of defining community gardens extends, therefore, also to the question of their origin. It is just as controversial and questionable to establish from which point in time the various urban (and rural) food growing projects can be called community gardens, as it is to define what, specifically, is meant by the term itself. I believe it is not meaningful to mark one specific moment in history as a categorical starting point for the development of community gardens. Rather, with this historical outline, I wanted to show the existence of communal food growing projects (especially in urban areas) as a continuous development. Community gardens can be understood as part of this continuous development; the name, as well, can be considered part of this development, and viewed as a reaction to economic and political decisions (that either restricted or supported the work of community projects).

To refer back to Müller's idea of community gardens as an undefined terrain, the historical outline reinforces the way in which they can be used as both a transmitter and a platform for addressing different issues at different times: the threat of starvation in war times, the problems associated with vacant land in post-war times, or more recently cuts in social services, gentrification, and the dilemma of food production, consumption and distribution.

Concepts and theories of community

> *Characteristic of any discipline is that its members are not always able to agree on the nature of the phenomena they examine. This lack of agreement is especially reflected in the formulation of abstractions, including concepts and definitions.*
>
> (Hillery 1955: 111)

As social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1998:11) writes, the term community is "highly resistant to a satisfactory definition in anthropology and sociology". According to George A. Hillery and the entry quote, it is a characteristic of any discipline that its members cannot always agree on the nature of the phenomena they examine. There are indeed many different and complex theories, definitions and concepts of *community* and many of them are contentious and often a source of confusion. The term community stands for many interchangeable meanings and often it is even taken in an unproblematic way, as a for-granted concept. Some authors, therefore, maintain that the ambiguous employment of the term, in disparate and frequently non-scientific contexts, diminishes its usefulness for

[8] I will give an insight into the more recent political decisions after the 1970s, concerning the development of community gardens in London, in the introduction to the second chapter.

scientific purposes.[9] Cohen (2002: 167), for example, writes that the term "community" is used "so variously, inconsistently and loosely that […] it has ceased to be of any obvious analytical use as a category in social science". Dennis Poplin (1979: 4) questions if the concept of community is not stretched to a point, where it loses all meaning and becomes completely useless for scientific purposes. Poplin describes it consequently as an "omnibus word," which is a non-scientific term unless explicitly defined in every scientific paper (1979: 3).

There are different overviews and attempts at the classification of the existing definitions and concepts of communities already in existence. Hillery (1955), for example, compared and analysed 94 different definitions and concepts of communities. The only aspect he identified as common among all the definitions is that all of them deal with people (Hillery 1955: 113). This, as a result, seems almost an ironic reflection of the variety of previous attempts to define the term. Instead of re-repeating the different definitions, it is my intention here to give a tentative description of the different streams of interpretations with the help of Hillery's classification.

The definitions and concepts from sociologists and anthropologists at the turn of the 20th century are considered as classical theories and are still used as a reference in works about community today. These theories are based on the idea of the contrast between two types of societies. The sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1935: 7, 34) for example, distinguished between "community" (*Gemeinschaft*) and "association" (*Gesellschaft*); the sociologist and cultural anthropologist Émile Durkheim (1966: 130f.) distinguished between "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity". These early theories have in common that they describe a transformation of societies: from a social context where all individuals know each other (*Gemeinschaft*, mechanical solidarity), to a social context of anonymity (*Gesellschaft*, organic solidarity). Supposedly, such a process was initiated by industrialisation and would result in the end of communities in modern times, as suggested by both Tönnies and Durkheim. Cohen (1998: 23) writes that it is important to understand the idea of a transforming and developing society within the framework of evolutionary theories. According to Hillery's classification these theories describe the term community as a sociological unit with the element of social interaction as most significant (Hillery 1955, 113). The concept is furthermore based on the idea of a group of people living together. The element of a shared geographic area is thus just as important as the element of social interaction to describe communities.

Durkheim's ideas were developed further by Park, Burgess, Wirth and Redfield of the Chicago school in the first half of the 20th century. Even though the theorists of the Chicago

[9] Notably: Korpela 2013; Bauman 2003; Cohen 2002; Amit 2000; Poplin 1979; Minar, Greer, 1969.

school came to the conclusion that Tönnies' and Durkheim's proclamation of the end of communities in modern times was wrong, they still used Durkheim's dichotomy as a model for their own distinction between urban and rural societies. They differentiated between simple rural societies, organised as communities, and complex urban societies characterised by a loss of community. (Cohen 1998: 27f.) The fundamental elements in the theories of the Chicago School are thus the element of social organisation and the element of a shared geographic area.

Increasingly, recent works have tended to understand community as an idea of sociality, rather than a social structure. In Anderson's work the idea of community characterised through an imagined "collective identity" rather than through social interaction is particularly obvious. To explain the affective loyalties in nationalism, Anderson formed the idea of "imagined communities", whose participants imagine themselves as part of the same community with a shared identity, even if they never meet each other personally (Anderson 1995: 6f.). Imagination is thus the fundamental element in Anderson's concept of communities. The sentiment of belonging (we-feeling) and the community as a symbolic and socially constructed one, are the essential elements also in Cohen's work. Cohen writes that communities derive the sense of themselves as a group by contrasting themselves with other groups. Hence participants of a community construct their community as coherent, homogenous and distinctive in contrast with others that build coherent, homogenous and distinctive groups themselves (Cohen 1998: 115f.). Boundaries mark the beginning and the end of a community, which imply both similarity among the members and difference in distinction to the non-members. More important than the boundaries, Cohen maintains, is the symbolic meaning of the boundaries for the participants. A community is thus made up of people who share the same symbols (although not necessarily the meaning) that they have constructed themselves in order to be distinctive to other people as a group. (Cohen 1998: 15 ff.) It is important to mention also Frederik Barth's (1969) concepts of ethnicity in this context. Barth states that the cultural differences taken into account as features of belonging to an ethnic category are not "the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant" (Barth 1969:14). Barth claims that the people of a group choose consciously significant features as "signals or emblems of differences" to exhibit their identity and that they ignore, play down or even deny other differences. (Barth 1969:14) Anderson, Cohen, and Barth describe communities (or more specific nationalities and ethnicities) as groups that are actively and socially constructed by the members of the group. Fundamental elements are an (imagined) feeling of belonging among group members, and their continuous construction of this sense of belonging through symbolic borders and through selected features of differences.

The ideas of construction and imagination can be connected to the theories of interpretative anthropology that emerged in the middle of the 20th Century as a direction of thought in social anthropology. They refer especially to Clifford Geertz, who interpreted culture as created and recreated by people through social interaction (Geertz 1983: 9, 46).

Vered Amit (2002: 2) writes that both the early theorists, like Tönnies or Durkheim at the turn of the 20th century, the urban studies of the Chicago school in the first half of the 20th century and also the more recent works of Cohen and Anderson, used the concept of community as a "vehicle for interrogating the dialectic between historical social transformation and social cohesion". Confronted on one hand with industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation, and on the other hand with the observation of a social transformation, theorists were trying to interpret the effect of these changes on people living together.

More recent theories emphasise even more the constructive element, and the idea of a community as emotional "togetherness". In addition to the other elements also the effect of time on the togetherness of people is questioned and thus time became a new element. Korpela's and Dervina's "cocoon communities" (Korpela, Dervina 2013), Maffesoli's "neo tribes" (Maffesoli 1996) and Bauman's "cloakroom communities" (Bauman 2003) focus on short-term communities. According to these concepts, a community is a group of people that comes together because its members share the same interest and communication networks (Maffesoli), a specific activity (Korpela, Dervina) or a specific event (Bauman). These emotional communities can be more unstable and open, but can also experience long-term togetherness (compare Maffesoli 1996: 15 with Korpela, Dervina 2013: 4). They can be place-based within a common geographic area but, equally, may be transnational, or even online. Firth, Maye and Pearson differentiate between "place based" and "interest based" communities. Whereas the first one is usually internally driven, initiated and managed by people that share a common geographic area, the latter may bring together members that do not share a common geographic area but instead share mutual interests. (Firth, Maye, Pearson 2011: 565)

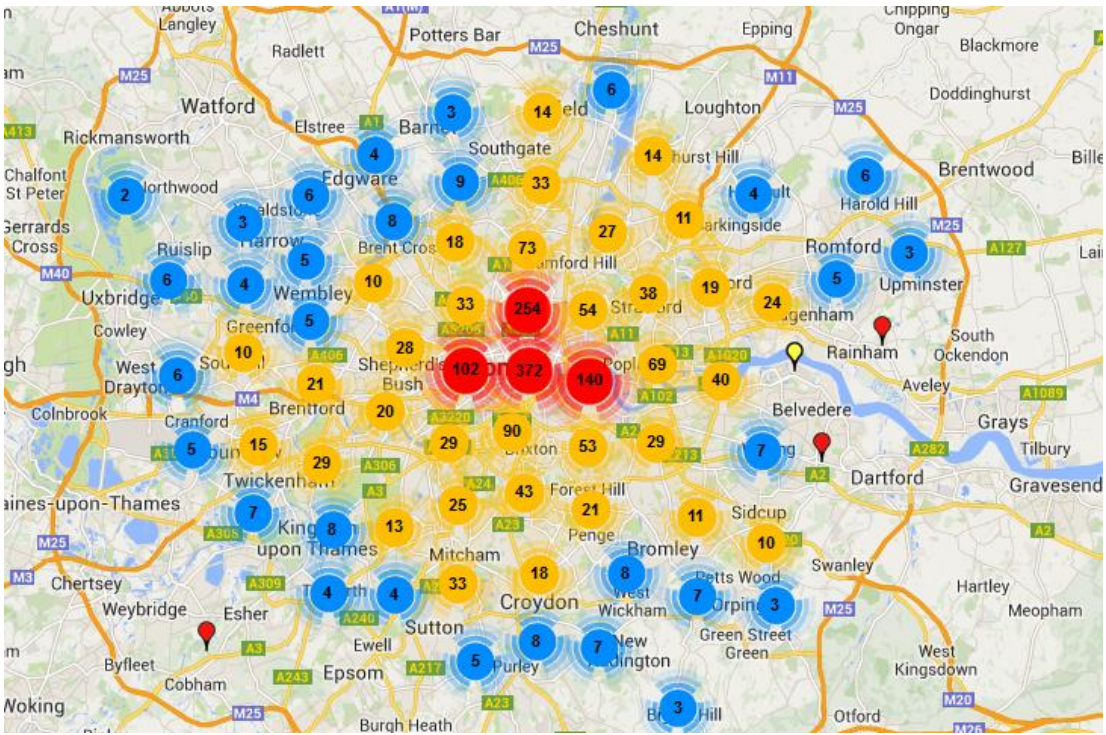
These recent theories are less strictly characterised by the qualities listed earlier (common geographic area, social organisation, social interaction), identified by Hillery as common to earlier attempts to define communities. Instead, they emphasise the emotional importance that participants give to the community, which can be temporary or allow members to be parts of multiple, differing communities. It is also noticeable that recent theorists often try to find new terms for "community", reflecting their discontent with the term, and the old concepts and ideas that are connected to it. These recent theories focus more on how communities are *in use*, which is why the elements of emotional belonging, time and a specific shared purpose (activity or event) will be fundamental for my own analysis. While I

do not claim one of the concepts of community as definitive, nevertheless, the element of social construction will be crucial for my later analysis; as one of the questions of my thesis is how the participants *create* a community in the garden, I take a definitively social constructivist approach to analysis.

More than a century later it is obvious that communities have indeed not ceased to exist, as was proclaimed by theorists at the turn of the 20th century. Ruth Landman (1993: 1) writes about contemporary urban Americans that they have organised "large or less important parts of their lives in groups and settings that include the word 'community' (community gardens, community food stores, community bakery, cooperatives)", an observation that can be easily transferred to many other contemporary contexts, too. It may, perhaps, mean that the term community, as Poplin wrote, got stretched to a point, where it lost its meaning for a scientific purpose. But it also shows that there is still need for scientific research and work, especially on the question of the practices and use of contemporary communities.

1.2 Rain or shine: my field research in the community gardens

When I came to London in mid-June 2013 to conduct my field research, my initial plan was to stay for three months. In order to gain familiarity with the field and to get an overview of the existing community gardens, I started mapping the existing community gardens of London. I had the idea of visiting as many community gardens as possible, in order to develop an understanding of their structure, organisation and origin, before eventually planning my stay and formulating research questions. As it turned out, I had to stop my attempt of mapping at an early stage. This was, firstly, because there were many more community gardens than I expected and, secondly, because according to different definitions and sources, the number varied immensely: recorded numbers range from 90 - the number of



registered members of the "Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens" (Catherine Miller, 5 December 2013); to 2261 - the steadily increasing number of registered community-based food-growing projects from the networking organisation Capital Growth.[10]

Picture 1: Map of community food growing projects in London registered with Capital Growth.[11]

A second attempt, by contrast, involved choosing a limited number of community gardens that reflected an exemplary range of different locations, different forms of organisation, structure, origin, history, funding situations and involvement. Essential for me was that all of the chosen projects would define themselves as community gardens and had "community garden" as part of their names. I visited several community gardens all over London, collected information on the internet, and eventually chose to focus on two of the community gardens. As most of the community gardens were very particular, and different from each other, the reasons for my final selection were pragmatic ones: since I had a part-time job during the time of my field research, I chose one of the community gardens that was close to my work place in North London (Culpeper Community Garden); the other one was close to the place where I was living in South London (Glengall Wharf Community Garden). Before arriving in London, I had planned to do my research in several community gardens at the same time, but as soon as I started working I realised I would only be able to get truly involved in the community gardens if I spent as much time as possible in them. I went to both at least once a week, twice when possible, for the duration of their opening hours. The Culpeper Community Garden in north London was a 50 minute cycle ride, whereas Glengall Wharf was only five minutes cycling from home.

In September, I moved to another neighbourhood in South London. After this, I started spending one afternoon per week in a third community garden - NxG Trust Community Garden – which was nearby my new house. As this community garden is part of a community centre, it is organised differently to the other two. The different locations, origins and structures of these three community gardens created the interesting contrast I had hoped to find.

The field research can be divided into three main phases. The process of choosing the community gardens and formulating a research plan can be identified as the first, exploratory phase of my field research. Once I had selected the gardens and drafted the research plan, I tried to collect as much information as possible about the two community gardens. The main methods in this second phase were observations, participant observations and informal conversations. My first intention was only to observe: to note who was coming to the gardens and what they were doing there. Early on, therefore, I wrote several observation

[10] Homepage Capital Growth: http://www.capitalgrowth.org/. Last access: 23 May 2013.

[11] Map from the Capital Growth Homepage: http://www.capitalgrowth.org/spaces/. Last access: 2 May 2013.

minutes of the Culpeper Community Garden, which was open to the public every day, from dawn till dusk. Shortly after that, I myself started to actively participate in the community garden routine. Thanks to the volunteering sessions, which are drop-in working sessions open to all for the maintenance of the community garden, it was easy for me to participate. As the Glengall Wharf Community Garden was only open for the volunteering sessions, I participated there from the outset. I kept a field journal about general thoughts concerning the process and progress of the field research, my role and my problems as well as, of course, about my experiences, observations, and informal conversations during the volunteering sessions.

I had a quite difficult relationship with my role as a researcher, especially at the beginning of the fieldwork. It was particularly problematic that in both of the community gardens I did not introduce myself as a researcher, but as a passionate gardener, willing to participate. Once introduced as a "volunteer", I was quickly involved in the work of the garden, and found myself postponing the revelation of my research purpose. For the first two months, therefore, my research was a "hidden" one. When I eventually revealed my research idea, everyone was very interested, and enthusiastic about helping me with interviews and answering questions. I am still uncertain why it was so difficult for me to introduce myself as a researcher, and I sincerely regret that I postponed it for so long. I am fully aware that withholding such information is, ethically speaking, quite a debateable research approach. It was an issue I reflected upon constantly in my field journal. On the other hand, however, I gained an insight into the way new participants are welcomed; an experience I might not have had, had I introduced myself as a researcher straightaway. It was striking that when I revealed my role as researcher, the expectations in the field changed immediately: some of the community gardens I went to are in precarious financial situations, and in need of public support. Information and research to do with community gardens are still relatively rare and, as a consequence, I was often asked whether I could share my findings with the community gardens for publication. Instead of being just another participant I was suddenly perceived, by some of the other participants, as a kind of ambassador, representing the community gardens with my research. My relationship to the other participants also changed from my perspective: when identifying myself as a participant, they had been mainly just other participants or friends, but when I started identifying as a researcher, their role immediately became the role of an informant.

Other problems with my role or the research process were minor problems. For example, at the beginning of my research, I often found myself totally absorbed in the garden work. Being so enthusiastic about the gardening, I sometimes completely forgot to observe the other participants. The idea of participant observation as the classical method of social anthropology was, often quite impracticable in the community gardens. Although I tried to

participate and at the same time to observe other participants, it was sometimes simply impossible, as they were out of sight or in a completely different corner of the spacious community gardens.

By the end of the three months, I had by no means as much data as I had hoped to collect. I consequently decided to extend the field research for another three months and to stay until mid-December. With the help of my notes from the observations and my participation in the volunteering sessions, I re-designed my research plan and formulated new research questions. By this stage, I already knew the community gardens, the structure of the volunteering sessions and most of the regular participants; the participants themselves were also familiar with me, and adapted to me in my new role as researcher. As a result, I felt much more at ease in my role during these additional three months. I focused more closely on observation and informal conversations.

The problems I experienced at this stage were mainly connected to the translation of my research questions to practice. I found it quite difficult to ask my informants about something as abstract as the meaning they attribute to the community aspect of the community garden during an informal conversation while, for example, planting lettuce in the heat of an exceptionally hot British summer. During these informal conversations I formulated questions that focussed, therefore, on the personal connection of the participants to their particular community garden. I asked most of them about how they first got involved, where they lived, and their occupation outside the community garden. Some of these chats evolved into further, more in-depth conversations about volunteering in general and the idea of community gardens. As most of these informal talks occurred during working sessions or tea breaks, I could not audio-record them, but managed to put down notes in my field journal afterwards. As data, they are just as useful and valuable as the interviews I audio-recorded in the third phase. As I was anxious that my material wouldn't be enough, I started again to visit other community gardens and to participate in their volunteering sessions or other events towards the end of the second phase of my field research.[12]

In the third and final phase of my field research, I concentrated entirely on interviews and informal conversations. I conducted eight qualitative semi-structured interviews in total, with eight different people, from five different community gardens.[13] Five of the interviews were

[12] The community gardens and food growing projects I participated in were namely: Culpeper Community Garden (Islington); St. Mary's Secret Garden (Hackney); Growing Communities (Hackney); Dalston Eastern Curve Community Garden (Hackney); Harleyford Road Community Garden (Lambeth); Roots&Shoots (Lambeth); Glengall Wharf Community Garden (Southwark); Walworth Garden Farm (Southwark); NxG Trust Community Garden (Lewisham); Common Growth Community Garden (Lewisham); Telegraph Hill Community Garden (Lewsiham); Chrystal Palace Community Garden (Bromley); Food from the Sky (Harringey); Grow Heathrow (Heathrow).

[13] A list with the names of my interview partners, some further information about their role and their background and the circumstances of the interview can be found in the appendix.

audio recorded, with the consent of the interviewees; of two others I took notes from my memory right after the interview; the last one was a written questionnaire, resulting from an email exchange. All of the interviews were conducted in English. Once I was back in Germany, I did a complete transcript of the shorter interviews and a partial transcript of the longer ones. Five of the interviews took place in the relevant community gardens, one in the office of the interviewee, one in a café, and one in the home of the interviewee. Using the community gardens as a location for interviews led to many little interruptions, due to the presence of other participants and background noise, and therefore influenced the quality of the interviews immensely.

My research material includes: the transcription of the five audio recorded interviews; notes of the non-audio-recorded interviews and from informal conversations with the community garden participants; my observation minutes and field journals, with the reflections on the research process and my own role; and notes from my observation and participation in the volunteering sessions, the public events and the committee meetings I attended. Over the course of my six months of field research, my role shifted from being a foreign student passionate about gardening, involved as a volunteer in several community gardens, to a researcher with a specific research project, and, finally, to that of both a visitor and a friend.

Influenced by my observations, I reformulated my research questions a couple of times. The research process can therefore be described as a circular rather than linear one (Flick 2000: 59ff.). I started with the question about the meaning of community in the example of community gardens, and the question of why there are so many community gardens in London. Later I looked into the motivations of the people to volunteer in community gardens, and the benefits and values surrounding the phenomenon of volunteering. Finally, I focused on the question of how a community in a particular community garden is created and maintained. After the many hours I spent in the different community gardens, I felt, I began to have an understanding of their structure, organisation and origin; many questions, however, remain unanswered: the field is by no means sufficiently researched yet. I cannot claim, therefore, to have gathered data that is in any sense universally representative or generalisable, and have to emphasise that all of the quotations and interpreted meanings are related to specific individuals.

I didn’t follow a specific method of analysis, but took, instead, the ideas of the grounded theory as general orientation (see, for example: Glaser, Strauss 1998). Thus the elements expressed so far should not be misinterpreted as all-encompassing, strict or invariable categories. Rather, they should be understood as a reflection of individual meanings and recurring observations encountered during the field research. Spending six months with the same people in the same location enabled the generation of trust and familiarity between me and the other gardeners, and therefore contributed a great deal to the quality of my data.

On a personal level, I felt equally comfortable in both community gardens, despite their very different set-ups. My research project was welcomed and supported by both gardens, as well as by all the other community gardens in which I introduced it. Due to the limited opening times of the community gardens and my part-time job, I fortunately never had the problem of getting too close to the field, as my access was necessarily limited. Having the opportunity to retreat and to live with my partner and friends was nevertheless a valuable advantage, easing most of my problems that occurred with the research process and my role as a researcher. The data I collected in these six months of self-organised field research lay the foundations for the descriptions and analysis in the following M.A. thesis.

1.3 Structure of the M.A. thesis

This introductory chapter has included an outline of the theoretical frame for addressing my research questions, a review of the relevant literature concerning community gardens and concepts of community in both an historical and contemporary context, as well as an extensive description of the method of my field research, the research process, and my role as a researcher.

The second chapter offers an in-depth description of the Culpeper Community Garden and the Glengall Wharf Community Garden. By describing and contrasting their origin, structure and organisation, I provide necessary background information about the two gardens, which form the basis for the analysis in chapter three.

Chapter three is the main part of the thesis and is divided in five sub-chapters. In each sub-chapter I will analyse one of the possible levels of participations I identified in the two community gardens. I analyse both the role participants take on at a particular level, their motivations for participation, and the different elements that can be described as community creating elements at that level of participation. All of the levels of participation will be contrasted and compared between the two community gardens.

The final chapter will be not only a conclusion answering the questions of my thesis and visualising one possible model of community in community gardens but also an outlook on the significance of community in community gardens both from the participants' perspective and also on a more general level, from an outsider's perspective.

2 Portrait of two community gardens

> *People were like just fed up with looking at something and were like we will just do something until people tell us not to. It seems from what people tell me about the 70s that it was a quite exciting time, quite different. And that people were being quite free spirited.*
>
> (Catherine Miller, 5 December 2013)

While the origins of traditional allotments and community gardens in the UK can be traced back to the late 19th century, the contemporary community garden movement dates back to the 1970s. Howe and Wheeler (1999: 14) have pinpointed the 1970s as a turning point in the history of community gardens in the UK: a time marked by a sudden burgeoning of environmental awareness. Emerging from the "free spirited" atmosphere, as Catherine Miller described the era, many of the gardening projects started with no right to be there at all but managed, later on, to establish themselves as accepted, worthwhile organisation; some still exist today. During the 1970s, land and property values were not as high as they are today, and health and safety regulations were different and less intrusively legislated. According to Catherine Miller, this could be one of the reasons why so many city farms and community gardens were established around that time (Catherine Miller, 5 December 2013). The decline of the welfare state and cuts to social services in the 1980s under the Margaret Thatcher government can be seen as strengthening elements for community organised projects in general, as suggested by another of my informants (Jill Mountford, 23 October 2013)[14]. Many of the community gardens and city farms established at that time were developed by local residents, often conceived of as community art projects, or as an empowerment projects with an educational or therapeutic focus. When Tony Blair led New Labour into office in 1997, taking over from the Conservative leadership, his government launched the "new deal for communities". According to another informant, Dan Hudson, the programme was a further boost for community projects, including a regeneration programme designed to improve deprived neighbourhoods and to support community projects (Dan Hudson, 27 November 2013).[15] A decade later, after the 2008 financial crisis and during the resulting recession, a lot of regeneration money was invested in community projects; a proportion of these funds came from financial trusts, in an attempt to improve their public image as "greedy" bankers (Catherine Miller, 5 December 2013). In 2009 the network "Capital Growth" was founded, with the aim to support 2012 community food growing projects by the end of the year 2012. This project was launched in connection with the 2012 London

[14] Information from my interview with Jill Mountford, manager of the New Cross Gate (NxG) Trust Community Garden, in New Cross Gate, South East London, 23 October 2013.

[15] Quote from my interview with Dan Hudson, paid part-time worker in the New Cross Gate (NXG) Trust Community Garden, in New Cross Gate, South East London, 27 November 2013.

Olympic Games and in cooperation with the mayor of London, Boris Johnson, among others.[16]

In my view, this governmental endorsement is a significant development in the history of community gardening. If at the beginning community gardens were a tool of the local residents, and a means for expressing disapproval with political decisions concerning environmental or social matters and gentrification processes, they have since become a tool for the municipality, city planners and developers, too. A variety of community gardens with different founders (ranging from local residents to, albeit indirectly, the mayor of London), different structures (from an allotment structure with different plots to rent, to an area that is managed cooperatively) and different focus groups (anyone from estate residents to homeless people) has been developed over the past years also in London. Notwithstanding the various differences, most of them are calling themselves a "community garden".

In the two following sub-chapters I give an in-depth description of the history, structure and organisation of two of these community gardens. The two gardens are situated in very different neighbourhoods; I will therefore also include a brief description of the borough in which each neighbourhood is situated, covering key historical and demographic reference points.[17]

2.1 The Culpeper Community Garden

The Culpeper Community Garden is a vibrant, lush and overgrown little pocket of land in the borough of Islington, in North London, just two streets away from Angel Station. Islington is the third smallest borough of London. It turned from a little hamlet into a village in the 17th century. In the 18th century it became an area famous for its dairy products, supplying London with butter, cream and milk. After the industrial revolution, Islington became a poor labour class area for most of the 20th century. The small borough was hardly affected by the bombings during the Second World War. After rebuilding the area in post war years, the borough underwent a quick gentrification process, accelerated during the

[16] Homepage Capital Growth: (http://www.capitalgrowth.org/our_support/). Last access: 28 April 2014.

[17] Although ethnicity is not a category I will focus on explicitly in my analysis later, I feel it is important to mention that the ethnic constellation of the two boroughs is very different. The different participants of the two community gardens reflect, of course, also the different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds and other characteristics of the inhabitants of the particular borough. With the brief insight in the borough's history, I show that the difference of the borough's inhabitant is partly a result also of the different historical backgrounds of the two boroughs.

1980s.[18] As well as big high street chain shops and supermarkets, an increasing number of designer shops moved into the borough. Islington became a desirable residential area for the upper middle class and is now one of the boroughs with the highest rates of population turnover, undoubtedly as a result of the gentrification process.

The estimated population of the borough at the last census (2011) was 206.100 people, with a considerably high percentage of people registered as single (60%). About three quarter of the population identified as "White British" or "White Other".[19] The ethnic diversity slightly increased in comparison to the 2001 census, especially because of an increasing number of people born in the European Union but outside of the UK moving to the borough (Islington Census 2011: 3).[20] The gentrification process starting in the 1980s was accompanied by struggles and protests and formed also the frame which the Culpeper Community Garden was founded in, as I will show in the following paragraph.

History of the Culpeper Community Garden

> *I have lived in Islington all my life, 56 years, and this is the only free space left. This garden nourishes, nurtures and changes people. It's called, 'being Culpepered'. I myself was 'Culpepered' a good while back.*
>
> (Culpeper Community Garden 2012: 22)

Having existed for more than 30 years, the Culpeper Community Garden is one of the oldest remaining community gardens in London. It was started by people working in the White Lion Free School, a project in Angel that provided alternative schooling for children excluded from the state education system (Culpeper Community Garden 2000: 5). Several teachers of the school saw the necessity for a school garden and started to look for a site in Angel. They found a former bombed site that had been cleared of housing many years before and had been used as dumping ground for rubbish ever since. The site was not far from the White Lion Free School and just across the road from the Penton School, a local primary

[18] Homepage Islington Council: Brief history of the borough: http://www.islington.gov.uk/islington/history-heritage/heritage_borough/bor_history/Pages/default.aspx?extra=7. Last access: 11 June 2014.

[19] With the categories of "White British" and "White Other", I'm referring to the official classification of ethnicity that is used in many institutions of the U.K. Personally, I'm very critical about the concept and idea of ethnicity and how strictly, dogmatic and often absolute it is being used in everyday life. As ethnic diversity especially in London is part of the everyday life, "ethnicity" as a category is not further discussed here. Although ethnicity and "cultural background" are still an important aspect and not yet as invisible in everyday life as many officials like to claim, in the field of the community gardens they are almost irrelevant. The difference is here therefore only mentioned in connection to the ethnic different neighbourhoods but not as relevant characteristics of the participants in the different community gardens.

[20] Islington: Census 2011 second release. http://www.vai.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2012-Census-Islington-Summary.pdf. Last access: 11 June 2014.

school. Although the supermarket chain Sainsbury and also the Police had expressed interest in using the site, the planning officer at Islington town hall was sympathetic to the cause of the White Lion Free School; they agreed to open up the site for gardening until a decision regarding the final purpose of the site had been made.

The garden was laid out in 1982, with an initial grant of £1000 from the Islington Council for the purpose of creating a garden for school children and their families. The garden was planned by a landscape architect free of charge, inspired by the Covent Garden Community Gardens that no longer exist today. The plan included a pond for wildlife, a communal lawn for open space and terraced plots for individual gardeners and groups. (Culpeper Community Garden 2012: 28 f.) The name "Culpeper" was given in reference to the botanist Nicholas Culpeper, who published his botanic books in Islington.[21] The council approved the plans and allocated another grant of £36.000 to employ a coordinator for two years and to pay for the main building works. In the same year, 1982, it came out that the land had been listed as public open space by the Islington Council. Later on, new housing, a little park and a children's playground were created around the garden and other places were found for Sainsbury and the police station. (Culpeper Community Garden 2012: 6).

After the basic structures had been laid out within the first year, mainly by unemployed Community Service Volunteers, 35 plots were allocated to local residents, local schools and local community groups without access to a private garden.[22] Although schools were involved right from the beginning, the concept of a garden for children and their families soon evolved into a space with much wider community involvement. (Culpeper Community Garden 2000: 7) Links were made, for example, with local community groups working with so-called "disadvantaged" groups; the aim was to create a space where these people, in particular, could be acknowledged and welcomed. The community groups involved in the garden today work with people with learning disabilities and difficulties, people with mental health problems, people with experiences of torture, immigrants or people of immigrant descent, as well as with people with alcohol issues or experiences of homelessness. Some plots were designed as raised beds, in order to facilitate access for wheel-chair users and elderly people. (Field journal, 16 July 2013)

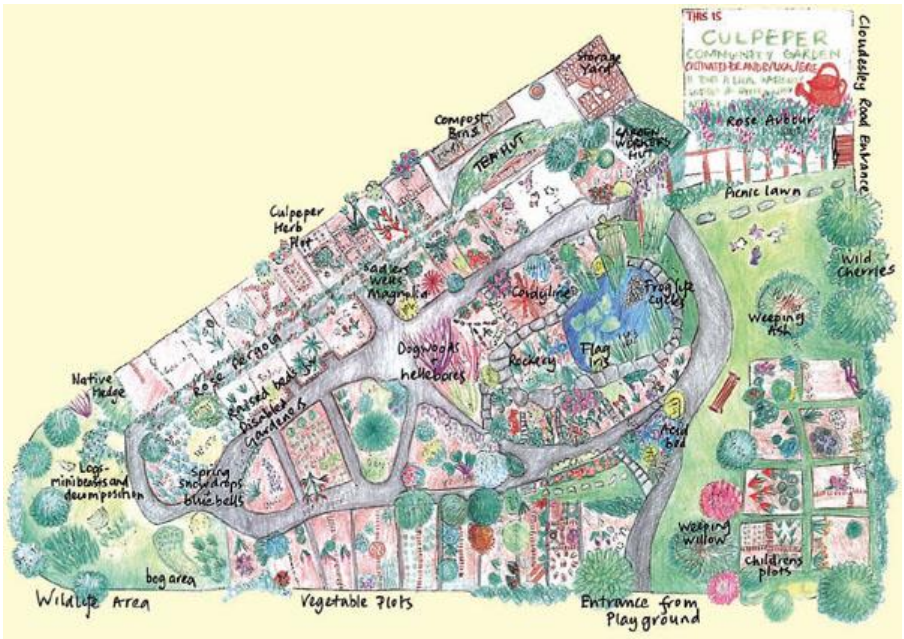
Plot-holders are encouraged to grow whatever they wish, so long as they adhere to organic principles. This has resulted in a mixture of gardening styles co-existing in the garden, reflecting the members' background and previous gardening experiences. (Culpeper

[21] Homepage Culpeper community garden: http://www.culpeper.org.uk/history.cfm. Last access: 4. March 2014.

[22] After the Islington council closed a road in the late 1980s, the community garden got more land and could increase the number of plots from 35 to 46 (Culpeper Community Garden 2000: 11). At present, the community garden has 57 plots for local people and community groups without gardens (Culpeper Survey of members and users 2013).

Community Garden 2000: 9ff.) The main idea of the Culpeper Community Garden was not to be an allotment garden, but to create a community space open to everyone, if possible almost around the clock: this was the guiding idea, shaping the garden's organisation and structure since its opening to the public in 1984. (Culpeper Community Garden 2000: 19)

Explicitly communal areas are: the lawn, as gathering space for members and visitors; the pond, as wildlife area, which has become one of the main attractions, especially for children; and a pergola walk that divides the different sections (Culpeper Community Garden 2000: 11). Buildings and other structures were built over time, some of them still existing today, and in use by the different individuals and groups. The oldest one is the so-called green hut, a low-rise building with three rooms, one big and two smaller ones. The bigger room serves as a meeting place for the different groups and the committee meetings, with plenty of storing space for all sorts of material and a toilet for the garden members and the groups. One of the smaller rooms is the garden worker office with only enough space to fit a desk and some drawers in. The other smaller room is the tool-shed, which is accessible only from outside the building and usually locked. All of the plot-holding members and the garden workers get a key to the tool-shed, the meeting hut, the side gate and the other two main entrances of the community garden. The park warden responsible for opening the park adjacent to Culpeper Community Garden, also opens and closes the gates of the garden itself. The meeting hut (also called tea hut), is a small one-room log cabin with a kitchenette, a library with garden books and sitting facilities. The meeting hut is the place where garden members and participants of the volunteering sessions usually come together to eat, to chat or to relax. In between the green hut and the tea hut is a patio with a composting area and a little locked greenhouse that is used as plant nursery. (Field journal, 16 July 2013)



Picture 2: Plan of the Culpeper Community Garden.[23]

Over the course of the last 32 years, the community garden experienced several acts of vandalism, theft or anti-social behaviour, which sometimes made it necessary to involve the police or to take down some of the structures (for example a gazebo and a big greenhouse). The overall concept, however, is to try to involve everyone in promoting and perpetuating the garden as a self-sufficient, inclusive and tolerant space and to involve everyone in sharing and perpetuating the tolerance policy of the garden. (Culpeper Community Garden 2000: 21)

Structure and organisation of the Culpeper Community Garden

And so it's not, it's
completely not a top-down
sort of structure really.

(Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)[24]

Within the first year, the community garden founding members approved a constitution and set up a management committee. The group of people that developed the community garden, registered at first only as a community group but later they set up a charity as well. There are different ways to get involved in the Culpeper Community Garden. One possibility is to become a member for an annual fee of £10 (£5 with concession). According to a Survey of members and users the community garden had around 200 registered members in 2013 (Culpeper Survey of members and users 2013). Members receive the monthly newsletter and are welcome to use the meeting hut and to be involved as much or as little as they wish. Members that live nearby and have no access to a private garden, or members of other community groups, can further apply for a plot for an annual fee of £12, thus becoming a plot-holding member.[25]

A third possibility is to become involved with the management committee. The management committee consists of 12 people, out of which, according the constitution, at least 50% have to be plot-holding members. The other people can be members or even non-members, as is the case for the current management committee. The committee meets every six weeks and is elected annually in a general meeting, where the old committee steps down, new members are proposed and then officially elected by all of the present garden-members. Most of the committee members have been on the committee for many years already, and the three

[23] Homepage Culpeper Community Garden: http://www.culpeper.org.uk/map.cfm. Last access: 20 May 2014.

[24] Quote from my interview with Martha Orbach, paid part-time garden worker, in the Culpeper Community Garden, 22. November 2013.

[25] Homepage Culpeper Community Garden: http://www.culpeper.org.uk/membership.cfm. Last access: 4 March 2014.

different tasks of chair, secretary and treasurer often circle among the same few people. Most of the people in the current committee are long-term members of the community garden, past the age of 65, and retired. The current chair is a former garden worker and, as a woman in her mid-thirties, one of the youngest members of the committee - alongside two other people (one plot holding member and one non-member), who recently came on board. (Field journal, 17 November 2013). The committee, which is entirely voluntary, is supported in the task of organising and managing the community garden by two paid part-time garden workers. In the interview with Martha Orbach, one of the garden workers, she described her role in the following way:

> The garden worker role is sort of three different bits. It's a lot about community. There are two of us, two part-time workers. And so we co-run the actual organisation. And so the role is not a straight forward gardener by any means. It's sort of three way split between running a small voluntary organisation. Making sure that annual report and accounts and some things get done. And all of these sort of, you know, finance and meetings and all the organisation stuff. Than community and education stuff. Lots of people, lots of volunteers and group sessions. And working with disadvantaged groups. And then also the outdoor skills, looking after the physical landscape of the garden. […] It's a kind of mix that combines a bunch of different skills. […] And it's completely not a top-down sort of structure, really. The management committee is accountable to the membership. And we are accountable to the management committee and the membership. And so basically the role is very kind of collaborative. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

The garden-workers are paid through funding and almost throughout the whole time since its onset, the garden was able to employ at least one, and most of the times even two, part-time garden workers. Employing a garden worker means to have every day at least one person who is facilitating the activities and the groups in the garden and a contact person for all the visitors and participants. The actual physical gardening work though is mostly done by members or also non-members. Twice a week, on Tuesday afternoons and Friday noons, there are official drop-in session for everyone to help with maintaining the communal areas of the community garden. Tasks are given according to the seasonal typical garden tasks like watering, weeding, pruning, planting or harvesting. Around 70 people come to these drop-in voluntary sessions over the course of a year, according to Martha Orbach. The group sessions bring even more people to do gardening work on the different group plots. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013) According to Martha, one of the reasons that the community garden still exists is the fact that some long-term members stick around for ages, some of them for over twenty years (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013).

I personally experienced the volunteering sessions as a social occasion. People with different backgrounds come together and spend the same amount of time that is spent working in the garden, in the tea hut or in front of it to share a cup of tea and a chat. The division between plot holding members, committee members, non-plot holding members and non-members is

rarely visible, as in the end everyone comes together in the same place, to do some gardening, enjoy the green space or the company of other people. As the community garden is also open to the public, it is especially around lunch time or on sunny days crowded with all kind of people.

The committee also organises different weekly courses and annual events. For example, very popular events are the strawberry tea party for pensioners, Christmas and Halloween Parties, art courses such as pottering in the summer for children or craft courses such as knitting for adults once a week. Also some "days-away" are organised regularly, in order to visit other community gardens or other garden related places together. The Culpeper Community Garden boasts an extraordinarily various program that aims to include as many people on as many different levels as possible.

As it will be shown in the next paragraphs, the structure and origin of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden are very different from the Culpeper Community Garden.

2.2 The Glengall Wharf Community Garden

The Glengall Wharf Community Garden is situated in South London, in the borough of Southwark. Southwark, the second oldest borough of London, was historically one of the industrial centres of the city. With agriculture being the first major industry, large parts of the borough were originally farming land. Peckham, especially, was known to be a market garden area. In the early 19th century the borough became attractive as a residential area for the middle-class; by the middle of the 19th century, however, the middle class had mostly moved out, and the borough became a predominantly working class residential area.[26] Due to the bad living conditions in the overcrowded tenements – dating as far back as Victorian times - the borough became a target for improvements by the municipality. Catherine Miller informed me that the Red Cross Garden in Southwark, a garden that was set up in 1887 for people without access to gardens to improve their health and living conditions, is considered as one of the first community gardens from today's point of view (Catherine Miller, 5 December 2013). During the Second World War, the Elephant and Castle area got heavily affected by the bombings and was completely transformed over the post war decades. From

[26] Homepage Southwark Council: Southwark Villages: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200159/history_of_southwark/1034/southwarks_historic_villages/4. Last access: 10 June 2014.

1950 onwards, people from the Caribbean got invited to help with the post war-recovery in London and started to settle down in Southwark.[27]

During the 1970s and 80s, people from Vietnam and Cyprus started to come as political refugees and settled in the borough as well. More recently, people from West and East African countries, Latin-America and Eastern Europe came looking for employment and settled in the borough, too. With over 100 languages spoken, Southwark is one of the most diverse boroughs with regards to the ethnic composition of its inhabitants.[28] At the time of the last census (2011), the estimated population of Southwark was 288.300, with a particularly high percentage of people between 25 and 34 years.[29] In a report based on the data from the 2011 census, 16 different ethnicities were identified among the people living in the borough. Compared to the other 32 boroughs of London, Southwark had the highest "Black African", "White and Black African", "Black British" "other Black" and "Chinese" population, especially concentrated around Peckham. (Southwark Analytical Hub 2006: 5)[30]

The largest of the 16 identified groups among the people living in the borough were nonetheless identified as "White British" (52%) as of the census from 2001. (Southwark Analytical Hub 2006: 5)[31]

This short insight into the population demographic and history of the borough already shows significant differences in comparison to the borough of Islington. The different origins of the community gardens can be connected to the different historical developments of the boroughs. Whereas the Culpeper Community Garden can be understood as the result of political initiatives from local residents and activists, the Glengall Wharf Community Garden can be seen as a result of the improvement projects of the council in cooperation with local residents.

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27 Homepage Southwark Council: Borough and Bankside: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200159/history_of_southwark/1008/borough_and_bankside. Last access: 10 June 2014.

28 Homepage Southwark Council: World connections: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200159/history_of_southwark/1025/southwarks_world_connections. Last access: 10 June 2014.

29 Homepage Southwark Council: Census. http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200223/census_2011/2723/census_2011_briefing. Last access: 10 June 2014.

30 Southwark Analytical Hub, Southwark Council and PCT Data Sharing Partnership (2006): Ethnicity in Southwark, London Borough of Southwark: General population. http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/262/ethnicity. Last access: 10 June 2014.

31 Southwark Analytical Hub, Southwark Council and PCT Data Sharing Partnership (2006): Ethnicity in Southwark, London Borough of Southwark: Executive Summary – Ethnic Groups. http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/262/ethnicity. Last access 10 June 2014.

History of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden

It started when the mayor of London gave a large grant to the Burgess park, for the whole park, before the community garden was in it. For improvement because of the poverty in the area and the high level of crimes.

(Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)[32]

The Glengall Wharf Community Garden is part of Burgess Park, the biggest park in Southwark, connecting Camberwell and Peckham. In 2009 Burgess Park gained, along with ten other London parks, a refurbishment grant of over £2 million from the mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Southwark Council gave a further grant of over £6 million to support the renovation of the park. (Homepage BBC News, Homepage Burgess Park)[33] The area around Burgess Park, especially the nearby Aylesbury Estate, had the reputation for being one of the worst places in London, with a high record of murder and violent crime; this is likely to be one of the reasons why Burgess Park was shortlisted for the public vote for the refurbishment grant, according to Charlotte Dove (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013).

An interesting feature of the story of the park is that the Aylesbury Estate was built as compensation for the demolition of buildings that had to be destroyed for the creation of the park in the first place, in an area which was previously very densely built-up. As part of the refurbishment, the Southwark council set up committees of local people for different areas of improvement in the following year. One of the committees was a subgroup on food, which decided that Burgess Park should also have a food-growing project: that is, a community garden, as part of the park. The group obtained the lease for a derelict site, a former wharf, which then gave its name to the community garden: Glengall Wharf.

Initially, the whole area was riddled with the foundations of the former buildings and had been slowly overgrown with by brambles and other plants, but had almost no soil to plant in. As the group did not receive any actual funding from the parks upgrade, they applied to Community Spaces and got their first grant of over £40.000 in 2011. Raised beds and

[32] Quote from my interview with Charlotte Dove, volunteer project coordinator from the "Grown in Peckham" project in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, 6 December 2013.

[33] Homepage BBC News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/7923118.stm; Homepage Burgess Park: Burgess: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/461/a_to_z_of_parks/1293/burgess_park/1. Both last Access: 8 March 2014.

mounds were built the year after, in 2012, along with the first plantings of fruit trees, berry bushes and perennial plants. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013) When I came to the garden in the summer of 2013, the community garden was thus still in its first year and most of the structure was still to be build. The already existing structures were a roof, used as a makeshift shelter against the rain and sun, a small cupboard containing some crockery and a kettle to cook tea, a polytunnel as plant- nursery and a large container for the tools.

For the present year, 2014, it has been planned to build a meeting hut, to give better shelter from the rain and cold days, a compost toilet and a rain harvesting construction. And because the garden registered as permaculture learning site, the buildings will be build, like everything else, according to permaculture standards.[34]

Picture 3: Plan of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden.[35]

[34] Permaculture originally derived from the words "permanent agriculture". Permaculture is, however, not only about sustainable gardening techniques. It can be understood instead as a "design system", "looking at how elements are placed in relation to each other in order to maximise their efficiency in creating a self-sustaining, low input/high output, non exploiting whole" (Burnett 2012: 8f.).

[35] Picture from the Glengall Wharf Community Garden Homepage: http://burgessparkfoodproject.org.uk/garden-plan/. Last access: 20 May 2014.

Structure and organisation of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden

A lively, diverse and busy project,
we are an 'ideas hub'
for alternative gardening and sustainability.

(Homepage Open Garden Squares Weekend)[36]

The original composition of the food sub-group set up by the council changed almost entirely within the first year. However, as soon as the community garden was awarded the grant from Community Spaces, the group of people started to meet on a fairly consistent basis and registered as a community group. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013) To respect the minimum standards of bureaucracy, the group set up a committee with the three positions: the chair, the secretary and the treasurer and approved a constitution. The committee meets every eight weeks and gets elected annually on a general meeting. It presents an organisation similar to the Culpeper Community Garden, although the different levels of participation are not yet as complex. Besides the committee members, currently eight people, there is only one more organisational level, which is that of the key-holders. The key-holders, also called "lead gardeners", are people who have the key to the garden, open the community garden and lead the volunteering sessions in turns. Including the eight committee members who have a key, there are currently 16 key-holders in total. Anyone can become a key-holder, and a long-term aim of the committee is to keep the garden open every day. As there are still only relatively few people involved, so far the community garden has been opening only twice a week, for volunteering sessions on Thursdays and Sundays. Aside from these sessions, the garden is opened up for public events, such as the summer and the winter celebrations, where there is free food, a bonfire, music and a plant sale to thank the volunteers, and to invite other people of the neighbourhood to see the work that is being done.

During the volunteering sessions, there are often mainly the committee members and the key-holders coming and doing some work. Especially during the Sunday sessions, an increasing number of people from the neighbourhood have started to drop by, as they discover the community garden. Some of them have turned into regular participants of the volunteering sessions. Visitors range from entire families, or mothers with their children, to

[36] Homepage Open Garden Squares Weekend: http://www.opensquares.org/detail/Glengall.html?Tickets=onFirefoxHTML\Shell\Open\Command. Last access: 8 March 2014.

teenagers that have been playing in the streets or in the nearby park, as well as to individuals and couples of all ages. Charlotte Dove said the following in the interview about the volunteering sessions:

> The idea of the Thursday session is that it would be slightly more for people, who were interested in food growing in particular and interested in learning more and getting trained in that. […] Whereas on Sunday it's much more just a social, a come and go, a drop in […]. And there are probably more people come just to visit than to do work on a Sunday, whereas on a Thursday nearly everyone was there to volunteer. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

The Thursday Session is a working session for the "Grown in Peckham" project, an idea that was set up by Charlotte. For this project, Charlotte created a partnership with three different local restaurants and cafés in Peckham. In exchange for some financial support, they receive a weekly delivery of garden products. The three hours volunteering session is usually aimed at planting new plants, weeding, watering and harvesting. Tasks are similar also on the Sunday session. The main difference is that the harvest would be shared among the people present and there would be tea and biscuits or other food and a shared break with everyone.

Until the beginning of 2014, the work was done entirely by volunteers. However, since the beginning of this year (2014), the community garden is able to pay two people for part-time work, thanks to additional funding. The two people are Charlotte for her "Grown in Peckham" project, which will continue throughout this year (2014), and Sue Amos, one of the founding members, for organisational tasks and fund raising. This has been an important development for the community garden. There have been attempts to establish working connections with other community gardens, such as Culpeper, but these have not yet come into fruition. Mainly because there are not yet enough people involved to open the community garden daily. There is, however, an already existing connection to the volunteering centre, as one of the key holders works there; the centre regularly sends people to help out. Corporate volunteers, too, are becoming an increasingly common feature, supported by various different business organisations.

This year, there is a plan to open the community garden for different courses, especially permaculture introduction courses. The aim of the committee is to create a permaculture show garden that promotes food growing, organic horticulture, permaculture and other ecological techniques and to work with the local community and increase the understanding of healthy, local and fresh food (Homepage Glengall Wharf Community Garden).[37]

Although the organisation of the Culpeper Community Garden and the Glengall Wharf Community Garden is similar, the structure and the focus are very different. Already, therefore, it is possible to see how different community gardens can be.

[37] Homepage Glengall Wharf Community Garden: http://burgessparkfoodproject.org.uk/about/. Last access: 7 March 2014.

3 Growing a community in community gardens

In the previous chapter I showed when, by whom and under which circumstances the two different community gardens were founded and developed. After this in-depth description of their history, organisation and structure, it is now time to come back to the central questions of my thesis.

In the introduction I highlighted different theoretical approaches describing "community" as a shared geographical area, shared social organisation, social interaction, as emotional belonging to a group, with long or short term membership. I emphasised especially the social constructivist theories and concepts of Anderson, Cohen and Barth. In the following chapter I will elaborate on their understanding of communities as groups that are continuously created and constructed by participants. Focussing on the social interactions and activities of the different participants, I will investigate whether I can find different elements and conditions among their practices and activities that can be interpreted as fundamental in the process of creating a community (elements that I will call "community creating elements").

Similar to many other communities the community in the garden is characterised by a certain social organisation but it is not as many other communities based on a lifetime membership. I already described in chapter two that there are different levels of participation resulting from the garden's structure and organisation. I will analyse these different levels of participation individually in the following chapters and investigate which community creating elements and conditions each of them entails. Although the different levels of participation and the structures into which they are embedded are slightly different in the two community gardens, I will analyse them jointly, within broader, over-arching categories to formulate a typology of participants and a model of community in the community garden. The categories are namely: the visitors; the people participating in the volunteering sessions; the formal members; and, finally, the garden workers and project coordinators. These categories will be examined in the context of each community garden, allowing for a comparative analysis; my analysis will be complemented by extracts from my field journal and extracts from the transcripts of my interviews.

3.1 The visitors and public events

The first step to participate in a community garden is probably to visit it. Different people visit different community gardens for different reasons, of course. During my field research, I myself "visited" several community gardens. The Dalston Eastern Curve Community Garden for example runs a café on the side of the garden and often offers activities for kids,

which is why it is often full of visitors.[38] Other community gardens attract less visitors. The Harleyford Street Community Garden, for example, is designed as a little park open every day from dawn till dusk. I myself used the path through the community garden often as a short cut when I came home cycling from the city centre, but I never met any other visitor there.

According to what the different community gardens are designed for, and what activities and facilities they offer to the public, they attract more or less visitors. To make the term clear, in the context of the community garden a "visitor" is for me someone who comes to use either its facilities (for example a café, a lawn, sitting areas), or to take part in activities (courses, events). They are mainly in the community garden for their own purpose, such as resting, eating lunch, meeting people, reading or the like. Some of the visitors might be of course also visiting a community garden because they are interested in gardening or community gardening.

Visitors and public events in the Culpeper Community Garden

The Culpeper Community Garden is adjacent to a little park with a playground and is situated just two streets away from Angel Station. Although the community garden itself seems like an oasis far away from the city, it is actually in the middle of a busy network of shops, supermarkets, markets and offices. On sunny days the lawn of the community garden turns regularly into a sitting area for many different visitors. During one of my observations I once counted 42 people, sitting on the lawn, not counting the children running around, or people sitting on one of the several other sitting possibilities (Field journal, 7 August 2013). Due to its location and facilities the Culpeper Community Garden is a highly-frequented community garden. In the course of the day, different kind of visitors are present, as the following extract of my field journal shows:

> When I arrived at 11am, the garden seemed abandoned. A lawn-sprinkler was watering the lawn. The atmosphere was quiet and peaceful. The only people in the garden, two men, sat a bit further away on a bench, sharing a beer but soon left the garden. […] Two women in their mid-thirties, each of them with a children's push chair entered the community garden, the children, two girls of maybe four years, were running in front of them and right to the lawn-sprinkler. For the next 20 minutes the two girls hypnotised orbited the lawn-sprinkler with a surprising stamina until the water eventually stopped and left the two behind, out of puff and soaked wet, their mothers laughing, the sun shining. After changing their children's clothes the two women left in opposite directions to the two different exits of the garden, bidding each other fare well until next week. A teenager had come and was sitting already in the sun reading and tipping her toes to the music in her ears. A man in his

[38] When I came for the first time to the Dalston Eastern Curve Community Garden, there were at least 30 children with their parents carving pumpkins for Halloween and it was literally packed (Field journal, 26 October 2013).

> forties and in an elegant suit arrived and sat down on a bench in the shadow and started to eat some take away. […] Around lunchtime the garden got more and more crowded and all of the possible seats on the different benches and especially the lawn were occupied with all kind of different people. Most of the visitors seemed to be office workers having their lunch break in the community garden, sitting in groups, exchanging the latest news and gossip from work and eating take away food or homemade food from plastic boxes. Also quite a few students had come, sitting alone or in groups. The air was filled with their chats and laughter. As soon as a group of people went, a new one arrived. A brisk coming and going. […] In the afternoon it got quiet again. Some school kids with their parents came passing through the garden, probably taking a short cut from school to home. A group of four mothers was sitting on the lawn, feeding their babies. […] When I left the garden around five, it was very quiet again, I was almost the only one left in the garden. (Field journal, 16 July 2013)

The above extract gives examples of some of the different people visiting the Culpeper Community Garden. The first group that can be identified are office workers who come mainly around lunch time, to have their lunch break in the garden (easy to identify as they do not stay longer than 20 minutes, usually sit in groups, and are sometimes even recognisable by their clothes, key fobs or the topics they talk about). Another group of visitors were mothers (rarely fathers) with their children, often one or two (most of them under five years, many even under two years). They come in the morning but mainly in the afternoon and often stay for quite a while, feeding their children, or letting them play and run in the garden. Other people were not so easy to identify: some may have been students, others workers. Most of the visitors were women; other identifiable characteristics, such as age, for example, were very varied.

It is likely that most of the visitors come to the community garden because of its location, which means that they either work or live nearby, or passed by and discovered the community garden accidentally. The activities of the visitors were as various as the visitors themselves. A selection of activities I observed were: relaxing, sun bathing, reading, studying, listening to music, talking on the phone, eating, socialising with other people or playing with the kids. Most of the visitors moved comfortably through the garden, as if they knew it already, which indicates that they may be regular visitors. Especially kids often went running directly to the pond, their mothers behind them warning them to watch out and to not get too close. Just a little example showing that for many of the visitors that wasn't their first time there.

Throughout the whole year there are also special events for the visitors. The ones I experienced during my field research were potting and art craft for kids in the summer holidays (although also some of the adults, including myself were using the chance to use the potter's wheel, often even with more enthusiasm than the children), a Halloween bonfire, a plant sale, the annual general meeting with lunch and a Christmas bonfire. The activities

were announced on a noticeboard in the garden, in a newsletter that goes out to nearby households and through specific signs hanging outside, visible from the street and the adjacent park. These activities attracted even more visitors. The plant sale for example brought more than 200 people to the community garden, even though it was on a rainy Sunday. The pottering was also a big attraction and whenever I came, the tent of the potter-lady was always busy with children and adults throughout the time of the summer holidays. In addition to these "exceptional" events, the community garden offers weekly courses like hand craft courses that were also open to the public, but, as far as I observed, mainly visited by formal members of the community garden.

In sum, the visitors of the Culpeper Community Garden were using the garden for their own purposes. This, however, is not to imply that they appreciated the garden less as a place. Quite the opposite, in fact: a survey of members and users carried out by one of the committee members received very positive feedback. When asked about what visitors liked most about the Culpeper Community Garden, out of 103 replies, the most popular answers were the "garden itself" and the "peaceful atmosphere" (Culpeper Survey of members and users, 2013). More than 80% answered that they think the Culpeper Community Garden creates a sense of community and neighbourhood (Culpeper Survey of members and users, 2013). The Culpeper Community Garden does not only *claim* to be accessible to all kinds of people; as a result of its long and regular opening hours, the wide-range of activities on offer and the facilities available to visitors (such as the various seating possibilities), the garden's claim is translated into practise, and the space is quite literally open and accessible to everyone.

The situation in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden is a very different one, as I will show in the following paragraph.

Visitors and public events in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden

The Glengall Wharf Community Garden is at the very end of Burgess Park and marks the beginning of the Surrey Canal Walk, connecting Burgess Park with Peckham. More and more people discover this green strip as a quiet route for cycling or walking to Peckham. And more and more people walking or cycling past the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, discover the existence of this new community garden. Some of these people drop by curiously, others snatch some ripe blackberries from the fences, and others stand simply in front of the gate and observe what is going on inside. As the community garden is only open for the working sessions and there aren't really areas to sit and socialise comfortably, as it is instead the case in the Culpeper Community Garden, there are many less visitors staying for more than a couple of minutes in the community garden. Even though there were some people visiting during each sessions, they were usually just looking around, maybe asking

some questions (most of them if it was allowed to have a look around) and after a round through the community garden they were usually leaving again. I observed some of the key-holders trying to involve these visitors, asking them if they would like to join and sometimes even giving them some vegetables to take home if the harvest was plenty. The visitors themselves were usually deeply impressed by the place, some said that it was a good thing what was happening with the area. Especially if they knew the site from before, when it had been just a fenced off, derelict piece of land, they reacted surprised to see how quickly it has changed. Some of them announced that they would love to join and would try to come the following week, but I never met anyone again myself. The public events held during my field research were a summer celebration, a harvest celebration at the end of the harvest season, and the annual general meeting. For the celebrations, one of the restaurants part of the Grown in Peckham Project, provided free food, cooked with vegetables from the garden. At the summer celebration there was also a little plant and seed sale, cake and coffee and at the harvest celebration there was a lantern making workshop and a bonfire. Most of the people coming to these public events were involved in the community garden at some level, and I can say that as I recognised most of them from the volunteering sessions. Quite a few people seemed to be passers-by and neighbours that found their way to the community garden. As there isn't much publicity (events are announced only on the homepage, Facebook and the community garden's gate), and not many people know the community garden yet, my theory is that it will take a bit longer until visitors discover the community garden for themselves. A further observation is that with the high fences and the often closed gates (even if the community garden is open), the community garden doesn't seem to be a public space from outside which would explain why many visitors stand in front of the gates only watching, or asking if it is allowed to enter. So far visitors get involved very little in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, and those who come to the garden are mainly residents living locally, passing by and discovering the community garden that way.

Accessibility, facilities and activities can be interpreted as elements and conditions for the creation of a community in a community garden. People can only get involved when the community garden is open and accessible. Accessibility can be, therefore interpreted as an important element, or rather, as a condition that allows the creation of a community in the first place. The contrast between the well-established Culpeper Community Garden which is open daily and the only twice a week open and otherwise locked Glengall Wharf Community Garden, shows the significance of this element very well. Fences, gates, locks, keys and opening hours are used by the community in the community garden as tools to regulate the accessibility and are thus symbols of the negotiation who belongs to the community and who doesn't. The visitors have a restricted access as they can enter the community garden only

when it is open. Other participants depend less on the opening hours, for example if they own a key to the garden. It is important to note that there are different levels of accessibility that correlate with the different levels of participation, an important feature that I will come back to later again. Also the spatial design of the community garden, and the facilities it offers to the public constitute another element. The Culpeper Community Garden, thanks to its accessibility also for wheelchair and buggy users, its many sitting possibilities, the lawn and the pond is an attractive place for visitors to spend time in. The Glengall Wharf Community Garden is still creating these kind of facilities. In the direct comparison it is presently much more exclusive than the Culpeper Community Garden.

The visitors themselves have definitely an important role for the community garden. A frequently visited community garden creates the image that the community garden is being enjoyed and used as a place and it is important in bringing different people together. Both community gardens address the visitors as a group of participant through the various activities and facilities they offer. Especially the Culpeper Community Garden is certainly a place where visitors can meet each other (or also be on their own), enjoy the garden itself, even if they are not interested in gardening and in doing so, they create the garden as a place *for* a community. The different visitors may feel differently about the community aspect. As long as the visitors are not getting further involved with the garden and stay only as visitors, my interpretation is that the community garden may be the place of their choice but in the end it is just a place relatively replaceable with any other place. As the results of the Culpeper survey showed, community gardens can be, however, valuable places for visitors, too.

The next level of participation I will take into account, are the people that participate in the (drop-in) volunteering sessions. As I spent most of the time of my field research participating to these sessions, my data about it is particularly rich. Hence I'm able to analysis this category in more detail and as a key category. To analyse further community creating elements, I will thus first have a closer look at the structure of the volunteering sessions themselves, and then at the participants, their role, motivations and reasons to get involved.

3.2 The (drop-in) volunteering sessions

The volunteering sessions are an important part for every community garden that is organised on the principles of a voluntary organisation. The volunteering sessions are usually the moments in which a big number of people comes together, spends time together just being in the garden, or working together doing gardening work. Sometimes, as in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, it is even the only moment in which people can come

together, as the community garden is only open during those sessions. All of the community gardens I have worked in during my field research, have a volunteering session, and as far as I know, most of the other community gardens do as well. In the following chapter I will juxtapose the structure of the Culpeper Community Garden volunteering session with the one in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, always keeping in mind the question of community creating elements.

The volunteering session in the Culpeper Community Garden

Fancy a cuppa?

(The usual greeting of Martha,
garden worker, to everyone coming
to the volunteering session)

As mentioned in the second chapter, the Culpeper Community Garden has a drop-in volunteering session twice a week where officially everyone is welcomed to work on the maintenance of the community areas of the community garden. The organisation and structure of the volunteering session can be best described and analysed with the help of some notes from my field journal I took after my first volunteering session:

> On my way I saw a little sign on the front gate saying: "Volunteering session, drop in, everyone welcome, Tuesdays 2-4pm and Fridays 11am-1pm". […] When I came to the garden it was almost half past two. I went to the log cabin where two men and one woman were drinking tea and chatting without noticing me. […] Looking for the volunteering session, I went through the garden, but couldn't discover anyone working. I went back to the log cabin again and with some effort finally managed to ask the woman about the volunteering session. She looked at me delighted but surprised, introduced herself as Mandy, one of the two garden workers leading the volunteering session, and said that they were just about to start. (Field journal, 16 July 2013)

This first extract shows already two different things. First, the surprise of Mandy, the garden worker, and the fact that no one noticed me until I asked, shows that it seems to be not that common that someone unknown is showing up to volunteer in the volunteering sessions. As I was writing before, citing the other garden worker Martha, around 70 people volunteer in these drop-in volunteering sessions over the course of the year and most of them leave after a certain period of time, according to their specific motivations and life circumstances. I observed that most of the people I met in the drop-in volunteering sessions were either long term formal members, or long term volunteers who have been coming to the community garden for at least a year or most of them even longer. During the six months I was going to the community garden, I usually met the same six to nine people. I met only one man who

joined in September and came regularly to the drop-in voluntary sessions since (and who is now part of the management committee as a non-member). This is an interesting contradiction between what Martha said and what I observed (and in the end also to what the sign says about welcoming everyone to just drop in). The surprise of Mandy could be also traced back to my own features, being a young, female, foreign, white student. These features indeed stand out in comparison with the other regulars of the volunteering session, which can be mostly described as retired, male and British-White.[39] Although there were also many other people who don't fit in such categories, different people pointed out several times (especially the formal members), that the combination of being young and female, as in my case, wasn't a common characteristic among the people participating in the volunteering sessions. My observation confirmed this notion as I saw young women who would rather sit in the sun on the lawn than weed the community beds.

The second aspect that stands out in this first extract is connected to the organisation of the volunteering session: when I arrived at half past two, thus half an hour after the official start of the session, no one was working yet. Instead the two people that came to the volunteering session were sitting together with the garden worker and were drinking tea. It seems that "working" is not the only aspect of these volunteering session I described before as working sessions. Another and even more important component, at least in the case of the Culpeper Community Garden, is the "drinking tea" and socialising, an element that I will come back to later.

> Mandy proposed to show me the garden while the other two, an elderly man with a cane and several visible health issues and a younger man around forty, would finish their tea.[…] The tour ended at the tool shed, a cramped little room, next to the garden worker's office. Mandy opened the drawer with the gloves and said with a smile, the one who found a pair of gloves would get a prize. Outside of the drawer stuck a little note saying to keep the gloves in pairs. […] Eduard and Ian, the other two, were working already when I came back with one glove and a handle missing rake. Eduard, the elderly man, was singing opera scenes or made animal sounds as a change. He was funny but hard to understand and seemed to have some mental health issues as well. Ian asked me questions about my garden experiences and if I had plants at home. […] Eduard comes to the garden for seven years as a volunteer and member of one of the groups for people with learning disabilities. Ian comes for more than one year quite regularly, almost every day. Both are living locally. (Field journal, 16 July 2013)

This extract already describes some characteristics of the people participating in the volunteering sessions. What both volunteers have in common is the fact that they are living locally. Other visible characteristics though, such as their age or their health conditions, are different. A more detailed analysis of the participants of the volunteering session will follow in chapter 3.3. The fact of living locally, however, is worthy of a mention at this juncture, as

[39] I will come back to the different participants in chapter 3.3.

it seemed to be a common characteristic of the Culpeper participants: all the people I asked at the volunteering session claimed to be local to the area.

Mandy's ironic comment about missing gloves, as well as the broken tools and the general untidiness of the tool shed give hints that missing gloves or untidiness are not really considered to be a problem, as long as it is still possible to work. The missing gloves and broken tools can be also seen as a sign of how long they have been used already, as well as of a lack of funding for replacements.

> Mandy, who was working in another corner came back to us barely fifteen minutes later to ask if we would like to have a break and a drink as it was very hot. Even though no one answered she disappeared and came back a minute later with some water, squash and glasses on a tray and gave us a drink and said that she felt too hot already and needed a break. After this little break we continued to work. […] Two more people were coming. Everyone seemed to know everyone and they were chatting all together. […] Before I even realised that time has passed, it was Ian who announced that it was four o'clock and time to finish. I brought my tools to the tool shed and when I came back, everyone was sitting already again in front of the log cabin and Mandy was preparing another cup of tea for everyone. (Field journal, 16 July 2013)

This last extract shows another aspect connected to the role of the garden workers: Mandy made sure that all the participants felt comfortable and were looked after. I observed this attention to the wellbeing of participants in many other situations, both on the part of Mandy and the other garden worker, Martha. The garden workers not only supervises the participants and facilitates their activities but also, as Mandy's behaviour demonstrates, assumes a certain level of responsibility for and taking care of them. There are other important characteristics of the garden worker's role, which I will further examine in chapter 3.4.

The extract above showed furthermore the importance of the "drinking tea". Drinking tea can be seen as a form of socialising. And indeed it is the image I instantly connect with the volunteering sessions in the Culpeper Community Garden. The session usually starts with a round of tea, there is a tea break in between and another (or also endless) round of tea after the session. If it happened that Martha or Mandy seemed to have forgotten the tea break, there was usually some murmuring among the participants until someone would ask eventually and rhetorically if it wasn't time for the tea break already. The tea, always black tea, was served with milk and sugar and it seemed to be an unspoken competition to keep in mind who liked how many spoons of sugar and if with or without milk.[40] If there wasn't

[40] Only once, when we were redesigning the herb bed, Martha proposed to have an herbal infusion, as there were several cuttings from different kind of herbs. Amusingly for me, most of the people reacted surprised and not sure if they wanted to try, or said they would like to have tea (black tea) and not the herbal infusion. Some people tried the infusion however but none of them wanted a second turn (which rarely happens with (black) tea).

enough milk in the log cabin, Martha or Mandy would even go to the next shop to buy some. The un-official name of the log cabin was the "tea hut". These and other aspects emphasise the significance of "drinking tea" as a symbolic element of creating community.

The extract above underlines as well, how most of the people know each other already and how most of them are very communicative and talkative. With a cup of tea the participants talk about their daily life, holiday plans or TV programmes. For me, these tea breaks and tea rounds, held in front or inside the tea hut, represented a definitive element of active community creation. It is in this particular moment of drinking tea that the different participants of the volunteering session come together and socialise. It is even more likely that they would share something while drinking tea than during the garden work itself, as often everyone is scattered in the garden. Although all of the participants are very different and have different reasons to be there, in the tea break they are all coming together, sharing their time, sharing the tea and share a conversation. I therefore understand "drinking tea" as an element that creates community on a symbolic level. Interesting is that both the garden workers as well as the participants of the volunteering sessions actively support the institution of the "tea breaks", which shows how important it is for all of them.

In sum, the Culpeper Community Garden volunteering sessions can be seen as social occasions. For most of the participants, being outside in the garden and spending time with each other seems to be as important - or even *more* important - than the actual garden work itself. Working and drinking tea together can therefore be interpreted as community creating elements. In fact, in this instance, the broken or missing tools can also be interpreted as a sign of how gardening does not come necessarily first in the priorities of the participants or the garden workers. The analysis of the volunteering session further showed that even though everyone is welcomed to just drop-in, new (unknown) people get only occasionally involved and most of the participants know each other already, as they are involved for at least a year or longer and meet regularly. New people are in any case welcomed warmly, as I experienced myself, and as I observed also in the case of the other person, who got involved during my field research.

The volunteering sessions in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden

> *At the end of the session, I helped Charlotte weighing the harvest, a colourful collection of different vegetables, and packing them in little plastic bags to get them ready for the delivery to the cafés and restaurants*.
>
> (Field journal, 11 July 2013)

As mentioned in the second chapter, the Glengall Wharf Community Garden runs volunteering sessions twice a week. I already mentioned that each of the two sessions has a

different focus to the other. In the Thursday session, dedicated to the "Grown in Peckham" project, the participants work on the beds to grow and harvest vegetables and herbs to be delivered to three different cafés and restaurants in Peckham. The Sunday session is less about growing, tending and harvesting and generally more of a social occasion with more people coming and dropping in, some to work and some to socialise, similarly to the volunteering sessions in the Culpeper Community Garden. I will focus on the Thursday sessions, to contrast the sessions between the two community gardens. Once again, my analysis is complimented by extracts from my field journal:

> I arrived in the garden, just after one o'clock [*the official start of the volunteering session*]. Some people were working already in the garden and two women, around mid to end of 20 were talking near the entrance. One of them welcomed me immediately and introduced herself as Charlotte, the person who guides the volunteering session on Thursdays. The other woman got introduced to me as well, Angelina, who also came for the first time. Charlotte asked us about garden experiences and showed us the garden. […] Nothing is planted directly into the soil but there are different raised beds and mounds. The raised beds close to the entrance are the ones for the Sunday volunteering session. The mounds are arranged in a big circle around a fireplace and are planted with herbs, berry bushes and different flowers. Next to them on one side are some more raised beds that are for the "grown in Peckham" project on Thursdays. […] The tool container is well sorted and very tidy – the tools stacked in boxes with notes what goes where and notes to please bring the tools back and keep them in order and tidy. (Field journal, 11 July 2013)

In direct comparison with the Culpeper Community Garden volunteering session, there are two things already noticeable. First, when I arrived to the community garden there were already people working even though the session had just started. Secondly, I was immediately recognised as a potential participant (and not for example as a visitor), welcomed and asked about my gardening experience. The Glengall Wharf Community Garden opens only for the volunteering sessions (or public events) and as it is not yet established very well, it is constantly looking for potential participants. It was easy for Charlotte to recognise me as potential participant, also because I came at the right time and with old cloths and sturdy shoes I fulfilled one of the conditions that the community garden asks people who want to participate. The situation is, therefore, less confusing than in the Culpeper Community Garden, where even during the volunteering sessions, most of the people are not in the garden to participate but to enjoy the community garden as a visitor. The extract describes also the physical division of the two volunteering sessions: differently from the Culpeper Community Garden, the Glengall Wharf Community Garden does not have different plots allocated to different community groups (with their own sessions) or individuals but separated beds dedicated to the two main sessions. The big fireplace gives a hint to the public events, which are usually accompanied by a huge bonfire. The lack of many other facilities (as the "green hut" or the "tea hut" in the Culpeper Community Garden) as well as the very tidy and structured tool container, can be interpreted and connected to the

very young age of the community garden. A meeting hut was already planned and is currently (April 2014) built. During my field research, the only gathering place was outside, underneath a roof that gave little shelter against the sun (as the roof was transparent) and even less against the rain (as it was without walls).

> When we came back from the tour there were three more people, all were there for the first time and all of them around my age. While they got the same tour, Charlotte handed me a risk instruction which I had to read and sign. The instruction included information about possible risks with the gardening work, like falling over, or allergies and injuries caused by the tools or plants. Next to each risk were advices on how to best prevent them. […] After I signed the instructions, Charlotte came and asked me if I would like to help Angelina with sieving the compost. I agreed and started working with Angelina, while the other people got other tasks somewhere else in the garden. Without any problems a conversation started between me and Angelina […] – a casual small talk. Angelina grew up in South London and lives five minutes from the community garden. She often walked past the garden but never came in. As she was on the summer break from her management studies she wanted to do some volunteer work and searched for work in the environmental sector on the internet. That way she came to the community garden. She obviously had no experiences with gardening but she also obviously enjoyed the work a lot […] Charlotte was going around the whole time and always in the right moment, when we finished one of the tasks, or we had a question, she magically came by and we could ask her without looking for her. (Field journal, 11 July 2013)

With this extract I want to highlight two more differences between the two community gardens: first, that the Glengall Wharf volunteering session is structured very differently to those in the Culpeper Community Garden. Through the "signing in" papers and the risk assessment the community garden makes sure that they are legally protected in case of accidents. I did hear that the Culpeper Community Garden has a similar risk agreement, but I, personally, was never presented with one. In the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, the people guiding the volunteering session made sure that everyone had read and signed the risk assignment the first time they participated. Furthermore every participant had to sign in for every volunteering session. In case of doubt the lead gardeners would even prefer to ask another time than missing someone out. The second aspect is that the Glengall Wharf participants are monitored more closely than in the Culpeper Community Garden (Charlotte goes around to assist, suggest different tasks, keeps the work going). Whereas I characterised the garden worker's behaviour in the Culpeper Community Garden as taking care for the wellbeing and health conditions of the sometimes impaired participants, the behaviour of the people guiding the volunteering session in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden is of another kind: Since the food in the Thursday session is grown to be sold later, there is much more of a schedule of the different tasks (with sowing, planting, tending and harvesting) that has to be more or less followed, otherwise there wouldn't be enough vegetables and herbs to give to the cafés and restaurants. Charlotte made sure that everyone knew what and how they had to do their tasks which ensured that the growing and harvesting schedules were being

followed. At the same time, it allowed the participants to learn a lot about gardening, or to improve already existing skills. Even though there was a schedule to be followed, it doesn't mean the atmosphere was stressful or tense. Quite the opposite as it was perceivable that Charlotte didn't expect anything particular from the participants. Sometimes we were simply not able to follow the schedule, especially when not many people were participating. Charlotte always asked everyone what they wanted to do and made sure to explicitly express her appreciation of the work of everyone. Especially thanks to partner work it was easy to start a conversation with the other participants. But in the summer months it happened also quite often that there were only very few people and everyone had to work in different corners of the community garden. The component of the working together is therefore much more significant in the volunteering session than the component of socialising, exactly the opposite of the volunteering session in the Culpeper Community Garden. As in the Culpeper Community Garden most of the plots are allotted to the different community groups, the tasks of the participants in the drop-in sessions are more general ones such as sweeping the paths, weeding and watering the communal beds, or pruning the roses and trees. In this case gardening skills are neither required nor explicitly promoted.

> Charlotte came back to us and asked us if we would like to do some harvesting as it was the last hour of the session. We continued after a little break, the first people had already left. […] There was sorrel and peas to harvest. Charlotte showed us how to recognise if the peas were ready to harvest and which sorrel leaves had the right size. Before we started she gave us a bit of each to taste and asked if we liked them. It was a long time ago I had eaten fresh peas, and I was surprised about how nice they tasted. Also Angelina's expression and diffidence showed that she probably never had tried fresh peas before. My astonishment and Angelina's diffidence seemed to be very amusing for Charlotte. She laughed, ate immediately another pea, and said we could eat as much as we wanted but should leave some for the harvesting as well. (Field journal, 11 July 2013)

This extract shows best one of the elements that can be interpreted as community creating elements in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden. The volunteering session offers the time and space to share and exchange knowledge and expertise with other participants. During my time participating as a volunteer I learned a lot and after a while, I could exchange my knowledge with others, who would know again other things. As Charlotte was saying in the interview:

> [E]verybody is welcome to contribute ideas. […] So when you are there it feels like everybody is equal. […] A place to exchange knowledge and ideas. Because […] everyone normally brings some expertise or interesting knowledge or story. So I think, when you are working together, you know, one afternoon or for a couple of weeks, then there is time for these stories to come out. Because everyone has something to offer. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

The volunteering session is a moment of learning together. And the interest in learning together or sharing and exchanging knowledge can be interpreted as an element that creates

community, as it brings people together and makes them communicate with each other. While in the Culpeper Community Garden I identified "drinking tea" as the fundamental community creating component, in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden it is "learning together" through collective gardening work that plays this role.

3.3 Typology of participants in the volunteering sessions

In the literature about community gardens, participants are usually described as extremely various with different backgrounds and across a wide age range. "Living locally" is the only element mentioned in the literature that the different participants have in common (Firth, May, Pearson 2011: 556; Müller 2010: 23; Grünsteidel 2000: 130).[41] Other characteristics are only rarely described, neither are their motivations nor their role. With my observations and interviews I'm certainly able to add quite a few characteristics and to describe different "kinds" of participants. My aim is not to form a typology with strict and well-defined borders of each the individual type, but rather to give an idea of the various tendencies of what kind of people come for what kind of reasons to the community garden. Of course, each and every person has very personal motivations regarding why they participate in the volunteering sessions and none of the people has of course the exact same background. However, to make it possible to analyse further community creating elements, it is necessary to have a look at whether the different motivations and backgrounds have some elements in common.

Participants in the volunteering sessions of the Culpeper Community Garden

To be honest, I think a lot of people
who get involved are quite socially isolated.

(Helen Wallis, 29 November 2013)[42]

When asked in the interview about what kind of people are usually coming to the volunteering session, Martha answered the following:

> Very varied. […] I guess, there are sort of different groups. There is people who come because for one reason or another they got a break in their employment, or their studying for example. So they have some extra time. Because either they are off work because they are sick, off work because they are taking a break or…they are studying, so they got a bit more time on their hands. And then there is people that come for recreational reason. Who just have a bit more time on their hands. Maybe retired or yeah, got a longer term health condition maybe. And then there is quite a big group of people that come because of some form of well-being type situations.

[41] Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011: 565) distinguish between "place based" and "interest based" community gardens whereupon the majority in the later are usually not local living participants.

[42] Quote from the Interview with Helen Wallis, Chair of the Culpeper Community Garden, 29 November 2013.

> Whether it's that their circumstances are sort of difficult, so they are needing a way back into work or employment. Maybe they are in a difficult position, they had homelessness or alcohol issues or something like that. And they are sort of recovering. And actually, I think, people can be recovering from anything. Long term health, alcohol, trauma. And they are just looking to start getting into things, a routine and things like that. And yeah then there are people who got long term health conditions or long term health or mental conditions, learning difficulties and things like that, who probably would struggle to get into a more formal work. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

Even though Martha tried to keep her description rather vague, she states that there are "different groups" of participants, as she calls them herself. It is worth to mention that Martha took her time in describing these different groups. She chose her words carefully and consciously, which suggests how important the topic is for her and how deeply she respects everyone and everyone's life story.[43] The groups of participants she mentioned in the interview are: people with a break in their employment, retired people, students, people with physical or mental health conditions or learning difficulties, people who have experienced trauma, people with alcohol issues or experiences of homelessness. In order to describe the types of people participating in the garden, she also mentions their reasons for being there, such as "recreational reasons" or "well-being type situations". Martha even finds common elements, to connect these seemingly very disparate groups of people: participants are people with some "extra time" on their hands (she mentions that three times), or who are "recovering" as they are or were in a "difficult" situation.

Obviously having "extra time" is an important element or even a condition for the people to be able to participate. The volunteering sessions in the Culpeper Community Garden are on weekdays, during working hours (Tuesdays from 2-4pm and Fridays from 11am-1pm), which automatically excludes people working full-time in 9-5 jobs. Having "extra time" in this case, therefore, implies not having a full time-job, having flexible working hours or, indeed, having no job at all.[44] The people participating in the volunteering sessions, as shown above, are mainly people who fit in this latter category: pensioners, students and for different reasons, unemployed people. For most of the "types" Martha described, the Culpeper Community Gardens also provides special group sessions. I never attended these group sessions (as they are closed to the public) but know about them and the plots allotted directly to them. I also got to know some of the people that are in the group for people with learning

[43] On another point of the interview she said: "I hate calling people disadvantaged groups. Because I think basically you work with people and we meet people. And really everyone is different." (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013) A statement that describes her attitude even more evidently. That her attitude is connected to her own background will be shown later in this chapter.

[44] Surprisingly the volunteering sessions were quite often during the week and in the typical office working hours also in other community gardens, I went to. Dan Hudson from the NXG Community Garden in New Cross said for example that "working people might get involved on a weekend" but there aren't that many people and they are not "queuing at the door" yet (Dan Hudson, 27 November 2013). It seems the time of the volunteering sessions is an offer that meets the need of people participating in these volunteering session somewhere in the middle.

difficulties, as they also attend the drop-in volunteering sessions. Asked about the reasons for the people getting involved in the voluntary session, Martha continued:

> Well again. I think it's really various. For some people it is company. I think for some people it's literally access to outdoor space. They don't have a garden on their own, or not a big one. They want some quiet time and some sort of outdoors. And for other people it is community and that they like getting to know people. They are isolated for some reason. And so they get a sense of being part of something. And some people, I think, they are learning skills. They got an eye on what might come after for one reason or another. And I think, yeah, again this well-being thing. For a lot of people it's an improved confidence. Or feeling better about yourself because life has been rubbish recently or something like that. Like having a place to go where or what you can do is useful. I think for some people it's quite a novelty. And so just having this sense of, yeah I did a good useful thing today. Some people appreciated that. […] I think that's a big part of it actually. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

Martha starts her explanation again with the conclusion that the reasons why the people participate are "really various". Just like in the earlier extract, she finds different elements nevertheless: company and community ("getting to know people") for those who feel isolated; access to outdoor space for those who have no or only a little private garden; learning skills for those who prepare themselves to go back to work; improved confidence, the feeling of being useful and the feeling of being appreciated for the well-being kind of people.

From my observation of the participants, I can say that probably half of the people are retired and enjoy the outdoor space, the company and the gardening activities (five out of ten regulars). The other half of the participants is made up by people who are unemployed for different reasons. Some of them have visible health issues, others have probably also mental health conditions and learning difficulties. From what the participants told me, their motivations range from the wish to participate in order to study, to do charitable work, to enjoy the outdoor space and the company. In my opinion, the motivations are not only very varied but combined as well. It is definitely not possible to relate some of the motivations to only one of the different types. To give an example: one of the regular participants is a formerly homeless man who has been coming to the garden for more than 20 years. When asked about his reasons for joining the volunteering session, he answered that he needs to be outside and tries to be outside as much as possible. Reasonable motivations for joining the volunteering session of a community garden. From my observations, however, I would also add another motivation - one he may not be even conscious about: he seemed to need attention and was often asking for it. For example, he would often ask a question to one of the garden workers and, immediately afterwards, spread the new information to the other participants. He also liked to show people around, and to explain things. He was usually the one welcoming people, always adding that he had been coming to the garden for more than

20 years.[45] In the setting of the garden, he seemed to feel comfortable and to know what to do. Especially because he has been coming to the garden for such a long time, he feels naturally very confident and familiar with the community garden as a space. His way of expressing himself was sometimes confusing, and some of the struggles of his past were still quite apparent. In the setting of the garden, however, he was confident and noticeably at ease. He is, therefore, an example of someone who has "gained confidence" through community gardening, as Martha was suggesting: a very important aspect. Helen Wallis, the current chair of the Culpeper Community Garden, reinforced this point, states that "overcoming social isolation" is probably one of the main motivations for people to join the volunteering sessions. I further observed as a connective element among the participants a visible joy of gardening and being in the garden. From the mimics, gestures, way of talking, little expressions and the behaviour, I could observe among all participants a deep joy of being and working in the garden.

To summarise the different characteristics of the people participating in the volunteering sessions in the Culpeper Community Garden, it is possible to say that the people I met share the characteristics of having time, of having a certain joy of being in the garden and/or gardening (expressed verbally or non-verbally through their behaviour) and of living locally. They differ from each other in their social and economic standards – categories are here pensioners, unemployed (partly because of mental health or longer term health issues) – and they vary age, which is estimated to range between late 40 and 70 years, although at least half of the participants are already retired. All of them were British and all but two were "White". It seems that the aspect of overcoming social isolation through company and improved confidence is a very important reason for people in the Culpeper Community Garden to join the volunteering session, a motivation of which is likely that most of them are not consciously aware. If described in a positive way, their motivations can be referred to as looking for company and community. Sharing reasons and motivations with other participants, as for example the mutual joy of gardening and being in the garden, but also the common wish of finding company can definitely be interpreted as a community creating element. Both elements are bringing people together and giving them a shared, common purpose. Having time and living locally seem to be two fundamental conditions in creating a community. Also having similar experiences and background could be seen as a community creating element. In the case of the Culpeper Community Garden, most of the participants have indeed a kind of similar background as the majority can be described as socially

[45] When we first met, I was sitting on a bench, he arrived a bit later and welcomed me although I had been there already. To which I said that it is funny that he welcomes me, as I was there before him. To which he said he has been here for more than 20 years. "And the bench you are sitting on", he added and started telling me the story of how the bench came to the community garden. (Field journal, 15 October 2013)

excluded. The reasons for this "social isolation" can be, as shown earlier, completely different and range from being retired and living alone, to be unemployed, or to have mental health or health conditions. The example of the Culpeper Community thus shows that community gardening can have a strong therapeutic aspect and benefits these people, as Martha was describing it, to "recover from anything".[46]

Participants in the volunteering sessions of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden

People are there because of their love for plants, or normally just because a love of nature mainly.

(Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

When I asked Charlotte how she would describe the people that usually participate in the Glengall Wharf volunteering sessions, she answered the following:

> Very locally. I think that's how the majority of people finds out about it, just from walking past and seeing it. […] I guess there are some typical profiles. […] There are the "me-s". There are like late twenties, you know…middles class, kind of good doers [both laughing], who want to help, you know, who want to be part of…it's a bit…I'm a bit of a cliché. There are definitely other people like me out there. You do get the like… the drop outs, who, … who things haven't worked well for them, but gardening is something constructive that they can do and enjoy doing. There are quite a few mums. I think it's quite a good place for mums to bring their kids. Quite a few students… with spare time. But Burgess Park is pretty good, cause there isn't, just thinking about it now, like typical age or anything. It's right through. From I guess… there are not many teenagers. But right from like early twenties to like early sixties. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

Like Martha, also Charlotte spoke of "typical groups" of participants. She mentioned the "middle-class, late twenty good doers", the drop-outs, mothers with their kids and students. She also mentioned that, excluding teenagers, all age groups are represented. She mentioned, too, the time aspect, but only once and in connection with the students having spare time. As there is also another volunteering session on Sunday, having spare time does not seem to be as important a characteristic of the participants as it is in the example of the Culpeper Community Garden. Charlotte emphasised that especially for two groups - "the drop outs" (she is probably referring to people that have difficulties either because they are unemployed, homeless or have health or mental health conditions) and the mothers with kids

[46] To use gardening as therapeutic tool was a common practice in community gardens from the beginning on. The practices are formulated in a horticulture therapy that promises people to grow "alternative subjectivities through individual gardening practices in collective settings" (Pudup 2008: 1231).

- gardening can be something "constructive" and the community garden a good place to enjoy free time. With this statement, Charlotte also hinted at the therapeutic aspect that community gardening can have, and that is so strongly realised in the Culpeper Community Garden. As a common element, Charlotte mentioned right at the beginning the localness of the people. By walking past most of the people found out about the garden and got interested. "Interest" is therefore an important element to identify, which became even more evident when I asked Charlotte about the motivations and reasons for the people to participate:

> People come for so many different reasons. Normally… you know, there is…everyone has a reason that brings them there in the first place. But I can't think of any generalisation really apart from wanting to be outdoors. […] People are there because of their love of plants, or normally just because a love of nature mainly… and that sometimes then goes into a love of plants and a real interest of learning about plants. But just a shared love of nature and being outdoors is enough to unite people, I think. And yeah, and just taking you away from other, you know pressures and that kind of things. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

Charlotte said that everyone has a very personal reason to come to the community garden in general. The only generalisation she can think of is a "love of nature" and/ or of plants, which can result in a "real interest of learning about plants". Although she didn't mention it explicitly, another motivation is probably the wish to deepen the interest and to learn (even) more about plants, which is why people are coming to the community garden regularly. Charlotte noted further that this "interest" can take people away from other pressures, which indicates the therapeutic aspect again. The interest of learning about plants and a love of nature and of plants can be seen as mutual reasons among the participants and therefore interpreted as community creating elements.

My own observations of the characteristics of the participants are slightly more varied but go in a similar direction. The first observation to note is that many more people came to participate only for one or a few times and that very few people participated regularly for more than two months. Especially on the Thursday sessions in July and August, it happened quite often that there were only Charlotte and I plus maybe one or two other people who came only once or twice and not again afterwards. The number of participants varied from only the two of us to more than 10 on the Thursday Sessions (and to quite often more than 15 on the Sunday Sessions). Out of the people who came regularly to the volunteering sessions, most of them were key-holders and had therefore already a slightly different role than the people participating on a drop-in basis, without further responsibilities. As Charlotte noted, the age groups varied indeed much more than, for example, in the Culpeper Community Garden where at least half of the people were already retired. In the case of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, most of people were still under 65 and therefore potentially working people. Some were unemployed or students though. Most of the people were

between their late 20s and early 50s. The reasons and motivations were as varied as the many different personalities, as Charlotte indicated, too. One man, for example came as a corporate volunteer for four sessions and continued volunteering on the Sunday sessions afterwards. He lived nearby and as he had no private garden but loved gardening, he started coming regularly after the end of his corporate volunteering.[47] Another person was a former gardener but currently unemployed and needed to refresh his skills, as he was saying. Additionally he needed a reference to be able to get a job, which is why he participated for a couple of weeks in the volunteering sessions. Again it stands out that there are usually multiple motivations overlapping each other and not clearly distinguishable. This very same person for example said the following when I asked him for his motivations to come:

> This is my neighbourhood, you know. I grew up here. This was the place where I always walked with my dog when I was six or seven. When they fenced it up last year, I was suspicious at first. But then I saw that they made a garden out of it. I'm still living here, you know. And I want to give something back to this place, where I grew up. I love gardening. I'm passionate about it. (T., 18 July 2013)

In this case the different motivations are for example a love of gardening, a commitment to an emotionally important place, but also refreshing gardening skills and getting a reference to have better chances with the job search.

Another observation is that also the ethnic background of the participants was much more varied than in the Culpeper Community Garden. Even though, just like in the Culpeper Community Garden, almost all of the participants are living locally, their ethnic diversity can be explained by the different ethnic constellation of the neighbourhoods. Whereas all but two of the participants in the Culpeper Community Garden were British-White (the other two were British-Black), the participants in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden were much

[47] Corporate volunteering is an increasing phenomenon not only in the UK but also in many other countries. The principle is that the employer gives a certain amount of paid free days, or hours for their employees to spend these free days (or hours) volunteering in community projects or charities. I met several corporate volunteers in all of the community gardens I went to, where they had sometimes a crucial role in shaping the landscape of the garden. Corporate volunteers were also a topic in all of my interviews. It is to mention that the opinion about the idea is very varied, but all of my interview partners clearly distinguished them from other volunteers. Ella Perkins, project manager from Grow Wild, said about the difference the following:
Whatever I agree or disagree with corporate volunteers. There is a difference between like when someone comes as, say to Common Growth [a community garden] to do some gardening. But that isn't the only reason, they wanna socialise and talk to people and enjoy being outside. If you take corporate volunteers they really just come to do gardening. And you can get stuff done that otherwise would take weeks and weeks and weeks" (Ella Perkins, 2 December 2013).
Another point why corporate volunteers are sometimes so important for the community gardens is because the employer usually donates for each of the corporate volunteers additionally a certain amount of money to the place their employee volunteers for (monetary or in the form of tools as in the case of the community gardens for example). The critic of my interview partners were mainly that corporate volunteering is often only a fake commitment instead of the demanded social responsibility especially from huge enterprises. The border between this fake commitment and the actual social responsibility is very blurry though. And in the end it is sort of accepted, and all of the involved parties benefit of the corporate volunteering.

more diverse (equally British-Black, British-White and non-British). The countries of origin, besides the UK, ranged from Congo, to Estonia, Iran, Jamaica, Scotland and Spain, a constellation that reflects the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood. A further observation is that all of the people appeared to be very enthusiastic about the garden work and obviously enjoyed being outside in the garden. When I asked the five participants who came regularly to the volunteering sessions, who were involved only as volunteers (and not, for example, as key-holders), all of them stated that they loved being outdoors. As there were not usually any common breaks that would have provided time for mingling with the others, as in the case of the tea breaks in the Culpeper Community Garden (at least on the Thursday sessions; tea breaks were more common during the Sunday sessions), the main motivation for the people seemed to be an interest in learning something about plants, and a love of being outside. At the end of the Sunday sessions, the harvest was usually shared among the participants. As the community garden is quite spacious, the proportion allocated to each participant was usually significant, and an actual contribution to one's need of fresh vegetables and herbs. Even if no one explicitly mentioned the harvest share as a motivation to participate, everyone was usually happy to take something back home. On the Thursday session there wasn't a harvest share, as the harvest was to be given to the restaurants and cafés. However, people would still come, which can be only explained by the motivation to learn something, the love of being outside and the atmosphere of the community garden.

Unlike the participants in the Culpeper Community Garden, not all of the regular participants at Glengall Wharf were living locally. Although most of them did, and had first learned about the community garden by walking past - as Charlotte said this was not the case for all the participants I interviewed. Several stated that they had actively looked for a food growing project, and wanted to learn more about permaculture. I met two women, for example, who came a couple of times to the volunteering sessions; they informed me that it took them a fair amount of time to get there, but the Glengall Wharf Community Garden was the closest community garden that complied with what they were looking for. As the Glengall Wharf Community Garden is a certified permaculture-learning site, it targets (even if subconsciously) people who might not live in the neighbourhood (and are coming because they live close to the garden and like gardening) but who have a particular interest in the particular form of gardening practised in the garden.

In sum, the participants to the volunteering sessions in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden are, concerning their social and economic status, their age, gender, and ethnic background even more various than in the Culpeper Community Garden. Types to identify are in this case students, mothers with their kids, corporate volunteers (on the Thursday sessions only), workers (on the Sunday sessions especially) and unemployed people (on the

Thursday sessions especially). Pensioners or people with mental health or health conditions or different kind of disabilities that are so strongly represented in the Culpeper Community Garden were missing completely. Thanks to the Sunday volunteering Session, working people were in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden not automatically excluded. People with a full-time job come on Sundays, whereas people with a part-time job, students or unemployed people generally come to both of the sessions, or according to their personal schedule.

The analysis of the participants volunteering in the two different community gardens shows a certain difference between Culpeper Community Garden and Glengall Wharf Community Garden. Whereas Culpeper has a more therapeutic approach and the majority of the participants can be described as people that are socially isolated, for various reasons, the common element of the participants in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden is a shared interest in plants, a love of being outdoors, and learning about food growing. All of the participants of both community gardens have in common the fact that their age range is very different, as well as their social and economic status and ethnical background. The role of the participants in the volunteering sessions is not easy to define. For both community gardens they are very important, as they usually do most of the physical garden work, compared to all the other levels of participants in the community garden. Likewise the community garden is very important for most of the (regular) participants as well, as they benefit from the participation on various levels. To describe their role as "volunteers" wouldn't be enough and also not correct as, for example, also the formal members and committee members are volunteers in the sense that they provide unpaid work. However, the tasks of the participants to the volunteering sessions and the committee members vary fundamentally. The role of the participants of the volunteering sessions can maybe be best described as someone who benefits on various levels from voluntary practical garden work without any further commitment or responsibilities for specific amount of time. The participants play an important role in creating the community in the community garden. Through their coming together, their shared work, their shared interest and the time they spend together they create the community not from *outside* like the visitors but from *within*.

3.4 Formal Membership and member meetings

The next level of participation in a community garden is the level of formal membership. Most of the community gardens have a formal membership and formal members are usually people who pay a certain fee to support the community garden and get certain assets in exchange. There are different kinds of memberships and not all of them are present in every

community garden. The multi-layered formal membership of the Culpeper Community Garden gives a good example of the different kind of members that can exist in a community garden. In this case membership is further divided into plot-holding members and non-plot holding members, as mentioned in the second chapter. The Glengall Wharf Community Garden has no formal membership system established yet. Both of the community gardens have a management committee formed by the committee members, which will be described later on in this chapter.

Formal members and plot-holding members

From my observation of the Culpeper Community Garden, the motivations of the formal members and the non-members to get involved in the community garden aren`t significantly different. Theoretically, anyone can become a formal member. Being a formal member can be seen as an active support of the community garden. The support is both financial (through the fee, even if it is very little) and even more important, symbolic. The formal members are a sign that people are actively using the garden, and supporting the idea of the garden. Similar to the visitors also the formal members create the community in the garden through their acknowledgement and support. But other than the visitors (or any other participant) they are officially registered and are therefore important for the legitimation of the community garden. Many formal members symbolise a widespread support of the community garden which could be important for the community garden in case of problems with its legitimation. Through the publication of its annual report and monthly newsletter the Culpeper Community Garden is continuously engaging with its formal members. Furthermore, the official number of formal members is regularly published in official reports. These reports can be seen to carry out a legitimising function, acting as visual proof to the participants that the community garden is widely supported. Through the information, formal members can feel connected to the community in the community garden. Referring back to Anderson's idea of imagined communities, the formal members can feel part of the community, whether or not they are physically part of it.

The level of plot-holding members as in the case of the Culpeper Community Garden is different from the other formal members: they have assets that the other (non- plot-holding) members and the non-members don't have. An asset of the plot-holding membership is, for example, the key to the gates of the community garden, the tool shed and the tea hut. Plot-holding members, as suggested by their name, have furthermore the perk of their own plot of land. Plot-holding members are usually in the community garden more often than other formal members or non-members, who come mainly on specific days - usually for the drop-in voluntary sessions. Plot-holding members can be individuals or other community groups

and they are an important feature for the creation of the community in the garden. They are shaping the garden on a physical level, similar to the participants of the voluntary sessions. The community groups that are using plots for their group sessions create in doing so, the image of the community as a place open also for other community groups. As some of the individual plot-holding members are part of the committee as well, they create the community further through the practical management.

As mentioned, however, plot-holding members, formal members and non-members do mingle. Some of the people who spend a lot of their time in the garden are not formal members, and many people who are formal members are not involved in the community garden at all. Unfortunately, I have no data concerning the question of why and how participants decide to become (or not become) a formal member. The Glengall Wharf Community Garden has not yet created a formal membership. There are still differences among the participants and, as mentioned before, most of the regulars of the volunteering sessions are key-holders.

Key-holders

While the difference between key-holders and non-key-holders is not connected to membership, I would like to clarify their role at this point. Key-holders are people who have a key to the community garden. In comparison to the other participants they have a quite different role. They are not only opening and closing the otherwise closed community garden for the volunteering session, but are usually also "leading" the volunteering sessions in the sense of welcoming new people (making sure that new people read and sign the risk agreement, that they get a tour and everything explained), making sure that everyone signs in, and structuring the volunteering session (explaining the tasks of the session and supervising them, helping in case of questions). They are usually people with some garden experience, but this is not a necessary condition. In regular meetings the key-holders furthermore decide together what to plant when and where. They shape, therefore, the physical appearance of the community garden, both through their organisational and their gardening activity. Being a key-holder is not connected to a fee and therefore it is different from the membership. Everyone is welcome to become a key-holder. It seems, however, that not many people are willing to assume the additional commitment and responsibility associated with being a key-holder. For example, there must be at least one key-holder present at every volunteering session. In cases where no non-key-holder shows up, the key-holders are responsible for keeping the volunteering session running. Being a key-holder in

the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, therefore, requires a significant amount of commitment and dedication to the project.

As I was coming quite regularly to the community garden and was living close by, I was asked by the current chair of the community garden if I would like to become a key-holder as well. With my already time-consuming role as a researcher, however, I could not commit to the additional responsibility and had to decline, although it would certainly have been an interesting experience. (Field journal, 20 October 2013) The key-holders in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden have a role somewhere in between the role of the non-members and the role of the garden workers as they are established in the Culpeper Community Garden. Unfortunately I was unable to collect data about peoples' motivations for getting involved as a key-holder. My assumption is that some of the participants are simply very committed to the project in the first place, and others might actively enjoy having responsibilities, and confronting the challenges of organising and supervising. For such participants, it would seem that becoming a key-holder is not so much a case of taking on *additional* responsibility and commitment, as it is a case of receiving formal acknowledgment of their already existing roles within the community of the garden.

The committee members

The committee members have again a different role that distinguishes them from the other participants. In the form of a management committee, the committee members are literally managing the community garden (in the case of the Culpeper Community Garden with the help of the garden workers), which means that they make all the decisions concerning the community garden, including public relation, applying for funds and organising events. It is easy to imagine that the committee meetings that take place every six week in the case of the Culpeper Community Garden and every eight weeks in the case of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, are usually overloaded with all kind of different topics. I attended two committee meetings at the Culpeper Community Garden and the annual general meeting of both of the gardens. Although the annual general meetings are open for everyone, it was mainly the committee members who attended, which is why I take my observation into account of the analysis at this level as well.

The Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meetings, which in the Culpeper Community Gardens was on the 16th of November 2013 and in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden on the 24th of November, were the first occasions where I came into contact with the management committee. Both of

the meetings were very structured and attended mainly by the committee members of the current committee (in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden also from four non committee members).

In the Culpeper Community Garden I was surprised by how many of the committee members I did not know, despite the fact it was already relatively close to the end of my period of field research. Of the 15 people present, the only people I had met before were the garden workers and two of the formal members that were spending a lot of their time in the community garden, and sometimes also attended the drop- in volunteering session. As the community garden is open every day and I was in the garden usually the same two days, it is actually not a surprising fact. The situation was completely different in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, where I knew 15 out of 18 people present from the volunteering sessions. (Field journal, 24 November 2013) This is also not a surprise as this community garden opens only for the volunteering sessions and public events. The structure of both of the meetings was similar, from welcoming the people, to recapping the main events of the preceding year and presenting the financial support, the stepping down of the old committee, presenting the candidates for the new committee, voting the new committee and some other business. All in all, both of the meetings took no longer than 45 minutes. I was at first astonished by how structured and fast they were, but later recognised that it was probably thanks to a good preparation. I later realised for example, that the candidates for the new committee had been selected in advance during other meetings. It seemed everyone knew what was about to happen and that the whole meeting was more of an official frame following the given constitution.[48]

The annual general meetings, therefore, can be seen as a ritualised process, symbolising the structure and organisation of the community garden especially from the point of view of outsiders. As it is a public event (albeit not generally well attended by the public) the management committee represents itself as working very efficiently and smoothly. The minutes of the meeting are as part of the "ritual" a visualisation of the meeting and at the same time a proof especially for outsiders that the constitution and the formal structure are observed. The annual general meeting seemed to be a well-oiled mechanism: The only decision– that of the election of new committee members - succeeded smoothly and without conflict, as did the rest of the meeting. Most of the committee members were re-elected and only the chair went to another person (in both community gardens the treasurer and secretary did not change). The routine was even more noticeable in the Culpeper Community Garden

[48] Important to note is that once a group registers officially as community group, charity or any other group, a certain formal constitution is required. The formal structure that is a feature of the creation of the community in the garden is, therefore, highly influenced by an official position outside of the community garden. These laws and regulations create the community on a formal level from outside, which is why it is important to mention them as an element.

where, according to one of the committee members, the committee had not changed for many years; the meeting I attended was the first time in a long period of time that new people had joined the committee (Field journal, 17 November 2013). Although I did not inquire further as to what was meant by "a long time," even that relatively vague statement still supports the idea of a routine.

The annual general meeting is probably the event where the structure and organisation of the community garden is visible at its best. Additionally, as in both of the community gardens this event was connected to a lunch, it is also a social event where the old and new committee members (and few non-members) come together and have time to socialise. Thus the annual meeting can also be seen as a community creating element and representing the community at the same time. The committee meetings are in sharp contrast to the annual general meeting. As I could only attend two different committee meetings in the Culpeper Community Garden, my material is rather scarce but since they were very meaningful and interesting to see, I would like to give some remarks nonetheless.

Committee meetings

After I got in touch with the committee members of the Culpeper Community Garden at the annual general meeting, I was invited to their committee meetings as well. This was, of course, an invaluable opportunity for research, and one that I gratefully accepted. I attended the two committee meetings that followed the annual general meeting (27th of November 2013, 8th of January 2014). In contrast to the annual general meeting, both of the meetings were actual work meetings in terms of level of decisions, emotions and potential conflicts. I had not expected committee meetings to be so emotionally-charged, and was very surprised when it turned out to be the case. Both of the meetings were structured in a very similar way, which seems to be the general structure of the meetings. Its general agenda was: time for apologies, approval of the minutes of the last meeting, matters arising from the last meeting, a garden workers' report and then the particular topics. The committee meetings were usually attended by all of the committee members, or if one of them was not available, they would send words beforehand for their apologies, or let one of the other committee members know, to announce it in the apologies point of the agenda. The second point was the formal approval of the minutes from the last meeting, which meant that all of the committee members would read the minutes and either collectively approve them or correct mistakes where necessary. If there were unfinished points from the last meeting or new matters arising to be pointed out, that was to be done on the third point of the agenda. The garden workers' report is a written document of the two garden workers regarding what has happened in terms of activities, events, groups and drop-in volunteering session in the past six weeks.

This report is handed out, presented and, where required, discussed by one of the two garden workers in the fourth point of the agenda. (Field journal, 27 November 2013) These four points seemed to form the general structure and formal frame of the committee meetings. Most of the points did not take much time to cover, but were nevertheless diligently carried out.

The committee meeting was moderated by the chair, with the secretary taking minutes. The new chair of the Culpeper Community Garden was a former garden worker who now also works in other community gardens and community projects. Although she had not been directly involved with the Culpeper Community Garden for the past two years, she had remained in contact and was voted as chair. The fact that she was one of the youngest committee members was standing out. Also noticeable was that, while she was definitely very experienced as a chair, and capable of leading meetings in a structured manner, she was clearly not entirely familiar with the particular structure of meetings at the Culpeper Community Garden: she sometimes forgot to address some of the formal points, and was kindly reminded by the former chair. (Field journal, 27 November 2013)

The different points of the agenda sounded harmless and were mainly practical questions that needed to be discussed, such as installing a new letterbox, repairing the tea hut, checking the safety of the sitting possibilities, cleaning the garden buildings, cutting trees and similar other matters. But surprisingly all of these points were very emotionally charged. Both of the meetings took more than three hours and not even half of the points were discussed as almost all of the seemingly harmless sounding points were discussed in a highly emotional way. It is interesting to note that it was not even always the same people discussing, which could have been interpreted as maybe their character, but instead it was for every topic different people that became, for whatever reason, emotionally involved with the particular theme. The sometimes very difficult interpersonal dynamics between the committee members, also affect their work. The committee members have to make many decisions, both small and major. The committee members are practically continuously under pressure, especially time-wise.

My interpretation is that, as most of the committee members had been working together on the committee for more than ten years, even perfectly harmless points can become a field for unresolved matters from the past – matters that may not even be related to the community garden, but rather to personal conflicts among the committee members. Although the emotional atmosphere can be explained by these reasons, it surprised me nevertheless. It was, moreover, clearly not only a surprise to me, as one of the three new committee members resigned after the first meeting because of the tense atmosphere. (Field journal, 9 January 2014)

The committee members are the participants of the community garden who are responsible for the organisation and management of the community garden itself. As shown above, the management of a community garden is not always easy, and is rarely conflict free. Instead, it requires a lot of commitment, time, energy, patience and a high tolerance for stress. Most of the committee members of the Culpeper Community Garden have their own plot in the community garden. As they own an individual plot there can be no doubts regarding their interest in solving practical matters concerning the community garden. However, not all of the plot-holding members are committee members, and most of the existing committee members have been the same for the last ten years. As everyone else, the committee members commit to their managing task on a completely voluntary basis. My guess is that their commitment is connected to personal reasons. One possible benefit the committee members gain is that all of them are entitled to make decisions. This is, of course, a responsibility but one that some people actively enjoy, even if it is on only a voluntary basis (the majority of committee members, it will be remembered, are retired already which may be why they have slightly different conditions than non-retired people). Referring back to Firth, Maye, Pearson and Glover it can be said that through their role and their tasks the committee members collect social capital more than any of the other participants- a massive asset. Being a committee member is an opportunity to create and shape the community garden on a different level than that accessible to the participants in the volunteering sessions, for example. Of course, every decision is usually a decision of the entire committee, but decisions are made by majority and not by consensus. It would have been interesting to observe the committee meetings of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, and make a comparison, as the organisation there is very different, but unfortunately it was not possible for me to access these meetings.

3.5 The garden workers and project coordinators

Many of the community gardens engage garden workers that they pay through funding. The advantage of engaging a garden worker is that there is always someone in the garden who knows about it and can answer questions. Often the garden workers are the ones who supervise the volunteering sessions and help the management committee with their management work. Therefore, the garden workers constitute a special category on their own. As in most of the community gardens also in the case of the Culpeper Community Garden the garden workers are getting paid. The relation of the garden workers to the community garden is the formal work relation of the community garden as an employer and the garden worker as an employee. The Glengall Wharf Community Garden has no garden workers in the sense of a paid staff but nonetheless different levels of responsibility and commitment exist. Charlotte for example is not only a key-holder and lead gardener but also the project coordinator of the “Grown in Peckham” project, which is why her role is slightly different

from the other key-holders and lead gardeners. Charlotte's and the garden worker's position of the Culpeper Community Garden are very different because of the different relationship to the community garden, which is in one case a monetary and in the other case a voluntary one. I believe that their role and tasks are very similar, however, which is why I would like to analyse both of the positions together in the following section.

Martha Orbach, garden worker in the Culpeper Community Garden

I felt a bit like: I'm right at home here.

(Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

Martha has been working as a part-time garden worker at the Culpeper Community Garden for the last three years. She is not a professional gardener herself, but collected many different experiences and certifications over the past years. In my interview with her, she described her background and how she came to the community garden:

> So, I came to work here, because I was working in another community project. And I grew up in the countryside. And I was just really missing being outside. So I saw this job and I wasn't really expecting to apply but I read through it and was like, ah actually there are lots of things that I'm looking for. Ah, I need that. And so, yeah, I applied. […] And I just really, really wanted it. So luckily they hired me. […] That was about three years ago. […] And in the interview-process, they were like: So you realise there will be probably some better gardeners at the garden. Are you gonna mind that? And I was like: No, that's absolutely fine. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

The little extract from the interview shows already some of Martha's reasons on why she decided to work in a community garden. Her first reference is that she was working in another community project before, the second that she grew up in the countryside and was missing the being outside. These aspects show on one hand that she already had experience with the work in a community project and supposedly liked it, as when she was looking for a job she was searching again in the same field. On the other hand there is a reference to her own background and how she grew up. As she grew up in the countryside, she was used to be outside and was when she moved to London, she started missing the "being outside", as she said herself. The job in the community garden, was on a second look a good opportunity to combine her experience of community work with her wish to work somewhere outside. Although she didn't think about it at first, and also agreed when she was asked that there will be better gardeners than herself, she "really wanted" the job after thinking it through. Martha mentioned her family background once more a little bit later in the interview, when I was asking her about her experience with working with volunteers:

> I've worked in, I've worked for community organisation and with volunteers pretty much my whole working life, pretty much really. […] I grew up in a sustainable land use project. […] My parents opened it when I was about ten. It was lot of working outdoors, working with volunteers, well that sort of thing. So that was very much

> familiar characteristics in some way, to go back to that. So yeah. I felt a bit like, I'm right at home here. And yeah, this is probably where I learned working with volunteers. […] My mum, she used to work in therapeutic community for people with learning difficulties and yeah, I suppose the kind of ethos of helping, of facilitating others and things like that, was probably something, yeah, I got introduced to quite young, probably. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

Martha did not only grow up in the countryside, but in a sustainable land project that was also working with volunteers. The whole feeling of living in a community project, the work with volunteers and in an environmental sector was indeed something she got introduced to at a very young age. It is not surprising that she "really wanted" the job in the Culpeper Community Garden and it felt like being "at home". From the way she talked about her background and the project, it is likely to assume that she connects positive experiences with it. Her motivation to work in the community garden are therefore tightly connected to how she grew up and the (good) experiences she made in her past. Martha further mentioned an "ethos of helping, of facilitating others", another of her characteristics. When referring to the fact that she started to "work" with volunteers at her parents' farm, it is likely to assume she was also quite involved in the project itself, even though she was only ten years old. Martha also claimed that she has been working for almost her "whole working life" for community organisations. She is then probably not only feeling very familiar with this kind of work (feeling "at home") but the other way around, not being used to any other kind of work, which is probably why she keeps on looking for jobs in this sector. The community garden presented her, so to say, a perfect combination, putting together the aspects of working in a community project and the being outside. As I already mentioned in chapter two when describing the role of the garden workers, this role not only combines two different aspects but it also requires two different sets of skills: the skills connected to working in a community project (managing and running a voluntary organisation) and outdoor skills. Describing her work with volunteers, Martha says:

> I think working with volunteers you have to like people. Be interested in people. Because I think if you work with volunteers, it's much about the people. […] Because essentially, I think the best way of work with volunteers, you know, you get to know what people want out of their volunteering. Because everybody is different. […] And so if you are interested in people and you do that because you like it, then, I think, that makes it much easier. And then it's much easier to naturally be like "Ah, so you are doing this because you want to get more activity around gardening, Ah okay, you might like…" It sort of flows naturally. […] And also, I always get back to that thing about, if you are volunteering, you just, you are volunteering to help. And therefore if you are working with volunteers, it's not reasonable to have high expectations. Or if you do, you must make them really clear. So yeah, you have to apply lots of patience. People are not experts quite likely. […] Not getting fed up with people making mistakes. […] You have to be, I suppose, fairly laid back, I suppose. Because, yeah, it's not like managing a staff team. […] You have to be aware of how to … make people feel comfortable. […] Like making, trying to

> negotiate a lot of diverse personalities, who might not in everyday life have much to say to each other. (Martha Orbach, 22 November 2013)

In this extract, Martha said something very important about the role of the garden workers, which I described earlier in relation to their capacity for care-giving. The garden workers try to "negotiate" and are therefore not only facilitating between "diverse personalities", as Martha suggests at the very end, but also between the expectations of individual participants ("what people want out of their volunteering") and what the community garden could offer them. The garden workers role could be also described as an intermediary: the garden workers stand and mediate between the community garden, as a community offering activities and facilities, and the participants coming for particular reasons. They mediate further also between the different participants who are looking sometimes for very different things and have in any case very diverse personalities, as I showed before. The garden workers constantly negotiate and facilitate through "interest" in the participants and their motivations as well as the knowledge about the facilities of the community garden. According to Martha, to be able to negotiate and to comply with their role "naturally", the garden workers need to be, first of all, interested in people. I understand Martha's term "naturally" as fulfilling the role without letting the participant even notice that negotiating work is happening and/or necessary. Martha further mentions that garden workers in a community garden, should also be "fairly laid back", should be able to apply a lot of patience without or otherwise clearly formulated expectations and should be able to accept "mistakes" of the participants in the garden work. Martha thus shows clearly the difference between a garden where a garden worker manages a staff team and mistakes can't be accepted and a community garden, or more specific the Culpeper Community Garden, where the focus is to "make people feel comfortable" and mistakes can be accepted or are even part of the therapeutic aspect. This is an important difference that also some of my other interview partners emphasised. As Ella Perkins for example said: "Gardening is a big experiment. You learn from your mistakes and you compost them as well" (Ella Perkins, 2 December 2013). A conclusion that could be true for gardening in general but is even more valid for community gardening. From what Martha said and what I observed myself, I can say that the garden workers, or more specifically their facilitating and negotiating role, are an crucial element that works towards creating the community in the garden or that at least massively supports the process of creating a community in the garden.

Charlotte Dove, project coordinator of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden

I think it's the community gardening rather than just gardening. Because I think, if it was just gardening I wouldn't get the satisfaction out of it.

(Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

The situation of Charlotte as a volunteer project coordinator is quite a different one from Martha's as a paid garden worker. And yet they fulfil very similar roles and have even some characteristics in common. Just like Martha, also Charlotte is not a gardener by profession. Charlotte gained her gardening experiences through different short courses, volunteering experiences and an apprenticeship lasting a year in "Food from the sky".[49] Both Martha and Charlotte are around the same age, namely in their late twenties (Charlotte) and early thirties (Martha). Nonetheless, their backgrounds are quite different as it will be shown in the following extract of the interview:

> I only got interested… it's about five years ago now, when I did wwoofing.[50] […] I finished uni and then I was working in a theatre for two years doing press and marketing. Which I really loved. But there was something, you know, it wasn't quite right. […] I just started thinking about other things that might appeal to me. And then I heard about wwoofing. So I spent a summer travelling around England. I spent three months off work, travelled around and went to eight different farms. […] So not really long on each one. But that was a big turning point, I guess, in my life. […] So I did that and then when I got back to London, I never wanted kind of move out to the country and do something really immediate like that. I thought I will stay in London and see how I can make it part of my life here. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

So unlike Martha, Charlotte didn't grow up in the countryside but in London and had, until the time after she finished her studies, not much to do with gardening or community projects. The "turning point" for Charlotte, as she pointed out herself, was the experience of wwoofing. Charlotte mentioned that "something wasn't quite right" when she started working. Although she liked the work she was doing, she had the feeling that something was missing. Wwoofing was for her the opportunity to get to know a completely new field. Charlotte supposedly found in the voluntary gardening work on the organic farms what she was missing before in her paid work in the theatre. And indeed many things changed afterwards. With the attempt to make "it" (which can be only the experience of working outdoors, as a volunteer with other volunteers) part of her life, Charlotte started volunteering in different community gardens and gardening projects afterwards.

> And when I started to get paid a little more I was just working four days and surviving of that. So for the last four years I did that, or three maybe. I can't

[49] Food from the sky is a social enterprise on the rooftop of a supermarket in North London. The business is based on the ideas of the market gardens: Together with one part-time garden worker volunteers and apprentices grow vegetables and herbs to sell them on the local market, to restaurants or to supermarkets. (Field journal, 15 November 2013)

[50] Wwoofing is a phenomenon that became more and more popular in the last years. WWOOF (= worldwide opportunities on organic farms) is a worldwide platform, on which organic farms and projects can register and offer working opportunities for volunteers. The idea is then that people register as well and get access to the database of the organic farms and projects. In exchange for their voluntary work the volunteers get free accommodation and food from their hosting farm. (Homepage WWOOF: http://www.wwoof.net/. Last access: 19 May 2014).

> remember. But working sort of as a volunteer at least one day a week, to sort of keep the interest going, keep learning. And I did quite a lot of short courses as well, when I first got back from wwoofing. […] And then I did the apprenticeship, so that was a little more involved and a bit more commitment. So it just has gradually been stepping up. Yeah and the interest hasn't gone at all. It is the first thing ever in my life that feels right and that I keep on wanting to know more about and that I feel very committed to. […] I've done a lot of volunteering. But I would still carry on volunteering in, like community gardens. Because I know how much they rely on volunteers. It's nice to finally get paid and to be coordinating stuff rather than just turning up… I feel ready for this stage… But, yeah… (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

Charlotte's strategy of including the work outdoors in her daily life was thus to work one day less at her paid work and to live off that. By having an extra day, she was able to volunteer at least one day a week in different gardening projects. First she participated in different volunteering sessions of several community gardens in her neighbourhood, then she started as an apprentice in the "food from the sky" project for a year, and lastly she initiated and coordinated a project in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden for another year. As she said herself, Charlotte was "gradually stepping up", her own commitment and responsibility gradually growing and her interest would not stop. Getting paid for the growing season starting from 2014 as project coordinator of the Grown in Peckham project, marks just another step in this career. As she has been working as a volunteer herself for the past four years, she knows how important they are for community projects, which is why she would still continue volunteering for community gardens anyway. At another point of the interview, Charlotte said that actually she even prefers to be a volunteer, as the expectations, and the relationships with the other people and the garden are totally different. Volunteers can decide themselves how much time and commitment they want to give. A "really nice thing" and "totally in your control" as Charlotte said. As soon as someone is getting paid, she continued, the relationship changes entirely and is connected with many more expectations. Charlotte said further that she also feels almost bad to get money, as she feels like she gets already so many other things from the work in the community garden. Money isn't a huge motivator whereas interest in gardening and learning skills are some of the reasons why Charlotte started volunteering in the different community gardens. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013). Beside her interest in gardening, there is also another important aspect for her:

> One thing that for me is really important being at Burgess Park is, er, what makes me feel at home in the area. Because even that I grew up in South London but it wasn't close to here. So I didn't know this area at all when I moved in. But being here has just make me feel part of this part of London. Especially the link to the restaurants, because now I've got like friends in each of the places. (Charlotte Dove, 6 December 2013)

The aspect of being involved in a local community project is for Charlotte just as important as her interest in gardening. It makes her feel connected to the area she lives in. It makes her "feel at home", even though she grew up somewhere else.

It is interesting that both, Charlotte and Martha said that the work in the community garden makes them feel at home. For Martha "feeling home" was a way to express that the combination of the working outdoors and the work in a community project reminded her of the sustainable land use project of her parents that she grew up in. Charlotte used the expression to say that the work in the community garden makes her feel connected to the neighbourhood she is living in now. I identified "being local" as one of the characteristics of people getting involved especially on the level of volunteering sessions analysed earlier in chapter 3.3. Charlotte gave one explanations out of many possible ones about why it is beneficial for people to get involved in a local community project. Especially if they are motivated by finding company and friendship a local project offers the opportunity to get connected not only to the area but also to other people living locally.[51]

Charlotte takes a quite responsible role in the Glengall Wharf Community garden that distinguishes her from the other key-holders. She organised the whole Grown in Peckham project from the very beginning, from introducing the idea to the committee of the community garden, to making the contacts to the restaurants, organising and running the sessions and afterwards to delivering the food to the restaurants. Just like Martha, Charlotte has a facilitating and mediating role. She mediates between the different people coming to the volunteering session, but also between them, the community garden and her idea of the growing food project to sell it to restaurants - thus finding even a third level of mediation between the restaurants and the community garden.

The role carried out by Martha and by Charlotte is, therefore, very similar, and could be described as that of an *intermediary*. Through their activity of facilitating and negotiating they are creating the garden *for* a community from within the community. Other than the committee members they are not automatically part of the community they are creating. The position of the garden worker can be also *only* a job. I didn't ask neither Martha nor Charlotte if they feel part of the community in the garden, but from what I observed and from what they say, I think it is likely that they are.

[51] An important aspect that also Ella Perkins emphasised when she said: "I think especially in this dense urban area being able to walk to places […] is really important. It connects you to where you live and not travelling somewhere else. […] If you volunteer and travel somewhere else you probably not gonna meet those people in your daily life" (Ella Perkins, 2 December 2013). To participate in a local community project thus offers the option to get connected not only with the area but also with other people from the area and to meet them inside and outside of the particular community project (like the community garden for example).

The motivations and backgrounds of both Martha and Charlotte are very different. The overview of the two different biographies of Martha and Charlotte were meant to show how different the people getting involved in a community garden can be, also at a level of participation that asks for more responsibilities. The examples of Martha and Charlotte are partially in contrast to the backgrounds of other garden workers generally working at community gardens. I have asked some of those workers about their background and most were familiar with either community work or working in a garden from an early age on (by growing up in the country side, or with a big garden or growing up in a community project or with parents that were involved in community projects). Quite many of those garden workers have also had a garden related educational background (either professional gardeners, or environmental studies). Being already familiar with at least one aspect of the work required in a community garden, seems to be a not insignificant factor to undertake the choice of becoming a garden worker in a community garden. However as the biography of Charlotte exemplarily showed, there can also be other possible backgrounds.

3.6 Summary

The analysis of the different levels of participation showed that not only does every person have different motivations for participating in a community garden, but also that there are different possible levels of participations and different levels of belonging to the community in the garden. Although these levels are not strictly separate, there are different roles and tasks resulting from the different levels of participation. With my analysis, I pointed out different elements I described as "community-creating elements" and/ or conditions that influence the creation of a community in the garden.

The lowest level of participation in a community garden is the one of the visitors. I introduced visitors as people who are not actively working in a community garden to *modify* it, but who are using its facilities and activities for their own purposes. Most of the visitors are either living or working nearby the community garden; besides this, they do not necessarily share any further mutual characteristics. The role of the visitor, especially regular visitors, can be best described as *passive supporters*. The community garden for the visitors becomes a place for their own recreation. Here they can come to relax, or to meet with people that they know from outside of the garden. The visitors remain merely as *outsiders* and the community garden is for them a place that is relatively replaceable. As I showed, spatial and temporal accessibility are relevant conditions for the community garden on all levels of participation. The community in the garden is depending on a physical place – the garden. The aspect of an accessible geographic place is therefore an important element for

the creation of a community (compare with the interpretation of a community as a geographic unit, as I described it in the introduction). People can only participate if the community garden is open and accessible. Visitors are particularly depending on the accessibility of the community garden, whereas other participants are less dependent and can even actively regulate the accessibility (for example the committee members). Visitors will only participate and become part of the community in the garden, if it offers either activities (for example events, courses) or facilities (sitting possibilities, lawn, shade/ sun, and others) that meet their ideas and needs. The reasons and motivations to participate in the community garden as a visitor are not as various and diverse as on any of the other levels. It is even debateable if the visitors participate at all. As most of the community gardens are offering activities and facilities addressing the public in particular, I interpret visitors as the first and lowest level of participation. Important to note for the model of community in the garden is that visitors create the community from *outside* through their acknowledgement. In talking about the community garden as a place *for* a community, they are manifesting the community verbally on a symbolic level from an outside perspective. A frequently visited community garden shows further that the community in the garden is well connected to other communities and networks, for example the neighbourhood community, or the network of workers that use the garden as a place to gather. In the case of the Culpeper Community Garden the community (of gardeners) in the community garden is embedded in these network of other communities (neighbourhood community, school communities, and other community groups). Through the activities and facilities they offer, the community (of gardeners) in the community garden is in continuous interaction with them.

The formally registered members have a similar position like the visitors. Likewise they create the community garden on a symbolic level from *outside*, too. With their financial support and their acknowledgement the registered members, manifest the garden as a place *for* a community. The registered members have, however, another significance for the community in the garden. They are a concrete number, manifested in official reports and, therefore, the visualised form of acknowledgement that the community in the garden can use as a tool for their legitimation (many members symbolise a high support).

The next level of participation in community gardens are the people who get involved in volunteering sessions. These people are actively working in the community garden, shaping and changing it and are thus *insiders*. As their work often occurs under the guidance of a garden worker, or another form of supervisor, they usually have no further commitments or responsibilities. Their belonging to the community in the garden might be short or long term. The reasons and motivations of these participants are very varied and individual and may change over time. The benefits any of them might hope to gain through their participation

are various as well. Some are looking for an outdoor place and a space to do some gardening, because they don't have access to a garden. Others want to learn something about gardening, and again others are interested in company and overcoming social isolation. As an overall motivation I identified their love of being outside in the garden and doing garden work. The social and economic status, age, ethnic background and other characteristics of the participants can be very different but can be combined into different types. The types that I described are namely: students, middle class workers, unemployed people, mothers with their under-fives, pensioners, or people with difficult health, mental health or living conditions (for example homelessness, alcohol issues, learning difficulties and others).

The participants of the volunteering sessions often have multiple motivations, which cannot be one by one connected to the different types. For many participants in the Culpeper Community Garden, the community garden is a place where they can find company, and experience the therapeutic effects of gardening. For many people in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden, the community garden is a place where they can find company, and where gardening has an educational purpose.

The participants of the volunteering session create the community from *within* through their shared activity (working together, drinking tea, socialising), shared time and shared interest (mutual love for nature and being outside). The community that they are part of is created *by* themselves. Some of the participants share a similar social background or have mutual experiences, which is, however, not a compulsory element for the creation of a community. Having extra time, being able and willing to spend this time and being able and willing to work are conditions that I identified in the level of the participation in the volunteering sessions, which is valid as an element for the other levels, too.

The plot-holding members have a similar position to the participants in the volunteering session. They create the community from *within* through their garden work. Their level of belonging to the community that is created by them and the participants in the volunteering session, depends on how much they themselves participate in the daily activities of the garden. Through their presence in the garden, shared time with other members and non-members and shared activity they determine their own belonging to this community: their feeling of belonging can be very close or also very distant. I observed many plot-holding members in the Culpeper Community Garden that spend most of their days in the garden and with the community. Others, I heard other members saying, work on their plot early in the morning and disappear without any further contact to other members or non-members. Whether they are close or distant to the community, they follow the regulations set up by the committee: the plot holding members are committing to take care of their plot; otherwise, they would lose the right to own a plot and consequently also the benefit. They share the idea

of the community garden and in doing so manifesting the community through their acknowledgement and support (similar to the formal members and visitors). The plot-holding members can, therefore, be located somewhere in between all the other levels in my model of the community in the garden. They are an example of how important it is to understand my model as a flexible and continuously changing model. The feeling of belonging of the different participants of the community can change, with different participants assuming different roles and creating community on different levels as time goes by.

As another level of participation, I identified the committee members. The committee members are actively, shaping and changing the community garden on an organisational level. Their level of commitment and responsibility, as well as the benefits they gain from their participation, distinguish them from all the other levels, which is why I describe them as the *core* of the community. The committee members create a community in the garden through their decisions and practical management: they are creating the garden as a place *for* a community that they can be part of themselves. The decision making power of the committee members is an asset but at the same time an immense commitment. It is an energy and time consuming task and also a basic condition for the whole community garden to exist. The committee symbolises the organisation of the community garden and the committee members are continuously organising and managing the community garden. The formal structure of the committee is highly influenced from *outside* through laws and regulations concerning registered community groups. These laws and regulations are thus creating the community in the garden on a structural level and are another important element in the creation of the community from *outside*.

The last level of participation I identified are the garden workers or project coordinators, which form their own category. The garden workers and project coordinators help with both management work and practical garden work. Their work requires different sets of skills. Most of the garden workers are paid, which is why they have a different relationship to the garden in comparison to any of the other participants; however, as in the case of Charlotte, rather than the monetary aspect, it is the role that really distinguishes them from the other participants. I described their role as that of an intermediary. They undertake different levels of negotiation: negotiation between the various participants within the community; between the ideas of the committee and the other participants; between the community in the garden and other community groups; and, as in the example of the "Grown in Peckham" project, between the community garden and the restaurants and cafés (which can be considered as public institutions). Their role is important as they are facilitating and supporting the creation of community and trying to make all the diverse participants feel comfortable. In the model

of community in community gardens, the garden workers can be located somewhere close to the core, as part of the core and as everywhere in between as they connect all other levels and negotiate between the different participants. They create, similar to the committee members, the garden as a place *for* a community, both from *within* and from *outside* (through the communication with public institutions or other community groups).

In this summary it became clear that the community garden can be a very different place for every different participants. All of the active participants have the possibility to create the community in the community garden through their activities in the way that it becomes a place that meets their needs: for the type of participant looking for company, the community garden is a place where they can meet other people; for the participant who wants to learn something about plants, it is a place where they can learn something about plants; for the participants who are looking for a sunny place to eat their lunch, the community garden can offer a bench in the sun.

4 Community in community gardens: a conclusion

I think they [community gardens] really do build meaningful community […].

(Martha Orbach, 22. November 2013)

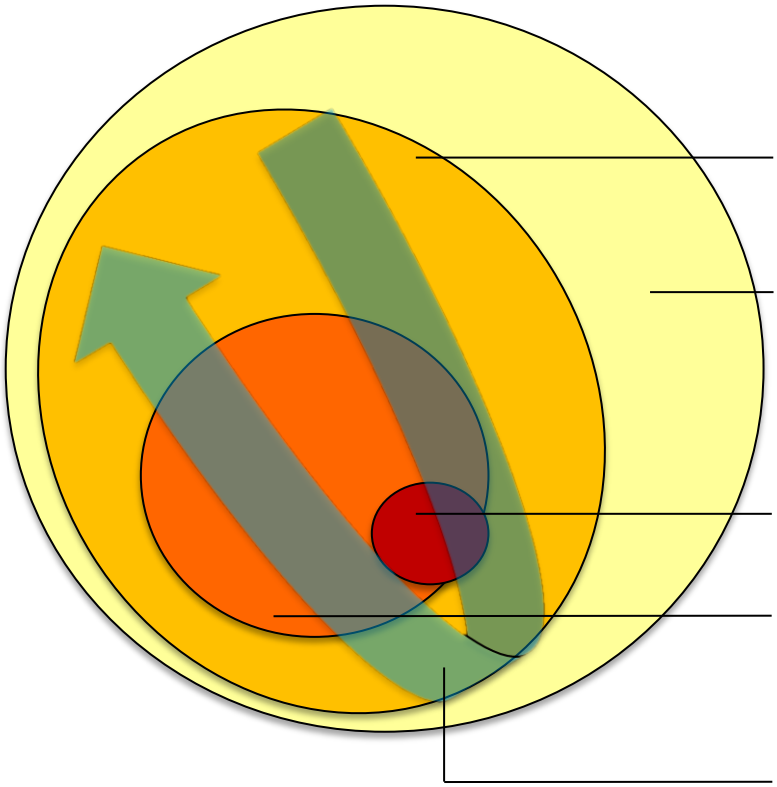
In the previous chapters, I identified the different levels of participation in order to analyse the different motivations for people to participate, their characteristics and their roles, as well as their position in the community. I suggested that, as a result of the open structure of the community gardens, participants have the possibility to actively create and/ or codetermine the creation of a community in the garden. As outlined in the introduction, community gardens do not have a predefined use; they are not "fixed places". Instead, they have "multiple uses" and "things change according to who is there and who is coming", as Ella Perkins suggested in an interview (2 December 2013). As I said in the introduction, referring back to Müller, I understand community gardens as undefined terrains, whose purpose is to be a "platform" or "transmitter" (Müller 2010, 32). Community gardens offer both the possibility of the realisation of individual needs and ideas of the different participants, as well as the possibility of the creation of a community based on mutual interest and shared activity. Depending on who is there and who is coming, the community garden is not only changing as a physical place but also on the symbolic level and the level of the meaning for the individual participants. If it happens, for example, that participants give the community the meaning of a meeting place, it might happen that the participants are coming together to drink tea and to chat. Other participants might give the community the meaning of a place to exchange knowledge and they might come together to work and to enthusiastically exchange advice on how to fight greenflies.

Despite the formal organisation and structure of the community gardens, all of its participants are *members* of the community they create. Everyone *can* contribute to the creation of the community in the community garden. The level of involvement and feeling of belonging may vary from individual to individual and they are not necessarily connected to the level of participation. Other elements that I described in the introduction, such as a shared geographical area (the garden) and a shared social organisation (the constitution of the garden) are important elements describing the community in the community garden as well.

In the preceding chapters, I identified some practices of the participants as community-building practices. These community-building practices are wide-ranging and multidimensional. They range from gardening together, resting together, chatting and drinking tea together, to community-building on the less tangible level of emotional connectedness, arrived at through sharing knowledge, interest and enjoyment in gardening.

The participants can act according to their own ideas and needs, and evolve through exchange, while being supported and protected by the group. My findings seem to fit Dervina's and Korpela's concept of "cocoon communities". As Alex Gillespie (2013: 144) writes in the afterword of Dervina's and Korpela's book, cocoon communities are a metaphor to "articulate individuality within community". The core idea is that cocoon communities are groups in which individuals can evolve protected by the group. The participants are free to come and go as they please - the community is not binding and the membership can be temporary - and yet, as the fact of the existence of long-term members suggests, the participants are emotionally attached to the community garden. The community in the community gardens, could be therefore interpreted as cocoon community. It is actively created both on the literal, physical level of carving out the place through every day practice, as well as on a symbolic emotional level (for example through the name, the constitution, the representation to the public). On the emotional, symbolic level, the meanings attributed to the community aspect of the garden vary significantly, depending on the personal needs and ideas of the particular participant. Therefore, following Anthony Cohen's concept of symbolic communities (Cohen 1998), the community garden as a place can be understood as a symbol in itself. The different participants are referring to the community garden as a place - the place created *by* them and *for* them - and still the different participants give the community and the community garden different meanings. The community garden itself is only a place that offers such possibility so that a community can be created within it (it is a platform); it is not a community *per se*.

The aim of my thesis was to formulate a typology of participants and to generate a model of community in community gardens. My model of community shows the different levels of community building resulting from the different activities and the different levels of involvement existing in the community garden (the further from the core the less the level of involvement). It is important to understand my model as flexible and one possible model among others.



Creating the garden for a community from *outside* through:

Acknowledgement and support (*Visitors, formally registered members*)

Laws and regulations determining structure of the community garden

Creating the garden for a community from *within* through:

Practical management/ organisation (*Committee members*)

Practical maintenance (*participants in volunteering sessions, plot-holding members, key holders)*

negotiating and facilitating *(garden workers)*

Picture 4: Model of community in community gardens.

I analysed the committee members as the core of the community in the garden. Through their practical management and organisation they create the garden as a place *for* a community from *within*. They regulate the creation of a community by other participants through spatial and temporal accessibility as well as the activities they decide to offer (volunteering sessions, courses, events). The participants of the volunteering sessions and partly also the plot-holding members create a community through their shared activity, shared time, and mutual interest. A community is created *by* them from *within*. Formal registered members and visitors create the garden as a place *for* a community from *outside* through their (financial and symbolic) support and their acknowledgement. The formal structure of the community is further highly influenced by regulations and laws from *outside*.

The case of the Culpeper Community Garden showed that, although theoretically there are many different levels of participation, in practice, there is a significant interaction and blurring of the boundaries between the different levels. It is almost impossible to state, categorically, whom among the participants is a formal member, or part of the committee, or a person just dropping in. The only easily distinguishable presences are the visitors and the garden workers, who are not usually involved in the same way as the other participants and,

therefore, remain *visibly* separate. The level of emotional belonging, as well as the level of involvement may be different from participant to participant and not necessarily connected to their level of participation. A visitor can just feel as emotionally connected as a long term formal member or a short term volunteer in the volunteering sessions. The level of belonging to the community can furthermore change over time. Likewise can one participant be part on different levels at the same time (many of the committee members are plot-holding members for example), or change the levels of participation and their level of involvement over time.

In the Glengall Wharf Community Garden the different levels cross over less. It is often quite clear, even from simply an observational standpoint, who is a key-holder or a lead gardener, and who is not. When it comes to the committee members, however, this distinction is less easily made. It became very clear during my observations that the difference between the levels of participation in the Glengall Wharf Community Garden is less of a difference of the actual, officially-allocated roles, and more one of levels of involvement. Participants that are more involved seem to become almost automatically a key-holder, and it is quite common for them to eventually progress to the committee. Advancing through these levels of involvement affects not only the commitments of participants, but also their duties, assets and, most significantly, their influence in the decision-making process, especially as part of the committee. Therefore, despite the fact the different levels are more distinguishable, all of the participants are together in the volunteering sessions: they work together and share a mutual interest in being outside and in learning more about growing food.

To answer one of the initial questions, concerning whether a community garden is "run for the community, by [the] community, or […] they just happen to be located in certain communities" (Firth, Maye and Pearson 2011: 557), it should be clear by now that all the options can be answered with a "yes". The community garden is run to offer the place and space for the creation of a community within the frame of the garden and is therefore run *for* a community (especially through the activity of the committee members from within, and the visitors and registered members, as well as laws and regulations from outside). Yet the community garden is, as I have demonstrated, not a community per se but actively created *by* the participants that form the community in the garden. It is therefore changing continuously depending on who is there. Finally, the community gardens are often situated in locations in which networks, groups and other communities already exist, be it in the form of other community projects, neighbourhood networks or other social groups. The example of the Culpeper Community Garden, where these different community groups were invited to participate from the beginning, illustrates quite convincingly that community gardens also happen to *be in* already existing communities. To answer the question, therefore, community

gardens can be everything: run for the community, by the community and, sometimes, located within the sphere of other communities.

It is important to note that the borders between the different communities, which are the community of the community garden, the neighbourhood community, and other community groups is not always easy to draw, especially not when participants are members in different communities. But the different communities represent themselves to the public as distinctive to the others. The Culpeper Community Garden for example represents itself explicitly as a community of gardeners that is working with other community groups in the garden and that is well connected to the neighbourhood (community). Even though the borders may seem to be blurry from an outside perspective, they are very clear from the emic point of view. To refer back to Barth's ethnicity concept, it seems that the community in the community garden is selectively choosing significant features to be distinctive to other community groups. Their mutual interest and love in nature and gardening is the only feature all the participants share. It is significant for their community. The participants share of course other features, too, many of the participants share for example the feature of living locally, but these are played down. It can't be a significant feature for the community in the community garden, because it is already significant for the neighbourhood community. The membership of the community is, therefore, based on the occupation of the participants and defined through their activities.

By portraying two among the many community gardens in London, I have tried to give an insight into the organisation and structure of community gardens, the people and their motivations to participate, and the roles they undertake within the gardens. The community in a community garden is actively made through interaction from within and outside, and it exists on both a material and an imagined symbolic level. The members of the community create the community through their shared interest in gardening and learning about plants and, most importantly, through a mutual love of being outdoors. Reflecting on my research, I certainly felt a member of such a community myself; as a passionate gardener, it was easy for me to feel connected to the other people. Community is a complex and multifaceted concept, as this thesis has demonstrated, but I have tried to provide some thought-provoking insights into the aspect of community in community gardens. In the end, the thesis can be considered only as an exploratory study of the topic, as proposed in the title: An ethnographic exploration of Community Gardens in London.

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Appendix

List of Names of my interview partners (audio recorded and unrecorded interviews).

Name	Community Garden, role of the interviewee and background information	Documentation of the interview	Date and Location of the interview	Other notes
Martha Orbach	Paid part time garden worker in the Culpeper Community Garden. Working 20 hours per week in the community garden. Background: Grew up in a sustainable land use project in the countryside. Has always worked in community projects. Got the job in the community garden by chance. Working there for 3 years. Did different horticulture courses.	Audio recorded interview, 33:31 min. Completely transcripted.	22/11/2013, in the Culpeper Community Garden after the volunteering session.	Spontaneous interview, many little interruptions through fellow participants and members of the community garden.
Dan Hudson	Paid part-time garden worker in the NxG Community Garden. Working one afternoon in the community garden. Background: Grew up in London with a big backyard garden. Environmental studies and professional gardener. Is working in several community gardens as garden workers. Has an own allotment garden with friends.	Audio recorded interview, 40:08 min. Completely transcripted.	27/11/2013, in the NxG Community Garden, before the volunteering session.	Spontaneous interview, some noise from the adjacent school and interruption from fellow participants arriving for the volunteering session. Stopped because Dan had to leave for an appointment.
Ella Perkins	One of the two coordinators of the "Grow Wild" project, a networking project providing support for community gardens. Working part-time, 20 hours per week for the project. Background: Grew up in London in a community art project. Studied art. Made Wwoofing experience and started volunteering in community gardens afterwards, studied	Audio recorded interview, 111:70 min. Partly transcripted.	2/12/2013, in the Telegraph Hill Café, during "Marmalade Monday", a cooking project from Grow Wild.	Interview after appointment made two weeks before. Interview with many background noises from the cooking session, parts of the interview incomprehensible.

	horticulture part time and found the job in "Grow Wild" after different jobs in national parks.			
Catherine Miller	London Coordinator of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. Working part time in the Federation. Background: Grew up in London. Professional gardener.	Audio recorded interview, 71:35 min. Partly transcripted.	5/12/2013, in Catherine's office.	Interview after appointment made four weeks before. Interview with another student asking questions about the cooperation of city farms with schools.
Charlotte Dove	Lead gardener, Key holder and project coordinator of the Grown in Peckham Project of the Glengall Wharf Community Garden. Background: Grew up in London, not garden related studies, Wwoofing experience, different horticulture short courses.	Audio recorded interview, 71:70 min. Completely transcripted.	6/12/2013, at Charlotte's home.	Interview after appointment made two months before and postponed several times.
Helen Wallis	Former garden worker of the Culpeper Community Garden, current Chair of the Culpeper Community Garden. Working in different community garden projects, living in a housing cooperation.	Written answers to a questionnaire.	29/11/2013, via Email.	As we couldn't find a date, where we were both available, Helen asked me to send her the questions via email and she answered them within an hour.
Jill Mountford	Manager of the NxG Community Garden. Working full time in the community garden.	Interview with notes taken from memory after the interview.	23/10/2013, in Jill's office.	Spontaneous interview after I introduced myself and my research project and asked about the volunteering session of the community garden. Didn't have the audio recorder with me.
Brian	Manager of the Dalston Eastern Curve Community	Interview with notes taken	8/11/2013, in the Dalston	Spontaneous interview, after I

Cumming	Garden.	from memory after the interview.	Eastern Curve Community Garden.	introduced myself and my research project. Intended to audio record the interview, but recorder was without battery.