

Guerrilla Gardening in California's East Bay

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ABSTRACT

The food movement has encompassed many efforts focused on sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and affordable access to healthy food. The highly urbanized San Francisco Bay Area is especially a hub of food activism. Guerrilla gardening is the illegal cultivation of land, and has been used to beautify blighted areas, proliferate green spaces, and grow food locally. The protest group 'Occupy the Farm' and their illegal occupation on the Gill Tract have prompted conflicts over urban land use and agriculture, raising questions over the role of guerrilla gardening in broader food movement efforts. I examined the practices, outcomes, and motivations of guerrilla gardeners in the East Bay through nine interviews with gardeners I identified by convenience sampling. Projects occurred on different scales involving individuals, neighborhoods, community-based organizations, and Occupy the Farm. Project contexts and landscapes influenced gardening practices and obstacles faced. I identified outcomes of youth empowerment, community building, and civic engagement from the neighborhood and organization projects. Occupy the Farm presented a model of resisting development pressures and promoting food justice in an urban context through a non-hierarchical and community-driven process. The community scale effects illustrated how guerrilla gardening can facilitate inclusive community organization, expand social capital, and build up local resiliency and assets. Gardeners came from a wide range of gardening backgrounds and demonstrated a breadth and depth of knowledge on food, social justice, environmental, and land related topics. Guerrilla gardeners can serve as informed, critical, and influential actors in the growing food movement.

KEYWORDS

Community gardening, urban agriculture, food justice, green spaces, urban land use

INTRODUCTION

Modern industrial agriculture, in addition to many negative environmental impacts (Altieri 1989), has created a profound separation between Americans and their food sources, resulting in far-reaching lack of control by communities over the production, distribution, and consumption of food. This has led to a cultural and economic focus on fast and cheap meals, impacting public health through high calorie and nutrient poor diets (Horrigan et al. 2002, Muller et al. 2009). In many urban areas, fresh food and grocery stores may not be accessible; such circumstances of ‘food deserts’ primarily affect poorer and marginalized neighborhoods (Guthman 2008, McClintock 2010). Urban agriculture has re-emerged in recent decades to help better address the needs of local communities, as well as overcome some of the detrimental environmental impacts from large-scale agriculture. (Altieri 1989, Donald 2010, McClintock 2010). Alternative food sourcing methods can be seen through urban farms, farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture programs, and community gardens (Brown and Jameton 2000, Allen et al. 2003). Community gardens can additionally benefit communities by not only providing produce, but also opportunities for people to foster connections with the land and with each other (Glover 2004, Glover et al. 2005, Tzoulas et al. 2007, Kurtz 2011). The focus on the food system and its impact on marginalized communities has been expanded under the concept of ‘food justice,’ which stresses the need for all peoples to have healthy access to food and robust involvement in their food systems (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). Poorer communities, in many instances communities of color, are disproportionately disadvantaged in all levels of the food system, from migrant farm laborers to food desert neighborhoods (Slocum 2007, McClintock 2010, Alkon and Agyeman 2011). The practice of gardening and producing food in the city has been an enduring part of American culture (Pudup 2008), and local production may more closely connect food to the individual and to the localities that need it. However, obstacles in cities such as limited land used for food production and high land prices can inhibit the development of gardening and urban agriculture as a means of creating local, more sustainable food systems.

Guerrilla gardening has emerged as a decentralized movement of cultivating land for gardening and agriculture purposes without legal ownership or express permission (Reynolds 2008). It can range from individual gardens on small areas of abandoned or unkempt land to improve aesthetics or grow food, to larger organized endeavors by communities and groups of

people (Tracey 2007, Reynolds 2008). Specific tactics to sow and cultivate the land (such as throwing seed bombs, clay structures filled with water, compost, and seeds into empty lots) may be used by individual gardeners who carry out projects covertly (Reynolds 2008). Community organized activism has been used to vie for and gain legal land tenure, as was the case of community garden sites throughout New York City in the 1970s that had been slated for housing development. Local organizing and grassroots groups such as the ‘Green Guerrillas’ promoted the importance of the gardens and helped save these community spaces (Schmelzkopf 1995, Reynolds 2008). However, such efforts have not always been successful. For instance, the South Central Farmers in Los Angeles lost their guerrilla farm through legal action by the landowner after 12 years of producing food for the surrounding disadvantaged community (Mares and Pena 2010). Case studies on community gardens in New York City have analyzed processes of urban land use and grassroots action through politics of scale and space (Schmelzkopf 1995, Smith and Kurtz 2003). The South Central Farmers presented a narrative of a marginalized community using abandoned land for food production and organizing power, with the resulting legal battle demonstrating a fervent struggle over land tenure (The Garden 2008, Mares and Pena 2010, Mares and Pena 2011). Nevertheless, there are few academic studies of guerrilla gardening in urban areas, especially at smaller scales. Looking into the complex and diverse landscape of guerrilla gardening can situate the influences of these illegal actors in the larger food movements and food justice struggles.

The Bay Area is a hub of food and environmental movements. Historically, the region has focused on maintaining green spaces and natural parks (Walker 2007), promoting local food and advocating alternative food practices (McNamee 2008), and fervently fighting for civil rights and social justice, radically seen through actions of the Black Panthers, for example (Lazerow and Wililams 2006). The legacy of People’s Park also points to past engagement with guerrilla actions and land occupation. In 1969, a community effort of hundreds of people turned a lot owned by the University of California, Berkeley into a public park through cleaning the space, constructing park infrastructure, and planting grass, trees, and flowers. These actions were met with violent resistance from the National Guard on Governor Regan’s command, but nevertheless People’s Park has remained a public park. It has become a symbol of protest actions, free speech, public access, and resistance to police and oppressive institutional structures for the consciousness of Bay Area activism (Compost 2009). A recent example of guerilla

gardening was initiated in April 2012, when Bay Area protestors, under the name ‘Occupy the Farm,’ began illegally occupying and cultivating a plot of land owned by the University of California, Berkeley called the Gill Tract (Bay City News 2012). The Gill Tract occupation was used to highlight land use tensions between development and farming. Guerrilla gardening is a fringe practice in the greater food movement, yet looking into guerrilla projects in the Bay Area may reveal novel approaches to gardening, local food production, and land ownership issues that exist in urban environments. As more focus is directed toward alternative food sources, sustainable agriculture, and socially just food systems, the role of guerrilla gardening may become increasingly relevant in exploring how some of these ambitious goals may be reached.

I examined the gardening practices, project outcomes, and motivations of guerrilla gardeners throughout the California East Bay Area. My objectives were to: document the practices of guerrilla gardening, including general narratives of projects, specific strategies in gardening, and difficulties encountered; identify outcomes in projects and obstacles in reaching project goals; and understand the motivations of guerrilla gardeners pertaining to past experiences with gardening and ideologies related to the food movement, social justice, and land use tensions.

METHODS

Site System

My study site was in Alameda County, California, of the East Bay area. My study population included people that have engaged in guerrilla gardening projects without express ownership or permission for land use. I drew from interviews and observations of activists involved with Occupy the Farm, community members interested in the Gill Tract actions, individuals working on their own project, gardeners working through community-based organizations, and community members involved in neighborhood projects.

Data collection

Interviews

To explore the narratives of gardeners and their projects, I conducted semi-structured interviews with people who I located through convenience sampling. I attended events related to Occupy to find interview respondents. I explored UC Berkeley networks to identify two neighborhood projects. The ESPM 117 Urban Garden Ecosystems class at UC Berkeley had a guerrilla garden site for one of its projects, and my volunteer site with the Berkeley Project was a neighborhood that worked on beautification projects. I further employed a snowball method by asking interview respondents if they knew other guerrilla gardeners. Table 1 categorizes the different gardeners I interviewed.

Table 1. Categories of the differing scopes of the projects by guerilla gardeners.

Project Type	# Gardeners Interviewed
Occupy the Farm affiliated	3
Working through a community-based organization	2
Working for a class project	1
Working with a neighborhood-based group	3
Individual project, or small scale with friends	1

I organized interview questions into different categories in a semi-structured format. The first section involved a ‘grand tour’ of the respondent’s projects, focusing on the specifics of their project site, how it was initiated, and their own involvement. I also asked about the goals of the project, obstacles they’ve encountered, outcomes they’ve observed, and what land tenure issues they encountered or have pursued. The other sections ask about personal experience and history in gardening, ideological views, especially in relation to food movement and food justice issues; and other long-term goals for their guerrilla gardening. I created two other subsets of questions for people affiliated with Occupy the Farm and for an interview with neighbors strongly connected to a project site. I conducted nine interviews that ranged in length from 8 minutes to over an hour, as the scopes of projects and gardeners varied widely. To analyze interview responses, I used an interpretative approach, through which I identified common

themes and results concerning respondents' practices, outcomes, and motivations. Interview questions are attached in Appendix A, B, and C.

Events and forums

I attended events focused on food justice to obtain a better understand of different food issues in the Bay Area, familiarize myself with grassroots organizations in this field, and identify guerrilla gardeners to interview. Occupy the Farm hosted three open community forums in October 2012, November 2012, and March 2013 with aims to bring together activists and community members to envision ideal uses of the Gill Tract. Occupy the Farm also had open community days on the Gill Tract. The student group We Dig the Farm offered a way to talk with student activists focused on the Gill Tract. I drew on perspectives of a wider audience involved in Occupy the Farm through these events, rather than only interviews. The ESPM 117 class had an open tour of its gardening projects, where I was able to see their community guerrilla garden and connect to neighbors focused on the project. I also attended a follow up community workday at this site, observing the project at later stages of its development.

RESULTS

I analyzed the interviews and observations as they pertained to practices, outcomes, and motivations. I categorized these into themes of diversity of projects and landscapes, outcomes of community empowerment, and wide ranges of influences from gardening experiences and engagement with food related issues. Themes are summarized below and outlined in Table 2. Table 3 briefly explains the specific gardeners and they are referred to throughout the discussion.

Practices

The scale of guerrilla gardening projects ranged from small-scale activities to participation in community-wide events and on-going activism. The types of gardening were also different, with flowers for beautification or plants grown for food production. The contexts of projects were diverse in nature, as some projects were affiliated with organizations,

neighborhoods, or an individual. Gardening projects were located on a range of landscapes. These landscapes often involved complicated histories, especially the Gill Tract. Gardens occurred on private property, city owned property, and property of the University of California, Berkeley, with these relationships shaping contexts of the guerrilla gardening project. The work done on landscapes also varied, and garden sites posed different obstacles of toxic debris, resource access, and suitable plants to grow.

Outcomes

Five gardeners used community building and organizing as a main component and goal in their gardening projects. Community building involving the immediate neighborhood area occurred in two project sites. Two other projects employed guerrilla gardening in their organization to reach goals of youth and community empowerment. Obstacles relating to community interaction also arose through gardening projects, and tensions in race and class played a role for many gardeners and community organizers. Occupy the Farm has had a major role in community organizing around the struggles at the Gill Tract, and has been striving to make efforts in broader food and social justice contexts.

Motivations

The personal histories, backgrounds, and ideologies of guerrilla gardeners were influences in their work. Gardeners came from a range of gardening backgrounds prior to engaging in their guerrilla garden projects. Many were knowledgeable on an array of specific issues pertaining to food and environmental justice, agriculture, and land ownership. Gardeners were also often involved in other projects, jobs, or academic studies that were related to their guerrilla gardening work. The narrative of gardeners' projects and how they situated themselves in it, including how they relate to the term guerrilla gardener, indicated a conscientious and meaningful experience derived from their work.

Table 2: Key points of themes

Practices: Diversity of contexts and landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scopes of projects ranged from small-scale to large community effort • Contexts of gardening done individually, with an organization, with a neighborhood • Gardening for beautification, farming for food production, with a variety of plants • Guerrilla gardens on private land, city owned land, land owned by University of California • Guerrilla gardening landscapes often presented obstacles in debris and resource access
Outcomes: Community empowerment, Occupy the Farm actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community building for neighborhoods through informal guerrilla gardening projects • Youth and community empowerment in organizations through structured guerrilla gardening programs • Tensions in race, class, and community interactions • Occupy the Farm demonstrated extensive community organizing and mobilizing around the Gill Tract
Motivations: Histories, ideologies, narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of backgrounds in gardening • Interests and concerns of food issues, agriculture, gardening, land tenure, social justice • Relevant jobs, participation in other projects, and academic pursuits to guerrilla gardening • Different associations and understanding of phrase ‘guerrilla gardener’

Table 3. Reference guide for gardeners and their projects.

Individual Scale Gardener	Small-scale gardening around UC Berkeley.
Neighborhood Median Strip Gardener	Neighborhood gardener and organizer who gardened in median strips along the sidewalk and streets of their neighborhood.
ESPM 117 Community Plot Gardeners	One student involved in the class section working in the ESPM 117 plot, two neighbors who lived by the garden and were key actors in its development.
Summer Youth Program Gardener	Gardener who was a more passive participant in a guerrilla garden set up in West Oakland as part of a summer youth program.
Eco-Arts Gardener	Gardener who co-founded an Oakland based organization focusing on community organizing and youth empowerment, which involves establishing gardens and mural projects, called the ‘Eco-Arts’ Program.
Occupy the Farm Activists and Gardeners	Interview respondents who have been involved in Occupy the Farm actions.

DISCUSSION

Guerrilla gardening projects occurred in diverse contexts and landscapes; outcomes of guerrilla gardening projects involved community organizing and empowerment, in particular shown by the community actions at the Gill Tract; and motivations for guerrilla gardeners drew upon gardeners' personal histories and ideologies, with projects relating to other food, environment, and gardening related interests. These six projects offered only a small window into the world of guerrilla gardening, but revealed that the actors and projects are diverse, productive, and meaningful. The range of projects demonstrated the ability of guerrilla gardening to engender urban agriculture, community focused production, and green spaces in urban areas. Guerrilla gardening offered flexible practices to be used by the individual practitioner or a large group of activists, supporting various alternative food-sourcing efforts in urban centers. The community building seen through community gardens and similar programs was also seen in communal guerrilla gardening projects, but the illegal nature of guerrilla gardening led to projects that did not stem from top-down structures. This resulted in more inclusiveness, non-hierarchy, and people-powered processes of community building through gardening. Fuller inclusivity in food related community projects is important in food justice issues, which stress how marginalized communities have not been afforded full access to alternative food practices (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). Actors practicing guerrilla gardening came from a range of experiences with gardening. Guerrilla gardening served as an introduction to gardening activities, a component of broader work in food and agricultural issues, and an avenue to inform on future life directions relating to rural and urban interests. Gardeners demonstrated both a breadth and depth of knowledge about issues pertaining to food, agriculture, environmental degradation, social justice, and views towards land use, such as ideals of cultivating 'the commons.' Their nuanced and well-developed views manifested in their approaches to guerrilla gardening and also illustrated how these actors are conscious in their work and engaged in the issues they are passionate about.

Practices: Diversity of scales, practices and landscapes

Guerrilla gardening projects were carried out in a range of contexts. Guerrilla gardening involved projects by individuals, large groups, neighborhoods, and organizations. Likewise, gardener involvement ranged from guerrilla gardening as side project to a primary focus of time, energy, or activism. This diversity illustrated the flexible nature of guerrilla gardening for various goals, such as personal gardening experience, community building, or conveying arguments on the nature of land use. The different physical landscapes of guerrilla gardening sites presented many obstacles to gardeners, and ways these obstacles were addressed demonstrated the tenacity of gardeners over their projects. The legal context and cultural history surrounding some sites was also important in mediating many of the practices and roles of gardeners at these locales.

Individual scale

One respondent joined a friend in randomly planting flowers and edibles around the UC Berkeley campus. Such a project did not risk much conflict with UC campus officials, as planting was decentralized and sparse in nature. The gardener said that this wasn't about making a statement, but "put[ing] some cool plants around here!" How-to guides about guerrilla gardening often discuss the practice on an individual level, and speak to how a single person can pursue the activity (Tracey 2007, Reynolds 2008). They offer many different ways one can start guerrilla gardening, often in small-scale projects using median strips, sidewalks, or small abandoned lots. Individuals wishing to engage in a small project do not need much experience, land, or time, allowing gardeners to take on projects according to their available skill and commitment (Reynolds 2008). Even though individual projects can be informal or sporadic, one still actively interacts with and thinks about the environment around them. This individual project illustrates the limited effort needed to engage in planting and gardening for not only enjoyment, but as an activity that may be critical of issues relating to land use in urban areas (Pudup 2008, Certoma 2011).

Neighborhood scale

Most gardeners were engaged in group-based guerrilla gardening projects, including four respondents who worked on neighborhood scale projects. The ESPM 117 Urban Garden Ecosystems class set up a guerrilla garden on a small section of a city owned lot in Berkeley. This lot was located behind an apartment building and was connected to a mini-park, but due to the lack of visibility and dangerous activity on the plot the city had fenced it off from the mini-park to prevent further use. Two neighbors explained the detailed history of the small piece of land. The secluded space presented many difficulties: it provided an area for drug use, a city park employee had been mugged on the plot twice, large groups of youth that did not live nearby congregated in the lot, and overall it contributed to the fear of danger and crime in the neighborhood. The City of Berkeley would not acknowledge the neighbors' requests to turn the lot into a community garden. The lot existed as a 'no man's land,' with the city clearing the overgrowth every couple years, but otherwise ignoring it and blocking any attempts to transform it. The ESPM 117 professor and graduate student instructor were informed about this space and contacted a neighbor adjacent to the plot to discuss its use. The class was able to enter the lot through the neighbor's fence, avoiding walking along the side of the apartment complex. The landowner of the apartment complex did not grant access to the group through their property, and furthermore had their own interest in obtaining the land from the city to turn into additional parking for tenants. This lot presented problems to the community for many years before neighborhood and UC Berkeley actors were able to interact, discuss the lot's potential, and ultimately establish a garden. Guerrilla gardening was a way for the project to take place when the necessary people and resources came together, whereas treating with the City and landowners may have resulted in the project falling through, or involved a drawn-out process that would have diminished the motivation behind implementing a garden.

While the class was crucial in establishing the garden and maintaining it for the semester, neighbors also played a large role. Reinvigoration of the garden started in the subsequent semester when the neighbors invited the community, ESPM 117 class, and brought volunteers through the Berkeley Project to revamp the garden and set up more beds. Their ongoing efforts focused on beautifying the gardening space and placing inviting signs along the fence, aiming to demonstrate to the city that the garden has had a legitimate and beneficial use in the community.

The class began trying to obtain official city recognition, and the neighbors were continuing this process in hopes of obtaining a small fence, gate access, and water spigot for the garden. The sustained efforts of the community showed how this space was transformed into something desired by the community. Guerrilla gardening was used initially to establish the project, but further tactics to achieve legal recognition point to illegal uses of the land serving as a means to an end. Neighbors wanted this space to be revitalized, and the ESPM 117 class and neighborhood most effectively achieved this by just going in and gardening on the lot.

Another neighborhood project focused on median strip gardening and general beautification of the street sides. The gardener and project organizer planted flowers and other ornamentals in the median strips along sidewalks. Sidewalk strips are public property and the gardener said the City of Berkeley was generally very receptive to their gardening efforts. The city themselves will not plant anything in the strips nor do they want any conflicts to arise from their use. Obtaining permission from neighbors and the adjacent property owners was the greater concern for the gardener. They stressed how permission was always obtained first, and peoples' wishes were respected. "To say 'I have a right to plant in these lands because they're city property'... is something that I never say and absolutely avoid." While many neighbors were overjoyed when the flowers bloomed, asking, "Where did these come from? Who planted these? They are beautiful! Beautiful," others did not want any gardening or planting next to their property; their wishes were always respected. Regardless, much of the community was on board, and approaching neighbors about the project served to initially meet and talk to neighbors about gardening. Beautification projects were well suited to guerrilla gardening practices, especially in small pieces of land. The effort for maintaining these spaces can be low depending on the plants used, and the goal of beautified space is easier to achieve than food production. Guerrilla gardening acts as a public good for neighborhoods, after neighbors have established their support for such projects. The collaborative nature of these guerrilla gardening projects on the neighborhood scale demonstrates a connection and vested interest to a locale, and a dedication to improving one's environment for the benefit for all (Firth et al. 2011).

Organization scale

Two gardeners engaged in guerrilla gardening projects through grassroots organizations, both with specific aims of youth empowerment. One gardener worked through a youth summer program with the environmental justice focused group to set up a garden in an abandoned lot in West Oakland. A community garden had previously been attempted on the lot but with no success. The lot was privately owned, and the group met success in choosing the route of asking forgiveness later for its use. The gardener stressed the economic, racial, cultural, and geographical diversity of the group. Knowledge of gardening and farming within the group was low, yet the garden saw fruition and grew various greens, blueberries, and other edibles. The summer program provided more structure and accountability than informal projects, and shows that guerrilla gardening can successfully occur on an organized level. The ability of the group to design and initiate a guerrilla garden points to the how actors of different ages and experiences can participate in gardening projects and use them as an avenue to engage with other issues such as environmental justice.

Another gardener co-founded an organization focused on community rejuvenation and youth empowerment in Oakland, and their 'Eco-Arts' programs sets up community gardens alongside mural projects. They identify areas in Oakland of high violence and little access to non-processed foods, where they then talk to the neighbors about a community project, clean the street sides, set up a garden, and paint a large mural. The process for acquiring land explores many different avenues: the organizers and youth approach the City of Oakland, the private industry council, homeowners, business owners, and landowners to find spaces for murals and gardens. Permission for use is usually granted and welcomed by the local community. Murals are often dedicated to or in remembrance of community members and leaders. Art is an important component to the organization's overall work, and the murals play an important role for the gardens, as "The visual aspect of it... catches the eye. Then you walk up to something you can smell, and eat, and its healthy, and its not wasteful or anything like that, it's not processed." The Eco-Arts program empowers youth to help better their neighborhoods, create an attractive and creative space, and work towards building up local production of healthy foods for communities in need of rejuvenation and resiliency. The focus of art in these projects also shows how guerrilla gardening can be a creative medium, tying to the work of graffiti or mural artists

and their efforts to beautify public areas while making critical social statements (Visconti et al. 2010). The organizations' methods in community-based work involve many different programs that engage youth with art and media to serve a social justice purpose. Guerrilla gardening provides another avenue to extend the impact of their work with a stronger focus on healthy food and lifestyles. Thus, guerrilla gardening can further build on work being done for beautification, food production, and community building by acting as another tool in the broader practices of urban agriculture and community rejuvenation.

Occupy the Farm's scale

Occupy the Farm demonstrates a larger scale of guerrilla gardening action. Occupy the Farm tilled, planted, and essentially established an urban farm on a sector of the Gill Tract in a single day, occupied the land for weeks afterwards, and farmed it for months afterward. People were involved on different levels as organizers, individuals regularly farming, and others with sporadic participation or interest. One's level of involvement could also be in flux over time, as the efforts have spanned well over a year from the pre-planning phases and the initial occupation in April 2012. Occupy the Farm's overall struggle of land reclamation to promote sustainable farming and food justice connects to other robust land reform movements in peasant and rural contexts (Robles 2001, Rosset et al. 2006), but such direct action in an urban region in the United States has not been as common. Occupy the Farm demonstrated how guerrilla gardening and land occupations specifically in industrialized urban centers can have wide reaching results, and further shows the extent that such actions and messages can affect the broader public awareness and dialogue on these issues.

Diverse landscapes

The guerrilla gardening projects occurred on public state lands such as the UC Berkeley campus, the Gill Tract, and City owned land, and on private land such as abandoned lots. The relationships with guerrilla gardeners and the landowner also varied, with situations involving informal permission for use, uses not known by the landowner, or outright disobedience to landowners' wishes. Landscapes largely dictated the gardening practices occurring on the sites.

Gardeners used ornamentals and flowers when projects focused on beautification and were on smaller areas of land with high visibility. Larger lots allowed for gardening more centered on food production of a variety of edible plants. The differing land uses illustrate how guerrilla gardening projects can readily manifest in projects from small to large scales, encompassing and being used for different purposes (Baker 2004, Certoma 2011). The different legal relationships with the land were also important in showing how guerrilla gardening projects can be navigated in different ways and relate to different philosophies of gardeners. Using land held under private ownership required an understanding of how the landowner might respond. In many cases, asking for permission was done courteously and with success. Gardening on city owned land was met with cooperation between the City and the median strip gardener, but the ESPM 117 plot elicited a more mixed response from City officials. Guerrilla gardening can be done in response to such impediments, consequently posing a criticism to the existing land use. Occupy the Farm's main focus was the land itself and its treatment by the University. In this instance, the real and symbolic use of the Gill Tract was the crux of the project and guerrilla gardening actions served to highlight these relationships involving the land, UC Berkeley, and the public.

The landscapes of guerrilla gardening projects posed various physical obstacles. Access to sites was not often an issue, except for the ESPM 117 class, which had to enter through a small opening in the neighbor's fence. This made initially clearing out the overrun weeds, trash, rubble, and sections of a tree stump in the plot more difficult. Debris was a common problem in sites, and many gardeners encountered toxic trash, including condoms, needles, and broken glass. The youth summer program gardener felt wary working without safety equipment or facemasks in a site with possible contamination from heavy metals in the soils. Two other gardeners cited the toxicity associated with urban environments as a large barrier to urban farming. The issue of soil contamination, especially with persistent and dangerous pollutants like lead, presents a major obstacle in scaling-up urban agriculture efforts (Romic and Romic 2002, Clark et al. 2006). Is it enough to transform urban land to gardens and small farms when there are insidious issues such as soil contamination present? Guerrilla gardening can play a role in reducing the debris and blight in urban areas, but nonetheless there are risks with urban land that may need to be remediated with more deliberate efforts. Such limitations need to be considered by any actors approaching urban gardening and agriculture, and will need to be further addressed in order to build up robust systems of urban food production.

Physically working on the land often was difficult and necessitated large transformations to make it workable. The ESPM 117 class had to pre-irrigate the ground for days to be able to dig up beds. The median strip gardener used the phrase ‘hell strips’ to describe the small sidewalk strips: “They’re hellish to actually garden because they’re parking strips and... they’re trampled, it’s hard to get anything to grow there, they’re often highly compacted soils, it’s really hard to keep people... and dogs off of them.” Projects focusing on these small and tough spaces can be ambitious and risky, and the gardener catered to high traffic areas by using eye-catching ornamentals. The Eco-Arts gardener also cited similar concerns of avoiding destruction from passerby, and took these obstacles into consideration for what plants they grow to ensure food can be successfully harvested. One gardener believed that guerrilla gardeners can be most important in proliferating radical transformations of urban land, and brought up the question:

Do we just want to keep blindly... putting more cement down on the ground? And having less green space? We really need to start figuring out how to create a more sustainable urban environment that will allow people to connect to nature in some way and allow people to learn about natural systems that we depend on for food.

However, the physical obstacles in working on heavily treaded or cemented urban environments can be difficult to overcome and act as an impediment to such positive greening efforts done through informal guerrilla gardening (Tzoulas et al. 2007). Despite these difficulties, guerrilla gardeners believed in the importance of green spaces and that their efforts could contribute towards such changes in their communities.

Available resources and money for projects were concerns, especially since guerrilla gardening was often a side project. Access to resources can be a major obstacle in establishing and maintaining a garden in unsanctioned spaces. There are substantial risks of losing access to the site, destruction of the garden, or conflicts from neighbors or landowners. The median strip gardener had no budget, and in response they aimed for gardening practices with the most impact at the least cost, demonstrated by using easy to grow ornamentals such as daffodil bulbs. The Berkeley Project and the ESPM 117 class provided volunteer labor for neighborhood gardening projects, indicating the benefit of relationships established through networks with institutions such as UC Berkeley (Firth et al. 2011). For necessary resources, the neighbors at the ESPM 117 plot were most concerned with water access. A park maintenance employee willingly filled two large barrels in the garden once a week, but the system did not pose a long-term solution. The

neighbors wanted a spigot to be installed in the lot, requiring official recognition and legitimacy from the city. The youth summer group had to use water from a nearby apartment building, and being cut off from water access was the first major obstacle for Occupy the Farm. Tenacity and innovation in the face of such obstacles demonstrated that gardening projects were important to the actors involved and worth the effort. Acquiring necessary resources often relied on exploring networks outside of the market system, since gardeners did not want to sink money into risky projects. Communicating with city officials, UC Berkeley students, or neighbors to acquire gardening resources and labor illustrates how gardening projects can better operate through relationship building and collaborative efforts (Glover 2004, Firth et al. 2011).

Outcomes: Community Empowerment

Guerrilla gardening projects entailed a variety of goals and outcomes, with the most salient outcome being the role of gardening in community empowerment. The organization and neighborhood-initiated efforts had distinct goals for community engagement and also worked for empowering youth. Occupy the Farm largely focused on community organizing and mobilizing, and has seen success over the uses and dialogues over Gill Tract through its community efforts. The processes in community building are important in looking at how guerrilla gardening can be used as an engaging, dynamic, and democratic tool for community development.

Community building broadly relates to the fostering of connections and relationships amongst a group of people. Practices of community building take on many forms, and can lead to an array of social, economic, and political effects for both the communities and the individual (Glover 2004, Glover et al. 2005). One well-studied result of community building is in the production of social capital, part of a social theory framework describing how social interactions and networks can provide collective benefits and expand an individual's resource access (Glover 2004, Glover et al. 2005, Firth et al. 2011). Such benefits may be tangible or economic in nature, such as borrowing a tool from a neighbor, or may be more intangible, such as having a sense of safety and trust in one's community. The importance of social capital is frequently noted on the neighborhood level (Swaroop and Morenoff 2006), as one interacts with their neighborhood environment daily and can thus be greatly affected by small-scale community building effects. There are many ways to categorize communities, and what constitutes community is often

widely contested (Kurtz 2001, Pudup 2008), even in seemingly straightforward spatially defined groups such as neighborhoods. These possible nuances in community dynamics are important to be aware of when looking at community outcomes in gardening projects and food activism.

Youth empowerment

Guerrilla gardening projects served as a vehicle to engage youth in gardening activities with local communities. Through these projects, youth were able to enact positive changes on their own communities or directly see the experiences and struggles of other communities. The ESPM 117 class bonded and became a close-knit group through the long workdays and regular maintenance of the garden. One student was happy being able to observe an identifiable change of “making a piece of land that was totally run down and totally abandoned into something beautiful and amazing.” They noted how the active engagement was extremely beneficial to their knowledge and understanding of urban gardening, stating

I'm so used to at Berkeley just talking about what's wrong with the world and feeling really upset... I hate just reading about this when I could be doing something about it. It's really awesome and refreshing to take a class where you do learn about what's wrong then you go out and you do something about it.

This direct experience presents a paradigm of learning that is active, collaborative with communities, and can instill a deeper sense of understanding on the subject of food and social justice (Barr and Tagg 1995). Gardening as a class activity was a refreshing experience from other academic work. School gardening programs have become widely popular as teaching tools, illustrating both the positive educational effects from active learning as well as the increasing focuses on gardening and connecting youth to their food sources (Blair 2009).

The two community-based organizations used guerrilla gardening to engage in broader community building and youth empowerment goals. The summer youth program prompted the group to independently design and implement an environmental justice project. The summer program gardener was satisfied with its success and was glad to be part of the process. They learned about how issues of diversity in the group relate to class dynamics, realities of impoverished communities in Oakland, and their own personal connection in working with the land. The guerrilla garden successfully provided a space to engage youth with social issues

present in urban communities in Oakland, develop interests individually and with a community, and appreciate gardening and its role in local production and sustainability.

The Eco-Arts gardener's organization's main focus was on youth mentoring and support, achieved through a variety of creative media programs. They aimed for youth to build relationships with their communities, and to guide youth using a collaborative mentor system:

I'm learning as I'm teaching. I have an elder with me, then they call me the youth elder, then there's the students. I'm the motivational, transformational coach that's supposed to bring the highest potential of youth out... in a healthy, spiritive [sic] manner. Doing it in a fashion as a team player. If you wanna grow into a leadership, we have leadership capability for you, it's up to you to figure out what you're going to do. We just want to be the stepping-stone for you to step and just propel yourself forward.

Through art and gardening, mentors can train youth in community-building projects, provide leadership roles, and educate about gardening, food, and other issues relevant to their communities. Such skill building can help youth work for further change within their communities, and the organization thus plays a role in sustained and future community empowerment.

Engaging children with gardening can be successful for influencing healthy eating habits and relationships with food. As demonstrated by the proliferation of school gardening programs, children can be very enthusiastic over gardening and may carry this interest with them later in life (Blair 2009). The median strip gardener's young daughter helped with guerrilla gardening in her neighborhood by making seed bombs and throwing them into traffic circles. At the ESPM 117 garden, a young girl who lived in the adjoining apartment complex emphatically claimed how *she* had the idea for a garden before the class came, and then proceeded to harvest greens for a salad. Her and her younger cousin were both were eager to help out on the community workday at the garden. Their enthusiasm over the gardening space and fresh produce was extremely evident, and illustrates the willingness of children to actively learn about and participate in growing and eating healthy food. While structured gardening programs do provide this opportunity, guerrilla gardening provides a more informal avenue for people of varying gardening abilities, including children, to get their hands in the dirt.

Community and neighborhood building

Community building from guerrilla gardening projects was most evident at the neighborhood scale. When the median strip gardener moved to their neighborhood, they saw renewal of the block as an opportunity to organize neighbors while beautifying a blighted landscape. Physically spending time gardening and inquiring about using sidewalk strips “gave me an opportunity to be on the street and meet... all my neighbors in a four block area. The first thing that I generally do is put myself out there because every project... especially in community organizing, starts and ends with relationships.” Their gardening resulted in meaningful relationships, which were catalysts for broader community interaction. Along with other neighbors they developed an email listserv and set-up an official neighborhood organization, facilitating communication, event planning, and projects within the block. Organizing extended beyond gardening projects, as activities such as potlucks and block parties were important focuses in the greater community building efforts.

Gardening served as an attractive hook to neighbors. After the first daffodils came up neighbors were asking how they could help garden, coming with great interest in the project. “Our goals were to really beautify the neighborhood, for me I’m a gardener and that’s my means of activism, to use that for a vehicle of community organizing.” Community organizing resulted in obtaining 20-25 street trees from the City of Berkeley. The City additionally sent over an employee on overtime to help the neighborhood plant the trees because they recognized the value in facilitating a community event. Through mobilizing neighbors to submit a large number of applications under the name of their neighborhood organization, they were able to garner enough critical mass and a sense of legitimacy to attract the attention of the City and obtain the trees quickly.

Such beautification had positive community effects. The benefits of green spaces in urban environments are numerous (Tzoulas et al. 2007), and the median strip gardener mentioned that economic benefits have been correlated with street trees in a neighborhood (Orland et al. 1992). They stated that a more pleasant, welcoming, and energetic feeling is imbued to the streets when moving from a denuded landscape to one with trees and green spaces. They planted daffodils, chosen as a symbol of hopefulness and beauty, which “lit [the street] up for about a month, and the impression it made on everyone was profound.” These efforts were

well received by the community and fostered a brighter mood and sense of neighborliness for those living on the block.

The ESPM 117 project resulted in both community building and improving neighborhood safety. The neighbors related how the mini park that the garden was attached to has been a space for community interaction. A community organization exists in association with the mini-park, and the park is used to host community meetings and events such as potlucks and movie nights. The garden reinforced a space already used for community gatherings and further offered another area and activity for building relationships between neighbors. The neighbors took the chance to introduce themselves to anyone they saw in the garden, aiming to foster a welcoming space and encourage people to harvest organic, local produce. A prominent benefit from the garden was the physical presence and attention of people, which reduced the opportunity for crime or drug use in the space. The neighbors reported that the garden had not seen any misuse, destruction, or non-garden activity since it was set up. The transformation of a small piece of land produced real benefits to the safety of the neighborhood. While the abandoned lot fostered a space of crime, the garden fostered one of growth and productivity.

Community building was evident in many of these gardening projects on multiple levels. Community gardens are cited as an effective way to build strong relationships with neighbors through the direct time spent gardening with one's community (Firth et al. 2011), which was seen in these guerrilla garden projects. However, guerrilla garden projects necessitated further interactions with neighbors to inquire about gardening on adjacent properties or obtain resources for projects. These initial efforts of community building quickly cascaded into further-reaching effects when they facilitated more structured neighborhood organizing that extended beyond gardening or beautification. Neighborhood social events illustrate effective outcomes of community building efforts while further fostering community relationships. Social ties in a community can build trust and a sense of security. The median strip gardener noted that they and other neighbors felt more comfortable allowing their children to play on the streets together or run off to a friend's house by themselves. While the composition of a 'community' for formal community gardens may be limiting (Kurtz 2001), guerrilla gardening serves as an activity that is not exclusive through any established structures. As these neighborhood projects informally took place on City property, there was no mechanism to deny or prevent involvement in gardening, making it an activity that was open to full participation. Additionally, these guerrilla

gardening projects were formed under an on-going process, allowing room for collaborative efforts and input from a diverse range of community voices. Illegal projects also allow for opposition to be more strongly recognized, as dissenting voices must be taken into account for a project under insecure land tenure to be successful. The ability to be involved or voice an opinion over a guerrilla project illustrates how guerrilla gardening can foster a more open and engaged community, which these projects intentionally strived to do.

Guerrilla gardening served as a community building tool by connecting people to their locale. The physical experience of gardening can have an array of positive effects on one's health and mental well being (Hale et al. 2011, Guitart et al. 2012), and community gardening experiences can foster such positive feelings on a communal scale (Pudup 2008). Efforts towards beautification and productivity in one's own neighborhood develop an appreciation and sense of civic engagement with one's environment (Glover et al. 2005), and these effects can lead to an overall stronger commitment to improving and taking pride in one's community. Guerrilla gardening projects were informal yet effective means to vitalize green spaces and combat negative effects of urban blight (Schukoske 2005), with an even more prominent outcome in the ESPM 117 garden when crime left with the blight. Guerrilla gardening on street sides or median strips can be effective for beautification efforts, as the small areas of land are interspersed throughout a neighborhood and not confined to a single lot like community gardens usually are. The aesthetic benefits of guerrilla gardening is consequently seen on a more regular basis and by a wider range of people, and brings these positive effects to people who are part of the neighborhood community but not participants in the gardening itself. With guerrilla gardens that produced food, a strong attachment to one's neighborhood comes through the food one can harvest and eat. Small-scale and local food sources are a step forward towards healthier communities with greater access to fresh food (McClintock 2010, Mares and Pena 2011). By trying to address such needs, guerrilla gardening can build more productive, resilient, and sustainable communities in addition to facilitating strong social networks and capital.

The neighborhood organizers strongly experienced a connection to their locales, as guerrilla gardening called for a great deal of knowledge surrounding the site and how to approach it use. The neighbors at ESPM 117 plot noted how they inadvertently learned all about the history and even urban myths behind the abandoned plot. They gained an understanding of the local politics behind green spaces, parks, and land issues by interacting with many different

city employees. They even gauged how to best approach formalizing the garden; they knew to wait until new employees were settled into their positions and the City had more money. The median strip gardener also learned how to navigate city relations to best support their neighborhood organizing and beautification efforts. Guerrilla gardeners, already engaged in critical acts of gardening and land use, can extend their and their community's collective influence into local government and policies (Glover et al. 2005, Pudup 2008). Civic engagement through community projects can be an important force to drive policy changes that support local urban agriculture projects and provide resources for communities to build their own resiliency and networks of support.

Community building in guerrilla gardening projects strived for democratic structures. The main actors in the two neighborhood projects were focused on maintaining a structure with no one acting as a single leader or decision maker. The median strip gardener commented that "One of the things about being a neighborhood organizer is not being a leader, it's being able to show that you have collective leadership." Balancing the role of facilitating neighborhood organization without being the main driver proved difficult to navigate. The neighbors at the ESPM 117 lot struggled with leadership roles in the garden project after it was turned over from the students to the community. They needed to maintain community interest and involvement in the garden, and the neighbors recognized "We don't know how to make a transition. Partly because I don't want to be the driving force... I'm happy to facilitate the process, but I don't desire to be in charge of it and I don't desire to make the decisions." They nevertheless took on organizing roles and brainstormed a scheme of assigning plots. Even in the discussion between the two neighbors, the phrasing of 'assigning plots' was contested, since the word 'assigns' implies some sense of ownership and control:

Let's assign half the garden plots to the kids on the block. Let's leave the other half open for just regular neighborhood plantings with the idea that anyone can plant and anyone can harvest.

I don't know if we want to assign anything... we need to get away from using the word 'assign'. Invite everybody to it. We don't allow, we don't assign. We offer and they claim.

There was a high level of awareness in aiming for non-hierarchical structures in the guerrilla garden projects. The organizers actively strived to work towards the most inclusive and

beneficial needs of everyone. These community-based projects and their efforts in avoiding a top down structure point to the ability of small-scale communities to operate on an inclusive level of democracy. The mindfulness behind their efforts shows that community focused paradigms can work to dismantle more top-down oriented structures of governance and development (Pennie et al. 2001, Mares and Pena 2011). Guerrilla gardening projects also led to broader levels of civic engagement, as seen through interactions with local government and establishing connections with UC Berkeley professors and students (Glover et al. 2005, Firth et al. 2011). Neighborhood organizations aimed to develop a participatory, inclusive, and non-hierarchical form of governing. Guerrilla garden projects particularly prompt an active engagement and thoughtfulness over one's community landscape and land uses, and therefore promote a more direct connection with one's social, political, and ecological environment.

Tensions associated with community building and guerrilla gardening

Tensions amongst people working together emerged in guerrilla gardening projects, especially since legality and ownership issues in guerrilla gardening could create tenuous and risky situations. One gardener noted the need to interact with emotional intelligence and awareness of the topics others and one's self might be sensitive towards when engaging in social justice related work. Building relationships and slowly navigating them was one of the most important components of the median strip gardener's work, and they appreciated the 'messiness' in working with a diverse group. An activist of Occupy the Farm also noted how tensions in the group could easily flare up, especially when people had different opinions on how a project should move forward or what direction to take. Occupy the Farm actions brought together people who had vastly different approaches to farming, land use, or ideologies over the work and messages of the movement. The illegality of Occupy the Farm, with the prospects of being arrested or having all the work destroyed, made points of conflict in the group especially likely. While the other gardening projects did not have this same level of risk, tensions in personal interactions do pose more of an obstacle in guerrilla gardening projects, especially when operating on non-hierarchical structures and striving to include the voices of everyone involved.

While the ESPM 117 class prepared plans for future use of the garden, student involvement nonetheless only lasted the school semester. The student expressed beliefs that

community control and more direct rights over land are important issues in land ownership, and in this project community control was a strong component but not initially at the forefront. The students were not living in this neighborhood, and this can pose problems to projects that transform an area. Geographic diversity in the summer youth program also led to a similar scenario, with the gardener stating

It felt really good to see the garden up and going but at the same time it felt so futile to put in all this work if the community participation and community ownership wasn't there... for change in the environmental justice world to be substantial it has to be first and foremost by and for the community. And that's not necessarily what this was, this was kind of a blending of the two.

These efforts can be unsuccessful in the long run when students or outside actors lose motivation or move on from the project. The positive outcomes from gardening and community building are not sustainable if there is no continuing support for the project within the communities it is trying to benefit. Additionally, the community may not recognize the benefits from these projects if they are not primarily involved, or they might not feel the project addresses what they identify as their actual needs (Firth et al. 2011). The summer program gardener also disparagingly noted "a very long history of privileged college students going into food desert communities and starting these community projects." Indeed the ESPM 117 garden project presents the same situation, for when the class ended so did most of the student efforts. A tenant in the adjacent apartment commented that it was a shame that now the garden was overrun with weeds and in disrepair. The garden was still being maintained and harvested by neighbors, but it was true that it was not as well maintained as it was while the class was working in it. The tenant's comments illustrate the potential negative reactions towards the short-lived work and activism in projects initiated by an outside group with little stake in the neighborhood.

Tensions stemming from issues of race and class also emerged in guerrilla gardening projects and community organizing. In the summer youth program, the group working on the garden spanned diverse socioeconomic statuses. The gardener noted that the 'rich kids' were less willing to do the dirtier work in the lot. These differences, predicated on class, affected the group dynamics, and further reveal the differing involvement in projects depending on one's stakes in the work being done. Race and class tensions became apparent in the neighborhood building efforts of the median strip gardener when they attempted a larger project. The 'lightning

rod issue' of the neighborhood was an abandoned lot on the street corner that the neighbor envisioned as a space for a garden. "If that's transformed, the neighborhood will be transformed. For better or worse in some people's eyes, because some people will call that gentrification." Gentrification is a process where land value and rents rise in a neighborhood, often leading to a middle class demographic displacing a poorer working class community (London et al. 1986, Hall 2011). Institutionalized structures can intentionally fuel this process through real estate agents and developers buying up potentially profitable land (Hall 2011), gang injunctions imposed to purposefully drive away communities of color away (Arnold 2011), and city governments supporting the process as they stand to gain from higher property taxes (Gordon 2003). The tensions over gentrification of neighborhoods is an increasing concern in the East Bay, especially in the light of the overall rising cost of living in the region, the 2008 housing crisis, and the general economic downturn. In the last decade the African American population in Oakland declined 25%, particularly in neighborhoods such as Fruitvale and North Oakland, pointing to a real worry in many communities (Arnold 2010). Potential manifestations of these complex processes may be very apparent to those who stand to lose from gentrified neighborhoods. When the median strip gardener held a community meeting to discuss the abandoned lot, many people from the greater neighborhood came to voice their opinions. The neighbor explained

It was too much, too fast. We always have to be really careful about what we're doing in these transitional neighborhoods, and to be sensitive to it... What did come up was a lot of dynamics around race and class and some real sensitivities in this neighborhood to white families coming in and making change, and that feeling threatening.

The gardener themselves had just moved into the neighborhood a few years recently, and could be seen as a part of a gentrification process by more established neighbors. Transforming an abandoned lot presented itself as both a clear manifestation of and contributor towards the broader gentrification process, and was something neighbors could resist. Additionally, discussing the use of this land through guerrilla gardening efforts allowed for many dissenting opinions, and broader inclusion of community voices may not have been seen from a formal, top-down initiated community garden on the lot. Despite the ability to resist this project, many

of the structural and multi-faceted forces of gentrification are not so identifiable or as easy for individuals to oppose.

These concerns over rising property costs or losing one's house are real, but does that mean that efforts to improve neighborhood development efforts should be shunned? "To me, it doesn't mean that you stop. It means that you slow down and you make sure that you're being inclusive. It's really messy actually. But, it hasn't stopped our efforts and I just feel we're better for it, but we have slowed down." Even in slowing down and striving for greater inclusion, the tension of gentrification remains. Does greater inclusion in such neighborhood projects serve the community or even matter if 'white families' have already pushed out more disadvantaged neighbors? Opposition to transforming blighted or abandoned land unfortunately stems from potential consequences of higher property values, and less so from opposition to the actual land use. Communities can benefit from gardening projects on many fronts, and these projects should especially reach communities with poor food access, a lack of green spaces, and areas of higher crime. Food justice in particular stresses the need for marginalized communities to have open and affordable access to fresh food and healthy activities (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). The role of gardening projects and their potential to exacerbate gentrification tensions will need to be increasingly acknowledged so as to avoid in further pushing marginalized populations away from food justice related efforts (Hall 2011). However, the larger structural issues that lead to gentrification remain necessary to address and should represent a strong focus in broader housing, land use, and social justice focused work in the East Bay.

Occupy the Farm: History, Actions, and Outcomes

Occupy the Farm and their actions around the Gill Tract present a unique example of a large-scale community mobilizing effort of reclaiming a piece of land to promote farming and stop development. The land itself was the major focal point of action and has been an avenue to raise dialogue on issues of urban farming, land use and ownership, and environmental justice. Engagement in these issues through people powered processes has led to tangible outcomes in community building and mobilization to influence local Albany politics and the University's policies.

The Gill Tract history and use

The Gill Tract. The Gill Tract, located in Albany, California and owned by the University of California, Berkeley is tract of land with a history of struggles over its use. The Gill Tract was purchased by the University of California in 1928 from the Gill Family, and extended across 104 acres. After World War II much of the land was rapidly developed for housing purposes, such as the University Village, which still provides housing for many UC students and faculty (University Village 2013). Prominent uses of the Gill Tract have included etymology, pest control, and crop management research, pointing to UC Berkeley's history as a land grant college with emphases in developing agricultural research and technology (Marvin et al. 2003). The Gill Tract extent has been drastically reduced to 14 acres of undeveloped land used primarily for UC Berkeley researchers. Much of remaining land has been left fallow in recent years, and current research on the land largely focuses on corn, although the genetically modified Bt corn variety has never been grown on the site (Brenneman 2009).

The land is one of the last tracts of undeveloped land in the East Bay, and has attracted the attention of various organizations looking to establish open access research centered on sustainable urban farming. In 1997, the Bay Area Coalition for Urban Agriculture (BACUA) set forth a proposal for a Center for Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems on the site. BACUA represented a coalition of over thirty non-profit and community-based organizations aiming to promote research in urban agriculture that would “conduct fundamental technical, economic, and sociological research and education into ways cities can create food systems that serve citizens and the environment well through localized, economically healthy and ecologically sustainable production and distribution” (Bay Area Coalition for Urban Agriculture 1997). They argued that such a center would fall squarely in line with the proposed goals of the College of Natural Resources and would call back to UC Berkeley's roots of a land grant university by providing agricultural research to be used for the public good, but UC Berkeley did not respond favorably to the proposal. Meanwhile in 1998, the College of Natural Resources entered into an agreement with the biotechnology company Novartis, raising questions about corporate investment and private research in the public UC system (Holt-Giménez2012).

Local community-based organizations in Albany have similarly envisioned community uses for the Gill Tract. A group called Urban Roots put forth proposal in 2003 for the land to

function as a community farm and garden for neighbors, as well as provide educational opportunities to Albany School District and local youth (Urban Roots 2005). The City of Albany has also had an active voice in the use of the Gill Tract and the University's development plans, stating a desire to have the Gill Tract continue to serve as an open space area. Albany's Parks and Recreation department explicitly pursues goals of open access to and expansion of green spaces for the community, and has looked to the Gill Tract as a potential space for "urban agricultural activity such as a community garden, demonstration organic farm or eco-park, with related educational programs, in coordination with the school district or foundation partnerships" (Albany Parks and Recreation Department 2006). Local government, community based organizations, and the University have all demonstrated a history and stake in the use and development of this parcel of land.

The Occupation. The recent actions and tensions over the Gill Tract emerged through the actions of Occupy the Farm. On April 22nd, 2012, Occupy the Farm organizers marched to the Gill Tract and occupied five acres of the land, planting rows of crops and setting up a small encampment. An urban farm with 15,000 seedlings was planted in a day through collaborative efforts of organizers and community members pooling resources for tools and labor. The direct action was prompted by a new development project for the site, which outlined plans to demolish old and unused research facilities and, more controversially, build a Whole Foods and a senior housing facility on 4 acres of the tract (Brenneman 2009). Protestors initially camped on the land for several weeks, holding food and agriculture related workshops, tending the farm, setting up permaculture and children's gardens, and inviting the community to participate in their work. Efforts by the University to drive protestors off the land by shutting off all nearby water sources were met with an outpouring of help from the Albany community in bringing water to the Gill Tract. On May 14th, 2012 the University finally took action to remove the protestors from the land, employing UCPD to secure the property and arrest any protestors that continued to trespass (Cabanatuan and Huet 2012). Much of the land cultivated by Occupy the Farm was bulldozed over in the summer, with the exception of the row crops. Despite police involvement, protestors continued work on the farm sporadically through the fall, illegally breaking through the fence to farm. Occupy the Farm hosted harvest parties and distributed hundreds of pounds of food to neighbors, schools, and other locations throughout the Bay Area community.

The Occupy the Farm action spurred other community-based organizing, namely the Albany Farm Alliance. In ally with Occupy the Farm, the group consists of Albany residents who want to preserve the open space of the Gill Tract in perpetuity and push forth the vision for open urban agricultural research. Albany Farm Alliance's political organization led to members filing a lawsuit in August 2012 against the City of Albany due to short sights in the development proposal's environmental impact report (Larsen 2012). Additionally, members from the Albany Farm Alliance ran for local city council, and gained much support in a petition calling for a referendum to vote against the planned development. The group has also supported Occupy the Farm in hosting community forums and fundraiser events centered on the Gill Tract.

On September 18th 2013, Dean Gilles of the College of Natural Resources announced that a section of the Gill Tract was given back to the College of Natural Resources for a ten-year period, and that focuses on diversified farming, urban agriculture, and food systems research would be expanded, possibly using the Gill Tract as a component of such research (Gilles 2012). Shortly after, Whole Foods pulled out of the project, citing the rising concerns from the Albany residents and the political and legal action being taken against the University's development proposal (Raguso 2012). However, UC Berkeley's development plan is still in action and a section of the Gill Tract is still at risk of being further paved over.

Messages and dialogue

Occupy the Farm's movement presents a guerrilla gardening effort in which land use itself is the major focus of the activism. Their efforts were opposed to the development proposals on the Gill Tract of a Whole Foods and Senior living centers. Slogans such as "Whole food, not Whole Foods" and "Farmland is for Farming" convey the group's ideologies that such undeveloped land should be put towards agricultural purposes. One activist elaborated that "The Gill Tract is an integral part of UC Berkeley's legacy, and it would be a permanent, devastating blow if this remaining pristine land were developed. The soil is meant to produce sustenance, not to be suffocated by cement."

Arguments concerning land use did not end at opposition to development, but encompassed broader messages on how land should best serve the public. The University of California is a public institution, and Occupy the Farm has brought up debates over the

ownership of the Gill Tract. UC officials have claimed that the land is private and under ownership of the UC Regents, but Occupy the Farm claims that as a public University, the land should directly benefit the public (Breslaeur and Wilton 2012). One activist stated that the University has the responsibility to serve the East Bay and global communities in spearheading urban agriculture research. They believed that UC Berkeley is an institution with incredible power to help the public, but instead has catered to moneyed interests such as the Whole Foods project and biotech research. They also discussed how past efforts for sustainable agriculture research on the Gill Tract such as the BACUA proposal tried to advocate for community desires, but were repeatedly stonewalled by the University. “When that happens, in a democratic society, we have a responsibility to challenge the systems that are there and assert ourselves... we have a responsibility to demonstrate what urban agriculture can look like. We can do better and we should.”

Occupy the Farm also aimed to address issues in food and agriculture systems. Many of the activists cited huge concerns with the industrial food system over the detrimental environmental impacts and the social injustices it has caused (Altieri 1989, Rosset 2009). Another major message was the opposition to biotechnology companies involved in research on the Gill Tract, and within the UC system overall, that serve corporate interests (Holt-Giménez 2012). Many UC Berkeley researchers were using the land to study corn, a major crop of conventional farming and genetically modified organism (GMO) technology (Food First 2012). Occupy the Farm opposed the focus on such research that would further contribute to the industrial food system, and advocated for research on urban agriculture and sustainable practices that would not degrade the environment nor solely benefit huge agribusiness corporations (Altieri 1989, Food First 2012).

Land occupation and solidarity with other social movements was an important focus of Occupy the Farm. The initial occupation was organized for Earth Day and their protest march to the Gill Tract was in solidarity with the peasant rights movement La Via Campesina. La Via Campesina’s guiding philosophy of food sovereignty, a framework advocating for the right of communities to define and control their own agricultural and food systems (La Via Campesina 2006), was an important concept in advocating for urban agriculture that aims to benefit communities. The Landless Worker’s Movement (MST) in Brazil, a social movement aiming to reclaim land from large-scale landowners and settle families in cooperative communities (Robles

2001), inspired many of the activists. Indigenous cultures and their conceptions of communally held land also influenced the goals of some activists in imagining democratic and communal uses of the Gill Tract. Occupy the Farm aimed to spread awareness of these global peasant and land reform movements while also trying to establish a model for land reclamation actions applicable to urban environments in the United States. Additionally, the group's actions largely connected to the Occupy Wall Street movement in their tactics of occupying a space and asserting arguments that government and public institutions should serve the public instead of corporate and financial-driven interests (Shoen 2012).

The messages and actions of Occupy the Farm entered into the dialogue of many local groups, such as the Albany community, UC Berkeley campus community, and a broad coalition of East Bay activists focusing on food, land, and Occupy Wall Street issues. Many local news outlets reported the events of the occupation (Bay City News 2012). Opinion articles have discussed Occupy the Farm in the context of food sovereignty (Kilkenny 2012), as a model of resistance to development (Roman-Alcalá 2012), and in criticism over the protestors' approaches to food justice (Collins 2012), to note a few. The Daily Californian, the UC Berkeley student newspaper, reported on the actions of Occupy the Farm and responses from the University, and featured opinion pieces from the UC Berkeley community both in favor and opposed to the occupation (The Daily Californian Archives 2012). Albany's online community 'Albany Patch' also closely followed the actions of Occupy the Farm and the conflicts occurring over the Gill Tract, and many Albany residents engaged in heated debates over these issues by writing opinion pieces or commenting on the articles (Albany Patch 2012). Similar to how Occupy Wall Street's actions brought questions of wealth inequality and corporate influence in government more centrally into the national dialogue (Shoen 2012), Occupy the Farm has engaged many parts of the East Bay community into a discussion on development, land use, food justice, and urban agriculture.

Community building

People powered processes. The day of occupation involved a mass mobilizing of people, tools, and resources to start farming the Gill Tract. Activists weeded, tilled rows, and planted 15,000 seedlings on the land. They acquired all the necessary farming resources through networks of

organizers and community members, demonstrating the large role social capital played in the action (Glover 2004). Two activists said that the most inspiring experience was actually stepping on the land and seeing all the work carried out in a single day. One activist elaborated on their doubts during the planning stages, thinking “you can’t just bring 200 people to the land and just say farm it! They’re not going to know what to do!” But after seeing the work done, they were “floored by... seeing the power of all those people.”

Similar to the neighborhood guerrilla garden projects, Occupy the Farm strived for democracy and inclusion in its actions. Non-hierarchy was an essential aspect to the organizing efforts. Voting processes ensured that a consensus was reached for every decision. One activist believed “this kind of movement really can be an expression of democracy” but was also aware of some of the obstacles such democracy posed. The structure made it difficult to know who to go to for asking questions or clarifying a proposal. It also led to a slow process in making decisions, necessitating patience. Nevertheless, they stated “I do think though that with this model of organizing, the medium is the message, so you have to live with it and be patient.” Occupy the Farm was advocating for public and inclusive processes to occur at the Gill Tract, while asserting that such inclusion was not seen through UC Berkeley. Their use of guerrilla gardening and land occupation conveyed very critical messages, and their efforts strived to reflect these messages on all organizing fronts. Neighborhood guerrilla gardening projects also worked towards these democratic platforms, but Occupy the Farm needed to be especially attentive to this non-hierarchical process so as to not undermine the critiques they were making.

The activists operated under a security culture, keeping their plans secret to avoid having their actions prevented or stalled. An activist noted the “interesting dichotomy having a public discourse going on and then also being part of a direct action group that uses security culture,” raising some concern regarding the inclusive goals of Occupy the Farm and public engagement under a more secretive organizing structure. People became involved in the planning stages by being directly approached by organizers, illustrating the limitation of needing to already be within the networks of original organizers. The secrecy can pose an obstacle to those wanting to become involved, as knowing about meetings and keeping in contact with organizers can be more difficult under this structure and without any prior relationships to activists. This reveals an underlying tension in guerrilla gardening efforts with goals to engage a broader community, as the risks of losing access to a site may impede in publicizing a project. Thus, people who

may have a stake in the project yet not are not within existing social networks can be left out in knowing about or participating in the actions of a project. Such limitations can increasingly be addressed with organizing efforts using online forums or social media, but nevertheless pose an obstacle to full inclusivity.

Community forums. Community engagement was prominent through a series of community forums hosted by Occupy the Farm. The forums served as a venue to envision ideal community uses of the Gill Tract, and to work towards developing models that would serve those ideal uses. The UC Berkeley, Albany, and greater East Bay communities were able to discuss how they would want the Gill Tract to serve their communities and promote research for the public. Occupy the Farm organized the forums with the Albany Farm Alliance and other social justice organizations in the East Bay.

The first town hall style forum was designed to start envisioning the future of a Gill Tract farm, education, and research center. Organizers gave a brief history of the Gill Tract along with Occupy the Farm's actions, and then launched into forming working groups of 'farming,' 'access and management,' 'education,' and 'research.' These groups aimed to develop models of urban farms that could inform on uses at the Gill Tract. The audience revealed a wide range of opinions through posing a number of questions to direct each group's research. The audience's ambitious questions also illustrated their optimism in imagining a sustainable agricultural research center that could provide educational services, food for the community, and a space for people to work on the land. An activist reflected the sentiment of these forums in saying that it was important to be "real with what we can achieve, imaginative of what we could construct." While Occupy the Farm was aware that this land was not under their tenure nor would the University be open to proposals from them, the town hall forum was important in keeping positive energy around the Gill Tract and continuing to push for a community driven vision of the tract.

The second community forum, titled "Land, Food & Power: A Community Forum on Food and Justice, from Deep East to the Gill Tract," and was co-hosted by Occupy the Farm and four social justice organizations in the East Bay. It featured four women of color as panelists, who discussed their own histories, struggles with land issues and displacement, and the work of their organizations. The speakers focused on housing issues in communities of color, citing the

decline in black and Hispanic house ownership, the high rate of foreclosures, and the extensive land grabbing that has resulted in gentrification. The panelists discussed the systematic racism in their communities as a major obstacle to these land issues, and many expressed desires for a move away from the current land ownership structures. They also touched on reclaiming land for gardens to benefit marginalized communities, mentioning their own work in guerrilla garden actions. The conversations in this forum steered away from the Gill Tract topically and geographically. The panelists clearly cited the effects of institutionalized racism, the displacement of communities, and the need to provide jobs and affordable housing as the primary concerns for many East Bay communities. They pointed out that these issues are much more pressing than the controversy over development and agriculture occurring at the Gill Tract, a land situated in the Albany community largely composed of white, middle class families. While Occupy the Farm aimed to work with and address issues of a diverse group of people, the group's diversity in race and class was fairly low. The forum was important in hearing from other social justice voices, and it conveyed a sense of urgency of more pressing social and economic justice issues facing communities of color, rather than a small struggle over a piece of land in an already economically well-off area.

Tensions of privilege were brought up in this forum. The panelists were aware of their own privilege while engaging in social justice work with legal risk, explaining, "Someone like me is not at the same level of risk than some of the people I am working with. Recognizing that, because I don't have a level of risk or a history, that I am not part of a community. I need to step back and listen, find other ways to support." They challenged the privilege of Occupy the Farm and noted that their risk in illegal actions was low compared to the risks faced by communities of color who try to challenge land uses and reclaim spaces. One activist agreed with their assessment, explaining that those living on the land during the occupation were largely college-educated adults who were able to go home to a shower and bed if they wished to. Similar to the tensions in neighborhood guerrilla gardening projects, the problematic role of actors outside a community (with the panelists recognizing nuances over what comprises 'community') was present in the relationships between Occupy the Farm, the East Bay, and food justice goals. While many East Bay communities face huge struggles, it should not discount the struggles over the Gill Tract occupation and the messages Occupy the Farm has put forth. All facets of progressive social justice work must act in support of one another for positive change to be

effectively fought for from many angles. When approaching tough issues in diverse communities, tensions in navigating privilege are important to be handled with consideration, but should not hinder positive work and outcomes.

The third community forum, ‘Keeping Food Local and Food Security,’ was hosted by Albany Farm Alliance with Occupy the Farm and continued to discuss the questions of the working groups. This forum dedicated time forming a ‘race, class, gender, privilege, and oppression’ working group, as the issue of privilege within Occupy the Farm had become increasingly prominent. At the forum, a majority of the audience was white and many were college educated, similar to the Albany community. Occupy the Farm aimed to address problems of food justice and land ownership throughout the greater Bay Area, but this task had proved difficult due to the group’s demographics and the Gill Tract’s location. One audience member claimed that incorporating diversity was a challenge because the people often interested in urban agriculture were a certain type, white and middle class. The statement made many audience members uncomfortable, and one activist noted that the cultural competency of the group was lacking. A working group focused on these issues did not have the diversity or knowledge to delve into the Gill Tract’s role in addressing issues of privilege and oppression, but instead could self-reflect on the group and the tensions that manifest in the Occupy the Farm actions. The Gill Tract is not located within a community lacking access or economic means to fresh food, and this limited Occupy the Farm’s efforts to address broad food justice issues. Guerrilla gardening actions are restricted in geography, as most of the benefits from gardening and green spaces occur in the immediate area. The occupation was largely tied to the specific history and use of the Gill Tract, and furthermore, taking similar actions into other East Bay neighborhoods may face problems of being seen as instigated by outside actors and transient activists. However, if the struggle focuses only on the Gill Tract, how can Occupy the Farm continue to push for their goals on this land without it simply becoming a struggle for a place to learn about agriculture and obtain fresh food for a primarily middle-class white community (Slocum 2007)? Occupy the Farm will need to stay aware of these tensions, recognize and respond to their own shortfalls, and push their collective brainstorming to find innovative and inclusive ways to approach their land use, urban agriculture, and food justice goals for all East Bay communities.

Motivations: Experiences and ideologies

Interviews provided a unique way to look at how guerrilla gardeners' ideologies and experience pertaining to food and gardening played into their work. The stories of these projects are long, complex, and touch upon many facets of the gardeners own backgrounds, opinions, and future work. Experience in gardening ranged from no prior experience to an extensive history in gardening related work and rural backgrounds, indicating the broad audience that can be drawn to guerrilla gardening. Guerrilla gardening projects also served as spaces in which to critically explore one's broader engagement with gardening, community organizing, environmental concerns, and land issues. Gardening projects could contribute to greater efforts in urban agriculture and be a component of one's work in building community assets, reclaiming urban land, and implementing local food production. Guerrilla gardening could also reflect gardeners' myriad opinions on environmental concerns, food and social justice topics, and anti-capitalistic beliefs over land.

Past experiences and broader work

Many of the gardeners cited past experience with gardening, farming, or a rural lifestyle. Two respondents gardened with their families, but had fallen out of the practices later in life. Four gardeners grew up in a rural setting and were tied to local food production. "I ended up doing it all: growing food, hunting, having twenty animals," said one gardener; their connection to land shifted to an urban setting and manifested through establishing gardens in their Oakland community. Another gardener worked with youth food programs and personal gardening in their hometown, and further pursued these interests through academic studies on agriculture and involvement with Occupy the Farm. The median strip gardener cited their experiences with the Peace Corps in Soviet Russia as influential in seeing how collective gardens, or *dachas*, were essential to providing for the community. They maintained a robust edible garden at another residence, which attracted the attention of neighbors, and these experiences shaped their activism by demonstrating the value in using gardening for community building. Many respondents had a long and active engagement in gardening or connections to land, and their participation in guerrilla gardening projects presented another form of these deep-rooted interests and lifestyles.

Alternately, some respondents had little or no gardening experience. Occupy the Farm provided an entrance into farming and engagement with food justice and land use issues. One activist became involved in Occupy the Farm through connections made in other protest actions, but had no previous gardening experience. “For me as a gardener it was a super empowering experience. It was the first time I ever planted a seed, first time I got to water a productive farm or garden or anything.” While self-initiated guerrilla projects require some initial gardening knowledge, Occupy the Farm provided a way to participate in these actions with other knowledgeable actors. The large scale of Occupy the Farm also allowed entrance into farming by first taking on other duties, as this activist initially worked on media relations and press releases. The gardener working on an individual project had just started taking permaculture classes. Their involvement, although with the guidance of a friend, shows how guerrilla gardening can build upon differing levels of gardening experience and serve as a way to gain gardening knowledge in a critical context.

Guerrilla gardening projects often fit into the broader interests of gardeners, informed on one’s opinions, and built upon previous knowledge. The student in the ESPM 117 plot studied food issues in other classes, but truly reconnected to their previous gardening experiences through the hands-on project. A student working with Occupy the Farm studied rural sustainable agriculture, and their involvement further contributed to their personal opinions and education in the complexities of agriculture systems. Another activist explained how the Gill Tract has helped inform on future life decisions. Coming from a rural background and appreciating the ability to live ‘off the grid’ and off the land, they later came to enjoy the city life. Occupy the Farm provided a means to explore this tension between rural and city lifestyles by offering an experience of working on land while still living in the urban East Bay. The summer program gardener had just begun thinking about their personal relationship with land during the gardening project, and they continued to critically reflect on their history and the connections to land of their ancestors. Whether from an extensive or elementary gardening background, guerrilla gardening was seen as meaningful and rewarding. It presented the opportunity to learn more about specific gardening techniques, explore one’s relationship to land and food, and develop approaches to community oriented work and activism. For many, guerrilla gardening helped form their personal thoughts and opinions with these issues, and provided a critical space to develop complex and nuanced perspectives.

Guerrilla garden projects were sometimes an important component of gardeners' broader work in food and community activism. The median strip gardener envisioned their work to help establish a model for neighborhood gardening; one which would be supported by local policies, be a platform for broader community organizing, and scale up the gardening and overall sustainability of communities. Although aiming for ambitious goals, they noted the need to keep the integrity of small grassroots work. They also learned not to move forward too quickly in their projects so as to be inclusive, and not overwhelming or threatening. Guerrilla gardening provided a platform to start the work of community building and allowed community activists to experience the persistence and sensitivity needed in such work. The gardeners felt that these lessons were valuable for their approaches and further efforts, demonstrating that guerrilla gardening projects provide a space to explore complicated processes of grassroots activism to better confront some of the difficulties that come with it.

The Eco-Arts gardener emphasized gardening "to get some food to harvest. And actually produce at a high enough level to where what we're doing is we're feeding not just the community, we can feed the city, the state," demonstrating grand visions of healthy communities and a commitment to food justice. Other efforts in their work have involved collaborating with other organizations, influencing policy, and relaying current food issues to the community. For their organization, guerrilla gardening served as another tool to work towards self-sufficient and sustainable communities. Guerrilla gardening in particular can play a big role in this goal, as it is a method to reclaim the land and assets needed in the work of urban agriculture:

It's heading towards a brighter place, really. I see it becoming a trend, you know, everywhere, across the country. Starting right now, in the last couple years. It has really come into its own... We can actually push it, especially here in a place like California you can really push the issue to the point where the whole world can see it. If we do some[thing] real, like how they did with Occupy, if we did that about gardening, or about something that we could really seriously change... because the 99% are not gonna give up their money or something like that, that's just not going to happen. You got to understand they're holding money in assets because they've been doing that since the brink of time, that's what they do, so we can't sit and snap off of that. We have to create our own assets and our own businesses because there's a job market and a business market out there, but it's up for us to attain it. There's funding, there's money going out everyday... so let's go and jump on in there then, whoever has the capacity to do it, let's go. They've got small grants for this and that and that and that and that. If we all

work together we can build something tangible... So we've got to get past that mentality that it aint enough, there aint nothing there. It's there, it's always there.

Ideologies of gardening, food, and land

Other interests in gardening, food, and environmental issues contributed to gardener's perspectives on their guerrilla gardening projects, and their concerns over these problems points to a conscientious engagement in guerrilla gardening work. Many gardeners were aware of or had direct experience with the problem of lack of food access in impoverished communities. Gardeners cited indigenous peoples struggles, environmental racism, and historical environmental injustices as major concerns. A discussion of food security versus food sovereignty from an Occupy the Farm activist illustrated their understanding of these concepts and their relation to efforts on the Gill Tract (Holt-Giménez 2011). Less explicit notions of food sovereignty permeated many interviews through beliefs that communities needing more ownership in their own healthy and resilient food systems (Mares and Pena 2011). One gardener cited the mass farmer suicides in India over the past ten years as indicators that capitalist and corporate dominated agriculture has driven many towards poverty and suffering. Gardeners elaborated on the environmental problems in the food system such as oil dependency, seed availability, water rights and usage, and food waste "from a farmer with a crop that's overproduced but... he's not going to hire the laborers to come in, all the way down to Jimmy Jam with the sandwich he just throws in the trash." The gardeners overall demonstrated a breadth and depth of concerns over environmental and social problems in the food system, and were informed on the issues they were partly addressing through guerrilla gardening projects.

Guerrilla gardening connects to broader issues of land use and ownership. Many gardeners reflected anti-capitalistic sentiments when expanding on how problems in the food system have stemmed from corporate control of agriculture and privatization of public lands and services (Rosset 2009, McClintock 2010). Occupy the Farm's concerns were very land-focused, and one activist explained how the action surrounding the Gill Tract could be seen as a way to combat the trajectory of capitalism:

The Gill Tract before the occupation can be seen as a metaphor of the privatization of the University. You have the last unpaved earth in the east bay that's still good for growing food, and all these different struggles over who owns

it, is it really a public land... and then after the occupation I think the main power of Occupy the Farm was to plant the seed, if you will, in people's minds that there are alternatives to this whole conception that there is no alternative, this is how capitalism progresses, this is the trajectory. Originally the Gill Tract was more than 100 acres, consequently over 90% was paved over, so that can be seen as the natural progression of things.

Land ownership relations were an important topic in neighborhood organizing. The neighbors at the ESPM 117 plot expressed concerns over the business focus of the landlords whose stakes and concerns were not in the community or well being of tenants, but with a mind towards profits. The median strip gardener witnessed the negative effects of neglected properties in their neighborhood and reflected on how economic policies, especially California's Proposition 13, have fed into these problems. They elaborated that Prop 13 has allowed for property owners to hold onto land even when not making productive uses of it, contributing to derelict properties or long-term vacancies in urban centers (Schwartz 1997, Gordon 2003). Gardeners demonstrated a perceptive understanding of the systems and policies that have created the problems they are trying to address through guerrilla gardening. This understanding connected organizers more closely to the problems of their communities, and helped inform on approaches for more effective guerrilla gardening and community building work. This again points to guerrilla gardening as a conscientious practice, with the work often responding to these complicated structures and problems in urban areas around land use and ownership.

These views on land ownership build on ideas that communities should be more in control of their resources, including land, to better support and serve themselves. The structure of capitalism provides a focus on land to solely generate profit rather than exist as a vital and dynamic resource (Guthman 2008). Questions regarding the relationships between private land, public land, and 'the commons' arose with ideas of community ownership. Occupy the Farm stressed open access and land use to benefit the public, with an activist arguing,

Land should be held in common. And common is different than public or private, this is the other thing to keep in mind, it's neither the state nor the market. If things are held in common it's a mutual agreement between a community of people. Ownership of land is impossible basically.

Using land through 'the commons' can be much more comprehensive than public land, which may provide access but not serve a community's identified needs, nor be under their stewardship.

Guerrilla gardening emphasized community cultivation of land and non-hierarchical organization, and models for designing and implementing ‘the commons’ can draw from these guerrilla community projects. Guerrilla gardening revealed important processes in grassroots actions that must be developed and worked through collectively. Active engagement in community development, including developing models that can be based off the idea or spirit of ‘the commons,’ can help ensure the best outcomes for communities working towards control over their resources and livelihoods (Mares and Pena 2011).

Levels of access and participation in community gardens can vary widely and sometimes lack in full inclusion (Kurtz 2001). This was a further concern relating to ‘the commons’:

The other thing that Occupy the Farm was trying to specifically engrain in people’s minds or bring awareness to is that there’s a difference between a community garden and a communal garden. Community gardens, you have a neighborhood and each family, each individual. It’s very atomized, you each get your own box, rather than hold the whole garden in common and seeing what you can produce together and all share.

This issue was seen in the ESPM 117 plot, where the neighbors thought that dividing half the garden into these ‘atomized’ plots would benefit neighbors who wanted an active role in the garden, as an individual plot would face less risk of misuse. They also discussed questions of access to the garden and need of a fence, believing a small barrier would establish a boundary to prevent misuse. Nevertheless, a fence represented a structure contrary to ideals of fostering complete open access and neighborliness, illustrated when the neighbor joked, “More god damned society prison fencing. Society needs more fencing!” Gardeners demonstrated a strong desire for open communal spaces, for gardening and food production especially. However, existing issues of land use and ownership in urban areas makes compromises such as fencing or individual plots necessary sometimes. Destruction of a garden or loss of access to an illegal site are realistic considerations when working to successfully transform urban spaces, particularly with guerrilla gardens where illegality and sustainability of the project are concerns. Additionally, the potential involvement of outside actors presents another problematic angle to realizing the ideals of gardening and farming on ‘the commons,’ while also bringing up the issue in defining a ‘community’. Despite these practical limitations, gardeners came with ideologies oriented towards cultivating the commons and building assets for community empowerment, and guerrilla gardening was a means of expressing these ideals in real action.

Identifying with 'Guerrilla Gardening'

How respondents identified with the phrase 'guerrilla gardener' varied, and many applied a critical eye to the term. The individual scale gardener commented that they did not know much about the phrase, but said it held political connotations, suggesting an anti-government or liberal ideology. The ESPM 117 student also felt that 'guerrilla gardener' had revolutionary connotations, which did not fit with their positive experiences in the project. Nonetheless, revolutionary sounding phrases are often evoked in association with guerrilla gardening, especially when relating these actions to 'guerrilla' insurrections and movements (Reynolds 2008), and some gardeners did express these sentiments:

Gardening by any means necessary, I'll use Malcolm X. I'd say that the act of gardening unto itself is the desire to cultivate and proliferate beauty in the world. I'd say creating conflict unnecessarily that can actually thwart your long term interests is something that conceptually I don't agree with. But it depends on the action but I'd say overall, generally speaking, I'm all for gardening by any means necessary.

The summer program gardener said they identified as a guerrilla gardener in that specific moment of time, and was keen in their views of other guerrilla gardeners:

I think that guerrilla gardeners are critical... especially if it's coming from the community, you know I have so much respect for community organizers and community activists who say yeah you know what we don't have permission or we've been denied permission, let's do it anyways. I think when we say guerrilla gardeners what does that mean? Is it coming from the community or is it affluent college students coming in and saying communities need this. I think those are very different thing. With communities, I think it is an act of dissidence in a way to say this system isn't working for us.

An Occupy the Farm activist said they had not did not know much about the phrase guerrilla gardener and could not comment on it, while another activist was very perceptive of the different scales of guerrilla gardening, elaborating,

Thinking how we define guerrilla or a land occupation or insurrectionary agriculture... There's different scales and there's different degrees and the power structures are always different. So, it's a big difference between throwing a seed bomb across a fence into a vacant lot, versus occupying the Gill Tract and plowing, roto-tilling 75 rows over 3 acres. The scales and the contestations of

power are a lot different. Occupy the Farm was a very open, blatant spectacle. When I think of guerrilla gardening I think of super undercover, growing food where nobody would think to look, and not telling anybody, and harvesting it, and that's your stash. So, it just depends on what you are trying to use the land for and what you hope to accomplish by using that land. For Occupy the Farm... we were hopeful it wouldn't get plowed over but we all kind of expected that all those seedlings we had planted were probably going to get destroyed and wouldn't come to fruition. It was just planting the idea; it was a metaphor. Where as guerrilla gardening, you find your little median strip and plant some stuff in it, it's not too subversive really. It's a political act for sure, but it's not to the same scale and calamity to the powers at be if you're growing a little kale plant in someone's median strip.

The median strip gardener also demonstrated an understanding of guerrilla gardeners and their own relationship to that phrase and their own actions.

I see myself as a 'guerrilla' and a guerrilla gardener but I think I have a much more collaborative, diplomatic, conciliatory approach. So it doesn't fit into the level of... illegality or edginess overall. However, it has pushed the envelope and particularly tried to edify groups of people to cultivate areas that had become fallow. And to me that is very much guerrilla gardening. But I actually felt like it was important to do the work of building the institutional capacity to permit that gardening to happen, so that it would be sustained over time... I'd say my work has been less about guerrilla actions and more about how to build a sustainability movement. Which requires the hard work of continuity and getting people to the table to sort of diplomatically work things out and allowing that messiness to occur.

The scales of action through Occupy the Farm or local neighborhood organizing point to guerrilla gardening that encompasses more than the connotations of a solitary, surreptitious individual. I discussed these gardening projects as 'guerrilla gardening,' but perhaps there is another phrase that would better describe the projects and those engaging in them. Should they simply be thought of as urban gardeners and community organizers? Their participation in acts that may be subversive to city governments, landowners, or large institutions such as UC Berkeley is often an important component to their goals and the messages in their work. Pudup similarly stresses the distinction between 'community gardens' with their own term of 'organized gardening projects,' the later of which takes into account the critical and varied nature of projects that might not fit into the more rigid structure of 'community gardens' (2008). How then might we conceptualize 'guerrilla' gardeners and community organizers to convey goals of long-term community development, reclaiming land for productive uses, and a move towards an inclusive

and non-oppressive model of ‘the commons’? Would a term that is more inviting and more strongly emphasizes the importance of community serve to better engage urban, food, and social justice activists in these practices of gardening and land use? Perhaps a phrase like ‘radical community gardeners’ better conveys their projects and processes. Whether done through guerrilla gardening, ‘radical community gardening,’ or other similar methods, such grassroots efforts are needed to propagate and push the food movement, win policy and local victories, and work towards broad social and food justice.

Limitations and future directions

The interpretive analysis of these guerrilla gardening projects and their outcomes was mediated by my own understanding and experiences with food and gardening related topics. Many of my academic studies have focused on environmental problems in industrial agriculture, environmental and food justice, and rural land reform struggles. Thus, these were the main connections that I made from the interview respondents and the narratives of their projects, and greatly contributed to the angle from which I analyzed the roles and effects of guerrilla gardening. One of the main limitations in this study design was the interview process. I encountered a large number of UC Berkeley affiliated actors and gardeners through convenience and snowball sampling methods. The process of running into or identifying guerrilla gardeners led me to select for those with projects that were more visible and open. More secretive projects on smaller scales were not as easy to encounter. A culture of secrecy around projects involving land reclamation and illegality potentially restricted the gardeners I was able to find and interview. There is likely a much wider scale of projects occurring throughout the East Bay, but limited time and networking capabilities did not put me in contact with such gardeners. Some gardeners I approached also did not wish to be interviewed about their experiences. Practices, goals, and narratives of projects could potentially span a much wider range and inform differently on how guerrilla gardening manifests in the Bay Area. Future directions in this researching guerrilla gardening can specifically target the solitary and surreptitious actors to analyze the impact of individuals and very small-scale projects.

Occupy the Farm’s activism is still strong a year after the initial occupation. Their movement can be documented and explored more in depth and in connection to broader topics

such as Occupy Wall Street, land occupations, and ideas of ‘reclaiming the commons’. There are many processes of land reclamation happening worldwide; however, such processes in urban regions in the United States are not well documented, as there are fewer instances. More research on gardening and farming projects that reclaim and rejuvenate land to benefit communities would help provide insight into food activism and urban agriculture on small scales. The growing body of literature on food issues can benefit from case studies on community-focused projects that draw from a critical, land-oriented lens. Further research on community building and gardening in a social justice context would also be useful in exploring the role of illegal projects, and would illustrate on how legal and legitimate projects can target systems of inequality and poverty. Models for robust local production systems under community control, whether done through guerrilla gardening (‘radical community gardening projects’) or otherwise, are pursuits that activists, researchers, and communities can contribute to in forming, implementing, and spreading throughout urban environments.

Conclusion

Gardens grow from the ground up and need to be tended with patience and care, and after sustained efforts result in something productive and beautiful. These guerrilla gardening projects emerged from bottom-up processes and community interactions that allowed for open dialogue and inclusion. Through working with diverse actors on projects that touch upon many community struggles, gardeners recognize the patience and commitment needed to make these projects successful. And in the end, these guerrilla gardens produce substantial outcomes in transforming land, growing food, and strengthening community bonds and organizing power.

Guerrilla gardening is a moldable practice that can be employed in many facets of food movement and social justice work, either as the main crux of activism or as part of a larger toolkit. The democratic, inclusive, scalable, and productive nature of guerrilla gardening was prominent in these projects. Guerrilla gardening necessitated structures of grassroots and community-focused work, and thus produced results that were community owned and operated. The processes in community building lead to an array of interactions that can mobilize communities to assert for more control over their resources and land uses, and possibly even cultivate spaces modeled after ‘the commons’. Urban communities can ultimately be

collaborative forces that better provide for their own needs and remain resilient in the face of increasing urban development, economic hardships, and neoliberalism. These projects resulted in an attachment to one's land and locale, and show how active gardening efforts can impart a more dynamic engagement with our food system and understanding of where our food comes from. While such work can be illegal, it often serves as a means to an end – an end involving local food production, healthy and enjoyable activities, and more vibrant, sustainable communities.

Urban agriculture and local food production addresses many of the environmental issues in large-scale industrial agriculture due to their more diversified agroecosystems and decreased dependency on fossil fuel energy. Guerrilla gardening can work to build up local, sustainable food systems and simultaneously point out the limitations in urban environments. Soil contamination and toxicity of urban land is one of the major physical limitations, and remediation efforts will pose a large challenge in proliferating urban food production. Other issues of land use and development present both problems and opportunities to urban agriculture. Gentrification is a very delicate and complicated process that ties into land transformations and uses, and 'greening' efforts must stay acutely aware to not feed into further marginalization of communities. At the same time, blighted areas can be opportunities to mobilize communities into gardening projects and provide opportunities to interact, organize, and fight for more community ownership and assets. These issues were prominent in the guerrilla gardening projects and point to how guerrilla gardening serves as a dynamic practice that can not only identify and respond to various tensions that arise in urban spaces, but also push for more inclusive and creative efforts in the food movement. These broader land issues can be approached by small-scale efforts such as guerrilla gardening, but top-down institutions and government policy changes can also act as important forces to more comprehensively lay the scaffolding for urban agriculture on a large scale. And consequently, smaller-scale processes toward changes in our food systems can be more successful, achievable, and numerous.

Urbanization and continuing development trends present a conflict to realizing efforts in food justice and urban agriculture. Occupy the Farm made a large impact with community mobilization to prevent development on the Gill Tract, and may likely be seen as a salient force in food activism in the coming years. The issues Occupy Wall Street raised are still in our larger dialogues on political and economic issues, and Occupy the Farm will serve this function too.

Many food advocates note that a broader engagement and awareness of the food movement has just recently started gaining traction, and Occupy the Farm's messages may be important forces in driving the movement to more critical and politicized actions focused on open participation and land use. Tensions in land relations may become more prominent in the United States and industrialized urban regions. Fundamental questions of land use and ownership structures may arise more prominently in the food movement, and forces such as guerrilla gardening that fight for more community control, sustainable land uses, and equitable food systems may have a large part in raising or addressing these questions.

Cultivating a connection and critical thoughtfulness to land, food, and gardening can be an important process for an individual, and is an important component in engaging people with food system issues. Guerrilla gardening shows one way that such engagement is something anyone can do, and we may see a proliferation of individual efforts alongside greater pushes in the food movement. While people can approach guerrilla gardening projects from many different ideological standpoints, being flexible, practical, inclusive, and sensitive in one's work is important in maintaining conscientious efforts and sustained forward movement in food justice and community work. The individual can help sow the seeds of revolution for radical change, or at least sow seeds for greater social equity, inclusion, and sustainability in our local and global food systems.

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APPENDIX A: General Interview Questions

“Mini Grand Tour”

- Will you tell me about the project you’ve been involved in?
- If OTF, tell me about the processes and actions of OTF that you’ve participated in?
- What did you do? How did you do it?
- Where was/is the project?
- What do you grow?
- What if any techniques in particular have you used during the growing or cultivating / development of land process? Specific cultivating techniques? Tools used? Seeds used? Where did you get seeds/inputs to do your project? Any ‘creative’ techniques used (like seed bombs?)
- Who else has been involved, or is this completely independent? You don’t need to cite or name specific people, but rough number of people, how you knew them/how they got involved too
- Is there any history of this area of land, legal issues? With Gill Tract, I know most about the history, what parts do you find most compelling, interesting, etc?
- What specifically prompted you to start on this project in particular?
- Why did you choose the avenue of illegality, or guerrilla gardening. Or why do you think this is a useful method.

Logistics/Obstacles

- Did you seek legal tenure, permission or have you? Are you doing so right now? Tell me how that is going.
- How did you discover or find out about this project/plot of land/OTF? Walking by, word of mouth, organizations/community
- How did you physically access your project? Any subversive or crafty methods you needed to use to access your project or to ensure you weren’t getting caught?
- What obstacles did you encounter? Assessing, growing, tending? Legal, or otherwise? Any confrontations?

- Where there any community voices present over this project / plot of land? What were the opinions, ideas, what did they consist of

Goals/Outcomes

- What happened to it or is its current status?
- What was your goal starting out? Personal goals? Overall goals for the project?
- Have those goals changed at all?
Did you reach them? Would you consider it a success?
- Did you have any sort of game plan or strategy when starting the project? Did that change, and how? And why did it change?
- What did you do or try to do to meet the goals?
- Are you aiming to gain tenure, legal access, or official permission to this land? Why or why not? What kind of tenure?
- Have you already tried? Asked permission from someone?
- How have you aimed to gain such tenure? Has it worked? Why or why not has it worked?
- **Personal Experience and History**
- Do you have any other/previous gardening/agriculture/farming experience?
- How did you get interested in gardening more generally? Have there been any specific prompts, events, people, or moments in your life that got you interested?
- How did you learn about the technical side- the how-to of gardening? Books, internet, people, school/official program, growing up with it?
- How did you get into guerrilla gardening specifically? What did you know about it when you started? How and what have you learned about it? Do you know more about it now/have learned more about it? Anything specific get you interested in guerrilla gardening?
- Do you identify with the phrase ‘guerrilla gardening’? If not, do you have your own terminology/phrase for it?
- How do you situate or identify yourself with other guerrilla gardeners? If you do at all. Are there some methods/tactics/people/movements that you are in disagreement with? Some you definitely approve or disapprove? Look up to?

- Do you have a garden or land that you cultivate legally? What do you grow?

Ideologies

- Do you subscribe to or follow any food movement ideas/issues?
- What personal views/ideas do you have on these issues? Or which ones do you feel particularly strongly about? Can you elaborate on your views?
 - Food and social justice
 - Food deserts, access to food
 - Health, obesity, malnutrition
 - Organic, local, farmer's markets
 - Sustainability, permaculture, agroecology
 - Urban agriculture
 - Community gardens, community fostering
 - Food sovereignty, international food politics and movements
 - Farm bill, agricultural policies both domestic and international
- Have you done any work, advocacy, activism, or volunteering in these issues? Do you apply some of these ideas to your daily life, through thought or action?
- Any other opinions on the problems? Any ideas for solutions?
- Any other views regarding gardens, beautification, food systems, agriculture, farming
- Do you feel any of your political views, or overall views/ideologies, connect to your work and ideas relating to guerrilla gardening projects? How so? Please elaborate as much as you'd like.
- How do you feel or do you have any particularly strong opinions about issues regarding land and land use:
 - Access to land in urban settings?
 - Public use of land?
 - Ability to own land, land tenures?
- Do these issues play into guerrilla gardening for you personally? Do you feel guerrilla gardening addresses, or responds to issues over land, or food movement issues? How does it do so? Is your specific project responding to these issues in some way?

Long-Term Goals & Future

- Do you have any longer-term goals?
 - For this specific project?
 - For guerrilla gardening in general?
 - In relation to any food movement or ideological stuff in general?
- Are you going to continue with this project or other projects? Why/why not?
- Do you see guerrilla gardening as fitting into any bigger movements/ideas/issues? How does it fit in?
- Is guerrilla gardening a movement itself? Do you see it as unified? Successful?
- Are you happy with your experience in this project? Do you feel accomplished? Or what do you feel overall/how do you view your work?
- What future do you envision (realistically? Ideally?):
 - For yourself in this work
 - For guerrilla gardening and gardeners
 - For anything in your particular food interests/ideologies
- And how, if any, does this work in guerrilla gardening play into your personal goals, short term, long term?
- Any tips, advice, or words of wisdom for other guerrilla gardeners? For people in general?

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions for the ESPM 117 Plot neighbors

- What is the history with this plot of land? (prior to the ESPM 117 class)
- How did it come to be abandoned?
- What measures have people or the community taken to do something with it?
- What communication with the city has taken place over the lot?
- How did you first start paying attention to this plot of land, what drew you to it?
- How did you get into contact with the ESPM 117 class to work on it?
- Did you or other community members participate in setting up the garden with the ESPM 117 section?
- What were your experiences with working with the ESPM 117 group? What changes did you see to both the lot and general community during the span of them setting up the garden? Any identifiable effects?
- What are some of the other community voices surrounding this plot of land?
- What's the current status of the garden? Is the community maintaining it?
- What is the current status of the lot in relation to the city? Are there steps being taken to make more changes to this lot of land? How has that process gone?
- What obstacles, or successes, have you encountered in trying to transform this plot of land?

APPENDIX C: Interview Questions for Occupy the Farm activists

- Tell me about your role in Occupy the Farm's efforts and what specifically you have worked on
- What was your role, involvement, tasks, processes, actions?
- How did you first hear about OTF?
- How did you get involved with the movement?
- What has been your role up until now and what role are you currently playing?
- What were or have been some of the benefits/best things in working in the OTF movement? Your favorites?
- What about the worst?
- What obstacles have you encountered both in the roles you've taken on, and OTF as a whole has encountered?
 - With UC/UCPD?
 - With farming and accessing the land? Supplies, physical things like that
- What has been your experience with the community? Community voices? Obstacles?
- What have you observed/opinions in the processes of occupying land, vying for land tenure, vying for this social movement?
- Do you think OTF has gone about things in the most ideal way? As in, using occupying/guerrilla and illegal gardening are achieving the goals of what the movement/org wants
- What have been the biggest or most important messages from OTF for you? What do you feel hasn't adequately been addressed?
- Guerrilla gardening - do you have any associations with the term? Do you see OTF as a guerrilla gardening venture? Do you associate yourself with that term?
- Where do you think OTF/GT efforts are heading towards in the future? Where would you like them to go? What's your ideal visioning for this movement/project?
- Personal gardening experience?
- Where do you fall in food/agriculture/gardening related issues?
- Land tenure and related issues or opinions