

Urban agriculture, informality and land-rights: A study of urban agriculture  
projects in Winnipeg and Brandon

by

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## **Abstract**

Typically, the cultivation of land for the production of food is a rural activity. There is an emerging interest in urban agriculture and a growing body of research that examines its relationship to community renewal, health and well-being, sustainability and environmental justice. Some research has applied a critical theory lens to guerrilla gardening, the most radical form of urban agriculture, and has drawn on the literature of right to the city and urban informality. This research examines how critical concepts relate to both less and more radical forms of urban agriculture. This thesis attempts to offer academic knowledge on urban agriculture and its relationship to the planning system, and to better understand this relationship through the framework of informality, property rights, and Lefebvre's writings on right to the city. The comparative analysis found that there are many commonalities between urban agriculture participants, while there are some contextual differences. Participants in Winnipeg tended to emphasize more radical ideals than others. Findings further indicate that while urban agriculture participants may not be aware of right to the city they are implicitly using concepts developed by Lefebvre. Preliminary findings also show that informality both benefits and harms urban agriculture practices. There are several implications of this research. Stronger connections to right to the city literature and the broader urban agriculture community have been established. The City of Winnipeg could also take steps to improve its relationship with informal activities such as urban agriculture on a structural level. These implications are mainly applicable to the Winnipeg context. More research is necessary in other communities to ascertain if similar findings arise elsewhere.

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# 1. Introduction

For centuries, if not the beginning of urban life, agriculture and urban settlement have been intimately entwined (Bhatti & Church 2001; Gorgolewski et al., 2011). This relationship has ebbed and flowed, and at times, modern urban life has been at odds with agricultural practices (Hough, 2004). In the modernized post-industrial city, urban agriculture has taken many forms and has been associated with the radical transformation of cities (McKay, 2011). In recent years, urban agriculture has become increasingly popular, which has led to the development of formal policies to address issues arising from informal or unconventional land uses. At times the needs of community gardens and other urban agriculture activities have been at odds with regulatory systems and planning policies (Schmelskopf, 1995). This is the case in Winnipeg, where inner-city community gardens have struggled to achieve secure land tenure (Mikulec et al., 2013). Inner-city community organizations have struggled to secure better terms for their community gardens, which have often been constructed on derelict city-owned properties. They have also struggled to receive direct financial or in-kind support. Even though many cities in North America and elsewhere have begun to entrench urban agriculture practices as a formal urban activity, urban cultivation is frequently seen as a temporary use (Hou, 2014).

Academics such as Nicholas Blomley (2015; 2016) have criticized the planning profession for being too uncritical of how land use planning and regulatory frameworks favour more powerful interests while excluding other community interests. Blomley (2004) also articulates the importance of public space through collective action and how laying these claims can challenge neoliberal concepts of property. Urban agriculture, which largely takes place on public lands, can play a pivotal role in challenging our assumptions (Blomley, 2004). While property rights research has not necessarily been explicitly connected to urban agriculture activities, there

are potentially important connections to be made as urban agriculture has frequently been seen as a temporary or extraneous urban use.

Even in places with vibrant and longstanding urban agriculture initiatives, urban agriculture projects can be threatened. Furthermore, not all urban agricultural projects are treated equally by local governments. Depending on the location of the urban agriculture project, the security of their land tenure can be variable. For instance, long-standing suburban allotment gardens are often more secure than inner-city community garden projects (Schmelskopf, 1995). Other urban agriculture projects, like community-supported agriculture initiatives, have also gained popularity in urban areas. These new initiatives can push the limits of urban agriculture policies in cities. Moreover, not all urban agriculture practices are formally sanctioned by municipal governments. There are numerous people who participate in illicit urban agriculture activities. Guerrilla gardening projects circumvent the formal planning system and garden on lands without explicit permission. Unfortunately, very little is known about how various agricultural initiatives in cities are treated by city planners. In Winnipeg, as well as elsewhere, the research focus has tended to be on policy frameworks (Covert & Morales, 2014; Hou, 2014), health and wellness (Alaimo et al., 2008; Armstrong, 2000), community cohesion (Glover & Parry, 2004; Hancock, 1999; Lind, 2008), sustainability (Hall, 2000) and numerous other subjects. Little is known about the implications that informality and property rights have on urban agriculture projects.

Although the literature on informality has traditionally focused on the Global South (Roy, 2007), recently published work has broached the wide-ranging and heterogeneous topic of informality in the Global North, covering issues such as illegal secondary units, and place-making (Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris (eds.), 2014). Some of this research has focused on informality within urban agriculture, and how planners can better integrate these uses (Hou, 2014). Other work has delved into the formalization process of garden projects (Covert &

Morales, 2014). Although the issue of informality has been broached by some researchers, very little comparative research has been conducted. Much less is known about how participants in urban agriculture perceive the planning system compared to their more or less formal counterparts.

The nuances of informality have often been ignored by the planning system. As Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris (2014) state:

[i]n the United States and other regions of the affluent and developed world ... informal urbanism is understudied and often misunderstood. Planners and policymakers usually see informal activities at best as unorganized, marginal enterprises that should be ignored, and at worse as unlawful activities that should be stopped and prosecuted (p. 1).

In fact, informality in countries like Canada and the United States is heterogeneous and complex. Urban agriculture is no exception. While there are examples of fringe guerilla gardening activities that are explicitly illegal, there are many examples of urban agriculture initiatives where the intent is not to be illegal, but survive within tenuous and unclear frameworks (Ralston, 2012; Schmelskopf, 1995). In other cases, informal projects have also become formalized (Hardman, 2014; McKay 2011). In any case, urban agriculture can be framed within an informality continuum, from highly informal guerrilla gardening to completely formalized urban farm. To be formalized also means to be granted long-term land tenure and official recognition in planning policies and regulations. However, many more projects fit somewhere between those two extremes.

Another important concept that was used to frame the issues faced by urban agriculture in Winnipeg is the 'right to the city' literature. The right to the city literature explores how collective citizen action can transform and remake our urban environs. As David Harvey (2008) explains, the right to the city "is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the



exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization”. Importantly the right to the city concept was formulated at a time when the Modernist project (popularized by Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Oscar Niemeyer, etc.) had reached, and subsequently passed, its apex of influence. Modernism was beginning to be fervently scrutinized by activist citizens and academics alike. Individuals such as Henri Lefebvre, a Marxist philosopher, who wrote much about cities, was interested in fomenting both citizen action and political change when he coined the term in 1967 (Harvey, 2012). As described by Harvey (2012), the right the city was:

both a cry and a demand. The cry was a response to the existential pain of a withering crisis of everyday life in the city. The demand was really a command to look that crisis clearly in the eye and to create an alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful but, as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and dialectical (p. x).

The crisis of confidence inspired by the failings and shortcomings of the Modernist project has since faded. Nevertheless, much of its normative planning frameworks remain to this day. These issues have been further compounded by the neoliberalization of cities, which has become a pernicious problem that further entrenched the primacy of individual property rights and the powers of private capital both local and international (Harvey, 2012). There are those that are pushing up against these powerful currents of unfettered capitalism and state authorities that capitulate to capitalist interests. Around the globe, the right to the city movement remains a powerful clarion call for social empowerment and change. For example, Brazilians enshrined right to the city in their constitution as the sun rose on the twenty-first century (Harvey, 2012). Importantly, the right to the city manifests itself in numerous ways across the globe. Indeed, urban agriculture in its modern iteration fits squarely within the right to the city movement, as it is often a collective action, that is a response to the many alienating forces within cities. The urban agriculture movement both advertently and inadvertently challenges how we order our

cities. This thesis will explore the relationship between right to the city, informality and property rights and how it relates to the urban agriculture movement in Winnipeg.

### **1.1. Research Purpose and Questions**

It is for these reasons that my research investigates how stakeholders in urban agriculture projects perceive and relate to the planning system in Winnipeg and draws a comparison from three different urban agriculture projects with varying degrees of current and historical formality: urban CSA, suburban allotment garden, and inner-city community garden. My research also looks at Brandon, Manitoba, a smaller, more rural city. The interview conducted in Brandon was used mainly as a way to help provide some context for the Winnipeg research and to see what similar or different perceptions there are to the planning system. The focus is on Winnipeg's agriculture movement, while Brandon helps further contextualize the urban agriculture movement and helps inform a comparative analysis.

While these agriculture projects are all on public lands, they do not have the same histories or relationships with the planning system and are situated differently on the informality continuum. I had originally assumed that the urban CSA is the most secure and formalized urban agriculture project, but this was incorrect. They farm on an undevelopable parcel of greenspaces. Before commencing their agricultural project, CSAs received sanction from the City of Winnipeg, but through informal means. Moreover, they were one of the first sanctioned urban agriculture projects to grow food for profit, much of which was not formalized in an agreement. The suburban allotment garden is a longstanding urban agriculture project with strong ties to the community and a long history with the City of Winnipeg. Similar to the urban CSA, the allotment garden is situated on land that is undevelopable due to its proximity to the river. Unlike the urban CSA, the allotment garden has a much more informal history as it was started as guerrilla garden. In the present day context however, the allotment garden has become a more

formalized project. Next, urban community gardens are most often situated on vacant real-estate properties held by the City of Winnipeg. These gardens do not receive the same security of land tenure as the allotment garden project, but similar security to the urban CSA. The continued existence of many inner-city community gardens is predicated on the lack of interest in real-estate development in the neighbourhood. The City has also shown little interest in improving the tenure and providing direct or in-kind support to inner-city community gardens (Mikulec et al., 2013). Brandon also has a mix of urban agriculture sites, ranging from small community garden plots on school sites to larger allotments in parks and other public spaces. In the case of Brandon, one individual was interviewed and provided information on the various urban agriculture projects in the area.

When considering informality in an urban agriculture context three key variables must be considered: how long has the project existed; where is the project situated; and does the City recognize and sanction the project's existence? Based on these three variables I consider how the City of Winnipeg reacts to informality in urban agriculture. I argue that the City of Winnipeg does too little to accommodate more informal community gardening practices on public lands and tends to favour more formalized, and longer standing suburban agriculture initiatives. Understanding this from the perspective of the right to the city, I argue that an important variable that dictates the response the City has to urban agriculture initiatives is how informal the gardening activity is, as less formal activities are not easily accommodated by city planning policy. Longer standing and more formalized allotment gardens which tend to be in suburban neighbourhoods likely have better relations with the planning system than their less formalized and even illicit gardening compatriots.

As such, the purpose of this thesis is to help elucidate how informality affects the relationship between urban agriculture participants and the planning system. Using 'right to the city' theory

developed by Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, I frame the issue within land rights and access. I explore how land rights are not equally distributed among members of society and that certain land uses are deemed more worthy than others, leading to certain groups receiving more privileged access to urban lands. In general, urban agriculture can be seen as a marginal land use in cities, but the focus here is on access to land use within the urban agriculture community through various levels of formality. As such, this research seeks to explore how the planning system can better respond to various urban agriculture initiatives to make land access more equitable. I asked four questions to guide my research:

- How do these three groups (urban farmers CSA, suburban allotment garden, inner-city community garden) differ or converge in their perceptions of the planning system and their role in changing these systems, and how do these relations differ from other urban agriculture projects in Manitoba?
- What conflicts and tensions exist between these groups and the planning system and how do these tension relate to right to the city literature?
- How can the planning system better respond to informality as it relates to urban agriculture?

By comparing various gardening projects on a continuum of formality, my research will help contribute to a better understanding of how the planning system engages with various groups based on their conformity to dominant planning policies. A key aspect of the research is to help develop knowledge of how the planning system can better accommodate more informal land-uses within the context of urban agriculture.

## **1.2. Significance of Research**

Urban agriculture is a well-researched topic with interest from numerous academic backgrounds. Existing academic research on urban agriculture has focused on studying aspects

of urban renewal, community cohesion, health and wellness and so on, but there has been less focus on how urban agriculture fits within the planning system and how perceptions of the planning system differ between various activists and participants.

Some researchers have begun to grapple with these topics. One study conducted by Crane et al. (2012) compared guerrilla gardeners' intentions and values to community gardeners in Kingston, Ontario. The intentions and values of guerrilla gardeners and community gardeners were different. Community gardeners were less interested in engaging in gardening practices that were not sanctioned by the local municipality. It is important to note that the Kingston research on guerrilla gardening and community gardening mostly focused on the experiences and values of the gardeners themselves, and less on their relationship to, and perception of the planning system. In Winnipeg, some research has made comparisons of different garden projects, but the focus has not necessarily been on the relationships between gardens and the planning system. For instance, Hall (2000) analyzed various community garden projects through the lens of sustainable development goals and found that garden projects varied in their focus on sustainability goals. Some work has been conducted on the legal and policy climate as it pertains to inner-city community gardens (Mikulec et al., 2013), but no work has been done on comparing these various urban agriculture projects as it relates to their organizers' perceptions of the planning system.

Moreover, much of the research has not made explicit connections to right to the city literature. While right to the city and critical theory have been applied, it has largely been in the most extreme instances of informality, such as guerrilla gardening. Another notable gap is the connection between property rights, informality and right to the city discourses. I intend to clarify these issues and to understand how different urban agriculture participants view the

planning system through right to the city discourse, while also making connections to informality and property rights literature.

The research findings and recommendations have resulted in important empirical and practical contributions to the issue of right to the city and informality in the planning system as it pertains to urban agriculture. The study contributed to conceptual knowledge by further developing knowledge about the relationship of informality to the planning system, clarifying the relationship between right to the city discourse and urban agriculture, facilitating learning outcomes for various stakeholders involved in urban agriculture development and advocacy, and framing issues involved in future urban agriculture development in Winnipeg.

### **1.3. Chapter Outline**

This thesis is made up of six chapters. The current chapter provides the reader with an overall context of my research by framing the issues and outlining the research purpose, goals and significance. The next chapter is a review of the popular and academic literature. In this chapter, I review some history and provide a summary of the key themes within the urban agriculture literature. The chapter is broken into two key areas: the first section provides an overall understanding of the broad agricultural movement; and the second section an analysis and review of guerilla gardening literature. This allows the reader to understand the difference in academic foci as it pertains the literature and it helps frame the discussion in the next chapter. The third chapter is an exploration of the right to the city literature and the inter-connection between right to the city, informality and property rights. The purpose of this chapter is to help the reader understand some of the key themes within the right to the city literature and provides the basis of analysis for the chapter. Before proceeding to the analysis, I briefly summarize my methods in Chapter Four. Chapter Five is where I go over the findings of my empirical research. The sub-sections are divided into thematic areas that loosely correspond with my theory chapter. Here I

analyze my interview findings and relate them to my key areas of focus. The final chapter is the discussion and conclusion. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize my findings, answer my research questions, provide lessons and recommendations and finally, suggest future areas of research.

## 2. Literature Review

Urban agriculture has garnered interest from a wide breadth of researchers. Those interested in urban agriculture have focused on sustainable food systems issues (Aubry et al., 2012; Lovell, 2010), as well as physical and social capital improvements provided by urban agriculture activities (Bartolomei et al., 2003; Lind, 2008; Shinew et al. 2004). Others have delved into the relationship that urban agriculture has with the planning edifice, broadly focusing on inner-city community gardens (Covert & Morales, 2014; Halloran & Magid, 2013; Hou, 2014; Mikulec et al.; 2013; Schmelskopf, 1995). More recently, a burgeoning research field has developed around guerrilla gardening (Crane et al., 2012; Hardman, 2014; Zanetti, 2007). Those interested in guerrilla gardening have studied it mostly through the lens of critical theory and right to the city literature (Black et al., 2014; Crane et al., 2013; Purcell & Tyman, 2014; Zanetti, 2007). This literature review provides an overview of these research traditions and considers the evolution of research on urban agriculture.

To help provide differentiation and focus for the reader, this chapter is broken up into two sections. The first section will summarize some key research on the urban agriculture movement as it pertains to community gardening and allotment gardening. This section will also provide the reader with some basic historical analysis. The second section focuses on one type of urban agriculture activity: guerilla gardening, which has a stark difference in the focus. The guerrilla gardening literature is much more focused on critical theory, right to the city and anti-capitalist discourse. This helps frame my research, as the purpose of this thesis is to help understand the relationship of other more formalized urban agriculture projects to the city within the framework of right to the city and anti-capitalist discourse. To understand how these ideas, relate to more



formal activities, it is important to analyze the extreme, as this will help contextualize and frame my empirical research.

## **2.1. The Urban Agriculture Movement in Context**

Many argue that urban agriculture is not a contemporary phenomenon and in fact, agriculture and cities were historically much more closely tied together (Gorgolewski et al., 2011; Hough, 2004). In its most contemporary incarnation, urban agriculture is largely viewed as a progressive and grassroots movement; however, the picture is more complicated than that. Although community gardening has many virtues and has been strongly associated with community-based activism and radical subversive practices, it has also been associated with more elite social reforms (Certomà, 2015; McKay, 2011). To start, I will discuss the darker side of urban cultivation and sustainable agriculture movement.

## **2.2. The dark side of urban cultivation**

The gardening movement of the early 20th century is associated with elite reformist movements and concern over the morality of the working class (Certomà, 2015). Garden planning, as a form of rational planning, was imbued with processes of social control and environmentally determinist values (Certomà, 2015). Elite social reformists such as Ebenezer Howard and Frank Law Olmsted were concerned with civilizing the uncivilized (Certomà, 2015). These thinkers, as well as others, argued that people needed to be connected to their pastoral roots (Olmsted, 1870; Platt, 1994). Ebenezer Howard is believed to be one of the most famous and potentially influential individuals in the movement towards agrarianism with his Garden City concept (McKay, 2011). He claimed that by connecting people to a past landscape, a landscape of idealism and simplicity, people would be happier and their moral integrity strengthened (Hall, 2014). It is important to note that aspects of Howard's utopian world were

also based on collectivism and community engagement. Nevertheless, much of the early twentieth century gardening movement is strongly associated with puritanical reformist values and social control (Certomà, 2015; McKay, 2011; Platt, 1994).

Community gardening was also encouraged in difficult economic times and wartime. In the 1930s there were mandatory gardens known as 'self-sufficiency gardens' (McKay, 2011). People were often coerced into gardening as it was attached to social-security payments and the motto 'no garden, no relief' was frequently used (McKay, 2011). During the two Great Wars, gardening was also used as a tool for national identity and self-sufficiency (Cosgrove, 1998; McKay, 2011). These were not necessarily as coercive as the self-sufficiency gardens, but still strongly associated with nationalism. It was part of one's patriotic duty to garden (Cosgrove, 1998; Warman, 1999). This was a top to bottom, state-sanctioned approach. In some cases, provincial governments in Canada authorized local municipalities to acquire vacant land for purposes of growing food (Hall, 2000). After the war, many of these gardens were subsumed by development. Not only that, many associated gardening with poverty and war-time. Due to these factors, as well as others, there was a steep decline of allotment gardens in North America and Europe (Cosgrove, 1998; Lind, 2008).

As both McKay (2011) and Groning et al. (1987) note, the fascist movement in Europe is also associated with the organic and national gardening movements. The fascists in Germany and Italy connected organic food production and agrarianism with national purity (McKay, 2011). However, even with urban agriculture and the organic movement having ties to fascist extremism, it is much more strongly associated to the radical left and labour movements, especially during the post-war era (McKay, 2011). As such, a new era of urban agriculture emerged in the 1960s and 70s that was rooted in radical community activism.

### **2.2.1. Radical activism and urban agriculture**

It is important to understand that although there is significant evidence of urban agriculture as a state-run and sanctioned activity that was at times coercively dictated or propagandized to people, there is also a long history of social activism through gardening (McKay, 2011). Allotment gardens and other gardening initiatives were not just promulgated by the state but also strongly associated with the labour movement. Here, the focus will remain on the most contemporary incarnation of this movement. The inner-city community gardening movement coalesced sometime in the mid-1960s (Cosgrove, 1998). The activities of the 60s gardening movement are strongly associated with an era of grassroots mobilization (Cosgrove, 1998; McKay, 2011). As Hall (2014) argues, community gardening is “strongly connected to a response to concerns about the environment, urban decay, energy conservation, self-reliance and community breakdown” (p. 10). Furthermore, community organizers and activists began to establish community gardens in inner-city areas in response to increasing numbers of vacant lots, lack of safe green space and a decreased sense of pride (Lind, 2008).

Many of today’s inner-city community gardens can be associated either directly or indirectly to the mobilization of concerned citizens. Community gardens in places like New York owe their existence to a strong grass roots social movements of local concerned citizens (Eldredge & Horenstein, 2014; Schmelskopf 1995; Schukoske 2000). In such cases as New York, many of these gardens began as guerrilla gardens. In fact, the term guerrilla gardening was first coined by Liz Christy who, along with some other concerned citizens in New York City, began to clean up a derelict and abandoned lot (McKay, 2011). Over time the movement blossomed into the Green Guerrillas, which is still active today and acts a support group for those interested in starting urban agriculture projects (Hardman, 2014; McKay 2011).

### **2.2.2. The sustainable food movement and urban agriculture**

While community gardening and other urban agriculture activities have been associated with recreation and community wellbeing, the popularity of urban agriculture as a food systems issue has also grown (Aubry et al., 2012; Lovell, 2010). Urban farming is producing significant amounts of food for residents and the trend is expected to continue. One study conducted in Vancouver estimates that 44 percent of residents grew some of their own food (Beatley, 2011). According to Newman and Jennings (2008), “the UN has estimated that there are 800 million urban farmers globally” (p. 54). Increased anxiety over the environmental, social and economic impacts of industrialized urban agricultural practices has heightened peoples’ awareness and drawn them to alternative and more local sources of sustenance (Cockrall-King, 2012). Hough (2004) discusses many of the associated negative consequences of our reliance on a globalized industrial food system, like exploitation of non-renewable resources and rural economic decline.

The urban food security movement has had several permutations over the last few decades. Jennifer Cockrall-King (2012) describes the urban food sustainability movement in three waves. The first wave started in the early 1990s and is when the modern food sustainability movement coalesced. In the early 1990s terms like ‘food miles’ and ‘slow food’ began to enter into the everyday lexicon. It is in those years that anxiety over ever globalized and homogenized food culture began to grow (especially in Europe). The second wave, which mainly began in the early 2000s, is where consumer culture began to catch on and people began to demand better, healthier and more regional food options. People were not only demanding more options in the supermarket, they were also looking for more options elsewhere. By 2010 there were over five thousand farmers markets in the U.S., which was close to double compared to one decade earlier (Cockrall-King, 2012). While the second wave was largely characterized by what people were eating, the third wave became ever more focused on where food was coming from. Cockrall-

King (2012) argues that it is in the third wave that we began to significantly reshape cities to be productive food producers, which continues into present day.

Urban food production is a response to concerns of food safety, security and sustainability. As Newman and Jennings (2008) articulate:

urban agriculture in the form of city farming and individual, communal, and community supported agriculture, provides examples of meeting food requirements locally and bio-regionally, thereby facilitating greater economic and social security. Closing nutrient cycles through urban agriculture is a key way to foster more sustainable urban ecosystems. (p. 51)

Importantly, urban food cultivation is not just associated with large-scale production, but community gardens and allotment gardens, as well as other informal and formal activities. Although community gardening has been associated with recreation, well-being and community development, food security and food sustainability discourses have also permeated into community gardening activities (Crane et al., 2013). The issue of sustainability is not always equally addressed, as is shown in one comparative study of Winnipeg gardens (Hall, 2000). However, sustainability issues are indeed a focus in some of these gardens. The extent to which local food security is improved through community and allotment gardening has not been adequately addressed by the literature. The urban agriculture movement is most certainly broader than just allotment and community gardens. Increasing interest in consuming food more directly and locally has spurred the growth of commercial urban agriculture operations (Cockrall-King, 2012).

It is hard to say how sustainable these systems are. Although Hough argues that the industrial and globalized agriculture system contributes to environmental degradation and significant carbon production, other studies have shown that the issue is somewhat more complex (Hardman, 2014). Work done by Born and Purcell (2009) has shown that local food production is not always better for the environment and can potentially increase carbon

emissions. Another criticism is the elitism of the local urban agriculture food movement and potential connection to neoliberalism (Tornaghi, 2014). One example is Carrot City: Creating Places for Urban Agriculture (Girgolewski et al., 2011), which very much focuses on upper-middle class food trends.

### **2.2.3. Urban community gardening and the social and physical capital literature**

A significant body of research on community gardening focuses on the leisure and social and physical capital benefits. Research has shown that neighbourhoods with community gardens have residents who are more invested in the physical upkeep of their neighbourhoods (Lind, 2008). Other studies have indicated that community gardens can improve property values (Been & Voicu, 2001). Community gardens not only improve the physical capital of neighbourhoods but the social capital as well (Glover & Parry, 2004; Hancock, 1999). Other research has indicated that community gardening has significant potential for improving neighbourhood pride (Lind, 2008). Gardening can also improve trust and neighbourhood cohesion, especially in neighbourhoods with diverse ethnic minorities, who may not always trust one another (Bartolomei et al., 2003; Shinew et al. 2004). Enhanced health outcomes have also been associated with gardening activities through improved nutrition (Alaimo et al., 2008; Armstrong, 2000), increased exercise (Wakefield et al., 1994), and improved mental wellbeing (Hale et al., 2011; Lind, 2008).

Overall, there has been an important shift in emphasis on urban agriculture as a food security and sustainable food systems issue (Cockrall-King, 2012; Hough, 2004; Newman & Jennings, 2008). Significant research and literature, especially in the urban sustainability stream have focused on the sustainable urban food systems aspect of urban agriculture and has therefore shifted away from the historical reasoning for gardening, which was more focused on leisure (Mougeot, 1999) and later neighbourhood regeneration and social-capital building (Cosgrove,

1998). This is also showcased in policy, such as those in Toronto with Toronto Food Council and later Grow Toronto, which focuses on the food systems aspect of urban agriculture over other social goals (not to say they are completely ignored) (Hardman, 2014). However, there is also a growing body of literature that focusses on issues of land access and security, and the circumventing of urban regulations and formal planning processes.

### **2.3. Guerrilla Gardening: What Does It Reveal?**

In recent years guerrilla urbanism has gained popularity and has been used by a wide range of citizens who feel disenfranchised by often reactionary urban regulatory systems that favour the status quo over bold change and action. One form of guerrilla urbanism is guerrilla gardening.

Much less is known about guerrilla gardening. Compared to other urban agriculture projects, researching the hidden, unknown, and often illegal actions of guerrilla gardens is much more difficult. Researchers such as Hardman (2014) are looking to lift the “iron-curtain” which shrouds the activity (p. 1). Very little is known about the various actor networks, their motivations, or their relationship with urban agriculture. As Hardman (2014) points out, “Existing literature fails to account for the reasons why guerrilla gardeners pursue the unpermitted route or the impact – on the nearby community – of the spaces they create” (p. 2). As such, this section looks to explore the guerilla gardening movement and its relation to urban agriculture in general. It also looks to analyze its supposed radical leanings with the purpose of understanding how urban agriculture connects to informality and right to the city.

Moreover, the purpose of this section is to help contextualize the radical and more overtly political dimensions of urban agriculture. This section will explore the ongoing tensions between the planning system and informality. Guerrilla gardening is an avenue in which academics

connect more overtly radical ideals to urban agriculture. This chapter also helps frame the interview analysis and discussion in Chapters Six and Seven.

### **2.3.1. Guerilla gardening and popular literature**

There is significant activity among guerrilla gardening networks. A range of loose guerrilla gardening associations exists today. In the latter part of the 2000s, there was an increased interest in guerrilla gardening. Those who participate in guerrilla gardening have written books on the subject (see Reynolds, 2008; Tracey, 2007). Other works of popular literature have also discussed the topic (see, Cockrall-King, 2012; McKay, 2011). Technology has helped the movement significantly, with websites and social media pages being dedicated to connecting people endeavouring in guerrilla activities (Hardman, 2014). Guerrilla gardening has become a global movement with local guerrilla activists in Europe, North America, South East Asia and elsewhere (Reynolds, 2008). The increased interest in the clandestine activity grows as more people become frustrated with the current physical state of our cities (Tracey, 2007). As Reynolds (2008) argues, the movement can bring together a “host of contemporary issues under one banner including land ownership and access, food safety, brand consumption, biotechnology, the environment, sustainability, slowness and modernity, grass-roots politics and empowerment” (p. 8).

However, according to Reynolds (2008), the single strongest motivator and what ties all guerrillas together is the explicit use of land that is not one’s own. As Reynolds explains:

I do not wait for permission to become a gardener but dig wherever I see horticultural potential. I do not just tend existing gardens but create them from neglected space. I, and thousands of people like me, step out from home to garden land we do not own (p. 14).

People in guerrilla gardening break free from the bureaucratic planning system by disregarding legal and political conventions. In fact, it is the illegality and insurgent nature of guerrilla gardening that is emphasized by much of the popular literature (McKay, 2011;



Reynolds, 2008; Tracey, 2007). As a guerrilla, one is not merely breaking the rules but subverting the system, questioning authority, and fighting against an oppressive system that seeks to dominate. The goal is to push the boundaries of private space. Tracey (2007) argues that a city's private space should be democratized and reoccupied as public space: "if you can see it, it's public" (p. 2). This is a bold and radical reinterpretation of the public realm, strongly associated with Marxist political thought (Crane et al., 2013).

Much of Reynolds' (2008) rhetoric is couched in the language of radical leftist warfare and there are strong overtones of risk and danger. The most obvious being the term 'guerrilla', which is associated with warfare and resistance. As Reynolds (2008) so passionately expressed:

guerrilla gardening is not just about breaking convention, but about breaking laws. Our enemy is not just normality but something much worse. Just like the original Spanish *guerrilleros*, guerrilla gardeners are reclaiming land from enemy forces, and although our battle is seldom with imperial invaders, as theirs was, it sometimes feels as if we are up against a lot of little Napoleons.

Reynolds (2008) and Tracey (2007) also emphasized the communitarian and dialogical focus on guerrilla gardening. The goal of the activity is not just to change a space, but to change the conversation:

Guerrilla gardeners in public space are conscious of their role in the community, whether a social benefit is their main aim or just a side-effect of their solo hobby. A guerrilla becomes a powerful form of communication, an expression of the gardener's vision, and sometimes a specific message (Reynolds, 2008, p. 17).

The notion of changing community and the conversation is strongly connected to the academic literature. The next section provides an analysis of the academic discourse.

### **2.3.2. Research literature and the guerrilla gardening movement**

A number of researchers in Canada, Great Britain and elsewhere have begun to directly study guerrilla gardening activities to better understand their motivations and values, and

critically analyze guerrilla gardening through the perspective of land rights and social justice discourses (Crane et al., 2012; Hardman, 2014; Zanetti, 2007).

Fundamentally many of these authors focus on the radical and transgressive nature of guerrilla gardening (Black et al., 2014; Crane et al., 2013; Zanetti, 2007). These authors see guerrilla gardeners' activities as challenges “against the enclosure of public space” (Lyons et al., 2013), contesting the order of manicured space and the disorder of abandoned space (Hou, 2010). Thus, guerrilla gardening is largely understood as an activity looking to transform our understanding of space and place (Purcell & Tyman, 2014). Guerrilla gardening is seen as an overtly political, transgressive practice seeking to challenge state and corporate authority. Atkinson (2007) argued that gardening in the form of guerrilla gardening and other practices has become decidedly political and radical in nature. Using the language of Marxist critical theorists like Lefebvre, Harvey, Cresswell and others, guerrilla gardening is seen as a movement explicitly challenging the normative functions of space decimated by state and capitalist hegemony (as discussed in: Atkinson, 2007; Crane et al., 2012; Zanetti, 2007). As such, Atkinson (2007) argued that guerrilla gardening is part of a radical social struggle to reimagine and transform space away from capitalist and state hegemony at the everyday level, therefore creating a utopian vision of reimagined space that considers the needs and rights of the less powerful.

Various subculture groups are transforming cities into more equal and democratic spaces. Guerrilla gardening is one of many practices that challenge the privatization of spaces by democratizing them and placing them within ‘right to the city’ discourses. (Iveson, 2013). An important figure in this movement was Henri Lefebvre who was one of the first to do work on the production of space and coined the term “right to the city” (as cited in Atkinson, 2007). As Harvey (2012) explained in his book *Rebel City*, Lefebvre’s vision of an “alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful but, as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and

dialectical, open to becoming, to encounters, and to the perpetual pursuit of unknowable novelty” (p. x). The right to the city is not entrenched in dominant liberal state discourses of “rights” but instead a process by which individuals begin to govern themselves through the mobilization of grassroots organization (Purcell & Tyman, 2014).

Atkinson (2007) argued that guerrilla gardening can thus be characterized within utopian discourses and the reproduction of space, as actors within the movement seek to contest the normative production of space. The seminal work of John Cresswell’s (1996), *In Place/Out of Place*, discussed the way in which spaces are constructed through various norms and practices. Dominant uses of space and place “structure a normative landscape - the way in which ideas about what is right, just, and appropriate, are transmitted through space and place” (p. 8). These norms and practices are constructed by those in positions of power and authority. However, the counter weight to this process is transgression. As Cresswell (1996) explained, “just as it is the case that space and place are used to structure a normative world, they are also used to question that normative world” (p. 9). Guerrilla gardening through various interventions seeks to undermine our normative assumptions of useful space.

In capitalist terms, space is very much about ownership and production. Yet much of the city is left unproductive, under-utilized and forgotten. These are lands spent and left in the wreckage of capitalist and state production. Planners, economists, politicians and others fundamentally reproduce these processes often focusing on particular “exchange values” of space and not considering other aspects. As such, planners as state actors are part of a process of entrenching dominant political and economic agendas (Certomà, 2015). Planners are taking more interest in urban agriculture and in some places are becoming more legitimized (Covert & Morales, 2014; Hodgson et al., 2011). That being said, the dominant social and institutional structures often remain intact, and individuals looking to garden or create new green spaces are

expected to fit into the mould of state planning with its various constraints. As such, even in places where urban agriculture is state-sanctioned, many remain disenfranchised and instead opt to guerrilla garden (Adams et al., 2013).

Our narrow view of space all too frequently leaves us with disfigured and dysfunctional cities. Spent-spaces take the form of neglected neighbourhoods and post-industrial spaces, and leftover-spaces become freeway interchanges and expressway boulevards, to name but a few examples. As Schneekloth (1998) discusses, for all the spaces that are made through dominate capitalist process, many more are unmade. For all the emphasis of capitalist production, the capital economy seems to have an uncanny ability to create under-utilized and neglected spaces. It is frequently on these neglected, forgotten and unmade spaces that guerrilla gardeners do their work (Reynolds, 2008; Tracey, 2007). Importantly, guerrilla gardening seeks to transform these spaces not for capitalist productive purposes, but rather to subvert the very dominant discourses by appropriating spaces that are not theirs.

Capitalism also creates dichotomous spaces of hyper-inflated and conversely deflated land values. It is in both of these spaces that guerrilla gardeners act, appropriating small areas for purposes of growing food and producing public and community lands while being surrounded by skyscrapers. However, community gardening could arguably be seen through this lens as well. Community gardens are often in some of the most densely populated spaces in Western cities, like New York (Hardman, 2014). Community gardening, like guerrilla gardening, could be understood through the lens of 'out of place' activities, as so many are established in spaces that are highly dense and would traditionally not be considered appropriate uses of this space (Hardman, 2014). Guerrilla gardeners and community gardens can, against all odds, capture and remake space within highly dense and super inflated land values in large North American cities. Furthermore, Tornaghi (2014) connected urban agriculture to critical geographical analysis,

“systematically exploring the opportunity for a radical remaking of the urban” and connected this to the critical geography of food production. However, those engaged in community gardening are not always particularly interested in the dialectical and conflictual components of Lefebvre’s right to the city (Crane et al., 2007). The little work that has been done to place community gardening in relation to guerrilla gardening motivations have shown that participants are reluctant to support or engage in guerrilla gardening activities (Crane et al., 2012). Moreover, countless gardens have come into existence through traditional political processes rather than through countercultural practices (McNair, 2002).

### **2.3.3. Questioning the transgressive nature of guerrilla gardening**

Others have challenged this literature and questioned the often taken-for-granted radical nature of guerrilla gardening (Adams & Hardman, 2014; Hardman, 2014). Furthermore, research done by Hardman (2014) also positioned guerrilla gardening squarely within the broader urban agriculture movement. Hardman (2014) noted a number of prominent examples in the UK where guerrilla gardening activities are in fact strongly associated with localized food production.

One such example is the ‘Women’s Group’ (WG), which was studied by Hardman (2014) and Adams et al. (2014) through a multi-year ethnographic study. This group of guerrilla gardeners chose to start a community garden at the rear of a community centre without gaining permission from the local authority. From the outset, the garden began as a food security project. As Adams et al. (2013) explained, “WG originally sought to bring together women from the nearby dwellings around the community centre in an effort to widen access to fresh produce, thus practicing particular variation of urban agriculture” (p. 379). In the case of the WG, it could be argued that their motivations are largely focused on food production, while the guerrilla gardening aspect is more based on pragmatism due to the onerous process of gaining approval as well as meeting burdensome health and safety protocols (Adams et al., 2013). Unlike the

characterization of guerrilla gardening as discussed by Reynolds (2008), which argued that the movement is based on an inherent aspiration to garden spaces without permission, and Crane et al. (2012) and Zanetti (2007) who focussed on the radical and transgressive nature of guerrilla gardening, the WG is a more accidental guerrilla gardening group and not necessarily part of a wider movement of individuals and groups consciously subverting state authority (Hardman, 2014).

There are numerous other examples of guerrilla gardening initiatives that do not fall within the dominant conceptual framing. In one instance a guerrilla gardening troupe in Toronto began cultivating a failed community garden site established as part of a nearby homeless shelter (Cockrall-King, 2012). Some people in the community appropriated the space and began gardening without permission. From Cockrall-King's (2012) description, the group's members can hardly be described as radical guerrilla gardeners, but instead just happen to be gardening on space with ambiguous tenure. Also, numerous other guerrilla gardens have become legitimized into formal community gardens, such as in New York where the work of the Green Guerillas eventually paid off with secured spaces (McKay, 2011). However, even if gardens become legitimized, it does not automatically depoliticize the activity. In fact, many community gardens in New York become "contested space" in the late 1990s, when then-Mayor Rudy Julianne tried to evict some gardens because of increasing land values and developer interests (Ralston, 2012; Schmelskopf, 1995). Gardens can be compromised as neighbourhoods rejuvenate and property values increase, thus the 'exchange value' of the land surpasses its use value (Molotch, 1976). All too frequently local community interests are trumped by profit motivations because of growth machine politics. However, it might be in community's interest to develop land for housing, making the use value, exchange value less dichotomies and more nuanced (Zanetti, 2007).

While guerrilla gardening can have many commonalities with the broader urban agriculture movement, there are many guerrilla gardening activities that diverge from the priorities of the broader movement. In fact, many guerrilla gardening projects have nothing to do with cultivation for purposes of consumption (McKay, 2011). As Crane et al. (2012) argued, “due to guerrilla gardening’s small-scale and emerging nature, it does not fit comfortably amongst established areas of research in urban agriculture and food studies” (p. 76). Instead, guerrilla gardening “is an example of a local, self-determined, critical and expressive act” (Crane et al., 2012, p. 77). Except for a few noted exceptions, guerrilla gardens remain ephemeral and floating in and out of existence. Some are destroyed within hours. As such, guerrilla gardening may not fit within the current ideas of urban agriculture. The concepts may overlap, but fundamentally guerrilla gardening is about political ideology and issues to do with the right to the city. As such it is argued that guerrilla gardening as an activity is more associated with pirate radio and politically motivated graffiti art, as well as other movements that seek to explicitly contest the normative uses of space (Hou, 2010).

It is for this reason that Crane et al. (2012) and Zanetti (2007) focussed more on the politically transformative nature of guerrilla gardening than the explicit urban agriculture movements. One of the most famous examples of guerrilla gardening as a subversive act, and which has no relationship to food production, was the Berkeley park conflict (McKay, 2011). In this case, an assortment of activists took over a vacant lot that was annexed by the University for expansion purposes, but with the subsequent slump in the economy, the project never got off the ground. Instead, the property lay vacant and unused. As such, people took it upon themselves to transform the space into a community park, investing in soil, sod, flowers and other ornamentals, to beautify the space and turn a private derelict site into a community hub. This neglected space led to a significant standoff between the state and local activist as the state took to reclaim the

space from the group. Protests and clashes with the police ensued, with numerous individuals being sent to the hospital, and one being murdered by the police. For the most part, however, guerrilla gardening is hardly this dangerous and not always this radical.

Even if not all guerrilla gardening examples are that extreme and lead to conflict or violence, they may still be contesting the supposed best use of space. The work that Crane et al. (2012) conducted with guerrilla gardeners in Kingston Ontario exemplifies this. The dig site was a four-story parking garage adjacent to a hospital and surface parking lot. According to Crane et al. (2012), the “goal of the project was not only to garden and produce vegetables but was also to expose the public to an unexpected garden patch, thus disrupting the normal uses and practices occurring in the space” (p. 77). Given the institutional nature of the site, which is associated with government management, the gardeners of the Kingston dig looked to subvert and challenge some of those assumed interactions of space and the public. Over the period of the dig, some interesting relationships developed. Passersby engaged in conversations about use of space, as well as issue around food production. Interestingly, government workers began to tend to the garden plots as well, watering them on occasion. Over time further relationships were developed that indicated that others in the community were taking ownership of the space, including a work crew doing maintenance on the parking garage who would clean garbage from the plots.

It was clear to most that reproduction of this space was not through state intervention. As Crane et al. (2012) discussed, “Through the participant interviews with gardeners and passersby, it became clear that Dig Kingston was interpreted as a non-state intervention and spatial manipulation” (p. 79). These characteristics opened up discussion regarding how space was being used in the city and how it could be used differently. Through the project and research, a number of important themes developed. A central motivator for many was a sense of self-expression. Through the manipulation of an under-utilized and neglected space, both gardeners



and passerby were challenged on their use of the space. Another theme was intervention, by which the actions of the guerrilla gardeners questioned the normative use of space and emphasized the external channels of change that are not embedded in state action. Finally, Crane et al. (2012), argued that guerrilla gardening activities focussed on critical possibilities:

Herein lies an important contribution provided by expressive interventions like guerrilla gardening; guerrilla gardening and community members responding to guerrilla gardening questions cited a desire to see more grassroots, spatial manipulations that invoke wider critique and reflection (p. 87).

In this way, guerrilla gardening also differentiates itself from traditional sustainability topics like food security: “although there may be a small positive effect for gardeners and harvesters via direct consumption or passed gardening knowledge” the focus was not on mainstream sustainability discourses (Crane et al., 2012, p. 88). Although other urban agriculture activities, like community gardening, make important contributions to sustainability they do not, by their very nature, undermine state action and control, as they must conform to norms and processes dictated to them by the state. As Crane et al. (2012) argued, guerrilla gardeners drive “a wedge into taken-for-granted, status-quo uses and meanings, to open up difference and project a new possibility onto space” (p. 88). Guerrilla gardening challenges people to critique and reflect upon their surrounding in ways not emphasized by other forms of urban agriculture. Guerrilla gardening fits within a dialogue of sustainability that is much less interested in “linear and normative models of sustainability” but in locally “embedded relationships” and “action based sustainability” placed within alternative environmental discourses (Certomà, 2011). Thus, Crane et al. (2012) stated that guerrilla gardening fits squarely within the discourse of the transgressive, by questioning the dominant production of space in 21st century post-industrial cities. Guerrilla gardening explicitly challenges our alienation, while maintaining a sense of playfulness.

This discussion highlights the importance of not being reductive, in that the relationship between guerrilla gardening and the broad urban agriculture movement is complex. At times guerrilla gardening can be in fact much more about food production than transgressive action, while on the other hand community gardens can be transgressive just through their very existence. However, current literature indicates that guerrilla gardening is likely more comfortably situated within discourses in critical theory than in urban food sustainability. Unfortunately, countless individual and group guerrilla gardening actors remain unstudied, each with their particular context and situation. Larger more extensive studies need to be conducted to further unpack the motivations and values of guerrilla gardeners, and better situate them in relation to the urban agriculture movement. In particular, more research needs to be done on how more transgressive forms of urban agriculture are treated by the planning system, compared to their more formalized and officially recognized cohort.

#### **2.4. Land-rights, Informality and Urban Agriculture Literature**

Unfortunately, urban food systems are all too frequently left out of urban planning decision making (Halloran & Magid, 2013). As Hou (2014) discussed, despite the popularity of community gardens, they “remain one of the most poorly defined types of land uses in North America” (p. 79). Community gardens and other urban agriculture activities are often seen as interim or temporary uses and therefore ignored in long term planning (Covert & Morales, 2014; Hou, 2014). Until recently the bureaucratic barriers that urban agriculture faces have also not been adequately studied (Halloran & Magid, 2013; Mikulec et al., 2013). Mainstream planning discourse has all too often ignored community gardens. On the other hand, community gardens have often become ‘contested spaces’ and many gardens have had to fight to survive (Schmelskopf, 1995). Even in Europe, with stronger entrenchment of land rights, allotment gardens fall pressure to development (McKay, 2011).

Cities are also reluctant to give organizations more land tenure for various reasons. In Winnipeg for instance, one of the concerns is that these spaces will be perceived as city operated greenspaces over time, and thus creating greater responsibility for city maintenance (Mikulec et al., 2013). Even in cities where gardening is strongly sanctioned and supported by government, security of land tenure can be an issue (McNair, 2002). Furthermore, various bureaucratic barriers exist. To summarize, Newman and Jennings (2008) explained that:

...the challenge is to view lettuce and chard on equal footing with bricks and mortar. Urban planners and architects first think of housing, parking, and commercial development when they design cities, but they should consider the benefits—social, visual, and physical—of producing food on urban land. City farming, no matter how small in scale, contributes to food security and energy conservation, and a sense of community (p. 56).

Fortunately, some headway is being made to legitimize urban agriculture as a protected urban land-use (Holloran & Magid, 2013).

In New York, Seattle, Toronto and Montreal urban agriculture has become legally entrenched overtime (Hardman, 2014; McNair, 2002). Many of these gardens were legitimized by the state and even offered some legal protection (McNair, 2002). Several neighbourhood groups and other organizations have begun to run and operate gardens with the approval of state actors due to the perceived benefits of community gardening. In many cases, gardens are run and operated at little to no cost for cities, with significant social potential benefit (City of Winnipeg, 2015). As Newman and Jennings (2008) stated:

in more wealthy cities the growing of food is critical to the local economy, urban agriculture remains important as it is used for rebuilding derelict communities, greening areas that are bereft of nature, and providing an outlet for many who enjoy gardening. Montreal has eight thousand community gardens, and Toronto has more than one hundred in one network alone” (p. 55).

The relationship between food growing and cities is being re-entrenched and some forms of urban agriculture are gaining traction and legitimacy within urban policy making. However, presiding discourses are still dominated by property: land use as developer rights reign supreme.

Also, a major focus of much of this research has been on the more formalized side of the urban agriculture movement that already has established relationships with city officials.

There is already a rich literature in the traditionally dominant discourse of leisure, social capital and food sustainability. A newer, growing body of research has begun to focus on more transgressive forms of urban agriculture. Much of this research has focused on the guerrilla gardening movement with a particular emphasis on the motivations and values of actors within this movement. Some researchers have focused the relationship between radical forms of urban agriculture and land rights and access issues. However, much of this research has not been explicitly about understanding the relationship that radical gardens have with the city planning system. There has also been a growing body of literature focusing on informality and how the planning system can better accommodate community gardens. Importantly, in this case, the focus has not been on marginal agricultural activities and more on established community gardens. Some work has been done of cross-examining different urban agriculture initiatives to elucidate their perspectives on their relationship to the city policy, but even here the major focus has been on personal motivations and understanding how the values of more established community gardens are different from those of guerrilla gardeners. The issue of how varying degrees of informality/formality effect urban agriculture practices has not been thoroughly explored.

Big questions remain regarding varying agricultural activities and how they fit within planning and regulatory frameworks. There is also the issue of how various agricultural activities are treated by the planning system. The literature does a great job explaining the heterogeneous motivations and aspirations of agricultural practitioners, but few ask the question of how they perceive their relationship to the city in a comparative manner. Moreover, while critical urban theorists have studied guerrilla gardening and some of this research explicitly draws on right to the city literature, very little thought has been given to the broader urban agriculture movement

as it relates to the aspirations laid out by Lefebvre, Harvey and others. This research looks to bring together right to the city discourse and to explore the broader urban agriculture movements relationship to the planning system. While this chapter has touched on right to the city, namely through the guerilla gardening literature, it is not an in-depth analysis of the literature. The next chapter explores the writings of Lefebvre and those who have taken up his work.

### **3. Theoretical Framework: Right to the City and Informality**

Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city" provides a major theoretical foundation for this thesis. A strong connection between urban agriculture and right to the city can be made. The literature review provides some understanding of how this connection can be made through guerilla gardening, but there has not been enough of a focus on other forms of urban agriculture. The right to the city discourse can help us better understand the relationship and perception of gardening participants to the planning system in Winnipeg.

This chapter examines Lefebvre's conceptualization of right to the city as well as some contemporary elaborations on the theory. I begin with a broad introduction to the theory, followed by an examination of some of its core concepts: alienation and its relation to capitalism and neoliberalism, economic versus use value of land, the "oeuvre", and the creation of a new urban centrality through the embracing of difference. Finally, this chapter explores some contemporary manifestations of right to the city including property and property rights, citizenship, and informality.

The right to the city has many meanings and is not one homogenous movement (Mayer, 2009). The term has been appropriated by a broad range of urban activist groups. Researchers also use the term to describe and understand various urban social movements (Atkinson, 2007; Blockland et al., 2015; Harvey, 2012; Iveson, 2013; Mayer, 2009). Notably, the right to the city concept has recently been applied to urban agriculture and more specifically, guerrilla gardening (Atkinson, 2007; Iveson, 2013), but the connection is tenuous. Moreover, the broader urban agriculture movement has been almost entirely looked over; yet much urban agriculture is transformative, grassroots and focused on reinterpreting the use of land in an urban context. As such, an a priori assumption is that the themes and aspirations of right to the city are aligned with

the aspirations of the broader urban agriculture movement. To better understand these connections, or if they exist at all, I explore some of the key concepts within the right to the city literature, which will later be used to explore connections between urban agriculture and right to the city.

### **3.1. Lefebvre and the Germination of an Idea**

Lefebvre's meditations on the city began in earnest in the 1960s, when he set his sights on the relationship between town and country. His work on urban politics culminated with his eponymous book, *Le droit à la ville* (Lefebvre, 1968). It is in this writing that right to the city became a slogan and clarion call for a reimagined city (Harvey, 2012; Mayer 2009).

A self-described philosopher and sociologist, Lefebvre asserted that control and creation of urban environments should be the purview of the working class, and how the relationship between space, imagination, and play were essential in urban refigurement (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). What is particularly compelling about Lefebvre's writings on urban society is that his broad knowledge base imbued them with a holistic character. Indeed, his areas of interest and study included literature, history, philosophy, space, time, the modern world, and rural and urban sociologies' relationships to Marxism (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). Lefebvre was interested in the politicization of space, and how urban areas in his lifetime were simultaneously being extended and destroyed by capitalism and technocracy.

As Kofman and Lebas (1996) observed, Lefebvre saw the city as a place of conflict and tension that attracts and contains opposing forces: violence and peace, gatherings and solitude, restraints and opportunities (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). Although Marxism provided an ideological underpinning for much of Lefebvre's theories, right to the city is defined both in partnership and against it. While Lefebvre advocated for working class control over urban environments, he was critical of Marxism's tendency to ignore the city and the ludic quality of

life he believed was possible in an urban utopia. The search for utopias is a necessary pursuit of right to the city, allowing an unbridled yet self-aware optimism to imagine a model future, while simultaneously accepting that this ideal may never be achieved. Lefebvre rejected Marxism's indifference to the practice of using imagination, dreams and symbolism to create utopic futures in the conceptualization and creation a new centrality (Kofman & Lebas, 1996).

### **3.2. New Centrality, Assembling of Difference and the Creation of Oeuvre**

Lefebvre believed that through the individual and collective imagination of urban citizens, the city could be transformed to reflect the needs and desires of its inhabitants. It is through this utopic imagination that the city could be taken back from oppressive nature capitalist production. Lefebvre perceived that the city had become a place for capitalist production, and that the city as a centre for cultural, political and social life had been threatened by capitalist commodification (Brown, 2013). The reimagining and appropriating of space by and for the working class relates to one of Lefebvre's foundational concepts of right to the city: the city as "oeuvre". This is exemplified in his opening paragraph on the right to the city, in which Lefebvre (1968) argued for new social foundations:

The human being has the need to accumulate energies and to spend them, even waste them in play. He has a need to see, to hear, to touch, to taste and the need to gather these perceptions in a 'world'...which are not satisfied by those commercial; and cultural infrastructures which are parsimoniously taken into account by planners (p. 148).

Critical urban theorists noted that societies and their inhabited spaces are in a constant exchange of creating and recreating each other based on lived experience, activities and values (Cresswell, 1992; Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1968). This creative exchange is constantly changing and evolving. Lefebvre presented the "oeuvre" as an imaginative process and entity that embodies an ideal urban space. This ideal space is a dynamic artistic entity that prioritizes experience and use instead of the exchange, production and consumption of material goods. The



oeuvre is a breeding ground for a ludic lifestyle that fosters spontaneous and undirected playfulness, where knowledge is integrated into lived realities and experiences (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). Lefebvre insisted that the creation of and participation in the oeuvre was an artistic pursuit. Indeed, other critical urban theorists have bemoaned the lack of art in the creation of the modern urban space (Cresswell, 1992). For example, Cresswell described how New York City rejected graffiti from the city landscape in the 1970s, preferring instead to put this expression of urban art in a closed gallery and remove it from everyday life. To Lefebvre and others (Cresswell, 1992; Harvey, 2008), the city must become a place of cultural expression and identity that is focused on the creative and the imaginative. Otherwise, the city will become a sterile, lifeless and alienating place.

Lefebvre asserted that the working class is uniquely qualified to lead the creation of and participation in the oeuvre. This changing of the guard implies a new centrality in the decision-making processes that shape central urban spaces. The right to the city imagines a renewed urban society that permits full usage of “moments and places”, and the right for citizens to enjoy participating politically in decision-making (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). Planners, architects and sociologists may propose ideas for the creation of the city, but average citizens will be the ultimate authority in this process (Lefebvre, 1968). This was a key theme of Lefebvre’s which was further explored in “The Urban revolution” (1970) and “The production of space” (1974). His view of space was of a complex social product produced over various social interactions, and that powerful capitalist interests entrench specific understandings of space to further their agendas (Lefebvre, 1974 & 1970). Moreover, the state and various state actors are complicit in this process of production of space for capitalist interests (Lefebvre, 1970 & 1968). As such, Lefebvre invited us to envision a new centrality, which is a marriage of differences that arise through struggle, as opposed to the assembling of homogeneity. As Kofman & Lebas (1996)

pointed out, Lefebvre was a great believer in a dialectic approach to decision-making for the city; a process that championed comparing and contrasting different viewpoints to arrive at solutions. The dialectic process serves as a safeguard against rigidity in city planning, promoting a constant dialogue between opposing perspectives (Lefebvre, 1968). To reincorporate Harvey's ideas into the discussion, a citizen-led state, rather than corporate-led, would offer the working class greater democratic access over the production and utilization of surplus and space (2008). As such, this reimagined centrality is a microcosm of the city that it directs, "a whole that articulates relationships between elements" (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). It is thus through creative expression that city could be thrust away from capitalist and technocratic alienation.

### **3.3. Alienation and the Affects of Capitalism: Use vs Exchange Value**

Lefebvre argued that the working class had been denied the right to creatively engage in the construction of their ideal future. They had been alienated by those in control, such as financial powers, landowners, politicians and mass media. He described "alienation" as the feeling that one does not possess the ability to dream or achieve the possible (Kofman & Lebas, 1996). As such, right to the city is not concerned with everyone's right to the city, but primarily the alienated working class (Marcuse, 2009). While not explicitly linked with right to the city, other urban theorists like Harvey Molotch's writings on the "growth machine" (1976) include the notion that cities are "the areal expression of the interests of some land-based elite" (p. 309), leaving little room for the needs or aspirations of anyone outside of said elite. The sociocultural power possessed by this elite creates a normative landscape that denies the right of many to access land and its resources (Soja, 2009; Cresswell, 1992). Urban land is prioritized for those who would make it profitable, leading municipal governments to offer land to capitalist interests over public ones (Molotch, 1976). Lefebvre's demand for a "new and renewed" right to urban

life sought to prioritize citizen claims on their urban landscape and to challenge the normative structures imposed on land by the elite.

To elaborate on the identity and interests of the elite, we can look to the writings of David Harvey, a close follower of Lefebvre's work and a harsh critic of capitalism and neoliberal economics and politics. Harvey (2008, 2013) asserted that the population density of cities are ideal environments for capitalists to create and disperse of surplus, making the connection between urbanization and capitalism a strong one. Furthermore, neoliberal policies that marry state and corporate interests facilitate this dispersal in a manner that invites the corporate and upper class' ability to control the urban process (Harvey, 2008). Surplus absorption can often take the form of "urban renewal" projects that force low-income communities to relocate to make way for civic improvements. Even when social democracy hands control of surplus to the state, neoliberal policies effectively privatize the use of this surplus instead of using it to fund developments directed by and at average citizens.

Harvey (2008) pointed out that, although modern society claims to champion ethical and political human rights, dominant neoliberal politics and economics continue to deny resources for many people. Indeed, the urban growth machine fails to benefit the majority of city residents and creates community life that is directed by a minority of industry leaders and their allies. This is further illustrated by Santos Junior (2014) who observed that "a city's common spaces are appropriated by capital that aims to guarantee the conditions necessary for the production-reproduction of capitalist relations" (p. 146). This leads us to the notions of exchange-value and use-value. Modern neoliberal governments, under the influence of industry leaders, create urban spaces that prioritize economic exchange and profit instead of a maximization of use for citizens (Lefebvre, 1968; Purcell, 2003). The right to the city calls for a reversal of this trend,

encouraging citizens to appropriate urban spaces in a creative effort to reimagine their use-value for the masses over their exchange-value for the elite.

### **3.4. Property and Property Rights**

The notion of use value versus exchange value is also strongly related to the construction of property rights in capitalist society and is connected to Lefebvre's writings. Krueckeberg (2007) argues that questions about property are the most fundamental to planning, and that the answers to these questions are erroneously presented as objective. He was critical of the social and economic inequalities resulting from capitalism's liberal approach to property ownership.

Indeed, the middle and upper classes who control ideas about property and property rights also control ideas about what should and should not occur in certain spaces, forming a spatial ideology that mainly benefits the privileged (Cresswell, 1992; Jacobs & Paulsen, 2009). For example, Jacobs and Paulsen (2009) discussed American zoning laws carried forth from the 1920s that safeguard neighbourhoods with single-family detached houses from all other uses, as these types of dwellings were seen as the most respectable (p. 136). Today, many zoning laws resist the construction of apartment buildings and other high-density dwellings in these neighbourhoods, as they are associated with lower-class families. Soja (2009) explained that exclusionary zoning practices and institutionalized residential segregation often calcify into enduring policies that protect privilege.

Adding to the problem of rigidified residential development patterns is municipal governments' current trend of allowing the privatization of public space. Krueckeberg (2007) pointed to closed residential communities, business improvement districts and recreational parks that have private governing structures protected by public legislation as examples of the privatization of urban public space. Moreover, Davy (2009) pointed out that even in spaces that remain public, actions are taken to prevent certain types of public use, such as the removal of

benches and water fountains to prevent loitering, and monitoring of these spaces to corral the homeless. It is through such processes that property is territorialized and certain individuals or groups are excluded (Blomley, 2015). What makes these trends even more problematic is the tendency of the land use planning system to gloss over its entanglement with individual property right interests (Blomley, 2016). Through semantic language, planners distance themselves from issues surrounding property. It is argued that planners' goals are to order and define space through land use regulations, glossing over how these systems are designed to favour certain uses over others and how through the ordering of space, the planning system perpetuates capitalist interests.

Krueckeberg (2007) suggested that instead of planners obsessing over who owns property, they should be asking themselves who the property benefits and how access to said property can engender liberty and opportunities. Moreover, strict notions of property rights as individual ownership should be challenged. In the process of reconfiguring property rights new possibilities of expression of space could be made possible. It would also undermine the current pervasive and pernicious trend of connecting legitimate citizenship with property ownership and tax payers.

### **3.5. Informality and Its Manifestation in Urban Gardening**

Informality literature is an important body of work that touches on notions of public rights and challenges to hegemonic and rigid land-use regulations. Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris (2014) operationalized informality as “activities unregulated by the state” (p. 8). Informality is a diverse set of activities from informal housing to unsanctioned place making projects and covers many facets of urban life. Purcell and Tyman (2014), also defenders of informality, felt that right to the city enfranchises people to engage in all decisions that produce urban space and invites

them to create a process of “autogestion”, or self-government. This process, by its very nature, is an informal one if informality is defined as operating outside the radar of state control.

Although Cresswell (1992) was not explicitly writing about informality, he observed that transgression of normative boundaries created by those in power show us what the boundaries are. This transgression can take place through marginality, resistance or construction of difference or, in other words, using spaces in a way they were not initially intended for. Cresswell’s descriptions of the emergence of graffiti in 1970s New York City are an example of how a group of artists revealed the upper class opinion that art did not have a place in the urban landscape (1992). Graffiti was the informal artistic expression of primarily lower-class, non-white people that tested the boundaries of where those in power felt art “belonged” and who should create it. These activities not only challenge normative views on how space is ordered but also challenge notions of individual property rights. Through subversive expressions within urban space, we are reminded of the collective potential of urban space. Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris (2014) pointed out that informal activities are not just taken up by poor communities, but that people in various socio-economic groups enjoy activities such as creating and patronizing community gardens, garage sales and food trucks.

The cultivation of urban land as an informal activity is particularly relevant here. Purcell and Tyman (2014) asserted that community gardens engender a network of community organization, or autogestion, and an appropriation of space away from capitalist activities of accumulation and commodity production. Those who manage and advocate for the continued life of these gardens are engaged in a democratic struggle to have control over the production of urban space. This is a fundamental pursuit of right to the city: to hand control of urban space to those that live and work in it. Community gardens in New York City and Seattle are prime examples of citizens appropriating underused urban space and using it in a creative, fulfilling and community-

building way (Purcell & Tyman, 2014; Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). Many of these spaces began through the illegal use of land and were later formalized through various state regulations. Today, these community gardens survive through a complex network of public and private partnerships, supportive municipal policies, relationships with non-profit organizations and informal community management. Community gardening has the power to invite urban inhabitants to a fuller expression of political power (Purcell & Tyman, 2014). Blomley (2004) also articulated how community greening projects can be used by the urban citizens to create complex and collective space. As such, urban agriculture can play a pivotal roll in challenging capitalist notions of property rights and narrow land-use planning regulations that prop up capitalist interests.

Unfortunately, a common element that many of these gardens share is insecure tenure on their land (Purcell & Tyman, 2014; Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). Although the communities that manage these gardens view the spaces as long-term investments in their neighbourhoods, many municipal governments view them as temporary placeholders until a real estate developer shows interest in the land. Indeed, many community garden leases stipulate that the garden must be removed with short notice. Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris (2014) argued that planners must formulate more flexible and comprehensive responses to informality, and that homogeneous responses are ineffective. Brown (2013) wrote that this change will be ushered in by multiple incremental, rather than revolutionary, acts resulting from urban dwellers appropriating space and demanding appropriate policies.

### **3.6. New Notions of Citizenship**

Through appropriating space urban citizens demand to be heard and seen, especially individuals who are typically ignored. As such, an important broad theme within Lefebvre's writings, as well as others after him (Blockland et al., 2015; Brown, 2013; Purcell, 2003), is the

notion of citizenship and how it limits or broadens access to the city. Dominant conceptualization of citizenship is based on liberal-democratic principles of national citizenship and rights. The principle of liberal citizenship is based on a two-party relationship between individuals and the state. A social contract is established whereby individual actors agree to be ruled by a nation-state in return for privileges such as voting, and protections such as freedom of speech (Bown, 1994, as cited in Purcell, 2003). In such an arrangement, the individual is primarily beholden and loyal to their nation-state. This is a narrow view of citizenship and political loyalty.

Certain theorists call for new and broader definitions of citizenship for the urban dweller (Blockland et al., 2015; Brown, 2013; Lefebvre, 1968; Purcell, 2003). While current notions of citizenship give citizens limited decision-making abilities through electoral systems, a new citizenship would grant citizens more power over their lived spaces based on their lived experiences within spaces (Brown, 2013; Lefebvre, 1968). Brown (2013) asserted, “the right to participation allows citizens to access all decisions that produce urban space, while appropriation includes the right to access, occupy and use urban space, and to create new space that meets people’s needs” (p. 958).

Building on Lefebvre’s idea of the oeuvre, Blockland et al. (2015) asserted that urban citizenship should be an outlet for expression and invite the urban dweller to recreate conditions of urban life. Furthermore, Purcell (2003) argued that people should be considered citizens on scales smaller than the state level and that smaller communities comprised of a neighbourhood, a district, a municipality or even a political or social group have the power to undermine the hegemony of the national definition of citizenship. Purcell (2003) used right to the city to elaborate on this idea of citizenship as one that should be based on inhabitancy, rather than membership to a nation-state. As such, citizenship should be focused on heterogeneous



communities and in creating social ties on a local scale and then upwards, rather than nation states' conceptualization of citizenship from a broad monolithic level downwards. The right to the city challenges state control over the individual and instead argues for community control and citizenship based on inhabitance, which reorients, or at least challenges state decision making (Purcell, 2003). Decision making should lie with those that produce space at the local and community level.

### **3.7. Building a Greater Right to the City**

Much of the above discussion is about the radical transformation of the city and its social, economic and political fabric. These theorists, starting with Lefebvre, envision a wildly different city reconfigured on the needs of the working class and alienated society. This dream vision of the city is seemingly far out of reach. While many of these themes are radically divergent from present reality, they nonetheless constantly emerge in everyday city life. These challenges to the present order may not be imagined as bold revolutionary actions to present reality of capitalist city life, but act as small transgressions chipping away at an alienating capitalist hegemony. One of the ways in which the prevailing structures are being undermined at the city level is through urban agriculture, which works to re-envision public space and the social fabric of the city.

While community gardening is a heterogeneous activity and is not always explicitly transgressive, these gardens very existence can challenge normative planning processes and capitalist interests. Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review, there is a growing academic interest in guerilla gardening, which is largely viewed through a critical theory lens. There is also a tenuous connection between right to the city and gardening literature that touches on issues such as leisure and creativity, which can be interpreted through Lefebvre's writings on the oeuvre. The oeuvre is about individual and collective realization of creativity on the urban landscape and people taking ownership of the public realm to transform it for their cultural and

non-consumptive needs. So much of urban agriculture is about creating these new possibilities and defining new ways to understand and use space for community leisure. The right to the city is also about challenging a simple reductionist view of urban space. It is about envisioning complex, and conflictual public relationships that push us to build cities beyond capitalist production. Here again, we can connect urban agriculture to notions of right the city, as much of urban agriculture is about reusing unused and forgotten spaces for purposes of sustenance, community building and various other social activities. Moreover, property right and informality also play a significant role in how we understand urban agriculture. The dominant tendency in cities is to property rights and land use systems that favour capitalist interests. This often comes at the expense of other uses that do not fit within a narrow conceptualization of proper urban uses and urban agriculture has often felt the brunt of these forces.

## 4. Research Methods

This chapter outlines the research methods used to develop and analyze my thesis. I used a qualitative approach, which “is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The qualitative approach allows the research to probe for deeper meanings and focus on social values and perceptions. Moreover, the qualitative approach also lends itself well to planning professionals, who are often required to comprehend complex social behavior and to look beyond data as numbers (Gaber & Gaber, 2007).

As this research is focused on perceptions and values and required translating specific ideas into more general themes, the qualitative approach was the most suitable form of study (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative approach also allows researchers to free themselves from the burden of objectivity. I was also strongly influenced by a social constructivist approach. As Creswell (2009) described, constructivists “hold assumptions that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences ... [t]hese meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings” (p. 8). It has also allowed me to focus on the values and perceptions of participants above all else, which is the goal of constructivist approach (Creswell, 2009). My approach also relied on advocacy worldview, in which the research is explicitly connected to a political agenda. However, I do not claim that my research is strongly action driven, nor does it use some of the approaches that centre the research in an immersive participation of participants. Nonetheless, by focusing on a qualitative approach that hints at both constructivist and advocacy worldviews, my research was able to probe and explore beyond quantitative strictures and explicitly frame itself using a

specific ideological framework: right to the city. It also allowed me to be participant-driven and focused on a specific group of people with particular needs, wants and agendas.

The next section details the methods used to both gather and analyze my data. I was able to collect information through semi-structured interviews with key informants. The interviews were then interwoven with information collected through a policy and regulatory document review. After describing how I collected the data, I provide an overview of the analysis process. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion on the ethical implications and research limitations of this project.

#### **4.1. Data Collection Methods: Interviews and Policy Analysis**

I conducted semi-formal interviews involving local actors in the urban agriculture movement in Winnipeg. These included three different projects in Winnipeg: urban CSA, suburban allotment garden and inner-city community gardens. Each represented a different type of project with varying levels of informality. I developed a series of questions to explore how different urban agriculture groups relate to the City's planning system (Appendix I). Given the nature of my research topic, which is interested in perceptions values and beliefs, I used semi-formal interviews to gather data. Semi-formal interview techniques allowed for a more organic interview process while also providing some standardization to help with coding (Berg 2001; Gray, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are also valuable as they allow the researcher to probe and dig deeper into issues as they present themselves. For this reason, I thought that semi-structured interviews were an appropriate data collection method for my research.

I conducted one interview with each group (except for the urban CSA) and sought out the individual who has the most contact with, and knowledge of, city policies and by-laws. Given the nature of these projects, it was not difficult to seek out the individual with greatest expertise and knowledge. The suburban allotment garden and inner-city community garden exist within a

formalized institutional structure, in which it was possible to determine who is the expert on the projects' history and relationship to the city. For example, inner-city community gardens are administered by a neighbourhood renewal corporation green coordinator. With the urban CSA, I conducted two separate interviews. The CSA had a much less top-down organizational structure. As such it felt appropriate to understand more than one perspective within the group. In total I conducted five interviews.

I also interviewed one individual from Brandon, Manitoba, who at the time had worked as the greening coordinator for the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation. The Brandon participant was found through informal networks and was used to help establish validity and triangulate data. Brandon should not be viewed as distinct research site as only one participant was interviewed in the area. The focus of this research is on Winnipeg, but the Brandon interview helps provide some additional context and gives some indication that the issues I was learning about in Winnipeg are also present in other Manitoban urban centres

My interview process was very informal. The first step was to contact participants. This was done through various networks of friends and connections. Due to previous research on community gardening in Winnipeg (Mikulec et al., 2013), I was able to use existing contacts to help make connections. Some of the participants from the previous research project were also used for this thesis. Nonetheless, when I made contact with potential participants I provided a formal letter of introduction (Appendix II) and project background information (Appendix III). Once I was able to make connections with my participants we scheduled meetings. Meetings took place in places and times that were most convenient for the participant. For each interview, I took the time to go over my questions (Appendix I). Because I used a semi-formal interview process, I often made small modifications to my interview questions based on the individual being interviewed. I also scrutinized my questions to see if they were eliciting intended

responses. Before commencing the interview participants reviewed the ethics protocol (Appendix IV) and I went over the scope and purpose of the research. I gave participants the opportunity to ask clarifying questions before commencing the interview.

Interviews lasted approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. Before conducting interviews, I sought permission to record the interview. I also took notes as cues for the analysis phase. During the coding phase, I used thematic analysis to examine patterns and themes from the interview. During the interview process I mainly stuck to the predetermined questions, but at times I would deviate to ask follow-up questions if the interviewee brought up a topic that was relevant to the research but required more detail or clarification. After interviews were completed and transcribed participants were given the opportunity to review what they said and make changes if necessary.

I also used policy and regulatory analysis to triangulate my data. I relied on a document scan for key terms and phrases. Manifest content analysis is a basic technique used to determine what is emphasized in various texts. Content analysis is essentially a counting technique (Forbes, 2000). Researchers count the number of times a particular word or image is used in, for example, a policy document, magazine or newspaper. A transportation document may use the word “car” (and other such words) one hundred plus times, but only “bike” a couple of dozen times. By comparing how often words are used, researchers can ascertain a bias in the text. I used manifest content analysis to help ascertain the importance of urban agriculture in planning documents in Winnipeg. It also helped analyze how formality and order are emphasized in planning and policy texts. A key theme of the interview process was how regulatory system can frustrate urban agriculture participants, as it is not designed for their needs. As such, the policy scan served

another purpose, which was to contextualize and corroborate issues discussed within the interviews.

It is important to acknowledge that my reading of text is not an objective analysis, but was framed by a Neo-Marxist critique of planning. In the case of this research, “right to the city” literature was used to inform my interpretation of legal and policy documents as they pertain to urban agriculture issues in Winnipeg. Furthermore, textual analysis was used as the foundation for my questions in the semi-structured interview phase of my research.

## **4.2. Data Analysis**

The qualitative approach to research allows the investigator to explore and analyze complex social phenomenon, and to categorize and interpret broad issues (Cresswell, 2009; Gabor & Gabor, 2007). An important tool in the qualitative research process is the interview (Gray, 2009). For this research, I chose the semi-structured interview which is frequently used for qualitative analysis (Gray, 2009). According to Gray (2009), “[t]he semi-structured interview allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers ... to explore subjective meanings that respondents ascribe to concepts or events” (p. 217). Analysis began at the start of interviews with participants, as I took notes and mentally referenced previous interviews. I took an iterative and comparative approach to analyzing and coding the data. This next section describes the process I undertook to make sense of my interview data.

### **4.2.1. Analysis**

The first step in my analysis was to transcribe all of the interviews. During the transcribing process I stopped the recording to mark down important concepts. As I transcribed more interviews I cross-referenced previous interviews if I felt that there were data connections. When

necessary, I also did some light editing of the transcript to improve clarity by correcting basic grammatical errors.

After transcribing the data, I began the coding process. While many researchers use coding software to code and categorize their data, I chose a simpler method. Instead of spending a lot of time learning a coding software program, I chose to use a hand colour-coding process. After transcribing and printing the interviews I ascribed colours to specific categories and began colour-coding my transcripts. By printing out the documents and laying them out I was able to better visualize and connect patterns in the text. The process is also more tactile and immersive. Another benefit is that the process is more intuitive than software, which allows for a less steep learning curve, allowing for more efficient coding under time constraints.

I took an iterative approach to coding my interviews, which required numerous steps of coding, categorizing and validating my data. The first step in this process began at the interview stage. While conducting interviews I would take notes while the participant spoke. This helped me catalogue ideas and note any connections to other interviews or the literature. After conducting all interviews, I went through the transcribing process. While transcribing, I would take more notes if there were issues that stuck out as important. This further helped me in the process of developing themes and categories. The next step was to read over the transcripts. To immerse myself in the coding process, I read each one multiple times and in different orders. In this process, I started to make more connections. The next step was to develop themes and to colour-code these themes. I began the process of reading the transcripts and assigning colour-codes to phrases and sentences. Next, I laid out all the transcripts on the floor and began connecting ideas from different participants. The final step in the coding process was to pull choice quotes from the raw transcripts while referencing the printed colour-coded versions. This



is where I combined codes into broader thematic areas, which correspond with my theoretical framework.

The coding process allowed me to develop themes and concepts. The next step was to understand how these themes and concepts connected to my research problem, questions and theoretical framework. The process of qualitative research is immersive and continuous. The research from the beginning of the interview process is questioning and probing to see what connections there are to issues laid out at the beginning of the investigation. Once coding was complete and interview data was categorized into themes, I began the process of interpreting and analyzing the data through my theoretical framework. I drew on the literature review, theory and policy documents to help triangulate my analysis (Creswell, 2009).

To help frame and contextualize my interview data I relied on policy and regulatory documents from both Winnipeg and Brandon. Textual analysis is about the interpretation of a text and gathering information about how people make sense of their surroundings (Mckee, 2003). Policies and regulations are not neutral but are imbued with social, political and economic meaning. Texts, broadly speaking, from the written word to various abstract symbols, reflect our beliefs, values and attitudes, which in turn, frame our choices and decisions in life (Fairclough, 2003). By interpreting a text, it is possible to understand what we value. In the case of researching the policy system in Winnipeg and its effects on various informal agricultural practices, it is important to understand the legal and policy framework and how it can potentially stymie or abet access to land.

I used a variety of documents to help validate my data. Municipalities must go through the process of developing long-range planning documents that broadly outline planning goals. This is the first place I began. I searched both OurWinnipeg and Brandon & Area Planning District Development Plan as the first step in my inquiry. From there I scanned by-law documents for

both municipalities to search for key regulatory themes that relate to urban agriculture. Lastly, I searched for any secondary or tertiary policy documents that relate to urban agriculture policies. I found a basic Community Garden Policy on the City of Winnipeg website.

#### **4.2.2. Data reliability and validity**

Data reliability and validity are key to any research. Due to the scope and size of the data collection, there are some limitations. More subjective qualitative data collection methods, like interviews, make it more difficult to have extrapolative findings and to confirm validity. For one, qualitative data does not have statistical tests (Gabor & Gabor, 2007). Another issue is research bias. When it comes to research bias, I have been forthcoming to the reader and articulated that my values, motivations and political perspective frame and guide my research. There is also bias in the participant selection. As discussed earlier the participants were chosen largely through established networks of colleagues and friends and used a very informal selection process. My research only focuses on urban agriculture participants and does not seek out viewpoints from the City or elsewhere, which would also contribute to data bias.

Another key issue is generalizability. When using interviews and a descriptive approach to data it becomes difficult to generalize observations and relate it to other communities, even if those communities are similar (i.e. other urban agricultural communities). This is further exacerbated by small sample sizes. Due to the time and resource constraints of this project, the sample size is not large. It is advisable that the reader takes the small sample size into account when reading this thesis.

#### **4.3. Limitations**

There are numerous research limitations, due to scope of the investigation. This research only pertains to Winnipeg, and to some extent, Brandon, Manitoba. The intentions and activities of urban agriculture participants and activities vary greatly. As such, the behaviours, values and

ideas expressed by individuals in Winnipeg do not necessarily reflect broader trends and values outside of the Winnipeg context. Furthermore, there is a limited data set. Due to time constraints, I was unable to conduct interviews with guerilla gardeners, which was an intention of mine when I began my research. Instead, I am extrapolating from the research literature to inform my analysis. This is a major gap in my research and will undermine the validity of my findings to some extent.

#### **4.4. Ethics**

There are ethical considerations one must be aware of when working with human subjects (Creswell, 2009; Gray 2009). It is important to be cognizant of potential ethical issues through the whole research process. Creswell (2009) emphasized the importance of engaging in and anticipating ethical issues that might arise from the research proposal stage onward. During my research, I conducted interviews, which poses unique ethical concerns (Berg 2001; Gaber & Gaber, 2007; Gray, 2009). When working directly with human subjects through interviewing, it is imperative that free, prior and ongoing informed consent be provided through a formal consent document so that subjects are aware of the purpose of the study and any potential risks (Gray, 2009). Another significant concern is privacy and confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality of interviewees, I will not use names and use gender-neutral pronouns when writing about interviewees. I also assigned participants generic terms (e.g. CSA 1 & 2, allotment gardener, inner-city coordinator, Brandon coordinator) to hide their identities, while providing clarity and consistency for the reader. All of these precautions are particularly important when dealing with individuals engaging in less formal and possibly unsanctioned activities. It is imperative that participants understand the risks of discussing their activities and the limits of confidentiality. As part of the ethics process, each participant reviewed the ethics protocol (Appendix IV) and signed to indicate they understood the risks of participation.

## **5. Interview Analysis: Connecting Urban Agriculture and The Right to the City**

This chapter focuses on my empirical analysis and ties together my interview findings, urban agriculture literature, and policy analysis within the context of right to the city and informality literature. While the literature review and policy analysis inform the discussion, the focus of this chapter is the interviews conducted with various participants and activists in the urban agriculture movement in Winnipeg and Brandon. While my literature and policy findings are important, what is most germane are the interviews, as they provide direct insight into how urban agriculture practitioners view their relationship to the city and their views on by-laws and regulations. Using analytical framework of right to the city and informality, I was not only interested in technical matters of by-laws and regulations, but also of social values, such as community activism, citizenship, and local governance. The possible positive and negative outcomes of informality were key themes that I was interested in. Another aspect of my research was understanding how these perceptions converged and diverged between various agricultural activities in Winnipeg and Brandon.

The urban agriculture projects differed in their histories, locations and planning contexts. As part of my research, I conducted interviews with three Winnipeg based urban agriculture groups: suburban allotment garden, inner-city community gardens and urban CSA. I also had the opportunity to conduct an interview in Brandon. The suburban allotment garden was one of the oldest and most entrenched urban agriculture projects in Winnipeg and has a long history of working with the City of Winnipeg. Various inner-city community gardens are scattered over neighbourhoods such as West Broadway, Spence, Daniel Macintyre and so on. These projects vary in size and are on a variety of infill properties mostly owned by the city. Most of these

gardens are administered and organized by neighbourhood renewal corporations. Many of these gardens were started in the last 20 years and are tenuously situated and developable properties. There was also the urban CSA, which was the newest urban agriculture project. It was started on a piece of under-utilized city property with the goal of providing locally grown food to urban residents. The urban CSA was created through the concerted efforts of a few individuals who saw an opportunity to collaborate with the City and grow food for sale in an urban location. Unlike the allotment garden and inner-city community gardens, the urban CSA was a one-of-a-kind project with a short life. In Brandon, the situation was slightly different, with one individual who was speaking to the broader urban agriculture movement in the City and touched on numerous projects. I created five labels to differentiate the different participants. These include: “CSA 1” and “CSA 2”, “allotment gardener”, “inner-city coordinator” and “Brandon coordinator”.

The chapter is divided into five key thematic sections. The first section and key theme focus on issues of localism and re-configuring urban relationships and landscapes. This chapter is most closely related to discourses in right to the city literature. The next thematic area is on regulations and policy. In this section, I examine how urban agriculture is hindered by government regulatory frameworks and poor policy. I also evaluate how urban agriculture participants are challenging rigid top-down government regulations and policies. This section is also interwoven with analysis of the policy and regulatory literature. As part of my empirical research I surveyed and analyzed various government documents to help compare and contrast how urban agriculture participants felt about the regulatory climate and city policies and regulations. Sections 5.4 and 5.5 both examine the issue of informality. The first of these sections explores how informal relationships, a key theme discussed by all participants, facilitates their urban agriculture goals. The next section on informality highlights some of the

less optimal outcomes of urban agriculture as an informal activity. Here I expound upon the issue of precariousness and inconsistency of outcomes in urban agriculture in Winnipeg and Brandon. The final thematic section describes the less radical side of urban agriculture and how urban agriculture also can fit within the confines of governmentality.

### **5.1. The Urban Growth Ethic and the Challenges of Urban Agriculture**

A key theme within the interviews was the frustrations and challenges of dealing with an indifferent City that is more interested in Big Development than community. A contemporary of Lefebvre's, David Harvey (2012, 2008) framed the issue of cultivating grassroots democracy and social cohesion as way of challenging prevailing neoliberal forces.

Not only were participants interested in cultivating community and developing alternative economies, they were also interested in challenging what they saw as a narrow neoliberal development based narrative within the city. As the inner-city coordinator summarized:

Planning of policies and many by-laws for as far as I can see were designated more for business and less for community. Historically rooted in business interests or very strict neighbourhood planning ideals. Rather than community building or community based neighbourhood renewal.

The CSA 1 participant had similar perceptions of the city. There is a strong sentiment that government does not represent or care about their needs and that the focus of local government is on development and business interests, rather than designating land for local needs like food production:

The city is not designating lands for urban agriculture. As far as I know they are planning other kinds of development. The City never said we value what you are doing... They are not designating land for food production.

The Brandon coordinator more broadly interpreted the lack of attention to urban agriculture and felt that the city did not always priorities community gardening because of the perception of who was and who was not a taxpayer:

Ultimately the administration serves the tax payers and often the people using community gardens are not considered tax payers. I think the city is listening to people who are tax payers and a lot of times means roads, bridges, economic development. New businesses and housing coming to Brandon.

This is a pernicious attitude that reduces people's rights to how much money they make, rather than to the rights of individuals as citizens or urban inhabitants. Moreover, the implication is that urban agriculture is not productive economically and is therefore of marginal importance.

This strongly relates to policy analysis of city documents. When searching the city of Winnipeg website, there is a strong focus on land-use planning and development, while comparatively little interest in community gardening. In fact, there is only one two-page document relating to community gardening (no public document exists in Brandon) that can be accessed on the City's website (City of Winnipeg, n.d.). This document provides some guiding principles around gardening but is not at all substantive. For instance, one implementation strategy is to "ensure ongoing assessment of community need and collaborative planning (p. 1). However, there is no elaboration. One is left to wonder whose "community needs" and what kind of "collaborative planning". The document lacks depth and clarity and provides no real direction of specific goals, policies or regulations to guide community gardening in Winnipeg. Aside from feel-good sentences about how the City of Winnipeg considers community gardens to be very "beneficial in supporting communities and improving the quality of life in neighbourhoods" there are no tangibles that can be extracted from the document. The document is broadly positive and supportive, but it does nothing else.

The criticism of the City as Growth Machine (Molotch, 1976) is of particular value. Molotch and Logon argued that due to the pressures of "local growth coalitions", business-focused "exchange value" trumped community-based "use value". Lefebvre also lamented the fact that exchange value was elevated over other urban needs (Lefebvre, 1968, p. 148). On his

writings on *The Right to the City*, he argued that our “individual and collective human needs were parsimoniously taken into account by planners” (p. 147). Not surprisingly, the allotment gardener made connections to how the city favored certain kinds of development and that this meant that urban agriculture was relegated to the wastelands:

The City will always keep land for developer. The developer wants to make money and the City wants taxes. The greenspaces are left because they are on a floodplain or land the city doesn't want. I don't think the city has said that growing food and creating productive land is as important.

This is also evident in policy frameworks and decision making at the City. In a recent case, a controversial land-swap agreement showed the City giving land to a developer that it itself marked as ecologically important (Santin, 2015). This is more entrenched than a controversial land-swap deal; it is entrenched in the highest level of policy making. Take for instance the City of Winnipeg vision documents, *OurWinnipeg*. Terms such as “growth” and “development” are cited 275 times, while “greenspace” comes up once and “garden” can be found seven times. This notion of being relegated to unused space was also brought up by the CSA 2 participant. They further felt that their activities were not seen as permanent features:

This can help situate gardens and agriculture to urban planning. It is right now on the side, I forgot we have this space in the corner, you can have that until we do a big road project. It is seen as temporary.

In fact, the policy document explicitly recognized “temporary gardens” and states that there are “gardens established as an interim use on city owned property that is not slated for immediate development or sale” (*OurWinnipeg*, n.d.). Similarly, the inner-city coordinator felt that the city discouraged a sense of ownership:

They didn't want us to see the gardens as our own. Even though the neighbourhood people invested their time and energy cleaning out the lots, fencing them, planting fruit trees, making garden spaces, pathways and signs. The city still wouldn't acknowledge it was neighbourhood space, or not have us thinking of it as such.



Here again, the City has dragged its feet on developing land tenure agreements (Mikulec et al., 2013). There currently are no documents that can be found publicly that discuss land security and research shows that the City is not particularly interested in providing greater security (Mikulec et al., 2013). When considering the lack of interest in developing more extensive urban agriculture policies in conjunction with lack of land security, it is difficult to interpret the City of Winnipeg's position as something other than willful neglect. This connects well to the right to the city literature, which argues that urban inhabitants are alienated by the functions of capitalism and denied the right to access land and resources (Soja, 2009).

## **5.2. The Regulatory and Policy Wasteland**

The regulations that dictate our interactions in urban space are framed as necessary tools to order space and keep us safe. In fact, many regulations do indeed keep us safe, or prevent the city from becoming unmanageably chaotic. However, there is also a darker, less benevolent side to the rules that dictate our lives. The rules of the city also inhibit social activity and inhibit our ability to explore collective social realms (Cresswell, 1992; Jacobs & Paulsen, 2009; Lefebvre, 1968). Aloof technocratic processes can dictate our lives to the hindrance of our full human potential.

There was a sentiment amongst interviewees that on a broad policy and regulatory scale the city was often not willing to work with urban agriculture participants, and that there are numerous policy and regulatory hindrances. Participants discussed their frustration with how certain goals of theirs were hindered by stringent regulations. For instance, a major issue for many of the inner-city community gardens was a lack of water access. The inner-city coordinator discussed how they were thwarted by cost and the City's intransigents:

They would never give us permission, if meant it was becoming too permanent and invested in the gardens. We even started talking to them about metered hookup for fire

hydrants. I went to the length to speaking to contractors who do that, who pull a permit to the city and priced out permit. Again the city stopped us on that.

A major problem is that the City's regulatory system is designed to control development and land-use patterns. The City's Zoning By-law, for example, is a 140-page technical document that provides the framework for how things get built in Winnipeg. The document, in great detail, delineates density, setbacks, floor area ratios, parking requirements and much more. Admittedly developers may feel that the document is onerous and creates roadblocks for development, but what is forgotten is the very existence of the document provides consistency and security and is the foundation for development. Not once does the document discuss urban agriculture or community gardens. It does not even acknowledge that there is large-scale agriculture happening within its jurisdiction. Not surprisingly, urban agriculture participants felt thwarted by our regulatory system as it clearly does not have them in mind. This was not the only example. There was another instance where stringent regulations got in the way of the inner-city community gardens acquiring a storage shed:

There were all these rules. We were pricing out metal sheds, which other community gardens didn't even ask about. We happened to be dumb enough to ask about it. They took a month to get back to me. They would get back to me, we could only support a metal shed, which costs thousands of dollars. Which nearly drove me crazy.

It is evident that there is a palpable frustration with how technocratic rules got in the way of improving their community projects, and how the city was focused on technical regulatory aspects over community needs and realities. As such, the inner-city coordinator went on to remark:

The city was focused too much about following the rules about the distance the fence is from the side walk. They never had the vision to see their role as a potential game changer for a community.

Not surprisingly, our Zoning By-law mentions fencing twelve times and describes in great detail where and how fences should be built. This not problematic in and of of itself.

Standards can help reduce conflicts, but they also create rigidity and disallow compromise and context to sometimes dictate decision making. Nothing in the by-law gives consideration to the needs of a new suburban neighbourhood verses the needs of an old inner-city neighbourhood.

This frustration over lack of compromise and focus on rules was further echoed by an CSA 1 participant:

[I] don't think they were willing to be creative or push boundaries. We couldn't break too many rules. We needed to be reasonable. They were generally when push came to shove, it felt like there is a place where it stops. It couldn't get too too radical.

Unlike the inner-city community gardens, the urban CSA was able to get access to water. However, even here, they were frustrated by impersonal technocratic regulations and that seemed to apply differently based on business interests:

In terms of by-laws and rules, the sewer one was a major one. We would get a water bill directly from the city. This would include sewer fees even though the water doesn't go into the sewer and an exemption couldn't be considered, even though a bottle washing outfits gets an exemption... They wouldn't consider that for us.

Because of the City's rigidity, a small group of individuals were paying for sewer fees while larger businesses in the Winnipeg were able to receive exemptions. Other permaculture goals were also thwarted by government regulations. The allotment gardener felt that the City's rules on pets disallowed them from engaging in broader urban agriculture priorities:

The pet by-law is a pain in the a\*\* for us. We would really like to have chickens and to have pigs going through the apple orchard. Even have sheep for the grass... The pet by-law inhibits chickens and bees and other animals. If those things were changed, we could do more.

In Brandon, gardeners faced another challenge. They had to deal with different bureaucratic arms of the government and poor communication. In this instance, a fence was approved by the City to later be taken down and once again put back up because of uncompromising bureaucratic processes:

We have two years ago a site, on the lower lands right beside the dyke. The land is marginal. It had a fence around it to protect from wildlife and deer. The fence was built a few years prior. The city was part of the project. There are poor records kept of it. What happened two years ago, is that risk management inspected all the sites that were considered parks in the city and department that, that fence at that site was not within guidelines and by-laws. They said it had to be removed and issued an order on December 1 that the fence needed to be removed by December 10, to a community group that is only managed by volunteers.

While the fence was eventually rebuilt it came at the cost of thousand-dollar variance application. This bureaucratic scenario could have been averted if it were not for impersonal and stringent regulatory processes that strain loosely organized and underfunded community organizations.

There were also frustrations expressed about policy climate, or lack thereof. In the eyes of more than one participant, there was a lack of meaningful policy that would facilitate urban agriculture projects in Winnipeg. The inner-city coordinator felt that the community gardening policy was not effective in any way:

The community garden supposed policy had not teeth. So I would say that was a detriment it was talked about, but given no political teeth or power. No policy was written around it. We had a nebulous concept of a garden policy that couldn't be effective.

There was also frustration that there was no city-wide policy for urban agriculture. The allotment gardener wanted to see a city-wide policy that would encourage and facilitate small-scale agriculture and open up more greenspace for urban agriculture activities:

We have told the city in meetings that it would be helpful if they came up with a policy around planting. I understand that they don't want gardens on roundabouts in the exchange district. There is so much pollution. There is no particular reason that in Kildonan park or any of the other parks that the big flower gardens couldn't be planted squash.

This sentiment was also echoed by the CSA 2 participant, who also wanted to see a policy that clarifies and expands the vision of urban agriculture in Winnipeg:

I would like to see a position from them that is one that illuminates some goals for the entire city. I would love to see gardens everywhere. I think if people were able to rewrite

these policies from a visions point you can re-envision a lot of spaces taken over by gardens.

Furthermore, the issue of re-conceptualizing how space is used and how the city promotes the use of public space came up within the context of policy goals for the city:

There needs to be a goal to see how you can actually plan, reimagine a city that has gardens and green space. It is a big question. I think things needs to be inverted. It is not about adding to the policy. It is not reworking. It needs [a] new vision completely. It doesn't include a lot of agricultural activities. Only two scenarios for them.

In Brandon the lack of policy has also been a problem. The Brandon coordinator couched this within the issue of gardeners' rights and the City's responsibilities, and pointed out that "there [is] still no policy, which makes what rights the gardeners have and what the city will provide hazy". However, there were some concerns about how effective city policy would be, even if implemented. As such the Brandon coordinator discussed how the City's master green plan had fantastic ideas, but no follow through:

There were a lot of gardeners within the network that were part of the process to write master space green plan for the city. It has all of these fantastic ideas in it. It is a plan and it is supposed to by a five-year plan, and they read and there are things are stated like all community gardens will have water, or compost from the city. Community gardens will be protected sites. Problem is that in practice this not how it actually works. The document even outlines the amount of the money they will spend. None of which has been spent. The community reads this plan and things ok they are going to do all of this. The city's response is that it is just a plan.

Issues around trust were also raised and also indicated some potential disagreement between CSA participants. The CSA 1 participant questioned if the City of Winnipeg could produce an effective and well-written policy that reflects the goals and changing needs of urban agriculture in Winnipeg:

If the City of Winnipeg sat down and wanted to create a formal agriculture policy I don't trust they would make one that makes sense for urban farmers. They might listen and write a few things. I don't think the city has a good community-based understanding. I don't trust that planners know what urban farmers need. I'm worried about people in offices making decisions about the land. I think policy needs to be written and led by people in the community and has room for change.

There were concerns that the city would pay lip service to urban agriculture participants while continuing with their own agenda and not genuinely listening to urban farmers' needs. It is clear that urban agriculture participants face numerous regulatory barriers that affect the viability of their projects.

### **5.3. Localism, and Re-configuring Our Urban Relationships**

The previous two sections focus on the how the current economic and regulatory processes create barriers for urban agriculture. However, a central theme of right to the city is the invitation for urban citizens to produce an “alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful” (Harvey, 2012, p. x). The combination of public spaces with large concentrations of people makes the city the perfect canvas for experimentation and collective demands for a more justice society (Harvey, 2012). Moreover, urban public space provides people the opportunity to shape their surroundings. This opportunity would likely not be available to them outside of the context of urban life. A sentiment brought up by both urban CSA participant was that public lands provided an opportunity for people to produce food and sustain themselves in a way that would not be possible outside of the city. As the CSA 1 participant described:

When it comes to urban agriculture it was a lot more to do with what felt possible to me as an individual without access to money, land or equipment, as well as people. I felt rooted in my community in Winnipeg in a way that I would not felt that way if I picked up and moved to a rural town.

The city lends itself to being reconfigured and re-envisioned by its citizens. The large quantity of land that is underused, forgotten and leftover tempts people to revision and redesign. This is strongly connected to Lefebvre's rights on the city, which urges urban citizens to claim space for their own. While the participant does not use explicit right-to-the-city language, this sentence strongly indicates they are thinking about rights to claim the city for their individual and community needs. Participants also felt that they had an opportunity to challenge what felt

possible in cities. The same CSA 2 participant argued that “It is possible for communities to create all different kinds of spaces that challenges how we view space and food production and money and time and community and relationships”. This sentiment was echoed by the allotment gardener who expressed the importance of trying to challenge public values on how land should be used. They saw their work as challenging normative views on the use and function of public space as well as prevailing food production systems:

I think the city’s idea of a greenspace is to a park pallet. That is the manufactured lawns and the English garden. People think food comes from the hinterland. Currently it does and that is in California and Mexico. We are living in this temporary space where the international food system where fossil fuels and pesticides made it possible to come up with sterile useless greenspaces.

Another important theme was not only having control over the shape and function of one’s community, but also reshaping larger macroeconomic systems. This is connected to Lefebvre’s ideas on how “to imagine and reconstitute a totally different kind of city out of the disgusting mess of a globalizing, urbanizing capital amok” (Harvey, 2012, p. xvi).

However, there is more to these ideals than merely the physical and macro-economic processes. There are the social relationships; cities as places of social interaction. Once again, participants discussed their interest in urban agriculture as being part of redefining and building community. Asked about their interest in community gardening, the inner-city coordinator discussed the importance of gardens as a place for community and cross-cultural interaction:

Neighbourhood cohesion is something I see in the urban ag [agriculture] and community garden movement. People from different cultures can cross paths in community gardens. It is very important for the neighbourhood.

Similar community ideals were discussed by one of the CSA 1 participants. They saw an opportunity to not only connect with people from different backgrounds, but how public food production itself helped create space for connection and relationships:

Part of what we were doing when growing on public land was that people could see what we were doing and see who was doing it and could talk to us about whatever they wanted. It didn't have to be about the food or farming practices. It could be about their niece or why they were walking into the sports clinic. Whatever it was they wanted to talk about and that is what builds community... It connected us to a sense of place.

There is also a pushback against a reductive idea of citizenship. Scholars have discussed the notion of citizenship in Lefebvre's writings (Purcell, 2003). There is a challenge to create a more dynamic and local conceptualization of citizenship. A citizen relationship that is more than a liberal democratic view of state and the individual. Instead, that citizenship is about communitarianism and local and direct democracy. One cannot divorce Lefebvre from the historical idealism from the time of communal living and of democracy as being an inherently local and grassroots activity. These values remain present within the urban agriculture movement in Winnipeg. The allotment gardener focused the most on this topic:

There are few people who work at local governance or self governance... Looking at all the economic stuff, if there is a collapse and the centre can't micromanage the local, who is going to govern?

The allotment gardener often came back to the concept of local governance and resilience in times of economic and ecological uncertainty. They believed it was necessary to teach people about local and self-governance as there could be a moment when the top-down government breaks down. While not explicitly relevant to right the city, there are notable thematic connections. Lefebvre's (1968) utopian vision of urbanism reconfigured how communities make decisions and how they produce spaces around them. How urban citizens make decisions is central to processes and outcomes of our cities. Much of our cities' configuration is connected to our top-down decision-making processes.

The allotment gardener went on to further discuss other important collectivist ideals that relate to literature around informality and property rights. Much of land use planning, is about top down decision making and about asserting individual property rights (Blomley, 2016).



However, activities such as urban agriculture reshape our public spaces and in turn reconfigure our social relations as well:

I want to build trust and knowledge, learn how to cooperate and govern ourselves, make decisions, deal with conflicts. It is important to pool and share resources and ideas.

Moreover, the CSA 1 participant, argued that local food production could help foster economic alternatives and create new social connections. In essence they were adding a human touch by making connections with their customers and could foster alternative economies:

Our customers were people we delivered directly to. We knew them and their names. Some were friends and others were people we didn't know and we got to know them through this. We could create elements of alternative economies that were a little bit more humane.

To Lefebvre there was another aspect of creating a more humane society through the idea of the *oeuvre* (1968). The *oeuvre* can be described as the material goods of life that are not consumable. For Lefebvre, the right to the city was about the right to joyful living and play and to enjoy non-commoditized material goods. This was articulated vividly by a CSA 1 participant, who described their intention for engaging in urban agriculture to be with friends and enjoy the non-consumable material world:

I wanted to work outside with my hands, with people I care about, making decisions as a group and to build biodiversity. The actions of getting sun on the face, getting bit by bugs and talking to neighbors. These were things I wanted to do to feel connected to my community. These tangible relationships were important to me.

Other participants made similar connections and felt that urban agriculture helped create space for relaxation and self-expression. Urban agriculture is about more than food production. It helps us interrupt and recreate urban space that reflects the needs of local inhabitants. In other words, participants saw urban agriculture as part of a process of creating a *new centrality*.

#### 5.4. The Importance of Informal Relationships

There is a divide between the personal and the bureaucratic. As such, on a broader political and technocratic scale, the City is not perceived positively. The City's bureaucracy is broadly seen as indifferent to the needs of urban agriculture participants and more interested in macro economic activity than it is in community development. On the other hand, participants acknowledged that there were many individuals working within the city government that had their interests and values in mind and were willing to work on their various projects and proposals. The city is not a monolithic entity where all actors are bad. In fact, participants frequently brought up positive experiences with numerous city employees and departments. The CSA 1 participant illustrated the dichotomy between the larger forces of government and well-meaning individuals in government:

I think that the power structures are not designed to support fledgling urban agriculture projects. As a result of our existing relationship we were listened to, because there were people who are willing to do that advocacy within the City if Winnipeg, if they are not there, that can really reduce the strength.

This was further emphasized by the CSA 2 participant. They felt that their project was successful not because of broad institutional support and interest, but because of informal friend networks within the city who saw the value of what they were doing:

As a whole we had support from an acquaintance at the City who was on board with our idea. Not because all the staff were open to the idea. It was because someone championed the concept that we were proposing on that specific space. That informality was useful to us. It was useful to our relationship and to get urban agriculture to be a much more visible thing in Winnipeg.

The importance of having allies within the city who understand urban agriculturalists' needs and projects was also illustrated by a proposal for a community oven project in Brandon. The Brandon coordinator discussed how the project would have been much less likely to succeed

if it were not for the fact that they had informal channels to discuss their project and how it could fit within City by-laws and regulations:

We had a lot of conversations with people in the planning department to see if this was something we could do, and to see what process and priorities existed that we can fit under. We have a few people in planning who are also gardeners. The thing that helps with planning in uncharted waters is having connections with people informally. Without those informal connections, you would have to read all the by-laws and someone who can comprehend that to understand what you are getting into. If you have an informal connection with a gardener who is a planner who knows residential by-laws and is friendly to the garden network, that is a good resource.

To the coordinator, it was not only about the benefits of the personal and informal relationships gardeners developed. They felt that the personal relationships helped them deal with the bureaucracy. As such, the issue of the dichotomy between impersonal government processes and informal relationships once again cropped up:

The garden network is doing a community based project. Something that will be used all the time. The City sees that, but all the concerns seem to always be with the administration and policy or whether you are doing things under their mandate. The informal relationship helps get it there.

The Brandon coordinator felt that if it were not for these relationships, it would have been more difficult for them to actualize their project. Based on the interviews, it is evident that all urban agriculture groups found most of their support through informal channels within the City bureaucracy. In Winnipeg, participants discussed other beneficial relationships they developed over time. For instance, both urban CSA participants also discussed the positive relationship they had with the adjacent pool staff:

In terms of staff on the actual site, because our site was paired with a pool, we had ongoing relationships with the staff there and particularly the maintenance staff. They would come down to see how things were going. They were super helpful with us in an informal way.

There was also a delineation made by the CSA 1 participant between working relationships with government staff and politicians. They felt that most of the positive work being done came from City officials and not the political branch of government:

I would describe it [our relationship] as very positive for the duration we were actively farming the space. I would say that most of that was in connection with City of Winnipeg staff and not city politicians.

A similar delineation was made by other participants who felt that the most of the support for urban agriculture came from civil servants and not politicians'. In general, informal relationships were crucial for all the urban agriculture participants, but it was more informal groups like the urban CSA and inner-city community gardens that emphasized the importance of informality. It is likely that long-standing groups like the suburban allotment garden also relied on informality, but that over time these relationships solidified and became more formal.

### **5.5. Double-edged Sword of Informality**

Informality has created space for urban agriculture to experiment and be creative. However, informality has also led to inconsistent outcomes for urban farmers and gardeners. For example, the informal nature of urban agriculture practices led to inconsistent application of regulations. One area where this issue was most exemplified was in the legal grey area of selling food on public land. Because of the often informal nature of urban agriculture, there were inconsistent applications of this rule. In the case of community gardens, it was formally prohibited to sell food. In the case of allotment gardens in Winnipeg, the gardeners did not sign formal leases and the issue of selling food was not addressed although it was known that food was sold under the table. In the case of the urban CSA, it was explicitly known that they were selling food produced on their land to area residents. However, the City never legally acknowledged these economic transactions. During the time that the current urban CSA group was cultivating these lands, no

problems arose. It was not until another group wanted to take over that the informal nature of the urban CSA became a problem. As the CSA 1 participant described it:

I think a lot of things were facilitated by the City but it wasn't formal or written down. This leaves urban farmers in a precarious place as they will continue to rely on what they have written down. One thing that was positive was the lease agreement that we could adapt. The awkward thing was that it was an allotment garden lease. The whole place was founded as an urban agriculture project, but the city can turn around and say no, it is now a community garden.

While allowing for an informal agreement between the urban CSA and the City allowed for easy access to land and the ability to sell, it left the project in a precarious situation. This was described as such by the CSA 2 participant:

Informality wasn't necessarily desired to be continued. We were wondering how we could fit ourselves into the City, but nothing came about, nothing evolved to fit us. We just went on under the agreement allotment gardens. We rented 11 allotment gardens. It was an arbitrary number. It was informal, it was allowed to go through. We didn't have exactly the same requirements as an allotment garden. We didn't have to go through the same people all the time. We had a separate deal that was informal in a way.

Although taking an informal route facilitated getting the project established, it was not a situation the urban CSA participant wanted to be in. It allowed for arbitrary changes in decision making. As one urban CSA participant recalled, a City staff did indeed decide that it should no longer be a CSA. By changing the space to a community garden it effectively disallowed the CSA to continue on as a project. The CSA 2 participant explained:

There was a gap in the allotment contract to allow an individual person to sell food. It sort felt like the person in charge didn't think that kind of agriculture was for City land. The idea of growing food that you sell was disliked. Although people do that all the time in allotment gardens and that is ok. They saw a loophole, so they said they could do it as a community garden contract, so that made it so that they couldn't do because they wouldn't be allowed to sell food.

The CSA 1 participant touched on the issue of the perception of public space. To them, they felt the City was not very clear on the relationship between business and public space:

It is not a well-perceived or dealt-with issue in Winnipeg. Where the relationship between business and city space is not always clear. There are situations like parking per se, a

business is owned and they get money from people being able to park, but it can be on city space. Food trucks I guess is another example. They are selling on city property. Also we weren't selling on the property.

Indeed, the public realm is essential to the proper functioning and success of urban business. The allotment gardener also expressed that they had been butting up against the hazy rules around selling food from agricultural projects on public land.

In terms of policy I know something that is coming. We can get people to a tree planting. To get people to water and weed every week doesn't work. A garden is a little bit different because they are less maintenance. The orchard though is a monster. The idea came that we start it as a worker co-op and some of the food we will sell to restaurants and we can start a CSA. In order to take care of the orchard properly we need to move to that model.

In Brandon the issue of food selling lacks clarity as well. In some situations, gardeners are able to sell while others are prohibited, creating an inconsistent policy that is not applied fairly to all gardeners:

Selling vegetables is another thing. All the community gardens except for one can sell for cost recovery measure, but I know that other gardens also sell. They have fundraisers and plant sales. Technically they are not allowed. You are not allowed to profit from City land.

Furthermore, issues arose around re-conceptualizing how city space is used and how it can cultivate alternative economies. The allotment gardener felt that if one wants to create alternative food systems, one would also need to support alternative economies and argued, "if you are trying to create an alternative food system, you should also be trying to create an alternative economy. We are trying to build social enterprise".

Challenging the City to re-envision how it regulates space to cultivate alternative economies was another important value espoused by interviewees. The allotment gardener went so far as to question how we define the nature of public space in the city and argued for a common approach to management of land in the city:

It would be useful if the City came up with a by-law that this is common property. Yes, it is public land, but it is also a commons. You or anyone is welcome to participate and you can get a bit of what the land produces.

The commons provides an old, but new way to structure our social spaces. The idea of creating urban commons can challenge prevailing liberal theories on property rights and challenge us to work together out of the realm of capitalist processes (Harvey, 2012).

Informal relationships lead to other inconsistent outcomes. For instance, while the inner-city community gardens were often unable to get access to water, the City afforded this opportunity to the urban CSA:

Well it was our specific relationship. They were already renovating the side. So we had someone to talk to. It was a positive relationship. They were already renovating the building so could we have a couple of taps. They monitor it and we pay for it. There could be many other situations that look similar but in different places. That has to do with the interest of making the project successful, as opposed to saying you can or cannot do this.

This, once again, speaks to how informality can create unequal access to resources and inconsistent application of regulations and policies.

The inner-city community gardens and urban CSA were also not permitted to erect permanent structures, while on the other hand the allotment gardens have been permitted more than one permanent structure. In one case, knowing that they would receive pushback from area residents, a written letter was provided by the area's super-intendent:

I had a shed that is over by the garden and I knew I would get resistance from some of the neighbours. So I talked to the super-intendent and asked for their written permission. So he came and they looked at it and they said it looks perfectly fine. We store pumps and tools and all that kind of stuff.

While there are examples where informality has helped urban agriculture participants, it is also evident that informality has harmed urban agriculture projects. Informality can lead to unequal access to resources and create unfair application of regulations in policies This points to the need for a better-developed, community-driven urban agriculture policy.

## 5.6. Conformity

While urban agriculture participants are pushing the boundaries of what is permissible on public lands, there are also limitations to how far they are willing to go. When asked about their willingness to contravene by-laws or regulations, most stated that this was something they would not do. In many cases there were notable transitions from being so informal they did not ask permission to start a project to ensuring that any major decision was run by the City. For example, the inner-city coordinator discussed how, due to pressure within the organization and also from the City, gardens became a more formal affair:

Everything had to be supported by the board. The first gardens though, no one asked permission to build those. They went and took over the lots and piles of garbage and cleaned them out. As a community they just did it. I think it was a necessity based on pressure from the city. The organization was growing. As it grew, it became more formal. The community members recognized they needed a plan. Like a green plan to talk about these lots. The City was also putting pressure on the community to claw back those lots. There was tension between the threat of clawing back and the community organization that was slowly developing and becoming more formalized.

For the allotment gardener, it was important to have a working relationship and dialogue with the City as a way to educate and make slow change:

I would rather work with them and educate them and move them along. To move very fast and shut the door will hold things back five years. We had conversations three years ago. Every year we start a new initiative. We give them an idea.

In the case of the CSA, it was discussed as balancing between being a radical project and also being quite tame. On the one hand the project itself was radical, but on the other hand they wanted to make sure it did not offend anyone:

In many ways it wasn't a radical project and in many ways it was. I think it was the first urban agriculture project on public land in Canada. I'm not sure about it. I think. We tried to find information on that, but couldn't find anything else. It wasn't the only one attempted to be started. That is what I mean by radical. On another level it was a tame project. Like making sure it was pretty so nobody was offended by it. We weren't doing things like compost toilet.



While there is some evidence of conformity, this is no different than the findings in the guerilla gardening research, which also found that not all projects were meant to be an affront to state hegemony and capitalist interests (Adams & Hardman, 2014; Hardman, 2014).

### **5.7. Concluding Thoughts: Fragility and Conflict**

The interviews brought to light a number of compelling themes that strongly correlate to the right to the city discourses, and help broaden right to the city's connections away from guerrilla gardening and towards more mainstream urban agriculture projects. Participants, especially in Winnipeg, drew from themes around remaking the city, social justice and producing alternative economies. They also indicated that there were numerous issues concerning regulatory and policy framework in both Winnipeg and Brandon. Participants also discussed informality within various contexts. A key theme was how informal relationships helped them traverse the hazardous waters of City bureaucracy. However, informality also led to greater fragility and precariousness of urban agriculture, especially in Winnipeg. Informal processes led to inconsistent outcomes for different gardening projects. While there were numerous instances in which urban agriculture participants discussed the radical nature of their projects, there were also examples of how they tempered their actions to fit within the confines of state governmentality.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

This research attempted to further academic knowledge on urban agriculture and its relationship to the planning system, and to help better understand this relationship through the framework of right to the city, informality and property rights. There is a vast and ever-growing field of research that is grappling with the issue of urban agriculture through various traditions, including community renewal (Hancock, 1999; Glover & Parry, 2004; Lind, 2008), health and well-being (Armstrong, 2000), sustainability and environmental justice (Hall, 2000). More recently researchers have begun to take interest in guerrilla gardening (Crane et al., 2012; Zanetti, 2007). It is within this body of literature that a critical theory framework has been used, but this is often a very extreme and fringe form of urban agriculture. This raises the question, how do these concepts relate to more traditional forms of urban agriculture? Moreover, the literature does not provide a lot of examples of comparative analysis to understand differences within urban agriculture.

As such, this thesis attempted to shed light on these issues and close gaps in the literature. It is important to remember that the discussion and recommendations are limited by the scope and type of research. The sample size provides its own limitations, as more interviews strengthen the reliability of the data. This next section attempts to illuminate findings that can carry forward into new research. I will attempt to answer the questions outlined in the introductory chapter. Next, I will consider the conceptual and practical implications of my research. While the lessons learned may not be applicable to the broader agricultural community, I believe that the research points towards one broad recommendation for the Winnipeg context.

## 6.1. Research Questions

At the beginning of this research I set out to answer three questions. This section attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do these three groups (urban CSA, suburban allotment garden, inner-city community garden) differ or converge in their perceptions of the planning system and their role in changing these systems, and how do these relations differ from other urban agriculture projects in Manitoba?
2. What conflicts and tensions exist between these groups and the planning system and how do these tensions relate to right to the city literature?
3. How can the planning system better respond to informality as it relates to urban agriculture?

### 6.1.1. Question One

*How do these three groups (urban Farmers CSA, suburban allotment garden, inner-city community garden) differ or converge in their perceptions of the planning system and their role in changing these systems and how do these relations differ from other urban agriculture projects in Brandon?*

The interview analysis indicates that there are more similarities than there are differences and that many of the same frustrations are shared by urban agriculture participants.

All the Winnipeg participants noted how frustrated they were with the planning system. Participants all agreed that the regulatory system was designed for business and less for community development and that urban agriculture was seen as a temporary use, relegated to unwanted land. There were some minor differences based on the histories and contexts of specific projects. Allotment and community gardens seemed to have an easier time with policy framework than urban CSA, largely because the City had some basic contracts and systems set up for community gardening and allotment gardening. For example, the urban CSA project

eventually had to stop because the City wanted to designate it as a community garden. This designation effectively made the project unfeasible, as community gardens are not able to sell food. Because of this, CSA participants tended to focus on those issues. On the other hand, the community gardening participant focused more on the issue of impermanence, which is likely to do with the fact that most of their lots were on developable land. However, all participants generally discussed how the regulatory frameworks in place were rigid and uncompromising, and how difficult it was to implement simple improvements on the land they were using. The type of issues may have been slightly different depending on the type of urban agriculture activity – i.e. some focused more on issues like water access, while others focused on things like animal husbandry.

Moreover, almost all of the participants wished for more clarity as it related to government policy. During the interviews, there was a general sentiment that an urban agriculture policy would help further the goals of urban agriculture and help improve relations with the City. However, there were some minor differences. One CSA participant did not trust the City to formulate policy that would be consistent with the needs of urban agriculture in Winnipeg and felt skeptical that policy would be helpful.

All participants in Brandon and Winnipeg brought up the issue of informal relationships and how these relationships helped them further their goals and navigate the often impersonal bureaucratic planning system. In regards to how informality affected participants negatively, the CSA participants tended to focus on this more, as their project was terminated abruptly by someone at the City. They were also frustrated by the issue of selling food cultivated on public land. In the end, the CSA benefited from informality as its very existence was made possible through relationships and informal agreements. Ultimately, informality was the CSA's undoing. Arbitrary decisions by individuals at the City decided that the CSA should fit within the city's

existing community gardening framework which prohibits food selling and made the project unfeasible.

Finally, there is the issue of values and the notion that urban agriculture participants are changing the planning system and reconfiguring the city. A number of the urban agriculture participants discussed how their activities on the land redefine the city, their communities and their social relationships to and within these structures. There was a sense that urban agriculture could help create new notions of citizenship, challenging people to redefine public space and create new social configurations. However, there was a greater tendency for participants in Winnipeg to focus on language that was more radical and that challenged social, political and economic structures compared to the participant in Brandon.

### **6.1.2. Question Two**

*What conflicts and tensions exist between these groups and the planning system and how do these tension relate to right to the city literature?*

The interview findings strongly suggest that there are numerous tensions between community urban agriculture and the planning system. Broadly speaking, interview results indicate that urban agriculture participants felt that they were challenging neoliberal hegemony and promoting new creative possibilities for urban space and social interaction. Moreover, much of what urban agriculture participants stated strongly aligned with Harvey's (2009) criticisms of urban capitalism, in that they were configured to neoliberal interests.

Participants felt that laws and systems focused on business interests and narrow views of citizenship. Moreover, they felt that urban agriculture was left with unwanted spaces like flood-prone areas and empty inner-city lots. However, urban agriculture participants framed these issues as challenges against alienating forces and creating new futures and possibilities. A major theme in the interviews was reconfiguring urban society towards community and non-

consumption, which is strongly related to right to the city (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1968). While urban agriculture participants may not have used the specific academic nomenclature, much of what they discussed related to Lefebvre's concept of the oeuvre. Discussions focused on laying claim to the city and finding ways to connect to their surrounding spaces. Some participants focused more on closer interpersonal and community relations, while others discussed building grassroots democracy. While there were significant frustrations and concerns, much of the discussion came back to notions of joyful living and creating non-commercial space. These are the same positive and utopic ideas that Lefebvre envisioned when he discussed the importance of the oeuvre.

Another important theme in writings on right to the city is dialectic tensions. Lefebvre saw cities as conflictual environments with many contrasting interests. Once again, urban agriculture participants discussed the often tense relationship they had to the City and planning system, and that there was often considerable negotiation and fighting for more possibilities on the lands they were using. However, it could be argued that this is not the same dialectic tension that Lefebvre envisioned and that in many ways the rigid bureaucratic system thwarts true tensions, which should be flexible and elastic – something that was missing from the discussion.

While less emphasized, there were also connections made to citizenship and property rights. Generally, the Brandon participant did not use specific language that was closely associated to right to the city except on the subject of citizenship. They felt that a narrow conception of the taxpayer as citizen could have implications for community gardeners as they were not perceived to be taxpayers. While possibly not intentioned, they made a connection between neoliberal notions of citizenship. Through much of the discussion, there are inferences to property rights discourses. All but one participant discussed how their project challenged capitalist notions of property rights. The allotment gardener felt that their project could help reformulate notions of

property and through the process of collectivizing space. They discussed how their urban agriculture projects were bringing old ideas like the commons back to life.

### **6.1.3. Question Three**

*How can the planning system better respond to informality as it relates to urban agriculture?*

It is less clear from the interview results how the planning system could better respond to informality. On the one hand, informality has aided gardening projects as some interviewees report having a sympathetic staffer in the City who has helped them, but informality has also led to inconsistent applications of rules and inconsistent outcomes for gardeners (especially where selling of food produced on City land is related). Personal connections have been a great way to forward urban agriculture goals in Winnipeg and Brandon. Some participants discussed how specific individuals helped them navigate complex regulatory systems. Projects like the CSA in Winnipeg were championed by individuals in the City. It was also their informal existence that allowed another individual at the City to disallow the project years later. In Brandon, the interviewee felt that if it were not for personal relationships with individuals at the City their project would not be possible. There was also a general sense that participants felt they generally had positive relationships with individual staff members, which points to larger structural issues. The literature indicates that planning systems and governments needs to respond more flexibly to informality and to take it more seriously (Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris (eds.), 2014).

The answer to facilitating the development and upkeep of urban agriculture projects is likely to further formalize their existence (Covert & Morales, 2014). Interview results indicate that there is some support for more formalization through policy frameworks. City staff and officials could be designated to work with informal groups, like the ones examined in this thesis, and given the power to modify and recreate regulations in a consultative process with gardeners. This would represent a less top-down approach, which has thwarted urban agriculture projects in

Winnipeg and Brandon. A good policy would reflect the needs of urban agriculture participants and have implementable policies with tangible benefits. A vague document that discusses benefits of community gardening, as exists in Winnipeg today, is not enough. The policy should clarify the City's intentions and find ways to provide more flexibility.

## **6.2. Implications for Theory and Practice**

Urban agriculture literature has a deep and rich history with many well developed thematic areas. Nevertheless, this thesis attempted to close some gaps in the research. The literature focused on numerous important issues from urban revitalization to food security and sustainability, but comparatively few researchers have considered how urban agriculture fits within right to the city literature and informality. There is a growing body of research that has used right to the city and critical discourses to analyze guerrilla gardening (Crane et al., 2012; Zanetti, 2007), but this is on the radical end of the urban agriculture continuum. This begged the question: how does the rest of urban agriculture movement fit within right to the city discourse and what differences might there be?

This thesis points to broader applicability of right to the city within the urban agriculture movement and that these discourses are being used by various participants in the urban agriculture community. Participants connected their struggle to alienation, oeuvre and new possibilities. Kofman and Lebas (1996) emphasized that Lefebvre saw the right to the city as:

both a cry and a demand. The cry was a response to the existential pain of a withering crisis of everyday life in the city. The demand was really a command to look that crisis clearly in the eye and to create an alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful but, as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and dialectical (p. x).

While maybe not discussed in the same extreme terms, there are clear themes that connect to issues of crisis of urban and capitalist life and to create alternative possibilities. There are examples of how urban agriculture participants feel alienated by rigid regulatory systems and



capitalist society, but they challenge these values with alternative realities. These are new realities based on meaningful connection to urban space and community. Much of the discussion focused on different understandings of space and community that promote joy and connection. At the same time, there is conflict and tension, which is also fundamental to Lefebvre's right to the city.

While there are connections to right to the city, it is also important to acknowledge that not all urban agriculture participants emphasized these issues to the same degree. There are also examples of conformity. Many interviewees discussed walking a tightrope of radical approaches and caution. There is a dissonance and contradiction in this sentiment. Participants felt that they were making radical change and challenging people to revision community, governance and land, but at the same time shying away from pushing boundaries too much. Often participants would wait on the City to change its regulations. This could also be viewed in another light. In some way we could apply Lefebvre's dialectical tension. This contradiction can be viewed as a conflict that is both external and internal. Participants wish to see urban agriculture survive and thrive in the city, they also wish to transform landscapes and communities, but they fear that pushing too far could jeopardize their projects. Struggles against neoliberalism are real and complex and defy simplification. Current capitalist structures and regulatory processes do not give much room for non-conforming uses, and at times this was reflected in pragmatism by urban agriculture participants. Planners have a role in improving these issues and working for citizen interests as well as development interests.

Much of the discussion does not reflect well on current practice in Winnipeg. Participants discuss individual positive relationships, which is important, but structurally the response is woefully inadequate. Planners should challenge normative land-use processes that limit creativity and complexity in cities. There are many spaces in Winnipeg that are crying for new

visions and possibilities. Planners must help people dream and envision possibilities broader than simple capitalist production. Not every urban inhabitant may be interested in this, but planners must not shy away from possible conflicts. One way to improve the current environment is to be more respectful to ad hoc and informal approaches to land-use. Our current planning system is not well equipped to deal with informality, but there are examples where cities have adapted to the challenges of informality, allowing for new urban realities (Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris (eds.), 2014)

### **6.3. Lessons**

The City of Winnipeg does not deal well with urban agriculture. It inadequately addresses the needs of those engaged in urban agriculture in both policy and regulatory frameworks (Mikulec et al., 2013). Nonetheless, there are encouraging examples of community-based initiatives that are thriving. To some extent, these projects exist because of individual champions, but a cohesive policy is lacking. A lack of policy is causing inconsistent outcomes and frustration. A possible approach to overcome these problems is a well developed urban agriculture policy document. Interviewees mostly agree that a policy document would help further entrench urban agriculture in Winnipeg and provide clarity where needed. There were some reservations as one interviewee felt that an urban agriculture policy may not serve the needs of participants. Nonetheless, the reservation was based on the fact that they did not believe the City would adequately involve those involved in agriculture projects within the city. A well-formulated policy would be a democratic, community-based project that would formalize urban agriculture where necessary while allowing for flexibility elsewhere.

### **6.4. Reflections and Future Research**

This project had numerous limitations, and more research needs to be conducted in Winnipeg and elsewhere to investigate further how the planning system can better accommodate urban

agriculture. There is also a need for further discussion on how right to the city applies to urban agriculture projects. The scope of this research is narrow, as it only interviews a select group of individuals in Winnipeg and Brandon. It is difficult to say if the values expressed by participants in Winnipeg would be expressed elsewhere. Even within Winnipeg, the research could be expanded to more agricultural projects. It would also be advisable to broaden the scope to include agricultural projects not addressed in this project. There is also the issue of informality. While preliminary results indicate strong connections to right to the city and tensions between urban agriculture participants and the planning system, the informality implications were less obvious. A key question stemming from the research is how the planning system can better accommodate informality and if further formalization is the answer? While not a specific question, more research needs to be conducted on the relationship between urban agriculture and right to the city. Further comparative analysis is necessary and more formalized urban agriculture projects should be researched to see if the preliminary findings in this thesis are applicable elsewhere.

Ultimately this has been a challenging but rewarding project. It has elucidated tenuous connections between urban agriculture and right to the city that had not been directly addressed by previous research. While limited in scope, this research hopefully provides a framework for further investigation and discussion. Right to the city continues to be a relevant concept with real-world applications for urban life. This research indicates that there are individuals who are using right to the city as a way forward even if it is not explicit, which speaks to the intuitive nature of right to the city as an idea and political call to action.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Interview Schedule

Interview schedule:

1. How long have you been engaged in urban agriculture activities?
2. What got you interested in urban agriculture?
3. When did you join [fill in the blank] gardening organization?
4. When considering your relationship with the City, be it staff, officials, and council members, would you say your relationship is generally positive? Could you describe why or why not?
5. If you were to estimate, how often do you interact with city staff and officials on a yearly basis? And could you describe your interactions by citing some specific examples?
6. Can you recall situations where your activities as an urban agriculture practitioner has been impeded/facilitated by city policies or by-laws?
  - a. Can you tell me about specific by-laws or policies that have helped or hindered your activities, past or present?
  - b. Could you share an experience where the City has approached you or your group to enquire on how policies or by-laws could be improved
  - c. How would you describe the current state of by-laws and policies in Winnipeg?
  - d. Do you feel that the City's by-laws and policies adequately address the needs of your organization? Could you describe why or why not?
  - e. How flexible do you feel the City's policies and by-laws are?
7. Have there been situations where you or your organization approached the City for approval of an activity, that you knew, or thought possibly could contravene by-laws?
  - a. In situations such as these, how would you describe your interactions with the city officials? Was there room for negotiation and discussion?

8. Have there been situations where you have taken an action to later find out your organization was contravening by-laws?
  - a. In situations where your organization actions contravened city by-laws, how do you feel the City reacted? Was there room for negotiation and discussion?
9. Could you share an experience where your organization explicitly engaged in an urban agriculture activity that you knew were illegal?
  - a. Could you discuss why you felt or knew it was illegal?
  - b. Did the City find out about your activity and how did it respond?
10. Has there ever been a situation where the City inadvertently or advertently destroyed or removed something from your urban agriculture site?
  - a. In situations where there was intentional removal or destruction, did the City contact you, or your organization? Could you describe the interaction?
  - b. In a situation of inadvertent destruction/removal, did you contact the City? If so, could you describe the interaction?
11. How do you feel the city address urban agriculture in its planning documents and land use regulations?
12. Do you feel that the city's public lands are made available for urban agriculture activities? And could you discuss why or why not?
13. Could you share any experiences where land security became in issue issue that you and your organization are worried about?
  - a. Could you tell me about a situation where you felt your project was threatened?
  - b. How do you feel the City deals with land security?
14. In general, how do you feel about the city's policies and regulations in regard to urban agriculture? Could you share your opinion on policies or regulations that you feel are progress or regressive?
15. In sum, how would you describe the City's general attitude towards your urban agriculture activates? Is the city generally interested in working with you and addressing your concerns?

## Appendix II: Introductory Email

City Planning  
201 Russell Building  
84 Curry Place  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3T 2N2  
Tel: (204) 474-9458  
Fax: (204) 474-7532

[Salutation],

My name is Philip Mikulec and I'm in the process of working on my Masters of City Planning at the University of Manitoba. I am interested in providing a platform for urban agriculture participants to reflect on how the city responds and deals with the needs of their urban agriculture project in Winnipeg to better understand convergent and divergent experiences of urban agriculture practitioners. I have attached a "Project Background Information Sheet" which will provide you with further details on my research topic.

I would be grateful for your participation in an in-person interview related to my research. The interview will include 15 questions and it would take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interview can be conducted at a location and time of your choosing.

If you would like get more information about the research, please write (email) or call (phone number) me.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at (phone number) or (email).

Sincerely,  
Philip Mikulec

## Appendix III: Project Background



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

City Planning  
201 Russell Building  
84 Curry Place  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3T 2N2  
Tel: (204) 474-9458  
Fax: (204) 474-7532

### Faculty of Architecture

(Project Background Information for Prospective Interview Participants)

You have been asked to partake in a semi-structured interview as part my research into the urban agriculture in Winnipeg. This research is required as part of my Master of City Planning Major Degree Project (thesis), at the University of Manitoba. This research is being supervised by Dr. Janice Barry in the Department of City Planning.

The purpose of the interview is to gather information on how urban agriculture participants perceive and engage with the City of Winnipeg. This includes specific interactions with staff members, as well as situations in which by-laws or policies may have helped or hindered your urban agriculture project. I am interested in understanding how the City responds to different types of projects and if informality has any bearing on the City's response to urban agriculture activities as it relates to land tenure, policies and by-laws/regulations. Finally, I am interested in how the City has changed and how it can improve its practices as it relates to urban agriculture in Winnipeg. In sum, the intent is to interview participants from urban agriculture projects with varying degrees of informality to ascertain how well the City responds to projects that do not fit within normative land uses.

My guiding three research questions are: How do these four groups (urban CSA, suburban allotment garden, inner-city community garden and guerrilla gardeners) differ or converge in their perceptions of the planning system? What conflicts and tensions exist between these groups and the planning system? How can the planning system better respond to informality as it relates to urban agriculture?

The research findings and recommendations will result in important empirical and practical contributions to the issue of informality in the planning system as it pertains to urban agriculture. The study will contribute to conceptual knowledge by: further developing knowledge about the relationship of informality to the planning system, particularly in a North American context; facilitating learning outcomes for various stakeholders involved in urban agriculture development and advocacy; and framing issues involved in future urban agriculture development in Winnipeg.

## Appendix IV: Ethics Protocol

### Faculty of Architecture

#### Statement of Informed Consent

Research Project Study: **Urban agriculture, informality and land-rights: A case study of four urban agriculture projects in Winnipeg and their relation to the planning system**

Principal Investigator: Philip Mikulec, Graduate Student, Master of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

Advisory Committee: **Supervisor** – Janice Barry, Assistant Professor, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba  
**Internal Advisor** - Richard Milgrom, Associate Professor, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba  
**External Advisor** - Alan Diduck, Professor, Department of Environmental Studies & Science, University of Winnipeg

#### Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. This consent form, a copy of which you can keep for your records, is intended to ensure you have consented willingly and with all necessary information. It should explain what is involved in the research and what is expected of you as a participant.

Please take time to read, understand, and review the consent form and information about the research. If you would like more information, please feel free to ask me (the Principal Investigator)

#### Purpose of the study

The purpose of the interview is to gather information on how urban agriculture participants perceive and engage with the City of Winnipeg. This includes specific interactions with staff members, as well as situations in which by-laws or policies may have helped or hindered your urban agriculture project. I am interested in understanding how the city responds to and deals with different urban agriculture projects in Winnipeg based on their formality/informality, to better understand convergent and divergent experiences of urban agriculture practitioners. As such, an important aspect of this research is developing a better understanding of how the City responds to different types of projects and if informality has any bearing on the City's response to urban agriculture activities as it relates to land tenure, policies and by-laws/regulations. Finally, I am interested to understand how city has changed and how it can improve its practices as it relates to urban agriculture in Winnipeg. In sum, the intent is to interview participants from urban agriculture projects with varying degrees of informality to ascertain how well the City responds to projects that do not fit within normative land uses.

## **Study procedures**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a set of questions pertaining to your perception of City of Winnipeg procedures, policies and regulations. You may refuse to answer any question and the interview may also be terminated at your request. With your consent the interview will be audio recorded. You will also be given the option to review the interview transcript prior to publication. The transcript will be sent to you via an agreed upon media. A four-week time period will be provided for review. If the research does not receive a response within that timeframe, consent to proceed with information as is, will be implied.

## **Participant risks, benefits, costs**

The risks associated with this study are minimal. For participants who are engaged in urban agriculture practices that are formally sanctioned by the City of Winnipeg, there are fewer risks to personal or professional reputation. To ensure a high level of confidentiality, no names will be used. Furthermore, in the case of urban agriculture projects that are formally established as a CSA, allotment garden, or as part of an inner-city community garden, generic names will be used to reduce the likelihood of pinpointing the organization.

Due to small sample size and the nature and size of urban agriculture in Winnipeg, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed as general information provided by the interviewee could reveal their location depending on the reader's knowledge of urban agriculture in Winnipeg.

**Those involved in guerrilla gardening are cultivating public land without the expressed permission of the City of Winnipeg. Such activities contravene City By-law. The City of Winnipeg may take punitive actions against you, including but not limited to removal of the project, and fines related to damage to public property. Your name, and the location of their project will be kept strictly confidential. Dialogue that may identify your project will be eliminated from the transcript and not included in the research findings.**

The research findings and recommendations will result in important empirical and practical contributions to the issue of informality in the planning system as it pertains to urban agriculture. The study will contribute to conceptual knowledge by: further developing knowledge about the relationship of informality to the planning system, particularly in a North American context; facilitating learning outcomes for various stakeholders involved in urban agriculture development and advocacy; and framing issues involved in future urban agriculture development in Winnipeg. There are also numerous benefits to participants who will have the opportunity to share their knowledge, as well as access new information on urban agriculture policy.



### **Audiotaping & confidentiality**

With your consent the interview will be audio recorded. Personal identifiers will be removed. Transcripts will only include a generic identifier (e.g. allotment garden participant, guerrilla gardening participant #1). Audio recording will be immediately removed off of any portable device. Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on a secured computer and external hard drive for up to one year after publication of thesis research.

### **Feedback & debriefing**

After transcribing the interview, an interview transcript will be provided to you for the purposes of verifying information. You may also remove or modify dialogue that you deem to be inappropriate for public viewing. Interview transcripts will be provided within two months from the date of the interview. The transcript will be sent to you via an agreed upon media. A four-week time period will be provided for review. If the research does not receive a response within that timeframe, consent to proceed with information as is, will be implied.

### **Dissemination of results**

Published research will be made available via a number of media. A hard copy will be available at the University of Manitoba's Architecture/Fine Arts Library. A digital copy will be made available through M Space. Preliminary research findings will be shared with participants. As part of the consent form, all participants will be given the opportunity to request a digital copy of the published thesis. If the participant requests a copy, the researcher will email a copy to a given address upon department approval. The researcher may also use information from their master's research to publish conference papers and articles.

### **Voluntary participation/Withdrawal from study**

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You are able to refuse participation or to withdraw from the research study at any time. If you decide to participate, you have the right to refuse to answer any question or to refuse participation in any activity, at any time. You may withdraw consent verbally anytime throughout the interview process. You may also contact (contact information provided below) the researcher at anytime to request your withdrawal from this research. If you request withdrawal from this research all information pertaining to your interview (e.g. audio recordings, transcripts, etc) will be destroyed.

## **Contact information**

### *Student researcher:*

Philip Mikulec  
Graduate Student, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture,  
University of Manitoba  
Phone: (phone number)  
Email: (email)

### *Research supervisor:*

Janice Barry  
Assistant Professor, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture,  
University of Manitoba  
Phone: (phone number)  
Email: (email)

## **Statement of consent**

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at (phone number) or (email). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the corresponding box. If you do not agree, leave the box blank:

I have read or it has been read to me the details of this consent form.

My questions have been addressed.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), agree to participate in this study.

I agree to have the interview audio-recorded and transcribed.

I agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further information is required after the interview

I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this project published or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity.

Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings?  Yes  No

How do you wish to receive the summary?  E-mail  Surface mail

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_