Michael Hardman
Peter J. Larkham

Informal Urban Agriculture

The Secret Lives
of Guerrilla Gardeners

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Montreal, Québec, Canada

Joe Nasr
Centre for Studies in Food Security, Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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Michael Hardman
School of Environment and Life Sciences
University of Salford
Salford, UK

Peter J. Larkham
Birmingham School of the Built
 Environment
Birmingham City University
Birmingham, UK

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Preface

This book emerges from the authors' long-standing interests in the use and management of urban space. Originally, the idea was derived from Dr. Mike Hardman's M.A. in guerrilla gardening, which then developed into a Ph.D. supervised by Professor Peter J. Larkham at Birmingham City University; Peter has a long track record of research in urban form and space. They have both published a number of papers on urban agriculture and coordinated the visit of the international 'Carrot City' urban agriculture exhibition to Birmingham in 2013, amongst other projects.

Mike undertook the field research, over a 2-year period, on which this book is based, and therefore the extracts from observations and field notebooks are in his voice ('I', 'my' and so on). The remainder of the book is a joint effort and is phrased in a more traditional academic style.

We are grateful to the many individuals and groups who have contributed to this work, principally the guerrilla gardeners whose anonymised activities form the main focus of the book, but also to the many other urban agriculture organisations and gardeners who have provided ideas, examples and enthusiasm. We have enjoyed working with Dr. Joe Nasr throughout this research, and more widely on urban agriculture, and are particularly grateful for his enthusiasm for producing this book. In particular, we acknowledge the support of numerous colleagues at Birmingham City University, particularly Dr. David Adams, Dr. Rachel Curzon, Dr. Julian Lamb and Professor Alister Scott. Finally, a big thank you has to go to our partners and families, all of whom have been very supportive throughout the years of research and writing.

Salford, UK   Michael Hardman
Birmingham, UK   Peter J. Larkham

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Chapter 1
Guerrilla Urban Agriculture: Unearthing the Hidden Movement

Abstract There has recently been a surge of interest in the concept of Urban Agriculture (UA) from authorities to organisations and communities: more people are getting involved in the cultivation of fruit and vegetables within cities. In terms of academia, there is a large amount of literature on the topic, with sociologists, planners, geographers, soil scientists and a host of other disciplines interested in the idea of UA. Despite this interest, there is little reflection on those who practise UA without permission: 'guerrilla gardeners', individuals and groups who colonise land without permission, are at the forefront of the 'informal UA' movement. This chapter introduces the idea of guerrilla gardening and the need for more exploration of informal UA practices.

Urban Agriculture and Guerrilla Gardening

Lurking beneath the radar of all sorts of 'authorities' are groups and individuals determined to colonise land without permission. In fact a vast underground movement exists, from Australia to South Africa, the United Kingdom and beyond; 'guerrilla gardeners' are taking over spaces without permission. Broadly speaking, these actors aim either to beautify the space or to grow fruit and vegetables, with their action always being unpermitted (hence the adoption of the military term 'guerrilla'). This book focuses on those pursuing the act of guerrilla gardening, specifically on those who cultivate within the city without permission. In this book, we aim to lift the iron curtain that cloaks this activity, particularly focussing on those who pursue the activity to grow potentially edible crops without permission. We will draw on our own research to demonstrate the types of individuals and groups involved, their everyday practices and the impact of informal 'Urban Agriculture' (UA). Through adopting a personal approach, we hope to situate the reader in the action: demonstrating how guerrilla gardeners practise and cultivate the city.

There has been a surge of interest in UA, with academics, organisations, individuals and other actors actively pursuing the idea of farming in cities, creating productive spaces in often densely populated areas. Paralleling the formal activity is an underground, somewhat illegal movement, which sees actors colonising land

without permission. Research concerning how we grow, transport and educate the populace about food has been available for decades (Bryant et al. 1982; Mougeot 1999a, b), yet the idea of UA – the growing of crops in the city (Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012) – has only recently emerged as an important academic topic (Bryant 2012). In Europe, several networks have been established to promote discussion around the concept of UA: from the Association of European Schools of Planning Thematic Food Group (AESOP) to several European Union Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) 'Actions', there are increasing attempts to promote discussion around the topic (Hardman 2012). Essentially, most of the discussion centres on the idea of UA and the embedding of the concept in policy, which has proved difficult in a variety of countries (Gorgolewski et al. 2011; Steel 2009). For instance, Tornaghi (2012) argues that planning practice is failing to embrace UA and needs to be more proactive in promoting the concept, adapting legislation to adopt the idea. Recently, several authors have blamed the planning system for its inability to realise the benefits of these new concepts, holding the practice responsible for the lack of integration into policy (see, e.g. Carter and Scott 2011; Tornaghi 2012; Scott and Carter 2012).

In response to this lack of adoption, some individuals and groups have gone ahead with plans for UA without gaining appropriate consents, such as 'planning permission' (needed in the UK, e.g. to regularise all but the most minor forms of development and changes to land use) (Crane 2011). Whilst there is some discussion emerging on legitimate forms of UA, there is little regarding unregulated, illegal forms of the concept (Douglas 2011; McKay 2011). At the forefront of this form of UA are guerrilla gardeners – individuals who alter land without permission (Flores 2006; Tracey 2007). Reynolds (2008) argues that the activity is on the increase, demonstrating the desire of some individuals, or groups, to tackle neglected land and important issues facing the general public. Whilst guerrilla gardeners are well known for beautifying landscape, their actions with promoting local food – through the illegal planting of vegetables and fruit in the urban – are less widely known (Crane et al. 2012). Existing literature fails to account for the reasons why guerrilla gardeners pursue the unpermitted route or the impact – on the nearby community – of the spaces they create (Hardman et al. 2012). Fundamentally, as Douglas (2011: 1) states, 'existing social science research on illegal alterations of urban space is limited'. Whilst guerrilla gardeners have been viewed from afar, knowledge on their actions and interactions is limited (Crane et al. 2012).

This book explores the unpermitted use of space for cultivation in cities. Although the book is rooted in experiences in the UK, it is thoroughly grounded in a wider international literature of ideas and experiences. We begin with an overview of UA then proceed to dig deeper and unearth the hidden practices of guerrilla gardening. UA, the rearing of livestock and/or produce in the city context, is a fast-developing practice across the world: from New York City's famous community gardens, squeezed between large buildings, to the many sites in Havana, which supply the population with much-needed food, the idea of UA has been applied in a variety of countries, both wealthy and poor. Amongst the best known is Toronto's attempt to pursue UA, with policies, charters and other mechanisms being used to ensure that

the city, and its key actors, contributes to the concept. Specific targets are central to the success and deliverability of these strategies, such as that of implementing a minimum of ten food-producing rooftops in Toronto's city centre (Toronto Food Policy Council 1999) or the more recent GrowTO (2012) Action Plan which aims to increase the momentum for UA within the city.

These food-producing rooftops – and ten was just an achievable target, and many more were anticipated – enable Toronto to reduce air pollution, save on heating costs and allow easy access to fresh produce (Viljoen 2005). Fairholm (1999), who investigates options for food production in Canadian cities, adds to Viljoen's points by explaining that rooftop spaces have the potential to produce considerable amounts of food. If more space in the built-up urban area was devoted to rooftop gardens, cities would be able to improve their food autonomy to a significant extent (Perkins 1999). Toronto's pursuit of this form of innovative, space-saving UA demonstrates the technologies and ambitions sometimes adopted by cities in their attempts to increase food security; enabling residents to access food through projects which utilise leftover or 'edge' space (Scott and Carter 2012). Whilst Toronto is well known for exhibiting such forward thinking through a perhaps radical approach to adopting UA, others have taken a different route: official schemes exist in some cities, but there is also a thriving underground network devoted to transforming cities into havens for produce. In practically every city groups are pursuing UA through different channels: cultivating land without permission and refusing to work with authorities.

Exploring the Movement

The core aim of this book is to provide an insight into guerrilla gardening, using empirical material and contacts gained through the authors' networks; focusing specifically on those who practise UA without permission. Unlike previous books exploring the guerrilla gardening movement, this adopts a more personal approach: something of a mixture between Reynolds's on-the-ground guide and McKay's overview. The author of the most widely available on-the-ground guide, Richard Reynolds, is a household name in the guerrilla gardening field: a geographer by training, he has brought the guerrilla gardening movement into the twenty-first century through his guerrillagardening.org forum.

In 2008, Reynolds published his landmark text *On Guerrilla Gardening: A Handbook for Gardening Without Boundaries*: a bible for any would-be or veteran, providing tips and inspirational stories from around the world. The publication was the first meaningful attempt to reveal the hidden practices of the guerrilla gardening movement, with the core audience appearing to be those interested in partaking in the activity. This publication, in combination with his use of blogs, videos and other forms of social media, has resulted in guerrilla gardening gaining more attention: Reynolds has become an icon, probably the best-known face of the modern guerrilla movement.

The other core text mentioned – McKay's *Radical Gardening* – is an overview of various types of guerrilla gardening. Of particular note is the historical analysis of the movement and McKay's ability to provide an objective account of actions. For instance, with the latter, he refers to Reynolds as a self-imposed general of the movement and is rather critical of his motives. Combined with Reynolds's text, this is a 'must-read' for anyone interested in the wider movement, whether for academic or general interest or as a prospective guerrilla. Both texts compliment this book, which is designed to fill the middle ground between the two.

In terms of the movement itself, the prefix 'guerrilla' has a clear (para)military connotation, often being used to describe rebels who are in conflict with an oppressive dominant power (McKay 2011). Reynolds (2008) acknowledges and emphasises this similarity. The guerrillas and authority both 'wrestle for control' and attempt to 'shape the landscape' (Reynolds 2008), although Reynolds goes one step further declaring that 'fighting and gardening really are quite natural human pastimes, so combining the two offers no great contortion' (Reynolds 2008: 28). Obvious differences appear in their motives, for whilst combat-driven guerrillas aim to topple a government or combat an invading army, guerrilla gardeners generally attempt to beautify neighbourhoods and increase biodiversity in areas which generally suffer from neglect (Cobb 2011; Flores 2006; Lewis 2012; Pallenberg 2001).

Fundamentally, the act can be considered illegal in some, perhaps many, situations and countries (Tracey 2007). For example, Thompson and Sturgis encountered the wrath of the relevant authority when they attempted to plant trees without permission. On this occasion, they were lectured, at great length, about 'insurance culpability' (Thompson and Sturgis 2006: 17). In a similar manner, Reynolds has often faced situations where authorities, from police to the local council, have attempted to quash his guerrilla antics (Reynolds 2008). There are also many media articles on individuals being denied permission and facing the wrath of the authority. For instance, a couple in Cheshire, England, were charged with criminal damage for growing plants on the grass verge outside their home (*Daily Mail* 2014). Effectively, the actions of guerrillas could potentially constitute criminal damage or theft, depending on the situation (Hardman et al. 2012).

Overview of the Book: Why Guerrilla Gardening?

The following chapters investigate the unregulated UA movement, particularly focussing on the impact and reasons why such a radical agenda is pursued. One of our core arguments centres on the idea of guerrilla gardening and how any form of UA, conducted without permission, would fit under this umbrella term. Too often guerrilla gardening is viewed as a complex idea only involving certain actors, and in small numbers; but in reality if one unpacks the term, it is little more than growing without permission. This book highlights the current literature on these two

relatively new academic topics: whilst UA has a new, 'thriving' literature base, discussion surrounding guerrilla gardening is sparse and still emerging. The majority of these grass-roots texts only mention the beautifying aspects of the activity, failing to explore guerrillas who cultivate land to produce crops. There are, however, a few commentators who focus specifically on the UA elements of the activity, highlighting the underground UA movement (see, for instance, Crane et al. 2012; Johnson 2011; McKay 2011; Pudup 2008; Reynolds 2008; Winnie 2010).

Research into guerrilla gardening, although in its infancy, derives from a host of both academic and nonacademic disciplines: from Tornaghi's (2012) planning-orientated exploration to McKay's (2011) focus on the political aspects of the movement or the many guides on how to get involved in the practice (Johnson 2011; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007, 2011): this activity transcends boundaries. Guerrilla gardeners generally tackle small spaces (Winnie 2010), and since this activity has scarcely been researched, it could be questioned whether their action has any meaningful impact at all. Yet some UA schemes, now large and internationally renowned, have started through guerrilla action, such as Incredible Edible Todmorden (England), which is at the centre of the Incredible Edible global network. Nevertheless, existing accounts of guerrilla gardening are somewhat one-dimensional; the problem is that they portray the act in a purely positive light. The only thorough accounts of the activity derive from guerrilla gardeners themselves, such as Crane et al. (2012), Reynolds (2008), Tracey (2007, 2011) and various other authors and informal bloggers (see, e.g.: D.C. Guerrilla Gardeners 2012; Glasgow Guerrillas 2012; Pothole Gardener 2012).

This book therefore goes further, providing an evaluation of unpermitted or 'illegal' UA; using empirical material gathered during a PhD study along with other attempts to engage with guerrillas[1] in the field. In doing so it provides an on-the-ground perspective and an insight into the often hidden practices of this movement. Crucially, this book does not merely provide an overview of the guerrilla gardeners' actions, but their impact on those who live or work in close proximity to the sites. There is, so far, no notable, balanced study which explores unregulated UA and deals with the extent of the activity, its impact and the spectrum of those involved. There is also a distinct absence of discussion regarding those who surround these guerrilla sites and whether they have been involved in the action; literature on guerrilla gardening fails to include the nearby community and whether they have been consulted about the activity – it is frequently 'guerrilla-centric' (Adams and Hardman 2014). These communities are usually brushed aside and do not play any part in academic, activist or media reports. The danger here is that there is often a clear desire to brand guerrilla gardening as an activity which improves communities; hence, there is little critique or evaluation of their actions.

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[1] Guerrilla gardeners are often referred to – and refer to themselves – as 'guerrillas': this is merely an informal shorthand version to describe those who engage in the activity.

Approaching the Research: Working with Guerrillas

We chose to adopt an ethnographic-informed approach to delve deeper into the actions of the guerrilla gardeners, as individuals and as groups. Malinowski's (1978) anthropological experiences influenced large parts of this research, in particular his ability to integrate himself with other cultures and reveal details previously unknown about groups. Whilst in this context there was no interaction with foreign tribes, his experiences in the field have relevance to those demonstrated during this research: the ability to set the scene and record actions via detailed field notes. Moreover, similar situations experienced by Whyte (1955) and Patrick (1973), particularly their ability to interact with dangerous gangs, demonstrate the rich data that can be achieved by adopting an observation-based approach to researching complex groups undertaking illegal activity in the urban environment. Recent investigations into urban gardening by Crane et al. (2012) and Milbourne (2011), through the use of participant observation, also provide evidence to suggest that this technique is invaluable, even in the context of gardening.

The observation portion of this research aimed to survey the guerrillas in their 'natural environment': how they interacted with others, how decisions were made and the general practice of UA. Whilst later chapters elaborate further on the methodological approach adopted, it is important to note that observation was not the only research technique employed during this study. Understandably, one could argue that observations can be subjective, with the field researcher interpreting the world according to their values (Haviland et al. 2010; Jorgensen 1989). With this in mind, informal interviews – with the guerrillas – and more formalised interviews were conducted during the course of this investigation. The informal, unstructured, but probing interviews were conducted on-site and orientated around any interesting revelations which became apparent during the 'digs' (the term commonly used by guerrillas for when they meet up to perform guerrilla gardening). In a similar manner, the more formal interviews – conducted away from the digs – aimed to delve further into some of the actions performed by the guerrillas, enabling these individuals to express their own views and comment on some of the field observations (Fontana and Prokos 2007). There are also interviews with those who surrounded the sites, gauging their opinions on the changes made to the space and the addition of UA. In this instance, these discussions allowed otherwise unheard voices to express their views on the action and transformation of space (cf. Hardman et al. 2012). Overall, the combination of observations and interviews – both informal and formal – ensure that a balance can be achieved: the guerrillas, field researcher and community members are all able to express their opinions on the action, their experiences and their views (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002).

It was crucial to order these techniques in a manner which would allow for the maximum amount of data to be obtained (Atkinson et al. 2003): the observations and informal interviews – in the field – were positioned before the more formalised interviews: this allowed for issues relating to the groups' actions to be explored in greater detail in the recorded discussions (Berg 2004). The interviews with community members were positioned towards the end of the guerrilla action in

order to ensure that these discussions did not interrupt, or bring unwanted attention, to the groups observed and that comments would relate to the maximum amount of transformation attained, rather than a part-completed intervention.

Identifying Parameters for the Research

The data gathered during this research made it possible to investigate guerrilla gardeners from a variety of perspectives or theoretical angles. For instance, geographies of gender, crime, deprivation or culture could have been the focus; similarly, planning theory could have been the primary element of this research. A decision was taken to engage with most of these interest areas and not restrict the research to one particular disciplinary or professional silo. Inevitably, though, certain areas of interest could not be addressed in detail, due to the parameters of the book.

The following chapters provide a detailed exploration of these existing accounts, before focusing on the empirical material we gathered in the course of studying specific examples of guerrilla activities in the English Midlands. It is important to note that the general focus of the material, contained within this book, is around the UK and other Global North nations: from the literature exploration to the empirical material eventually used, the UK is the main context for most of this book, although we attempt to draw on Global South and other locations, via a wide range of sources, where appropriate.

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Chapter 2
Cultivating the City

Abstract The idea of growing in cities has been around for centuries, from the World War 2 'victory gardens' to allotments, community gardens and even the more recent idea of 'vertical farming', the practise comes in many different forms. This chapter explores the idea of cultivating the urban, before delving into the policies and strategies which support Urban Agriculture (UA), analysing various methods employed by governments and organisations to encourage the growing of food in cities. The chapter reviews different forms of UA, reflecting on academic and other studies which have explored the impact of this activity. It provides a broad overview of UA and the various schemes ongoing, both within the Global North and Global South. We explore the latter with the case of Cuba and countries in Africa who have practised UA for years. The chapter summarises with an introduction to the idea of informal UA and guerrilla gardening: the core focus of this book.

Introduction

UA is a fast-developing topic, with new research and practices emerging all the time; whilst this book aims to be as comprehensive as possible, the quickly shifting nature of this subject area results in new literature and avenues of research opening up month by month. Academic journals and other frequently updated sources[1] are essential to help the reader keep track of the volume of new material. Whilst UA has been more widely explored within the North American context, in other geographical areas – particularly within the UK – the research is only just beginning to flourish, thus new knowledge is always emerging from projects and schemes concentrating on the urban food movement. Sources which are regularly updated are essential to keep track of current rhetoric and practice.

This chapter explores the current state of UA, primarily within the Global North, providing a perspective on its development, barriers to implementation and future opportunities. In particular, the idea of UA is investigated in relation to key actors in the city, particularly planners, architects, artists, developers, communities and

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[1] Useful websites include: Carrot City (www.carrotcity.org), City Farmer (http://www.cityfarmer.org/) and Urban Farming (http://www.urbanfarming.org/).

others, all of whom hold the power to enable (or prevent) the activity. This exploration provides the baseline, leading to a subsequent overview of informal UA and an analysis of the current state of guerrilla gardeners who pursue such an agenda.

Nature and Cities

Gardening in towns and cities has been practised for centuries (Gorgolewski et al. 2011). Schofield (1999), for example, describes how large houses in central London continued to have gardens in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet small private gardens were not common in towns until around the 1760s (Longstaffe-Gowan 1993). The urban garden fashion steadily grew through this time, but plots suffered during the industrial revolution, when the pollution levels made gardening 'virtually impossible' (Hoyles 1991). Yet the 'traditional' English garden is not imagined as a space embedded within a city, but rather one usually imagines the typical garden as a picturesque, tranquil space on the periphery of suburbia (Bhatti and Church 2001; Francis and Hester 1990). In order to understand the development of urban gardening, and therefore UA, it is important to have an appreciation of how the activity was practised throughout history, and how the growing in the city phenomenon has grown.

The Practise of Gardening: An Historical Exploration of the Activity

The practise of gardening is ever changing; the English use gardens and take part in gardening for many different ends (Hoyles 1991). The landscape designer Humphry Repton characterised gardening as 'an art that originated in England' (Hadfield 1985: 76). Gardening has a vivid history with many different cultures practising the act, from the Aztecs who created gardens of attractive floral designs to the royal parks of the ancient Chinese and Roman emperors (Hoyles 1991).

There is a long history of people expressing themselves through gardening, in particular through private gardens (Francis and Hester 1990). Ancient cultures were just as creative as their modern equivalents. The Romans were amongst the first to create their gardens in an organised form; this was imitated by the Italians and quickly spread across the European continent (Albers 1991). The people of Pompeii would paint the walls of their gardens in an attempt to make them seem larger, whilst the ancient Egyptians would formalise their gardens by placing trees in straight rows and flowers in square beds (Connolly 1990; Manniche 1989).

Private gardens have played a pivotal role in demonstrating a nation's shifting ideals (Hoyles 1991). For example, Byzantines abandoned their pagan-era garden statues, replacing them with early Christian art (Littlewood et al. 2002). As Francis and Hester (1990) explained, we express ourselves in our gardens, in this instance

the Byzantines conveying their change in religious beliefs. Gardens can also show a cultural change through symbols, such as when the majority of Byzantine gardens were colonised by the Ottoman Empire (Conan 2007).

This progression continued in the colonial era, when the art of gardening was propelled further around the world. Colonial gardens emerged on several continents, such as the domestic gardens found in America which followed what was 'in vogue in England' and were constructed to 'precise rules of design' (Brinkley and Chappell 1996: vi). This echoes Repton's idea that the art of gardening originated in England and from the colonial literature, such as Brinkley and Chappell this would appear accurate, with colonies replicating the 'motherland's' practices to the finest of details.

Fundamentally, since the 1800s, the traditional gardener was typified as an English white, middle-class male (Taylor 2008), but in reality there is evidence showing that there were as many female horticulturalists as there were men. The Hindu culture encouraged women to garden through the Kama Sutra, explaining that wives should 'surround the house with a garden' (Bowe 1999: 190). In western culture, the first garden book exclusively created for women was published in 1617 by an unknown farmer from Yorkshire (Taboroff 1983), providing some evidence that males were not the only ones interested in the homestead's green space. Female gardeners became more established as years went on; by the early twentieth century, for example, Ireland had several horticultural schools that provided 2–3 year training courses for women (Forrest and Ingram 1999).

From Manniche's (1989) ancient Egyptians with their organised displays, to Brinkley and Chappell colonial (1996) copycat gardens, the passion for gardening evidently transcends time, nations and continents. Bowe's (1999) Hindu women gardeners, Taboroff's (1983) working-class female gardener and Taylor's (2008) traditional English male gardener show how horticulture, regardless of class, gender or ethnicity, has been practised by a large variety of people throughout the world and in various contexts, including ancient cities and towns (Albers 1991).

From Suburbia to City: The Modern Urban Gardener

> The contemporary garden is usually the domestic garden which is an area of enclosed ground cultivated or not, within the boundaries of the owned or rented dwelling, where plants are grown and other materials arranged spatially. (Bhatti and Church 2000: 183)

The suburban garden is described as a place of privacy (Taylor 2008). Lloyd (1987) explains that the gardener has few visitors; it is often a very lonely practice. Yet, according to Cross (1997), there is a split in how the contemporary suburban garden is used, with the front primarily for this public display, whilst the back garden is for private creativity. The front garden is where suburban dwellers 'show off' their horticultural skills, competing against one another with extravagant displays of vegetation (Cross 1997). This competitive element is well documented in western suburbia (Cross 1997): the competition sometimes pushes the boundaries of the vegetation included in gardens. For instance, it is claimed that there is almost as

much biodiversity in the average suburban garden as there is in the countryside (Bhatti and Church 2001). This portrayal of a suburban gardener compliments Francis and Hester's (1990) comments on how the garden is a space in which they can express themselves, demonstrating their ability to grow a range of vegetation better than their neighbours. Fundamentally, this suburban green area is seen as an 'enchanted' space where humans and nature can co-exist; it is a mysterious place where ecology, emotion, body and memory combine (Bhatti et al. 2009).

Whilst suburban gardens are defined as spaces of expression and heterogeneity, in stark contrast Verdi (2004) argues that contemporary gardens are appearing less and less 'identitary'. Evidently, this is in conflict with Francis and Hester's (1990) earlier opinion that the garden is a haven for individual expression, perhaps indicating that there has been a shift in our use of private gardens. More recently, Cox (2009) argues that the majority of these gardens, which lack expression, are in the urban environment. He describes a train journey through central London where he passes an assortment of small urban gardens, all of which are identical, where the owner has done 'little or absolutely nothing to stamp their mark on the plot' (Cox 2009: 9). Also relevant is the tendency, particularly over the past century, for private gardens to be opened to the public, for example, via the UK's 'yellow book' scheme operated by the National Gardens Scheme: this blurs the public/private distinction (Lipovská 2013).

The recent trend of paving over green space in highly urbanised countries such as the UK further adds to arguments surrounding the lack of imagination in urban gardens. For instance, Haringey Council (London) highlighted the concern with residents who are increasingly paving over their gardens. A scrutiny review report concluded by recommending that planning controls need to be amended 'so that these acknowledge the cumulative impact of the loss of front gardens' (Haringey Council 2009: 98). Furthermore, a report by the UK's Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) highlights this issue as being widespread and not isolated to the Haringey area. DCLG feels that there is a 'creeping increase in small garden developments' (DCLG 2010: 67) which is having a negative impact on gardens across the urban.

This bleak picture of urban gardening raises the common criticism that this form of horticultural activity is often – and increasingly – bland and without character. Amin and Thrift reinforce this: they conjure up the idea that the contemporary urban dweller cares little about the design of their garden (Amin and Thrift 2002). In a similar manner, Cox based his opinion on today's city private green space, which he describes as 'identikit-formulaic gardens' in essence meaning that they are replicas of each other (Cox 2009: 9). If one takes into account Cox, along with Amin and Thrift's views, then it modifies Hitchings' (2003) along with Francis and Hester's (1990) perspective that the modern private garden is a space for expression, a status symbol through which one's uniqueness can be displayed: contemporary gardening in the urban perhaps differs from the domestic yards of traditional suburbia:

> … gardening is a major activity of urban residents, not because they are all incipient garden designers desperate to give their garden a makeover (although the garden is a sign of practical aesthetics), but for quite other reasons. (Amin and Thrift 2002: 112)

Regardless of the creative abilities of urban gardeners, the activity has grown significantly and is a major pastime for many city dwellers (Amin and Thrift 2002; Flores 2006). Rishbeth (2005) conjures up the image that the city gardener is different from the everyday horticulturalist; she explains that the modern British city garden is peculiar, neither offering complete privacy nor the ability to socialise with neighbours (Rishbeth 2005). These comments, regarding the isolation experienced by the typical city gardener, echo Lloyd's earlier suggestion that this activity can be lonely. Whilst Lloyd and Rishbeth's thoughts may be relevant, there are large social networks associated with gardening: horticulturalists are able to interact with other enthusiasts at shows and competitions (Amin and Thrift 2002). These are, in essence, social networks which would almost certainly welcome any urban gardeners.

Introducing Nature into the City: Reshaping the Environment Through Gardening

Urban gardening, whether on a small or large scale, provides important spaces for bridging gaps and making connections to nature (Bhatti and Church 2001). However, this relationship usually involves humans transforming nature (Pepper 1993), refashioning, regulating and denaturalising nature to suit human needs. Nature in its raw form is seen as uncivilised, wild and untamed, something that needs to be mastered (Edensor 2005; Kaika 2005). The control of nature is present everywhere, from the trimming of city trees to accommodate transport, to the maintenance of urban 'grass verges', the narrow street lawns that separate one's private space from the public road (Couchman 2005).

This dominance is said to have lifted humans above nature (Castree and Braun 2001). Castree and Braun (2001) create the idea that humans have been freed, much like slaves, and in turn have created 'civilisation', an entity built on this control over what is deemed natural. Modern built form, demonstrating urban gardening on a relatively large scale – such as Southdale mall in Minnesota, USA – reinforces Castree and Braun's statement that the human species has ascended above what is natural. The mall encompasses a large garden which contains a variety of tropical plants, which bloom all year round, even in the cruel Minnesota winter (Hannigan 1998).

This control is not isolated to urban gardening, but has long been present: the garden acting as a theatre in showcasing humans' ability to restrain nature (Bhatti and Church 2001). For instance, American colonialists would structure their domestic garden to demonstrate that they were able to control the wilderness around them (Brinkley and Chappell 1996). The modern suburban homestead continues this commanding stance, with little feral nature existing in the garden (Pile et al. 1999). One may argue that today's private garden, located in the Global North, is more of a status symbol as opposed to a space that exhibits man's engagement with the natural world (Hitchings 2003). Essentially, nature is woven into the fabric of everyday

life and is obligatory for man's continual existence (Soper 1995); yet nature is treated as an entity which needs to be altered to suit our needs, an object which is not appropriate in its natural form (Pepper 1993).

From Survival to Niche: Reflecting on Food Growing in the Global North

Whilst the practise of gardening in the urban has been around for centuries (Schofield 1999), the idea of farming within a city is a relatively new concept, at least in the Western hemisphere (Nasr et al. 2013; Mougeot 1999; Viljoen et al. 2005). However, Ayalon et al. (2009: 11) claim that the idea is practised by millions globally, with some '15–20 % of the food eaten by the world population' coming directly from UA projects. Bryant (2012), however, argues that the concept has only come to fruition in more recent years. He states that whilst UA has been apparent in the North American context, only a small number of academics and practitioners were involved; UA has since moved across the globe and is now being slowly embedded in international, national and local policies (Bryant 2012).

Fundamentally, UA involves the notion of bringing agricultural activity into the city context (Caputo 2012; Mougeot 1999): from community garden and allotments to radical vertical cultivating systems and rooftop farms, all constitute examples of UA (Gorgolewski et al. 2011). The core argument for UA is often based on the need for greater food security: with populations rising and cities growing, the way we cultivate crops needs to be reconsidered (Angotti 2013; Steel 2009). Before this section further explores the concept of UA, it investigates food security and the current strategies employed to resolve this particular issue, with a particular focus on the UK.

The Food Security Issue

> Food security is fundamentally about achieving reliable access to adequate, affordable and nutritious food supplies sufficient to avoid chronic hunger, crisis hunger and stunted development. (Johnson 2009: 4)

The notion of food security has been around for over 40 years, originally addressing people's risk of not having access to food which would enable them to lead a healthy lifestyle (Hardman 2012). There have been several significant paradigm shifts in considering food security; perhaps the most important of these was the need to plan for the long-term, instead of looking for short-term, answers (Anderson and Cook 1999). The idea focuses on more than just producing crops: it addresses population change, mobility problems, international trade concerns, climate change and many more complicated issues (Phillips 2009). However, the main issue remains as to whether food production can keep pace with population

growth (Ehrlich et al. 1993), especially since this is predicted to increase rapidly in the early- to mid-twenty-first century (Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012).

An estimated 9.1 billion people will inhabit this planet by 2050 (mainly in developing countries); food output will need to increase by 70 % to support such a drastic rise (FAO 2009). Whilst output must rise, the existing system needs to be overhauled in order to provide more food to disadvantaged populations (Hanson et al. 2012; Johnson 2011), for instance, enough food is produced to feed over and above the current world's population (Nally 2011; OECD 2009). Nationally, Hardman (2012) demonstrates how current academic discussions refer to the current situation as dire, in relation to the origin of food, with at present 70 % of UK food being imported from abroad; this figure is due to increase over time (DEFRA 2002). International organisations, national governments and local councils are responding to this by drawing up strategies to secure food sources for the future.

It becomes apparent that there are numerous, potentially conflicting, strategies which tackle the issue of food security. At the international level the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) is planning for 2050; at the national level the UK's strategy plans for 2030; then, for example, at a local level, London's strategy focuses on 2016 (DEFRA 2010; FAO 2009; London Food 2006). The drastic differences in the scale and time-horizons of these plans soon become apparent once their individual aims are compared. For example, the London 2016 plan contains eight stages which focus on small, locally achievable objectives which can be completed by 2016 (London Food 2006). In contrast, the national strategy aims for something similar, but by the later date of 2030 (DEFRA 2010; Marsden 2010). Nevertheless, the national strategy aims to bring all of the local plans together, aiming for 'better integration of food policy across Government' (DEFRA 2010: 4).

Marsden's (2010: 443) reflective commentary on the UK's *Food 2030* strategy welcomes its publication, which addresses the food concerns that have been 'so much on the political agenda'. However, he is critical of the strategy's vagueness and failure to fully explore the short- and long-term food security issues in the UK: 'the strategy is at best chaotic and at worst idealistic about eliding the different strategic United Kingdom versus global strategic foci' (Marsden 2010: 444). In a similar manner, Nally (2011) challenges the value of these strategies, explaining that the future of food security will depend on private companies and not government. In essence, Nally disputes the power that governments have over the food system and believes that most of the power lies with corporate entities. He feels that the 'legal, institutional and biotechnical mechanisms' (Nally 2011: 49) need to be addressed in order for the poor to survive. Although Nally (2011) is critical of the current food system and its future, his particularly bleak outlook does not concentrate enough on charitable campaigns or other organisations that aim to bring food to places of 'underproduction'.

There are various not-for-profit organisations which appear to have taken on the burden of tackling these unproductive spaces. Organisations in the UK, from the Community Land Advisory Service to the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), aim to bring food production to the heart of cities, specifically to areas defined as 'food deserts', in essence spaces which

severely lack food infrastructure and supply (Community Land Advisory Service 2012; FCFCG 2009; Viljoen 2005). Local schemes are also in operation, for example, the Grow It, Eat It, Move It, Live It (GEML) project in central Birmingham, UK, focussed on the creation of UA sites in deprived communities (Hardman and Jones 2010), bringing fresh food and educating the local populace on how to cultivate their own crops. Nevertheless, Vejre (2012) argues that more is required on the part of strategies and concepts, particularly such as the trans-national Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) operating across Europe, to further embrace the idea of UA. The concept, according to Vejre (2012), is still treated as somewhat alien and new in many European cities.

Growing in the City

The idea of producing food and rearing livestock in cities is not new: yet, whilst growing food on domestic properties has occurred for centuries (Bhatti and Church 2001), modern domestic food production in the Western hemisphere has predomi-nantly been for purposes related to leisure, rather than for survival (Mougeot 1999). Historically, this was not always the case; gardening was very limited during the industrial revolution as rural people migrated to poor-quality urban housing with little or no garden space; but enthusiastic horticulturalists nevertheless continued with their attempts to cultivate land (Hoyles 1991). During this difficult period, when most men were at work, women played a vital role in supplementing the fam-ily income with garden produce, since this was a means for bringing in food to the household (Hudson 1996). Rapidly growing cities found that some food, especially very perishable items such as milk, still had to be produced locally, at least until the growth of rapid mass goods transit via the railways from the mid-nineteenth century (Atkins 1977).

In terms of survival, domestic food production was vital during the World Wars (Reynolds 2008). Short supplies of food, especially in Britain, resulted in urban 'victory gardens' (see Fig. 2.1): these plots ranged from municipally owned land to private plots, including turning decorative gardens and lawns over to fruit and vegetable cultivation, all in aid of producing food for the war effort (Johnson 2011). Victory gardens appeared in many countries, all created to provide more food for friends, family and neighbours (Adams and Allen 2003). The scheme in the UK involved districts being given targets and a strict management scheme was set up, with explanations expected if, for example, food quotas were not achieved (DeSilvey 2003). Victory gardens in other countries proved just as effective, for instance during the Second World War in the USA, victory gardens accounted for 40 % of all the vegetables grown (The National WWII Museum USA 2006). In the Canadian city of Vancouver, government campaigns urged citizens to plant war-time gardens, but values soon changed, and, only a few years after the war, Vancouver residents were forced to get rid of poultry and even to give up some plots (Hough 1989).
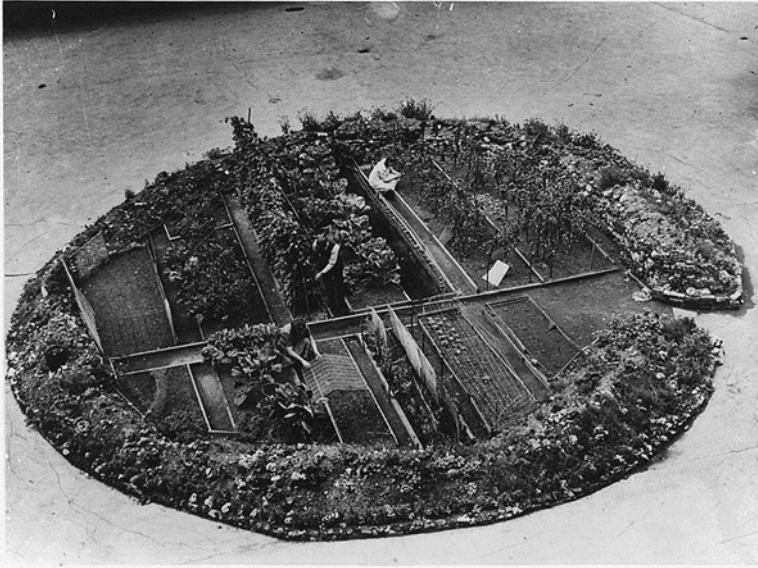
Fig. 2.1 A victory garden in London, UK, occupying a space in which a German bomb landed (Creative Commons)

In more recent years, many households cultivate crops in their domestic gardens (Viljoen et al. 2005): a popular option usually involves a small space in one's private garden being set aside, treated almost as a mini allotment (Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). This is a low-cost alternative, saving the gardener money whilst simultaneously providing the household with some fresh food (Mobbs 2003). There has been a recent surge in gardeners growing vegetables at home; the National Trust (2009) explains that 21 % of the population now grow some of their own food and 80 % of parents surveyed agreed that food cultivation should be taught in schools, meaning that the next generation of gardeners should be educated about the benefits of growing food at home. Perhaps this shift signifies, as Hoyles (1991) earlier claimed, the changing ideals of the gardening populace, with this push for 'growing your own'. Certainly, with recent concerns over food quality including the move to 'organic' produce, the gardener has much more control over what is grown and how it is grown than is the case for food purchased from supermarkets.

Growing at home is not just an activity that can be tackled alone; community groups have emerged over the years that come together to produce food for everyone who takes part. There are many forms of communal gardening, from allotments to community gardens and other associated agricultural projects (Milbourne 2010; Welsh Assembly Government 2010), all constitute forms of UA (Caputo 2012; Gorgolewski et al. 2011). These communal forms of gardening contain embedded notions of responding to food security concerns whilst, at the same time, providing the population with a sense of local control (Feagan 2007). Radical reformers often promote community action, declaring that communal ownership or control of land

may help in becoming self-reliant (Mougeot 1999; Tudge 2009). Increasingly, this form of governance is preferred, both in the urban and rural environments in which these projects may be found (Born and Purcell 2009; Stanley et al. 2005).

However, the strategies that give this local control and promote community food production have sometimes been criticised for being too fragmented, decentralised and chaotic (Wekerle 2004). Buttel (1997: 260) argues that, although these types of environmental communities are encouraged to 'think globally, act locally', they should in fact pay greater attention to the wider picture: linking with the central state whilst keeping a keen eye on the changing landscape of policies and regulations (Wekerle 2004). This ensures that schemes are not unduly focussed on the microscale and can better relate to the shifting nature of national (or global) politics, for example, through linking into wider schemes and liaising with other grow sites of a similar standing.

Examples of UA in Action

There are numerous examples of all forms of UA activities from across the globe, with Gorgolewski et al.'s (2011) 'Carrot City' providing a commentary about the more innovative and radical. This exhibition of food is a touring concept visiting a variety of cities: from New York (USA) and Montreal (Canada) to Birmingham (UK), Paris (France), Casablanca (Morocco) and many more locations (Carrot City 2012; Nasr and Komisar 2014). Gorgolewski et al.'s accompanying text provides a comprehensive guide to UA: from success stories to projects which have endured many obstacles, they critically assess the nature and extent of the impact of these initiatives upon the wider urban population.

Fundamentally, UA challenges the idea that the urban and rural are separate spaces, that the city is a place outside nature and the rural is where production occurs (Hodge and Monk 2004; Shillington 2009; Scott et al. 2013). This is very evident in what is perhaps the most frequently cited example of urban cultivation, the Cuba model: UA has been performed in Havana for over two decades as, following the decline of the communist nations, the country's government suddenly found it difficult to supply food (Angotti 2013; Ramirez 2005; Viljoen et al. 2005). Traditionally, Cuba operated a sugar-producing, export-dependent agricultural system and imported the majority of its food (Premat 2003; Weis 2007). Following the break-up of the Soviet bloc, the Cuban government realised that it needed to adjust the way in which it produced food in order to have a sufficient level of food security for citizens (Angotti 2013; Treto 2009). The government encouraged the creation of small-scale farms, predominantly on urban fringes, to tackle this food security issue (Vijoen and Howe 2005). The location of these sites enabled food to be produced by the community for the community whilst simultaneously allowing the consumer to be closer to the produce (Diaz and Harris 2005).

Moskow (1999) explains that the Ministry of Agriculture began promoting this type of activity in 1991, offering incentives such as free land to get projects started.

Hou (2010) adds to Moskow's discussion by describing how the Cuban government valued the efforts of the average citizen (or 'peasants') and this is what made the small-scale farms so successful. This tactic appears to have worked, with Havana boasting around 26,000 self-provision urban gardens (Moskow 1999). Unlike most developed countries, Cuba suffers from food shortages (Ramirez 2005); this need for food, combined with government backing for these 'self-provision gardens', has seen Cuba lead the way in this form of farming (Vijoen and Howe 2005):

> In the last decade urban gardens have started to appear again as a grassroots response to the urban-decay, spurred by the lack of access to fresh food which makes Detroit one of the largest urban food deserts in the US. (Giorda 2012: 274)

Detroit is another well-cited example of UA in action, although in a very different cultural context than Cuba. Giorda (2012) explains that UA appeared in response to the large quantities of land available following the loss of the car industry and associated 'de-urbanisation', with organisations and individuals taking over vacated urban space in response to a lack of food. Tracey (2011: 22) takes a humorous approach to commenting on the situation in Detroit, explaining that it is a place 'where you can now buy a city lot, or lunch, depending on your mood'. In this case, he is suggesting that there should be plenty of vacant land to adopt for UA, due to the slump in the job market and exodus of much of the population. Nordahl (2009) reinforces this claim, stating that over forty square miles of land (30 % of the city) is now vacant land. The city was declared bankrupt in 2013, emphasising the scale of the economic catastrophe, the flight of businesses and population and hence the ready availability of land. In a similar manner to Cuba, this is a unique situation due to the population's need for access to food: those who reside in these two locations farm for survival and do not have adequate access to modern amenities such as supermarkets, largely for economic reasons (Giorda 2012; Hanson et al. 2012).

A large amount of literature can be also found on nations in the Global South; from Lynch et al.'s (2013) exploration of UA in Sierra Leone to Magidimisha et al.'s (2012) focus on Durban, Africa is often highlighted as a hotbed for such activities. A recent piece from Chipungu et al. (2014) provides an overview of the state of UA on the continent: in the piece, the authors demonstrate how the practice is viewed as illegal. From Zimbabwe to Kenya and even South Africa, Chipungu et al. (2014) provide evidence to show how authorities are against the idea of UA, predominantly due to worries around health; they reinforce this with recent evidence of urban soils, suggesting that much of the UA currently practised is done in somewhat unsafe conditions.

Unlike in the Global South, in Global North nations there is generally no urgent need to harvest food at, or close to, one's home. In North America, for example, the food system has made an abundant supply of (relatively) cheap food available in supermarkets (Pothukuchi 2004): evidence that, for the average urban dweller, provisions are readily available. This ready availability may well lead to consumer complacency and a lack of questioning of origins, means of production and costs. This food is usually transported from outside the city's boundaries and sometimes from very far afield. However, regardless of this cheap supply of food, there have

been attempts within some North American cities to produce fresh food. Canada is renowned for its strategies of bringing food production to some of its large cosmopolitan areas. In Chap. 1 we mentioned the case of Toronto, which is seen as an exemplar of how to incorporate UA into the city fabric. Toronto's focus on what some might consider radical types of UA, such as its food-producing rooftops, has attracted a great deal of attention and put the city on the map; it is constantly being discussed at international conferences and other events focussing on the UA agenda. Further afield, examples of food-producing rooftops in New York City are also well cited, such as those found in the Brooklyn area, which are large examples of the concept (Carrot City 2012; Gorgolewski et al. 2011; Hardman 2012; Viljoen 2011).

The efforts made in the UK to create such food-producing rooftops have been much more limited (Livingroofs 2011). However, there are a few notable projects; for example, the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) created an edible roof garden in 2002 to act as an education tool, promoting permaculture in Reading's town centre (RISC 2009). On a wider scale, a more holistic, citywide study, commissioned by 'The Mersey Forest', attempted to identify suitable locations in inner-city Liverpool for green roof development (Natural Economy NorthWest 2009). That study explores food production and emphasises that 'green roofs have the potential to grow food, and have been used by community groups looking for additional garden space, as well as restaurants, hotels and hospitals who have used roofs to provide fresh herbs and salad' (Natural Economy NorthWest 2009: 6). Perhaps the most famous example of a food-producing rooftop, in the UK context, was that of Food from the Sky (*circa* 2012): a project in London which grew produce on the roof of a supermarket. The rooftop project used a permaculture approach, selling the vegetables and fruit to the supermarket below, whilst at the same time ensuring that there was an education angle to the project (Caputo and Hardman 2013). Despite its success, in April 2014, the project closed due to complications, ranging from repair work needed to the roof to other undisclosed reasons.[2]

Similar to the concept of rooftop farms, but more radical in its architectural/structural requirements, is the idea of vertical farms. These farms would be designed as mixed-use towers, located in the middle of cities and providing food for those who lived in the towers (Iyyer 2009). Graham (2008) argues that if a population of 35,000 was to be fed by these towers, then the footprint required (using vertical farms) would be 1/300th that of a conventional farm generating the same food output. Another added bonus of the vertical farm is that food is produced at (or extremely close to) the site of consumption (Collin and Collin 2010), cutting down on food miles and utilising inner-city brownfield sites (Despommier 2010), which exist in virtually every city: Detroit is merely an extreme example of space availability. There are other radical ideas, such as the retrofitting of existing infrastructure specifically for crop cultivation – for example, by glazing the area underneath raised motorway carriageways (Gorgolewski et al. 2011). However, some gardeners have adapted everyday techniques, and

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[2] See Food from the Sky's Facebook page for more details: https://www.facebook.com/foodfromthesky.

buildings, so that food production can be continuous and not affected by the seasons. The average greenhouse, for example, allows for all year round crops, regardless of the weather, allowing the owner to return to a time when we were one with nature, whilst simultaneously providing a place of escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life (Smith and Leggitt 2000).

Summarising the majority of these projects, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, is Gorgolewski et al.'s commentary of food projects from around the globe. This features a wide variety of UA initiatives: from vertical pig farms, where meat is reared and packaged in basements of large apartment-type blocks, to more everyday projects and a large variety of rooftop farms (Gorgolewski et al. 2011). This, perhaps surprisingly, is the first and most thorough account of UA projects currently existing or planned. Gorgolewski et al. take the reader on a journey through UA, from extreme concepts to everyday examples of city food cultivation.

Everyday UA: Allotments, Community Gardens and Emerging Spaces of Production

Whilst the examples in the above section are somewhat radical, in the sense that they are a more far-fetched version of UA in action, there is a rich database of literature which explores more everyday, mundane attempts at bringing food into the city. This section shifts to focus explicitly on the UK – the location for much of this book – showcasing an array of everyday practices which aim to introduce UA into cities, from community gardening to allotment gardening and beyond.

Perhaps a relatively new practice within the UK is the idea of community gardening: these gardens offer everyday spaces for individuals to socialise and exchange knowledge and, to an extent, around which a community can be built with nature (Cryzman et al. 2009; Gorgolewski et al. 2011; Hardman and Larkham 2014; Milbourne 2010, 2011). Milbourne's (2010) study of a city-based community garden in Greater Manchester, UK, highlights these benefits in the context of a disadvantaged community. His interactions reveal that community gardens can create spaces in which 'nature, sociality and culture collide' whilst at the same time providing access to vegetables and fruit for nearby residents (Milbourne 2010: 257).

Community gardening challenges the perception that space should be used in a particular manner by particular individuals, contesting how the city should be used and by whom (Tracey 2011). Milbourne (2011) argues that, at least in the UK, there are insufficient studies concerning this particular form of UA: the breadth of involvement and reaction to such spaces being created within urban environments. Regardless of the lack of research, he claims that 'there is little doubt that [community gardening] has become much more significant in urban places during the last few years' (Milbourne 2011: 5).

A practice which has been deeply embedded within the UK context for some time is that of allotment gardening. From the victory gardens, mentioned earlier in this chapter, to modern day allotments, these everyday spaces are in much demand

Fig. 2.2 Edible Eastside, a 'pop-up allotment' in Birmingham, UK (Hardman's photograph)

across the UK (WRO 2012). Figure 2.2 depicts a slant on the traditional allotment: Edible Eastside is a pop-up allotment project, located in the heart of Birmingham. The project adopts the basic concept of allotment gardening, with each holder having their own individual space. However, unlike the traditional allotment, Edible Eastside uses locally sourced raised beds, enabling users to grow on a disused, almost certainly polluted, site close to the city centre. In doing so, Jayne – the head of Edible Eastside – creates an allotment for office workers, students and other actors who may well wish to garden closer to where they work and live.

Arguably, one of the most comprehensive analyses of allotments, community gardens and similar community agricultural projects is the report of the Welsh Rural Observatory (WRO) on the extent of this activity in Wales. Although this report does not specifically focus on UA schemes, its survey of '196 community growing projects' presents a significant insight into the activities and barriers these projects face (WRO 2012: 2). This is perhaps the largest such study conducted in the UK context and raises some key issues and ideas surrounding the use of community growing projects: from their impact on residents to an analysis of the various project sizes, the report covers an array of topic areas including the size of sites, demographic data on the participants, crops grown and funding, amongst other statistical data. In the context of this research, its findings on barriers to these initiatives and exploration of the reasons why people pursue this activity are extremely relevant: these are explored in subsequent sections of this chapter and the book as a whole. Similarly, Holland (2004) provided an overview of community garden practice in the UK context: using the FCFCG's extensive network to communicate with gardens all over the country. Despite this network, Holland's response rate was insignificant in comparison to the WRO, which gathered more data on the obstacles and general practices of community gardens.

Fig. 2.3 The UK-based Real Food Wythenshawe project engaging with local residents (Reproduced with permission from the Real Food Wythenshawe team)

As the research from Holland (2004), Milbourne (2011), the WRO (2012) and others demonstrate, the very idea of UA is flourishing within the UK context. This is reinforced when one explores the various schemes and initiatives designed to encourage UA within British cities, from the Soil Association's 'Sustainable Food Cities' programme or London's 'Capital Growth' to many other locally based projects, such as Real Food Wythenshawe in Greater Manchester. The latter is a Big Lottery-funded venture designed to tackle issues around food security and healthy eating in Wythenshawe, a deprived area in the North West of England; Fig. 2.3 shows how the project's ethos is to engage with the community and involve them with creating new sites in the area. Through UA, the project hopes to have an impact on the locale and encourage the population to eat more healthily, enabling many to have greater access to fresh fruit and vegetables.

Should UA Be Encouraged? Exploring Local Food Criticisms

Whilst we have thus far explored typologies of UA and reasons why some actors pursue the idea, we have not acknowledged criticisms. Those critiquing UA often focus on the yield which can be produced from such spaces, with arguments often centring on the suggested lack of produce which can be grown within the city (see, for instance, Cooper 2013). Various other studies explore this issue too, such as Nasr et al.'s (2010) 'Scaling up Urban Agriculture in Toronto' report for the Metcalf Foundation. Within this, Nasr et al. (2010) provide several recommendations for taking forward UA in Toronto, from improving technologies to knowledge; the report cumulates in a future scenario in which a fictitious gardener, named Zoe, navigates Toronto's much-improved UA

scene in 2020: from community gardening hubs to new programmes aimed at enhancing urban food, the authors depict a wonderful food-producing future for the city.

Adding to this, Feagan (2007: 24) claims that there is 'an emergent, politically orientated set of food movements and practices largely orientated around establishing processes which re-localise food system production and consumption'. Essentially, food companies, the mass media, lobbying groups and many others are calling for a focus on local food over global (Caputo 2012; Feagan 2007). The Welsh Rural Observatory's report on this form of agricultural activity in Wales highlights the overwhelming support from local authorities on this issue too, with many supporting community garden and related schemes (WRO 2012).

A major criticism of UA centres on this idea that local is best, in essence the idea of challenging systems perceived as being large scale and anti-democratic with more localised, sustainable, democratic decision-making (Marsden 2008; Purcell and Brown 2005). UA is often centred on a more 'local' approach, in which empowered citizens use (in the guerrilla form of UA, seize control of) neglected spaces and transform them into havens for produce. To an extent, Purcell's thoughts on the 'local trap' are relevant here: his argument centres on the notion that, from the perspectives of academics, practitioners or policy makers, decentralisation is often viewed as a positive move (Purcell 2006).

However, Born and Purcell's analysis of local food demonstrates how the 'local' is not necessarily always the best scale (Born and Purcell 2006, 2009). For instance, the authors focus on the idea of 'food miles' and how this is often used as a tool to encourage more UA. 'Food miles' is a term coined by Professor Tim Lang (see *The Guardian*, 2005), and, in its basic form, concerns the distance produce travels from farm or area of production to consumer (Feagan 2007; Marin 2003). Lang's distance idea plays a major role in showing the origins of a product, with long trade routes often being identified via the use of food miles (Lang 1999). Paxton (2005) suggests that food miles can be considered at two scales: transportation within a country and transportation between countries. On a national level, the transportation of food accounts for 25 % of the UK's HGV emissions, with 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide produced from road journeys alone, this equates roughly to 1.8 % of total CO_2 emissions nationally (Smith et al. 2005).

Born and Purcell deconstruct this term and proceed to question the need to move resources to the local and cut down on transport costs: for example, highlighting an example in Texas, where rice production was localised for this reason, they demonstrate how, due to the immense water requirements and land degradation, it made more ecological sense to maintain rice production in other parts of the world and import it into the UK (Born and Purcell 2009). The two are not alone in their reservations: sceptics of the food miles ideology claim that this approach is insufficiently robust to question whether the content of one's food basket is environmentally friendly (Chi et al. 2009). An earlier report, published by DEFRA and authored by Smith et al., reinforces Chi et al.'s reservations: summarised in the report, Smith et al. explain that using a single indicator for the food miles argument fails to capture the complexities of transportation (Smith et al. 2005). For example,

Hogan and Thorpe (2009) claim that, during certain times of the year, imported produce may have a lower environmental impact than food grown in the UK. The food miles concept is increasingly being exposed as unduly simplistic (Saunders et al. 2006), since the idea does not explore how the food was produced, processed or consumed (Food Ethics Council Business Forum 2007).

Regardless of the disadvantages of the food miles argument, consumers are increasingly becoming interested in 'food with a story' (Parrott et al. 2002: 254). Although clearly a very basic concept, Lang's distance-led argument is a helpful tool to let customers comprehend how far their produce has travelled. Lang's food miles idea is also used to promote UA: in some cities, UA is seen as the answer to solving problems associated with the current food system (Lee and Tan 2011). Again, this is where Purcell's local trap idea comes to fruition, with many UA activists automatically favouring the local scale in order to reduce food miles and empower communities.

Essentially, Purcell's local trap attempts to make academics and professionals step back and fully assess the situation before automatically declaring that the local is preferable (Marsden 2008; Sonnino 2010). Born and Purcell (2009) urge academics to pursue a different research agenda than that currently followed in mainstream food studies, which predominantly fails to address the issues surrounding local food production. They encourage scholars to dig deeper and ask pressing questions, 'Who will benefit from localisation? What is their agenda? What outcomes are most likely to result from a given scalar strategy?'(Born and Purcell 2009: 133). Crane et al. (2012) claim that Purcell's ideas are crucial for any researcher working at the local level and must be taken into account when interacting with this scale.

From Critique to Praise: The Future of the Local Trap

Oosterveer and Sonnenfield (2012) feel that Purcell's questions raise notions about the sometimes negative operations of local food projects. The outcomes and impacts of these community agriculture initiatives are entirely dependent on the actors and strategies employed (Marsden 2008; Oosterveer and Sonnenfield 2012). The local trap, according to Carolan (2011: 136), 'has been used to conceptually disassemble those that make a case for local food': evidently, like Carolan, there are some authors who are critical of the approach adopted by Purcell and his colleagues. For instance, Sonnino (2010) to some extent contradicts some of the local trap's main arguments. She explores the local trap concept in relation to food projects in two UK schools and argues that, even though some agro-food projects are embedded in the values of neo-liberalism, these local-scale initiatives can still produce sustainable results. However, she also recognises that the local trap rhetoric will become increasingly important as decision-makers engage more with food systems (Sonnino 2010). Nevertheless, Sonnino is critical of the approach that Born and Purcell pursue, providing evidence that not all local projects embedded in the neo-liberal idiom have a negative impact on sustainable development. She feels that judgement should not be

made purely on this neo-liberal approach, but rather on the outcomes of this increased consumerism and choice (Sonnino 2010). Carolan (2011) is more critical in his analysis of the local trap, expressing concern over its vagueness and approach to questioning local food promoters and feeling that Purcell's argument is too abstracted and overly critical of the local food movement.

Nevertheless, the idea is being widely recognised by academics as a lens for critically assessing whether the local necessarily provides better or sustainable social and economic food systems (Morgan and Sonnino 2012). Heldke (2012: 34) hails the critical thinking employed by Born and Purcell in particular, who challenge 'the almost-messianic fervour with which advocates promote locally grown food'. According to Heldke (2012), the argument for local food production far outweighs arguments against, with the idea offering one of the few conceptual avenues with which to question the impact and nature of food production systems.

The local trap is not unique to the field of food studies; rather it is beginning to appear in an increasing range of fields that are starting to question the local scale. Cummins, an author interested in neighbourhood health, expresses an interest in Purcell and Brown's concept of the local trap. He stipulates that even though the 'local trap lies in development planning and studies of urban democracy, the local trap concept can be usefully extended to contextual studies of population health' (Cummins 2007: 356). In this case and for the purposes of this book, the local trap is especially relevant when thinking about whether the local scale is always the best option with regard to food cultivators, especially in the context of guerrilla gardening. Crane et al. (2012: 5) use these ideas briefly in their exploration of guerrilla gardeners, arguing that the local trap is imperative when 'working in a localised context', especially when embedding yourself in a group lobbying for this form of governance. This is reinforced by Marsden (2008: 5) who declares 'that there is no simple conflation between the local and the sustainable'. Essentially he recognises, in a similar manner to Purcell and colleagues, that scale is not an appropriate indicator that actions are more 'socially just or ecologically sustainable'.

Whilst the foregoing sections provide conflicting accounts on how and whether UA should be encouraged, addressing arguments for and against local-level production, the whole section focuses specifically on official schemes, which are numerous and relatively well documented (Gorgolewski et al. 2011; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). Hidden from the view of many is the expansion of unregulated UA (Adams and Hardman 2014), projects which have been implemented, and continually run, without authority knowledge or planning permission. The main perpetrators behind these unpermitted forms of UA are guerrilla gardeners: in essence, individuals or groups who cultivate land without permission (Reynolds 2008). The local trap is important for later chapters in this text, especially when deconstructing the actions of the guerrilla gardeners. As will be revealed, the activity – like the local scale – is often viewed in a purely positive light; adopting thoughts from the local trap enables one to step back and assess the activity for what it is, as opposed to the perception that the outcomes are always beneficial for communities. In doing so, we hope to provide an objective account of informal UA: revealing guerrilla practice through engaging with the actors who pursue the activity and those impacted by the activity.

The Roots of Informal UA

An argument surrounding the rise of guerrilla gardening is the role which authorities, such as planners, play in instigating projects. The various ideas expressed above, from radical UA to everyday community gardening, all require a proactive planning system (Howe et al. 2005; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). Academics have argued that urban planning should pay more attention to food systems (Born and Purcell 2009; Neegard et al. 2012; Shackleton 2012; Tornaghi 2012). In the UK, at the heart of the modern planning system lies the spatial planner, a position which 'brings together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function' (ODPM 2004). Spatial planning theory aims to transform the previous system from a controlling, negative, reactive entity to one that is adaptive and positive, enabling new innovative action and ideas (Scott 2001; Scott et al. 2009; Taylor 2010).

This theoretical ideal elevates the planner as facilitator and enabler to maximise multifunctionality and diversity that supports more innovative uses of land food systems (Nadin 2007; Tewdwr-Jones et al. 2010). In reality, however, the planner is often viewed in a negative light by individuals attempting to use land in innovative words: a barrier preventing the creation of spaces for UA (Tornaghi 2012). Ultimately, Reynolds (2008) argues that this rigidness can result in guerrilla gardeners taking up arms:

> There's so much disused land across Wales and if we could get over that and the planning permissions that's needed we could have loads of projects up and running for relatively small start-up costs. (WRO 2012: 16)

There is a substantive literature that perceives the planning system as a potential barrier for UA development. Yet UA-related advisory bodies, such as the previously mentioned Community Land Advisory Service and FCFCG, claim that planning permission should be sought before any development (FCFCG, circa 2005): planning permission can sometimes be refused, but this is an unlikely scenario (Community Land Advisory Service 2012). This is echoed by PlanLoCal (2012) who stipulates that 'if you have an idea for a low carbon project or a community garden, you are likely to need some sort of planning permission to make it happen', and with the latter proposal, evidence of 'community support' would be required. The recent report by the WRO (2012), although not concentrating specially on UA (16 % of the sites surveyed were urban), raises questions regarding the public's perception of the planning system, particularly the arduous process of obtaining permission to use land. Furthermore, Adams and Hardman (2014) argue how this perception forces some down the informal route: driving UA enthusiasts to adopt guerrilla-type practices.

This book now delves into the idea of informal UA, firstly by introducing guerrilla gardening and then deconstructing the action. Subsequent chapters focus on empirical material gathered over the last few years, before relating this to material covered in this chapter. In doing so, we reveal the intimate details of guerrilla practices through our experiences in the UK.

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Chapter 3
Unearthing the Unpermitted Movement

Abstract The occupation of land without permission, or 'guerrilla gardening', is on the rise globally: from Africa to North America, Europe and beyond, groups and individuals are colonising space in order to beautify neglected land or to grow produce. Yet despite this large international movement, there is little academic research on the topic; few have explored 'guerrillas' up close and even fewer have delved into those who pursue the activity to grow vegetables and fruit in the city. Beginning with an outline of guerrilla gardening, we proceed to discuss the activity and various examples from across the globe to showcase the wide variety of individuals and groups who partake in the informal activity. The chapter aims to provide a broad overview of academic and nonacademic explorations of guerrilla gardeners who pursue the idea of UA, setting the scene for the following chapters which reflect on empirical material we have gathered on guerrilla activities.

Introduction: Informal Action in the Urban

So far we have explored formal types of Urban Agriculture (UA), providing an overview of both the radical, with examples of rooftop farming, and the everyday side of the 'movement', such as the rise of community gardens. Whilst permitted UA is now thriving and gaining large amounts of attention, both in academic and practice circles, there is little acknowledgement of unpermitted food growing: particularly the actions of guerrilla gardeners who are pursuing this agenda. Only a handful of studies currently exist to provide an insight into this underground world, in particular, to reveal the motivations, practices and aspirations of those who pursue UA under the radar.

Many official UA schemes have roots in the realm of guerrilla gardening. The UK's Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET), for instance, began as a guerrilla project, with residents occupying spaces within the town to produce vegetables (IET 2011). The dominant nature of these individuals soon persuaded the relevant local authority to adapt legislation to support their action, with the colonised patches thus making the transition from illegal to legal uses of space (Adams et al. 2014). Another example is that of Rosa Rose from Germany. This was a group of residents who began colonising a patch of land adjacent to their apartment block: growing

vegetables and holding events on the space (Rosa Rose 2007). The local authority was able to liaise with the landowner and gain temporary use of the land for the residents, who were able to expand their scheme and grow more vegetables on the space (Reynolds 2008). In a more comprehensive study, Milbourne (2011: 7) notes how 'tactics of guerrilla gardening were employed to transform [community garden] spaces and then agreements had been made with the local authority'; in essence, grass-roots tactics facilitated these UA projects. Whilst these are only a few examples, all demonstrate the link between guerrilla gardening and UA, specifically how the former can initiate a legal, more formal type of food cultivation. The following section explores this concept in detail, before further investigating the role of guerrillas with UA.

Guerrilla Gardening: The Rise of Radical Agriculture

Although it is evident that there is a growing amount of UA occurring in UK cities, there has recently been a huge upsurge in grass-roots activity which, amongst other things, also aims to increase UA (Hardman et al. 2012; McKay 2011). At its most simple, guerrilla gardening involves:

THE ILLICIT CULTIVATION OF SOMEONE ELSE'S LAND. Reynolds (2008: 16)

With this rather simple definition, Reynolds – the father of the UK movement – attempts to capture the actors involved in this activity: his view is that anyone, consciously or not, colonising land which is not their own is in effect practising a form of guerrilla gardening. Whether you are a hardcore activist 'seed bombing[1] the Prime Minister's lawn or an elderly person merely tackling a neglected grass verge opposite your house, in Reynolds's eyes, you are a guerrilla gardener. The capitalised quote above demonstrates the simplicity of the activity and how he views it as something of an umbrella term, which incorporates a wide variety of actors.

Guerrilla gardeners, for the most part, occupy space that is either 'stalled' or underused (Hou 2010; Metcalf and Widener 2011; Thompson and Sturgis 2006). 'Stalled spaces' are derelict sites which will, at some point, be developed (Carpenter and Marrs 2012; Greenspace Scotland 2010), whilst underused spaces could range from an urban grass verge to a park or even a playing field (Scott et al. 2013). Since development could take years (e.g. see Glasgow City Council 2011), guerrilla gardeners may act on this inertia and beautify these neglected areas in the meantime (Lewis 2012). These stalled and underused spaces present the perfect playgrounds for urban explorers (guerrilla gardeners, graffiti artists, gangs and so forth) to engage in activities that would be forbidden elsewhere (Edensor 2005; Qviström 2007). By practising in such spaces, these actors are challenging

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[1] Seed bombing is a tactic employed by some guerrilla involving a biodegradable object which can be thrown into inaccessible spaces. The popularity of the concept has resulted in commercialisation (see, e.g. www.seedball.co.uk).

the ways in which these areas were 'meant' to be seen and used (Hubbard 2006). Dual-carriageway central reservations, intended to prevent cars colliding with pedestrians, become sites of symbolic food production (Adams and Hardman 2014), whilst train stations and other public amenities are transformed for agricultural activity (Flores 2006).

Guerrilla gardeners have existed for longer than most claim; there is evidence to suggest that the activity has been practised for centuries (Flores 2006; McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008). The origin of 'modern' guerrilla gardening, however, is near impossible to determine. Richard Reynolds explains that the term was first coined in New York City (guerrillagardening.org undated). In 1973 the 'Green Guerillas' (sic: guerrilla with one 'r') formed a grass-roots movement in NYC, initially using seed-filled condoms thrown over fences and walls in order to beautify inaccessible abandoned spaces (Paul 2009). The group continued its underground war, developing new techniques and growing larger. Today the 'Green Guerillas' have rebranded themselves; now more mainstream and less covert, they aim to educate residents about the benefits of community gardening (Green Guerillas undated).

Several authors provide a chronological narrative of the guerrilla gardening movement in the UK context. McKay (2011), for instance, claims that although small sporadic acts occurred throughout the late twentieth century, the first large-scale guerrilla action featured in the mass media occurred during the 'Reclaim the Streets Movement'. In 1996, several thousand activists occupied the M41 – Britain's shortest motorway – in order to highlight several political issues. One of their activities was to use large umbrella-like skirts to hide the planting of saplings into the M41's tarmac (Jordan 1998). Unbeknown to those who undertook this hidden activity, they were actually taking part in an early form of guerrilla gardening, juxtaposing a sapling with Britain's shortest motorway (Hardman 2011). McKay (1998) suggests that this early action resulted in the Highways Authority, which maintained the M41, paying several hundred thousand pounds to repair the motorway.

Awareness of guerrilla gardening has reached a new level, with entertainment series, such as the Australian prime-time television show, *Guerrilla Gardeners*: 'the show's narrative revolves around a group of six rather attractive young people with horticultural and building expertise, who aim to beautify various ugly spaces in peri-urban and suburban Sydney' (Lewis 2012: 319). Perhaps most relevant to this book is how this series portrays the guerrillas: they are seen to be young, 'hip' individuals making a positive impact and rebelling against an oppressive authority (*Network Ten* 2010). The show's producers use a variety of catchy headings to lure the viewers in: 'wearing hard hats and safety vests as a disguise, they perform their unique raids right under the nose of police, council workers and government rangers' (*Network Ten* 2010), playing on the idea of the illegality of their actions and the constant danger they act under (Lewis 2012).

In addition to this, McKay (2011) explains how Reynolds's website has adapted the techniques used by the Green Guerillas and provided clear step-by-step instructions to site visitors interested in the activity. Taking this one step further and looking towards the future, commercial companies and 'trendy' magazines

Fig. 3.1 'Seed bombs' ready
for action during a guerrilla
gardening dig (Reproduced
with permission from F
Troop)

have also adopted the idea. Figure 3.1 depicts seed bombs which we bought via
EBay, whilst a company called 'Seedball' had developed the idea further, selling
vast quantities online.[2]

Furthermore, a state of the art 'seed bomb' has taken over from the Green
Guerillas' improvised condom device. Much like an explosive device used in war,
the bomb is dropped from the air but on impact, instead of exploding, the capsule
melts away allowing the seed to sprout (Yanko Design 2008). Yanko's intention was
to use this variation of the seed bomb to tackle 'arid areas' and breathe life into
desert landscapes. Parallels exist between the guerrilla's use of the low-tech version
and Yanko's concept, with both aiming to introduce vegetation to spaces which
lack life. A recent edition of *Stylist* magazine featured the seed bomb on a page
highlighting items for sale, or, as they aptly named it, 'the style list': 'be a garden
goddess with these grenade-shaped seed bombs' (*Stylist* 2012: 10). Evidently, these
two examples suggest that guerrilla gardening is increasingly seen as trendy and
perhaps indicates the transition of the act from that of a submerged phenomenon to
a mainstream activity.

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[2] For more information see: www.seedball.co.uk.

Why Choose the 'Illegal' Route? Reasons for Guerrilla Gardening

Modern guerrilla groups vary dramatically; some may have political aims, whilst others just perform the act for fun and have no solid strategic plans (Tracey 2007). Guerrilla gardening has, since about 2008, received a large amount of media interest (see, e.g. BBC News 2009; CBC 2012; Fox News 2008; Sky News 2009); this, combined with the introduction of Richard Reynolds' virtual networking forum, where you can 'enlist' in a 'troop' (guerrillagardening.org undated), appears to have resulted in a rapid expansion of the movement. Although no exact figure exists, the amount of ongoing activity is argued to be large (Johnson 2011; Lewis 2012). There is no single generally agreed definition applicable to those who partake in guerrilla gardening (Flores 2006): the act crosses boundaries and includes various organisations, networks and action groups – from elderly women to young students, practically anyone unlawfully altering land can be deemed a guerrilla (McKay 2011).

Reynolds's description of today's guerrilla gardener conjures up the image that these individuals are against authority. He persistently uses examples when city authorities have destroyed green projects, such as when New York City's ruling body decided to destroy a 15,000 ft^2 garden to make way for housing (Reynolds 2008). Throughout Reynolds's influential and widely cited book he appears to use these examples to align the reader's views with those of his guerrillas, who are all 'fighting to reclaim land from enemy forces' (Reynolds 2008: 20). McKay (2011) believes that Reynolds' text promotes the act of guerrilla gardening and his own interpretation of the activity, reading more like a textbook of how to adopt this grass-roots approach, as opposed to the pros and cons of guerrilla action.

In summary, Reynolds's approach and words appear to be actively anti-authoritarian, promoting the idea that grass-roots groups should declare war and occupy neglected spaces (Reynolds 2008). Reynolds' anti-authoritarian views in themselves are nothing new: regulated space and the battles that ensue have long been a focus of discussion. For example, the fight between classes in Los Angeles is well documented by Mike Davis (1992), with his image that LA was increasingly becoming militarised via the use of CCTV and private security. Davis (1992) formed the idea that Los Angeles is becoming a fortress that favours its middle-class citizens, whilst the homeless and lower classes were pushed to one side. This inevitably leads to violence, and citizens being moved against their will (Davis 1992). In stark contrast to Davis, Reynolds paints the picture that guerrilla gardening does not directly confront authorities, with most guerrillas lying invisible and remaining undetected: using hidden tactics to challenge those in power.

Essentially, Reynolds (2008) promotes a covert strategy for would-be guerrilla gardeners, suggesting that a submerged approach would result in action occurring without authority interaction. In essence, Reynolds is promoting a form of a hidden network, an idea that has been around for centuries; history shows how effective remaining invisible can be. For instance, Melucci (1996) describes this in the context of the civil rights movement in America, when invisibility allowed the recruit-

ment of members even in times of extreme oppression. More recently, Holloway and Hubbard (2001) describe how, in a Canadian city, parts of the lesbian community remain invisible in order to avoid prejudice and hostility. There appear to be parallels between guerrilla gardening and these types of movements: they remain in the shadows to survive, avoiding those who want to restrict or halt their action.

Guerrilla gardening groups recruit members away from the prying eye of the authorities. They use anonymous virtual networks such as guerrillagardening.org to plan and organise these digs, further cloaking the network from those who could threaten its existence. Recent developments in social media, notably Facebook and Twitter, mean that guerrillas are now able to add further controls over who can see their updates and calls for action. Whilst this may be a positive point for the guerrillas themselves, it creates a huge obstacle for researchers wishing to access such groups, with permissions and key words often required to view the content.

The guerrillagardening.org forum has its own unique way of masking the identities of those who post, with members able to opt for 'troop numbers' to hide their identity, yet another military colloquialism. Full names are only revealed if the guerrilla has passed away (Reynolds 2008). Yet again, McKay (2011) argues that Reynolds's self-given 001 number creates the idea that he is the original guerrilla, a misleading impression since, as we have discussed, the activity predated Reynolds's own involvement.

Guerrilla gardeners do not necessarily have to be part of a troop (Tracey 2007). The 'shrub man' is an example of a solo guerrilla gardener: this individual was featured on national news reports and was described as a 'horticultural hero' by the local population of Colchester (Sky News 2009). Unlike Reynolds's guerrillas, who usually use the cover of darkness to hide their antics, shrub man uses a green grass-textured costume to hide his image; enhancing a comparison to a superhero tackling evil. The 'shrub man' is attempting to help his community by maintaining hanging baskets in Colchester's town centre (Sky News 2009). Guerrilla gardening evidently crosses boundaries and includes various organisations, networks, individuals and action groups. Diversity also exists in the reasons why guerrilla gardeners illegally cultivate land (Hou 2010). A recent example of alternative agendas for illegal gardening could be that of Paul Harfleet, with his attempts to identify areas of homophobic violence in UK cities. Harfleet plants pansies where incidents of hostility have taken place against the gay community (The Pansy Project 2012). Harfleet plants them without permission from the local authority but works with various organisations, such as local charities, in order to identify areas and raise awareness through guerrilla gardening (McKay 2011).

Nevertheless, the core focus is on the beautifying element of guerrilla gardening, such as that displayed by a group in Walsall, UK, in Fig. 3.2. In this instance, a green-fingered resident, tired of the lack of green space in the area, has started to plant on the corner of her street, creating a small fence and signs to help passers-by understand the action. This is typical of a guerrilla gardening project, with the activity revolving around the creation of greenery within an otherwise neglected landscape. Whilst there is some focus on this element, in the form of academic article, media reports and blogs, there is a severe lack of focus on productive guerrilla gardeners, specifically those who pursue a UA agenda.

Fig. 3.2 The Caldmore guerrilla gardeners' site (Photographs courtesy of Anna Rogozinska)

Illegal Urban Agriculture in the Global South

Before delving more into the guerrilla gardening literature and exploring current thoughts, we first wish to reflect on the UA movement in the Global South, particularly Africa, in which it is viewed as an illegal activity (Chipungu et al. 2014). There are evidently parallels between this practice and guerrilla gardening, with the theme of illegality connecting the two. Indeed, Reynolds ventured to Botswana in 2008 as part of a British Council-funded mission, and although the aim of this was not to talk about guerrilla gardening, it was still a practice he encountered.[3] In this visit, he witnesses a lady who has colonised land close to where she lives in order to feed her family and donate food to charity. Reynolds uses this example to argue how the guerrilla movement is international and comes in many different forms, from those seeking an escape from everyday life to those pursing the activity for survival.

This idea of colonising land without permission and growing food for survival is common practice in some parts of Africa (see, for instance, Arku et al. 2012; Lynch et al. 2013). Magidimisha et al. (2012) argues that authorities discourage UA for a variety of reasons, from worries regarding sanitation to concerns regarding its impact on the urban ecology. There are also questions regarding the soil in which the produce is grown, with areas where UA is practised often featuring poor soil

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[3] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDphi9TOTRk for the video of his visit to Botswana.

conditions which could be dangerous to human health (cf. City of Johannesburg 2003). Yet despite this stance by officials and concerns regarding the safety of the practice, illegal UA is widespread: from Nairobi to Johannesburg, citizens are cultivating land without permission (Chipungu et al. 2014).

In terms of other Global South nations, this book has already touched on the case of Cuba, perhaps one of the most cited locations when UA is mentioned. In a similar manner to Africa, UA practised in Havana is often illegal, with residents colonising fallen building sites and any leftover space for produce, enabling them to become more self-sufficient in times of hardship (Vijoen and Howe 2005). However there have been recent strides by the authorities to regulate and promote the practise, which ultimately enables more of the population to partake in UA.

Again, this idea of what exactly guerrilla gardening constitutes is raised here. It becomes clear that illegal UA is much more widespread in the Global South than Global North, yet Reynolds (and others) argues that these actions can be viewed as a form of guerrilla gardening. In essence, guerrilla gardening is merely an umbrella term for any form of unpermitted activity: whether actors are merely beautifying the landscape or cultivating crops, conscious or not, they are guerrilla gardeners.

Existing Academic Rhetoric: Examining the Current Evidence Base

Essentially, the literature and media comments surrounding guerrilla gardening do not investigate in any detail the reasons why these individuals adopt an unpermitted route. Apart from the occasional derogatory comment by Reynolds (2008) regarding the inept ability of authorities and planners to recognise innovative action, there is little or no acknowledgment of the guerrilla's relationship with authority. Perhaps Hou (2010) is the closest to touching on this idea, particularly with his comments on the democratisation of Berlin's urban planning through temporary activities such as guerrilla gardening. He suggests that these grass-roots initiatives have made the local authority planners consider how to use leftover spaces located in and around cities (Hou 2010).

However, regardless of these investigations into the activity, Crane (2011: 6) claims that 'there is a lack of in-depth analysis, or academic work' on guerrilla gardening. Crane attempted to partially fill this gap by undertaking a participatory study on guerrillas in Canada. However, one could argue that this study was flawed, with Crane (2011: 2) reviewing 'a project started by the researcher'; essentially, the author was at the centre of the study, acting both as a researcher and guerrilla gardener. The paper is also based on the author's dissertation and thus, in a similar manner to Hardman (2009), does not have the scope to fully investigate the action of UA guerrilla gardeners.

The majority of these investigations into guerrilla gardening appear to originate from student texts (see, e.g. Crane 2011; Hardman 2009; Harrison 2010; Zanetti 2007). A recent PhD thesis, for instance, investigated the act of guerrilla gardening

in relation to other grass-roots movements, adopting an approach which mainly involved reviewing secondary sources (Harrison 2010). Harrison relies heavily on the ideas of Reynolds and Tracey to frame her argument, which concentrates specifically on how guerrillas operate, before comparing the activity with other grass-roots examples. Whilst Harrison creates an interesting narrative of the activity, her reliance on these secondary sources renders the piece somewhat abstracted from the guerrilla activity itself, with the researcher merely repeating thoughts expressed by Reynolds and other similar authors.

A dissertation by Zanetti (2007) demonstrates one of the first attempts by an author to participate in guerrilla gardening, with the intention of attempting to understand how actors use public space. However, in a similar manner to Crane, this study is limited by the constraints upon Zanetti's academic work. Evidently, these constraints result in several 'holes' appearing in his work: from the academic position taken, the absence of explicit ethical considerations, to the guerrillas with whom he interacts (a troop coordinated by Reynolds); his research only focuses on the positives of the actions, entirely reliant on Reynolds's views. Nevertheless, Zanetti provides one of the most in-depth accounts of guerrilla gardening in the UK.

Perhaps the most recent study, and closest to this research, is the 2012 paper by Crane et al., concerning guerrilla gardeners in Canada (Crane 2011). The 2012 paper builds on her undergraduate dissertation, using a participant action research role to investigate guerrilla gardeners in Ontario. Other publications exist, some featuring direct links between guerrilla gardening and UA: McKay (2011), Milbourne (2011), Reynolds (2008), Tornaghi (2012) and others suggest that some official UA projects have roots in this grass-roots activity.

Nevertheless, as Hall (2008) suggests, academics – particularly social scientists and geographers – have faced difficulties with researching and interacting with those who perform illegal activities. In the case of previous research into guerrilla gardening, the vast majority of authors have personal and sometimes participatory interests with the activity and thus appear to feel that combining both research and their recreational pursuits would be sensible: core authors such as Crane, McKay and Reynolds to Tracey, Zanetti and others are, or have been, deeply embedded within these networks. It could be argued therefore, that whilst there has been some limited research into this activity (notably non-UA guerrilla gardeners), those researching the actions have been guerrilla gardeners too: participating in the action and with a deep belief that this grass-roots activity should be encouraged. It is not inappropriate to suggest that this may have influenced their work.

Using and Adopting Space: Colonising the Urban

It is quite clear that the literature available on guerrilla gardening focuses predominantly on interactions in the urban environment. The activity is portrayed as an illegal act, which is 'intentional but small-scale, largely anonymous, creative, "improvements" or "contributions" to lived urban spaces' (Douglas 2011: 3). As do

many others, Douglas is portraying the activity in a positive light, arguing that it benefits the urban environment and creates new, improved spaces. He also likens the act to similar activities which utilise urban spaces in ways otherwise not anticipated by designers or planners: graffiti artists and street artists who adopt and use space for creativity (Douglas 2011).

These alternative activities are often characterised as mutations, with actors changing and morphing the city, in small ways, from a grass-roots level (Tornaghi 2014). Occasionally, some of these activities are portrayed as transgressive: impacting negatively on the city. The antics of graffiti artists and others who tamper with the urban environment are well documented. Borden (2003), for instance, talks about skateboarders colonising land through the use of graffiti. In a similar manner, Edensor (2005) discusses the dissatisfaction of landowners who feel that these activities ruin environments, viewing graffiti artists in the same vein as rogue fly posters and other individuals who desecrate landscapes. One could question the transgressivness of guerrilla gardening; Creswell (1996: 49), for example, when commenting on graffiti artists, explains that the activity 'is linked to a moral disorder, a particular inappropriateness'. Graffiti artists and other forms of anarchist urban activity are generally portrayed as something inherently negative in the media (Creswell 1996; Edensor 2005), although the activities and creations of Banksy are now viewed more positively, especially as they have become commercialised. In stark contrast, this chapter has already alluded to the idea that guerrilla gardening is viewed only in a positive manner, both in mass media and academic circles.

One of the most comprehensive analyses of these acts is contained within Ferrell's (2001) personal reflections on urban anarchy. He provides a commentary on a range of case studies of 'underground' activities, from skateboarders and graffiti artists to guerrilla radio stations and guerrilla gardeners (Ferrell 2001; Franck and Stevens 2007). A theme running through all of Ferrell's discussions is his constant use of the term 'guerrilla'. Whilst referring to skateboarders, for example, he views them as 'urban guerrillas' who ignore the 'well mounted signs' and flout the rules (Ferrell 2001: 70). He also uses the term loosely for illegal radio broadcasters – 'guerrilla radio' (Ferrell 2001: 218) – and a variety of other anarchist activities, including guerrilla gardening. Essentially, Ferrell (2001) characterises guerrilla gardening as an anarchist action and aligns it with the likes of graffiti artists and others who transform urban space, somewhat reinforcing the suggestion by Douglas (2011) regarding the colonising nature of the activity.

Perhaps more blunt in his feelings towards guerrilla gardening, and its anarchist nature, Shantz (2009: 165) explains that 'guerrilla gardening [is an act] of recovery of underused urban spaces and the de-privatisation of spaces which can then be turned over to public use'. In effect, he portrays guerrillas as individuals who can make a difference by challenging those who own the land (Shantz 2009). Whether guerrilla gardening shares values with extreme activities such as graffiti or pirate radio is yet to be debated fully, but a simple commonality which does exist – interlinking the various groups – is how they contest the power of space: these actors do not conform to the norm of being 'passive and guided by established rules' (de Certeau 2011: xi).

The idea of guerrilla gardening shares values with more established forms of horticultural activity: the previously discussed community garden movement in New York, for example, despite being official, contests the everyday use of urban space (Hou 2010; Tracey 2011). It could be argued that, in a similar manner to the community gardens, which occupy some of the most densely populated spaces in central New York and other cities, guerrilla gardening could be seen as 'out of place': something which does not belong in densely populated areas (Creswell 1996). Whilst the practices may not always be inappropriate, the very nature of the activity often contravenes 'architectural and spatial norms' (Adams and Hardman 2014). This contestation has been highlighted by numerous authors, including Pudup (2008) who demonstrated how community gardening, and its guerrilla counterpart, challenges the neoliberal policies adopted by governments, questioning how space should be used and by whom.

Whilst guerrilla gardening and community gardening may share some similarities with their approaches to using space and implicitly, or explicitly, challenging policies, it must be noted again how the operational procedures of the former differ. The guerrilla prefix denotes the operating style, with individuals practising this generally opting to remain invisible to authority (Crane et al. 2012). There are several other activities in the urban realm which use this guerrilla prefix: from guerrilla knitting to guerrilla hospitality, the term 'guerrilla' is used to imply that the activity – although sometimes not the product – is hidden (Lugosi et al. 2009; Ziolkowska 2010). These activities are not too dissimilar from guerrilla gardening. Lugosi et al. (2009: 3080) use the gardening ideology to explain the concept of guerrilla hospitality: 'similarly to such social phenomena as guerrilla gardening, guerrilla hospitality involves judgements about urban aesthetics and the rehabilitation of the decaying environments'. These practices also appear to employ similar tactics to guerrilla gardeners; Knit the City (2009), for example, describes the act of yarn bombing, which is very similar to the concept of seed bombing, as 'the art of enhancing a public place or object with guerrilla knitting'. Fundamentally, this involves guerrilla knitters approaching targets and attaching their pieces of work, before making a hasty escape (Knit the City 2009).

This section has provided a glimpse into some similar actions performed in the urban environment, and, whilst there is an ever-emerging base of research on UA-related activities such as community gardening (notably Holland 2004; Milbourne 2010, 2011; Pudup 2008 and Tracey 2011), Douglas (2011) feels that more academic research is required into these semi-illegal acts and those who opt to remain invisible, such as guerrilla knitters, guerrilla gardeners, graffiti artists and other informal activists.

Unregulated UA and Guerrilla Gardening

Guerrilla gardeners 'tend to fall into two groups: those who are driven to beautify space and those who seek to grow crops in it' (Reynolds 2008: 28). McKay (2011) reinforces this suggestion by declaring that guerrillas either colonise space with

flowers or occasionally try to introduce produce into the landscape. There are significant numbers of guerrilla gardeners who grow crops in the urban landscape (Flores 2006; Harrison 2010), using neglected areas – as Edensor (2005) claims – for activities which are perhaps unsuitable for some spaces in the city. The potential for UA activity is heavily promoted by authors who encourage guerrilla gardening (see Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007). In particular, Reynolds (2008) cites examples from around the globe in which potatoes, tomatoes and a whole host of other vegetables are grown within the urban fabric. Whilst Reynolds and other guerrilla authors (including Crane et al. 2012; Johnson 2011; Tracey 2007; Winnie 2010; Zanetti 2007) all encourage the growing of food, they provide little information on the safety aspect of this activity. Fundamentally, it is potentially hazardous to grow, and then to consume, produce without testing the soil conditions (Cook et al. 2005; MeUser 2010; Turrio-Baldassarri et al. 2007). Cook et al. (2005) claim that some vegetables are more susceptible to pollutants and could seriously damage an individual's health. Pollution is more likely in urban areas and particularly on the types of disused and marginal spaces that have been colonised for guerrilla UA.

Nevertheless, Tracey (2007) explains that if guerrilla gardeners approach food cultivation in an appropriate manner, through efficient practices, huge health benefits for the community and local wildlife could result. Complementing this view is Winnie's analysis of the current food system: to all intents and purposes, Winnie calls for more food radicals to rise up and create their own food systems – growing produce for the people, by the people (Winnie 2010). Reynolds – perhaps the most vocal of all guerrilla activists – also pushes extensively for guerrillas to try and create spaces for vegetables. Interestingly, McKay (2011), whilst acknowledging the ability of guerrillas to touch on food production, ultimately demonstrates how many guerrillas transition to legal, self-contained plots, if they wish to pursue the crop cultivation aspect of guerrilla gardening.

Cobb (2011) provides probably one of the most comprehensive texts on UA grass-roots activities. She uses a variety of American case studies which demonstrate how 'successful grass-roots food projects ultimately converge around two central points: local food and community' (Cobb 2011: 9). Fundamentally, though, she provides a rather one-dimensional view of grass-roots activity, arguing that this is the way forward for the new food system, creating accessible spaces embedded in local communities. It becomes evident how her views correlate with the majority of authors who reflect on UA grass-roots activity (for instance, Johnson 2011; Metcalf and Widener 2011; Winnie 2010), particularly how these writers view the activity in purely a positive light: they all seem determined to convince the reader that grass-roots UA is flawless and one of the only ways to tackle the current problems with food systems.

Figure 3.3, captured during a trip by Hardman to Nitra, Slovakia, demonstrates the scope of this movement, with guerrilla gardeners across the globe practising UA without permission. In this case, students colonised a piece of land close to the city centre and have now started to work with the local authority to cultivate the space. Despite this global informal UA movement, literature which specifically focuses on

Fig. 3.3 'Hidepark', a site in Nitra, Slovakia, which originally began through guerrilla action (Hardman's photographs)

the exploits of food-cultivating guerrillas is minimal since 'few academic authors have focussed exclusively on guerrilla gardening' (Crane et al. 2012: 1). Yet the majority of published academic studies point to the potential impact of guerrilla UA; this idea that grass-roots movements are able to cultivate sufficient crops in the city, without the permission of the relevant authorities, to make a difference to food availability (Johnson 2009). Ultimately, McKay (2011) calls for more exploration into guerrilla gardening and food, particularly how the sites are operated and how the troops go about cultivating food in the urban context.

Guerrilla Gardening as a Social Movement: The Reach of Guerrilla Gardening

We have explored the history of the act of guerrilla gardening, how guerrilla gardeners operate and the idea of guerrilla UA, but so far we have only hinted at the idea of a wider movement: that guerrillas are somehow connected and are able to exchange thoughts, ideas and strategies via this network. Reynolds continually refers to the guerrilla action as an 'organic movement' (Reynolds 2008: 22), bringing people together regardless of their ethnicity, class or nationality. McKay (2011)

reinforces Reynolds's comment by suggesting that anybody can be part of the guerrilla movement, whether they realise it or not: from students to pensioners, the movement incorporates a wide variety of actors (Hardman et al. 2012):

> A social movement is a broad alliance or network of individuals, groups, and organisations that are united by their shared goals, aspirations, and interests. A social movement may comprise trade unions, political parties, cooperatives, neighbourhood actions groups, pressure groups, and any other collective organisations in so far as they share a common political purpose. Fulcher and Scott (2003: 781)

Social movements are not single organisations, but networks that may or may not include a formal organisation (Della Porta and Diani 2010). In relation to Della Porta and Diani's explanation, it is already evident that Reynolds's guerrilla network may be classed as a social movement. Guerrillas receive little to no support from outside bodies and tend to function alone, using the guerrillagardening. org website to communicate with others (Johnson 2011). Those who lie outside Reynolds's network are a little harder to classify: some guerrilla gardeners operate without the larger network support and may be completely unaware of its existence (Hardman et al. 2012; McKay 2011).

Fulcher and Scott's definition of a social movement is a little more detailed. They reinforce the idea that those guerrilla gardeners, who are connected to Reynolds's guerrillagardening.org, can be classified as part of a social movement. This is an example of a network of individuals who share common goals, aspirations and interests (Fulcher and Scott 2003), in essence a social network which is organised and communicates via the internet. Social movements aim for change (Kendall 2010), something with which Western society seems particularly obsessed (Abercrombie and Warde 1995):

> We start from negation, from dissonance. The dissonance can take many shapes. An inarticulate mumble of discontent, tears of frustration, a scream of rage, a confident roar. An unease, a confusion, a longing, a critical vibration. Holloway (2005: 1)

As Holloway (2005) suggests, this desire for change could range from a slight 'mumble of discontent' to a 'roar'. The guerrillas may, for example, be angry with the local authority's lack of maintenance of a particular space, or they could merely be digging for more political reasons (Tracey 2007). Their desire for change could even be aligned with Kendall's explanation of 'Relative Deprivation Theory'. In essence Kendall (2010) explains that social movements arise when people feel that they have been deprived of their 'fair share' and thus 'people who suffer relative deprivation are more likely to feel that change is necessary' (Kendall 2010: 555). The Rosa Rose troop in Germany exemplifies Kendall's theory, particularly in how the troop reclaimed the land through guerrilla action and online knowledge exchange (on guerrillagardening.org), in the face of a private company's desire to develop the space (Rosa Rose 2007).

Starr (2010) aligns guerrilla gardeners, who practise a local form of UA, to a wider local food movement. Fundamentally, Starr argues that local food cultivation and those who practise it are part of a global movement (Starr 2010). She uses

Melucci's (1996) stability argument (the sustained use of the term 'we' to identify a movement) which helps in understanding whether local food production can be likened to a social movement whilst simultaneously using Eyerman and Jamison's suggestion that social movements should generate 'ideals' (Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Starr 2010). Much like Reynolds, Starr starts using the term 'local food movement' (Starr 2010: 484): perhaps indicating that she believes that some forms of local food production can be seen as a social movement. Reinforcing Starr's perspective is Flannery and Mincyte's (2010) declaration that food in all its forms is intensely political. They continue by explaining that local agrofood systems could have connections with 'activism, social change, and the politics of consumption' (Flannery and Mincyte 2010: 425).

Wiltshire and Geoghegan (2012) take the discussion on collective gardening further, and provide a comprehensive table which acknowledges the various motivations for adopting a singular or collective approach to the activity. This table outlines a variety of parameters for a gardener opting to go alone or with others; primarily, Wiltshire and Geoghegan argue that self-interest motivates the solo gardener, whilst a common goal is often why horticulturalists band together. One can see the value of applying their analysis to the study of guerrilla gardening. Their arguments as to why gardeners opt for an individual or collective approach provide this research with an appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of each option. For example, whilst land might be harder to acquire for groups, there is usually a strong social atmosphere; the opposite evidently applies for someone who opts to tackle the activity alone (Wiltshire and Geoghegan 2012). Furthermore, they suggest that the difficulties experienced by groups seeking to negotiate access to land are more likely to push groups to adopt the guerrilla gardening approach. Although Wiltshire and Geoghegan mention this briefly, and without any evidence to reinforce their claims, the literature already discussed does, to some extent, support this view: it appears that there is an overwhelming majority of groups, as opposed to individuals, involved in guerrilla action.

There is, therefore, evidence that movements are complex and take many different forms. Melucci (1996) reinforces this suggestion by challenging the traditional idea that movements are rigid and that the characters involved play a distinct coherent role. He continues by explaining that social movements are 'fragmented phenomena, which internally contain a multitude of different meanings, forms of actions, and modes of organization' (Melucci 1996: 13). Melucci's criticism of the traditional ideal does not end there. He continues by explaining that two assumptions continue to linger: the first sees collective action as a 'unified thing', whilst the second assumes that a group of individuals automatically become a 'we' and that this needs 'no further analysis' (Melucci 1996: 15).

Melucci is, in essence, unpacking the word 'movement' and suggests that the term is too generalised. He suggests that movements are 'in fact a product of multiple and heterogeneous social processes' (Melucci 1996: 20) as opposed to a unified thing. This dismissal of homogenous movements is echoed in his core theory on acting collectively (Starr 2010). Melucci (1996) suggests that constructing collective

action requires the understanding of five key principles: the definition of collective action, its formation, its components, the form it assumes and finally the collective actions which must be examined. In essence, Melucci is explaining that there is no generic form of collective action; rather to understand collective action, one must use the principles to be aware of the movement in question. Evidently, movements are extremely complex: involving a variety of actors from a wide variety of backgrounds (Starr 2010). In the context of guerrilla gardening, Melucci's approach reinforces Reynolds's claim regarding the complexity of the movement. In this instance, actors unaware of the guerrilla concept can, according to Reynolds, still be considered part of the action.

The Guerrilla Movement: Connecting Socially Through Technology

Technology has played an important part in allowing guerrilla gardeners, who otherwise may be separated by great distance, to exchange ideas and strategies (McKay 2011). Reynolds's guerrillagardening.org forum is at the forefront of this technological revolution: launched in 2004, the site attracts members from countries across the globe, allowing guerrillas to connect on a level previously not experienced (Johnson 2011; Lewis 2012). Increasingly, however, individuals are starting to use popular social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with other would-be guerrillas (Crane et al. 2012; Hardman et al. 2012).

When Reynolds's language is deconstructed, it appears that guerrillas follow a cyclical approach to forming groups and carrying out action. There has been a considerable amount of commentary on how movements evolve, undertake action and disperse (Christiansen 2009). Typically, movements emerge, identify issues, formalise and decline (Byrne 1997; Christiansen 2009; Della Porta and Diani 2010). These are the 'four stages' of a social movement in their most basic form. Essentially, this appears to be the process which guerrillas follow: forming via social media, carrying out their action, reassessing their position and then fading or legitimising (Hardman 2011; Reynolds 2008).

Regardless of how the individual groups operate, Tracey (2007) goes to the extent of suggesting that the guerrilla gardening movement as a whole is unstoppable, an ever-evolving, diverse network of actors, each with their individual or group goals. Yet he emphasises the need for guerrillas to embrace technology, in order to survive and propagate their messages across the web: 'if you blog me I'll blog you' (Tracey 2007: 179). This is echoed by McKay (2011), who claims that technology is the most powerful weapon in the guerrilla's arsenal, allowing the invisible to have a voice and reach a global audience: social media becomes the tool of the trade, with would-be guerrillas and established guerrillas using the internet to distribute material and to organise meetings (Johnson 2011; Lewis 2012).

Summarising the Literature on Guerrilla Gardening: A Critical Review

As we have already argued, there is a nascent literature base on guerrilla gardening. The majority of this literature focuses on the transformative element of the activity, through groups beautifying areas of neglected land; there is very little information on guerrilla gardeners who pursue UA. Perhaps the strongest message from the guerrilla commentators whose work is discussed above is the resistive nature of the movement: authors from Crane et al. (2012), Flores (2006), Hou (2010) and Reynolds (2008) to Douglas (2011) Johnson (2011), McKay (2011), Tracey (2007) and others portray the act as heroic, with actors holding strong anti-authoritarian stances which are explicitly approved by this literature. Hardman et al. (2012) argue that guerrilla gardeners are seen as valiant individuals by those who write about their activities.

Furthermore, and beyond the realm of academia, the mass media has created an almost superhero persona for those who partake in guerrilla gardening: from Sky News' (2009) account of the shrub man to CBC's (2012) more recent portrayal of the visionary Julia McIntosh, from Hamilton (USA) who takes over neglected land for UA purposes, in each case the guerrilla is viewed in a solely positive light. This is reinforced by the countless blogs and social groups found on the internet, which in each case promote the action undertaken by guerrilla gardeners (Hardman et al. 2012).

This heroic persona is also present with other grass-roots movements: struggles with large powers often favour the underdog or the individual going out of their way in order to obtain change (Castells 1985). McKay (1998) reinforces this view by demonstrating how, on occasion, some of the individuals involved in these grass-roots groups play heavily on this externally generated 'heroism', which enables them to grow and tackle larger powers. However, whilst reviewing the group Greenpeace, he acknowledges that it is primarily the male members who seize this opportunity, becoming an 'ego-warrior rather than the eco-warrior' (McKay 1998: 8). This, in McKay's view, could be dangerous, leading to 'macho-aggressive attitudes' which can taint the action. Essentially, the message is clear: guerrilla gardening, like other movements, has adopted this persona, although whether it is appropriate or inappropriate is yet to be explored.

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Chapter 4
On the Ground with Guerrillas: An Ethnographical Reflection

Abstract There is little academic exploration of guerrilla gardening: existing accounts are often distanced or only provide a short glimpse into the activities of those who colonise land without permission. Whilst there are few academic accounts of guerrilla gardeners generally, there are even fewer which concentrate on those who pursue the activity of growing food in cities. Within this chapter, we focus on the exploits of F Troop, the Women's Group and a solo guerrilla gardening, three distinctly different 'types' of guerrilla groups, each pursuing the idea of Urban Agriculture (UA). In each instance, we provide an in-depth account of our actions 'on the ground' with the three guerrilla groups, enabling the reader to see how action is carried out and for what purpose. We also analyse existing legislation to determine whether their actions are in fact 'illegal' or something else entirely. Finally, we reflect on the guerrilla practices and analyse the three in relation to the wider movement.

Researching Guerrilla Gardeners

The previous chapters have set the groundwork, providing an overview of UA and particularly those guerrilla gardeners who practise this activity. Within this chapter we aim to ground this in specific case study examples. In doing so, we demonstrate the wide spectrum of activities involved in guerrilla gardening, from rebellious middle-class actors colonising dual-carriageway verges to some who could be considered working class, acquiring land for an unpermitted community garden. The chapter begins with a summary of the research approach adopted, before providing a narrative of the groups and ultimately an analysis of their actions.

This chapter prepares the ground for further exploration in the latter part of the book: using the case studies to illustrate issues around guerrilla gardening. In doing so, we hope to highlight an aspect of the activity which has not previously been explored in any detail, revealing practices otherwise cloaked.

We were conscious that few academic studies had interacted with these actors in a detailed and personal manner, instead tending to use techniques which distanced the researchers from the activity. With this in mind, ethnography influenced large parts of this study, which entailed spending considerable amounts of time in

the field with the guerrilla gardeners. The research strategy involved employing observation methods, alongside interviews with both guerrilla gardeners and those who lived, worked and otherwise used the areas surrounding their sites: in a sense going one step further and investigating the 'impact' of this activity on those closest to the spaces. Few studies have investigated guerrilla gardening objectively, let alone attempted to liaise with the surrounding residents, workers and other users of the areas affected by the gardening activity.

Perhaps most closely aligned to this study on guerrilla gardening is the paper by Crane et al. (2012) on unlawful food cultivators in Canada, discussed in Chap. 3. Their approach differs significantly, with the principal researcher (Crane) adopting a participant action research role, attempting to provide a voice for the guerrilla gardeners (herself and friends) to demonstrate the effectiveness of their action. In this piece, she adopts a participant role and *is* a guerrilla gardener: and not just *a* gardener but the leader of the troop. This creates a problematic dichotomy with the author acting as both a research subject and researcher (Crane 2011; Crane et al. 2012). It could be argued that portions of action research could have been considered appropriate in this study on guerrilla gardening. However, it is not the aim of the present study to improve, or otherwise directly impact on, the practice of guerrilla gardening. Instead we aim to explore what the guerrillas do, their motives for engaging in this type of activity and the impact on neighbouring residents and users. We therefore argue that an alternative research approach, relying on observation and abstraction, is better suited to this study, allowing the researcher to witness the activities of these individuals on the ground, without direct interference, and thus provide a more impartial assessment of the activity, outcome and impact.

The largest obstacle to any research using these intimate approaches is gaining admission to groups; this is especially pertinent with guerrilla gardening. Simply tracking down those practising the activity can take a considerable amount of time, and, once found, some guerrilla gardeners may be reluctant to partake in any research activity for a variety of reasons, not least that they may fear being unmasked (see, for instance, Hardman 2009). It was, therefore, important that early research efforts concentrated on gaining this access, since this was often the most difficult part of the observation process (Jorgensen 1989). From previous experience, it was evident that Reynolds's guerrillagardening.org was a valuable resource to exploit, aiding with making initial connections with some groups. Nevertheless, the rise of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, has resulted in several groups adopting these tools instead of the guerrilla gardening forum; as these sites have advanced security features, such as keeping groups private, there is a substantial impact on the research effort.

The field research was undertaken in 2010–2012 and encountered three examples of guerrilla gardening, two of which were sourced through social media and the guerrilla gardening forum, whilst one was found through word of mouth. We now proceed to provide an overview of these guerrilla groups before questioning legal issues around the activity.

F Troop: Rebellious Employees of a Local Authority

Following a period of searching online, a female eventually responded on the guerrillagardening.org forum after a direct message. She identified herself as an individual who was just starting a group, which at this point did not have a name. Subsequent interactions discovered that they called themselves 'F Troop': a name chosen to reflect the 'messy' and somewhat chaotic thinking behind the group's actions. The leader, a part-time horticulturalist named Sarah,[1] likened the actions of the group to that of an American Western television series called 'F Troop', in which cowboys would gallivant into action without a second thought. The name F Troop was adopted with enthusiasm by the other guerrillas, who later reminisced at some length about the series from which they acquired the name.

The group, who more commonly term themselves a 'troop', operated in the Midlands region and comprised a mix of males and females from their mid-30s to early 40s (Fig. 4.1). The unusual, yet interesting, issue with these individuals was that the group was formed entirely of local authority employees: by day they worked from a city-centre office and on weekends or evenings the group operated on authority-owned land without permission. Due to the nature of their 'day jobs', it was vital that, as researchers, we acted ethically in order to keep the identities of

Fig. 4.1 Hardman with F Troop members in 2010: guerrilla action in small-scale sites, difficult to access, at dusk (Reproduced with permission from Sarah, F Troop's leader)

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[1] The guerrilla gardeners have allowed their first names to be used throughout this book.

the individuals secure. We became conscious that, by exposing the city in which the guerrillas operated, the local authority (their employer) could perhaps be made aware of the activity and possibly the identity of the guerrillas. In order to prevent this, we refer to the region – the Midlands – as opposed to the precise city locale within which the group operated. The Midlands region incorporates a large number of cities, and thus, it would be particularly difficult for a reader to identify the exact location of the troop.

The Women's Group

It quickly became apparent that Reynolds' website had encountered a slump in activity in early 2010, with little recorded in the Midlands. The decision was therefore taken to alter the initial focus, which had been wholly on illegal activity, and to incorporate a legal scheme, allowing a comparison of unregulated and regulated UA. A community garden, established by a Women's Group (WG) had been formed recently in a Midlands city, and the group was willing to be involved with the research. Ironically, after a few observations and interactions, it became apparent that the women had created the community garden without seeking the appropriate permission and thus were arguably practising a form of guerrilla gardening: consciously colonising land and attempting to mask their unpermitted activities. With this realisation in mind, it was vital that this group was treated in the same manner, in terms of protecting identities and location, as was F Troop.

The WG cultivated a small 'community garden' to the rear of a community centre (see Fig. 4.2) and held fortnightly lunches to which local residents and organisations were invited. This was the only occasion when all group members were together and active. Mon, a community worker assigned to the nearby community centre headed the WG; she was effectively the 'glue' that bound the members together. The group had around eight members, although the number and membership was ever-changing, evolving and growing throughout the research period.

Fig. 4.2 Development of the Women's Group community garden; from the initial plot digging on the left in 2010 to the beds on the right in 2012 (Hardman's photographs)

This community garden was initially partially funded by a local health trust, which provided training for the WG members along with a few plants and initial guidance to get the group started. The funding was allocated to help the WG promote healthy eating amongst the local residents. Funding also stretched to cover the cost of a fortnightly 'community lunch', providing residents with fresh produce from the community garden in return for small donations, although residents were not compelled to make such donations. However, the local trust's financial support abruptly ended in early 2011, resulting in the scheme reverting to self-funding status. The WG was forced to search for other avenues of income to support its work and the development of the space.

The Solo Guerrilla Gardener

In the early stages of the research, an opportunity arose via the guerrillagardening.org forum: contact was made with a solo guerrilla gardener who appeared reasonably active and was eager to speak about her experiences. She was an elderly lady who operated in the Midlands region; her aim was to create a network of small-scale edible corridors, by transforming neglected alleyways providing side and rear access to an area of local authority terraced housing. Figure 4.3 demonstrates the extent of her action: peas, beans, tomatoes, lettuce and a variety of herbs are positioned along the space.

Fig. 4.3 The solo guerrilla gardener's alleyway, transformed for UA (Hardman's photograph)

Unlike the members of the other two guerrilla groups, the solo guerrilla was only willing to be involved in minimal amounts of research: this was due to a combination of factors, from the close location of her home in relation to the site to her wish that the research team avoided speaking with her neighbours. The latter was due to her experience of previous conflict, explored later in this chapter, in which a neighbour displayed significant anger about her actions. Although only used as a pilot during the present project, the data gathered still provides an insight into another form of guerrilla practice, in this case the activity of an individual, as distinct from that of a group.

A First-Hand Personal Reflection: Interacting with Guerrillas on the Ground

Whilst this chapter has explored the book, its outputs and addition to knowledge on UA, guerrilla gardening and a variety of other areas, it has yet to fully explore the research journey. This study involved large amounts of time in the field, networking with guerrillas, UA activists and a whole host of other actors. This journey is arguably more active, and potentially dangerous, than some studies, involving complex ethical dilemmas and considerable personal pressure: in this section, we wish to reflect on Hardman's experiences in the field.

The digs with F Troop were perhaps the largest and most demanding activities during my research. These presented a unique challenge, prompting me to engage with strangers – who all knew each other before the digs. Essentially, I had to break into an already-established network of relatively close friends. I would then watch, and record, whilst these friends cultivated patches of land in an immensely busy city centre. I knew that this tactic was problematic, and perhaps dangerous, in the sense that it attracted huge amounts of attention, with passers-by stopping to take photographs and look from afar at what was going on. I was extremely surprised not to see the police intervene or show any interest throughout any of the five phases.

Perhaps the second-largest challenge was my attendance at the WG events. In a similar manner to my interactions with F Troop, I had to embed myself in a community which had been together for some time; unlike the former guerrilla group, these individuals had known each other for years and had a long history together. I had witnessed, many times, and recorded throughout my field notes how those not favoured or in a certain clique were excluded from most events. Fortunately Mon, the leader of the WG, took a liking to me and my demeanour: how I constantly wanted to help out and 'lend a hand' in the kitchen. This was not a false persona, as I genuinely had a bond with the WG members and nearby community. This bond enabled me to work with them, in a relatively trouble-free fashion, over the 19-month period.

I have to admit that I was a little disappointed not to interact with the solo guerrilla gardener on a more meaningful level. Despite this slight drawback, she was extremely welcoming and willing to provide information. I feel I was extremely lucky to meet three sets of guerrilla gardeners who were at the beginning of their action and so willing to be involved. Whilst I had to be critical at times, I regard these individuals as friends and truly feel touched to experience this action alongside them.

I urge future researchers, interested in guerrilla gardening and UA, either as isolated concepts or a study with both included, to adopt a similar range of techniques as those shown through this study. In a similar manner to other urban-centric acts, guerrilla gardening has both a positive and negative side, depending on the group, their ambitions and actual actions. An observational approach allows the researcher, in a similar situation to mine, to establish a more clear view of the action, a particular viewpoint which has, until now, not been explored in depth. There is much to explore in this area and more to find out; there is an opportunity here to be a front runner and an opportunity to make a difference.

Is Guerrilla Gardening Illegal?

An important consideration which needed to be explored fully before any research took place was the fuzzy nature of guerrilla activity: is it 'illegal' or something which is merely discouraged by authority? Since the activities explored in this research occurred in the UK, we focus now on exploring this issue, which is often raised around research into guerrilla gardening, in the context of the UK legal system. Since the guerrillas are interacting with land, which is a form of property, the Theft Act 1968 formed the underpinning of defining the legality of their actions. Section 4 of the Act begins by explaining what property is: 'property includes money and all other property, real or personal, including things in action and other intangible property' (Theft Act 1968, s 1). In these terms the guerrillas clearly appear to be interacting with someone else's property and may therefore be breaking the law:

> A person who picks mushrooms growing wild on any land, or who picks flowers, fruit or foliage from a plant growing wild on any land, does not (although not in possession of the land) steal what he picks, unless he does it for reward or for sale or other commercial purpose. Theft Act (1968, s 3)

The Act also defines what cannot be classed as property: in particular it explains that 'a person cannot steal land, or things forming part of land' (Theft Act 1968, s 2). Both sections 2 and 3 thus demonstrate that wild foliage and plants growing on land are not classed as property. Although this initially may clear the guerrillas from accusations of both criminal damage and theft, a more thorough exploration of the 2 reveals that a person cannot steal land unless he/she is 'severing it or causing it to be severed'(Theft Act 1968, s 2). If the guerrillas are ripping up the existing

vegetation and replacing them – digging the soil and taking the vegetation's roots – then they would appear to be committing a criminal act by 'severing' the land owner's property.

Guerrillas often argue that they merely beautify empty space (McKay 2011) although, in stark contrast, the land owners and other authorities may consider it a criminal act: nevertheless, most of the time those in authority turn a supportive blind eye (*Irish Times* 2009). There is often confusion over ownership of the land being altered, but one has to be conscious that the land will be someone's property (Leopold 1997). There may not be a clear law condemning what the guerrilla gardeners are doing (as explained above), and guerrillas make it clear that police and authorities have little power to stop their action (Reynolds 2008, 2009), whilst several online videos back up these claims.

In conclusion, therefore, the existing UK law is 'fuzzy' in the context of guerrilla gardening activity, and, whilst not directly advocating their action, as a researcher and not an activist, it is perfectly ethical and legal to observe and interact with the guerrillas. Even so, it is important still to bear in mind that boundaries exist and, as a representative of a research organisation (in this case a university), it would be advisable to keep interaction to a minimum.

The Researcher's Role: Conflict of Interest?

Perhaps one of the largest conflicts of interest arises with Hardman's position as the field researcher. It must be noted that during elements of this research Hardman was a member of the West Midlands Police (WMP) Special Constabulary: a volunteer Police Officer with the power of a constable (WMP 2012). Evidently, working for an organisation which could jeopardise the position of the guerrilla gardeners potentially produces a large conflict of interest which could inevitably impact on the study (Stake 2010).

Nevertheless, during the initial portions of the field data collection Hardman was training and thus not fully warranted. It could be argued that even though the author was not a warranted officer at the time of parts of the data collection and thus was an 'ordinary citizen', this training position within WMP would surely impact on one's views of the guerrilla gardeners and possibly the research subjects' behaviour. For instance, there are numerous authors, such as Glaser and Strauss (1967), Pascale (2010) and others, who comment on the danger of entering the field with preconceptions, and in this context one could question whether the WMP training could taint the field researcher's observations and actions in the field.

Yet as will be made clear throughout this book, whilst some guerrilla gardening actions may constitute criminal damage or theft, the actions of those reviewed during this research did not cross any criminal boundary: the comprehensive ethical guidelines followed during this research ensured that the field researcher would never be exposed to illegal activities. Regardless of this, Hardman notified both the guerrilla gardeners being observed and his Special Constabulary line

manager of the research: numerous comical remarks were often made, but again due to the noncriminal nature of the action, all parties were happy for the research to continue.

Interacting with the Guerrillas: An Ethnographic Reflection on the Action

Something we have mentioned repeatedly throughout this book is the lack of detailed interaction with guerrilla gardeners. Throughout our time with F Troop, the WG and solo guerrilla, we sought to provide this detail: opting for an ethnographic approach enabled us to become part of the groups and report from within. In doing so, we were able to gather data on their everyday practices and, through the use of both informal and formal interviews, explore their reasons for such action. In this section, we wish to reflect on two of these detailed experiences, providing a chronological overview of our work with F Troop and the WG. With the solo guerrilla gardener, since she was an individual and lived next to her guerrilla project, this work was even more sporadic and is thus difficult to review in the same manner. Through this section, we hope to highlight how the guerrilla gardeners went about their actions. We also wish to review our position as researchers engaging with guerrillas in the hope that this will encourage more investigation of the activity. We begin with an overview of F Troop's journey before then continuing with a reflection on the WG's antics.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, and the next, we use first person to provide the reader with a great sense of the action. Hardman was the field researcher and so the reflections derive from his account: through adopting such an approach, we hope to highlight how guerrillas act on the ground, the differences in their practices and the produce they cultivate. Chapter 5, an analysis of their actions, proceeds to adopt first person too, before we shift back to the more 'traditional' format for the remaining chapters.

F Troop

I demonstrate, throughout my field notes, how F Troop refers to the digs as 'phases'. The term 'phase' was used before I even met with the troop in the field, thus demonstrating their desire to create multiple sites for possible UA. I witnessed five phases in total, which occurred along this barrier (Fig. 4.4). Each phase attracted different actors and tackled certain pieces of the land which ran along the route featured in Fig. 4.4. Whilst the picture in Fig. 4.4 is rather basic, unlike a map created via specialised software, for instance, it provides a greater sense of place and the messiness of the environment in which F Troop performed.

Evidently, there were dangers with working along this barrier; passing traffic was perhaps the largest threat present: cars would speed by me at over 50 mph and with the walkway being rather thin, it was imperative that I, and other group members,

watched our positioning. Safety was paramount, especially when engaging in such risky environment (Reynolds 2008; Wagenaar 2011). Whilst a high-visibility vest or a similar safety feature would usually be used in this situation (Hart 2005), on this occasion, due to the underground nature of the action, I was unable to use any extra equipment: relying more on my positioning and awareness skills.

Consideration also had to be taken with regard to visibility, particularly since guerrilla gardeners attempt to remain covert, unnoticed and thus undisturbed (Flores 2006; Lewis 2012). One could argue that my presence alongside such a group of individuals, who were tampering with land without permission, would give the impression that I was aiding with their action; it would be difficult to prove otherwise. Thus, in a similar manner to the guerrilla gardeners, I was aware of the implications of being caught in the act. Figure 4.4 illustrates two of my main concerns: the CCTV system, positioned opposite the dig sites, and the pub, where patrons would gather
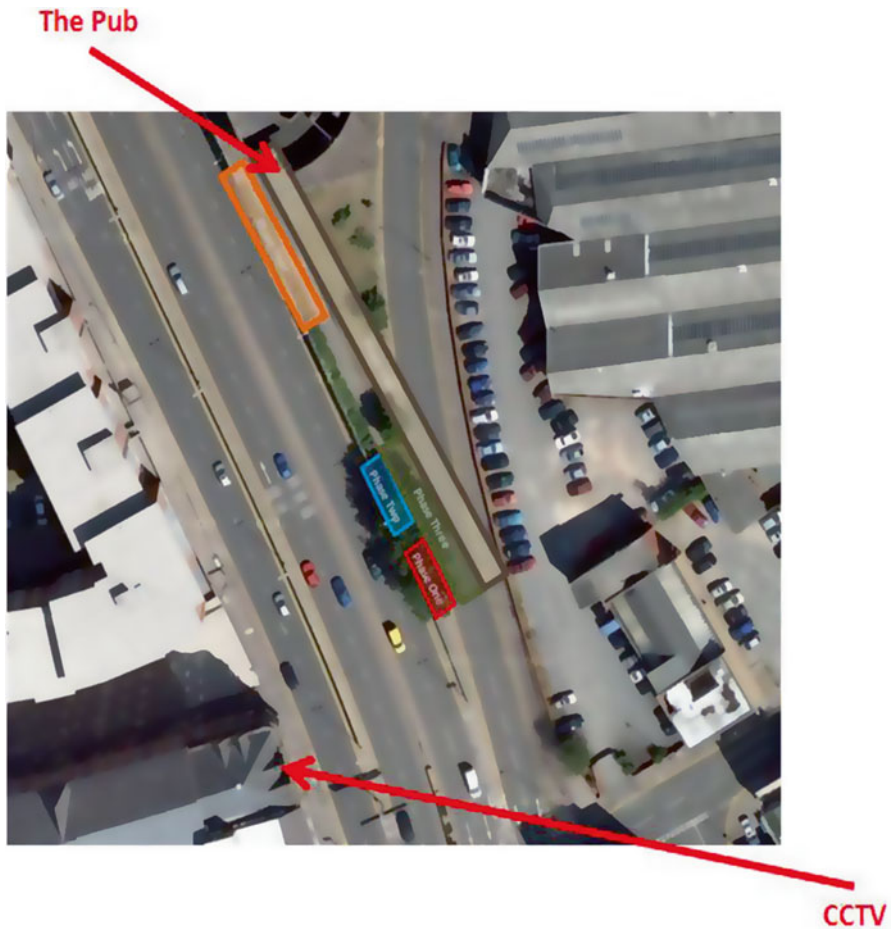
Fig. 4.4 The area in which F Troop 'performed' (Map data copyright of Google 2014, Bluesky)

outside for regular cigarette breaks. It was also vital to take into account passing pedestrians and vehicles, who may question or attempt to intervene with the action (Reynolds 2008).

This following section explores the five phases in detail, focussing particularly on the UA aspect of the troop. The chronological overview of each phase allows one to appreciate the development of the troop's ideas and how they managed the spaces, cultivating produce in what is a very busy area of this Midlands city. I utilise direct extracts from my field notes to present a raw account of the action and, as far as can be deduced, the thought processes of those involved.

Phase One: Considering the Possibility for UA

The first phase occurred on the 21st May 2010, on a relatively sunny day. I noticed that the group had opted to operate in broad daylight and on a busy junction; they were in complete view of passing vehicles and pedestrians. Traffic lights were situated adjacent to where the majority of the phase one dig took place. I met with group members on the site, who were already starting to decide on the specific area on which to concentrate. I noticed that each member brought tools and an array of foliage: from sunflowers and spades to pitchforks and manure, the sheer amount of items in their possession ensured that the group was highly noticeable.

> **Box 4.1: An Extract from My Phase One Field Notes**
> I'm initially greeted by three individuals, two females and one male. The group wait for later arrivals, which soon turn up (albeit 10 min later than the planned time). The new arrivals (one female and one male) come equipped with spades, rakes and extra plants. It's immediately apparent that some group members have thought about what they want to do. They've already 'scouted' the site, creating a basic diagram of where it lies. We set off to the phase one dig site which is located near to a set of busy traffic lights.

My field recordings for this phase demonstrate that attendance was reasonably high at this guerrilla dig (Box 4.1). Interestingly, this caption highlights how some of the group have pre-planned ambitions for the site, whilst others have been excluded from this process. I developed the feeling that, although most attendees had some form of horticultural experience, the vegetation brought along was a last-minute thought; there was no organisation to the event and everything appeared rather chaotic. This somewhat unstructured approach was humorously captured in the name of the group: 'F Troop'. The name was chosen almost immediately, on recommendation by one of the guerrillas who had a keen interest in the arts: he appeared creative and more interested in the aesthetic improvement of the space.

My passive role, although it involved standing back from the action, still enabled me to be part of this discussion. Perhaps the most interesting of these discussions was evoked by some members when they suggested the idea of planting crops. The initial discussion is primarily led by the organiser of F Troop, Sarah, a horticulturalist who appeared ambitious with her plans to utilise the space. Sarah was interested in using the space for innovative practices, including the cultivation of crops. This was of particular interest, since I have previously noted that not many guerrilla gardening troops opt to perform UA, instead preferring to adopt and plant less intensive vegetation; obviously, a simple array of greenery would require less maintenance, whereas vegetables usually require a lot of care and attention.

The main argument for vegetables appeared to originate from the leader, the female named Sarah, with whom I had originally liaised via Reynolds's site: guerrillagardening.org. Sarah was the founding member of the troop; she brought everyone together and directed the proceedings: it became clear that she was the centre of the troop and the others followed. This leader directed the food discussions and, with her enthusiasm for the idea, appeared to convince other troop members to back the notion of planting crops. Her suggestion was backed up by her close friend, Anna, who acted as a 'second lieutenant' throughout the process: reinforcing the leader's views and guiding other less experienced guerrillas.

Sarah, who holds most of the knowledge, was clearly conscious of the UA concept. She regularly acknowledged schemes in North America, and speaks of the 'Green Guerillas' (see Chap. 3), particularly about their achievements with sites. Her ambitions continually influence the other troop members and their thinking, which in turn manipulates the troop's direction. Sarah was determined to practise the art of vegetable growing in the city, perhaps fuelled by her keenness to display her talents in the harsh environment in which F Troop practised, attempting to prove that her skills were able to tackle such a desolate place.

Although there was extensive discussion on the topic of producing food in the patch, in this initial phase, the group opted to merely rejuvenate the space through the planting of bulbs and pre-prepared pots of flowers. Members initially concentrated on clearing the land (Fig. 4.5), which has gained a substantial amount of debris over the years. They resort to utilising a large bag of manure before planting the various plants and seeds.

This dig lasted for around two and a half hours, before eventually concluding with a clear-up of the site; members swept the pavement, ensuring that all traces of manure or topsoil were cleared from the area. The troop, evidently excited by their first successful venture, continued to discuss the options available by using the site to grow food. Interestingly, I note how plans were discussed for a phase two: a patch located adjacent to the phase one site; however, in this instance the patch would be used for the cultivation of vegetables.

Phase Two: The Nasturtium Display

Phase two occurred on the 1st July 2010, a little over a month after the May dig. The participant numbers, in comparison to the first dig, dropped considerably, with only a couple of individuals from phase one present. In a similar manner to phase one, a

Fig. 4.5 F Troop clearing the land during phase one (Hardman's photograph)

process appeared to be played out by F Troop; this is demonstrated in Box 4.2, an extract from my field notes. Planning was tackled on-site, with decisions made instantly using the vegetation available.

Box 4.2: An Extract from My Phase Two Field Notes
Discussion is focussed and centres on the tasks to be completed, these are identified before anything takes place:

1. Break ground
2. Turn soil
3. Organise arrangement by putting pots on intended planting spot
4. Plant
5. Clean up and head to the pub

This process was closely coordinated by Sarah yet again, who surveyed the planting plan before permitting guerrillas to dig and insert the various seeds, bulbs and pre-potted vegetation. On occasion, Sarah asked for my opinion on the display, attempting to engage with another's perspective to gain maximum impact from the space. Yet she refrained from asking others directly: those who were, in essence, involved more thoroughly in the process. I often felt that Sarah presumed that I was an expert and may not fully understand the basis for the research being undertaken.

Fig. 4.6 The Troop's display
with nasturtiums (Hardman's
photograph)

Nevertheless, I did attempt to address this issue through our conversations, to ensure that the group members were comfortable with my research focus and presence on-site.

In phase two, my field notes reveal that the troop propels the idea of UA from abstract to reality by experimenting with the land and planting a few low-key edible flowers (Fig. 4.6). Sarah brings along some nasturtiums, she then provided an overview of this particular form of vegetation to me, since I was not aware of its edibility: 'add the flowers and leaves to salads and they have a peppery taste' (Sarah). This is the first form of evidence to suggest that F Troop was interested in adding productive vegetation to the landscape; considering how it would survive in the harsh climate. Sarah was conscious of its purpose and brought the flowers along to see how they would cope in the plot.

However, the ambitious plans discussed in the latter stages of phase one appeared to have been replaced in favour of a less adventurous approach with the nasturtiums. The troop, with the direction of Sarah, again reached a consensus: they claimed that this produce would not be edible, due to the poor soil conditions in which it was planted. Rather, the troop members discussed, at length, the reasoning behind the proposed addition of more recognisable vegetables to the land; eventually they agreed that their efforts were symbolic: demonstrating that the vegetables can be cultivated and survive in the urban environment. They proceeded to discuss the dangers with growing food next to such a busy road. The main danger they identified involved the possibility of pollution, particularly from passing vehicles, which could have resulted in the soil being contaminated.

One could question whether the use of nasturtium is even a form of UA; this flower takes the centrepiece of phase two, with other plants surrounding the nasturtiums. However, regardless of its visibility, my notes demonstrated that there were few attempts by the troop members to warn passers-by or the local community that the flower might not be safe to eat. The troop has a minimal amount of interaction with those who pass the site or those who reside nearby. They opt to remain in a tight-knit cluster, apparently not welcoming involvement with others, which inevitably leads to those who pay interest in the site being unable to discuss the action with troop members. This lack of interaction, which will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, results in the failure to warn about the potential edibility (or otherwise) of the produce.

Phase Three: Planting Vegetables and Rejuvenating the Sites

The next visit to the site occurred 7 months following the previous dig, on the 3rd February 2011. The third dig was organised in the same fashion as the previous two, with Sarah sending out e-mails in preparation for a meeting at the site. The aim appeared to revolve around the re-establishment of plots, with a specific focus on the two previous dig sites, maintenance and further vegetation to be added. Interestingly, I noted how the attendance was the largest so far during this dig, with five females and one male at the site.

It became immediately apparent that the 7-month duration between digs, and the lack of maintenance throughout the winter months, had resulted in the plants succumbing to the weather; and some, of course, had been annuals. I noticed that the vegetation that once existed on the two patches was either trodden on by passers-by or had died due to insufficient nutrition (Fig. 4.7); litter and weeds again covered the area, and there was little evidence of F Troop's previous attempts to improve the space. Figure 4.7 demonstrates the devastating effect of the lengthy period between digs, with the site quickly reverting back to its former dilapidated state.

However, I noted that F Troop was still keen to exhibit its food growing skills. Sarah brought along several types of vegetation, including seeds for herbs and some pregrown vegetables: spinach and peas were to be introduced during this phase. The phase three notes, particularly the extract in Box 4.3, highlight the progress the troop has made with their ambition for growing crops next to the dual carriageway.

Box 4.3: An Extract from Phase Three Field Notes

The leader of the troop has brought peas and spinach to experiment on the land. Other members have brought plants to rejuvenate the area. Nasturtiums also make an appearance again, with one particular member bringing several bags of seeds. The leader suggested before the dig that troop members bring bulbs as opposed to seeds, this call was obviously ignored.

Fig. 4.7 The site before
phase three's action
(Hardman's photograph)

I noticed how Sarah also coordinated the planting of the crops: 'The peas should go against the wall. They'll be noticed more there' (Sarah). I suspect this was to gain more notice for this particular form of vegetation, whilst other flowers, including the new nasturtiums, were planted in front of the vegetables. The vegetables would clearly be highlighted by being positioned directly in front of the grey concrete barrier backdrop; they had a prominent position within the display. These were then quite heavily watered and admired by the two females.

Figure 4.8 shows the two females, Sarah and Anna, in action – digging the soil ready for the vegetables to be planted: it provides an insight into the fairly everyday practices of the group, particularly how they used techniques acquired from domestic gardening to plant on the land. Interestingly, I noticed that there was some hesitation about the planting of vegetables along the barrier. A few of the other guerrillas sniggered and smiled awkwardly as Sarah and Anna began the planting. My field diary highlighted that some playful taunts were thrown towards the two females from a guerrilla who had not attended the digs before. Nevertheless, all guerrillas appeared to admire the site following the 4 h spent 'tampering' with the space, a record thus far for time spent on-site.

Perhaps my most interesting observation during this dig occurred after the planting phase. I noticed how the guerrillas had run out of water and that the leader had instructed the only other male, Mark, to head into the nearby pub to request a top-up of the watering can. He reluctantly made his way to the pub, and on his return explained that the landlady was extremely enthusiastic about their efforts on the

Fig. 4.8 Planting peas and spinach during phase three (Hardman's photograph)

space. Following the dig, we ventured into the pub, to say thank you and repay their favour by buying a few drinks and snacks: the few patrons present flocked around the group, asking questions and wondering why they voluntarily tackled the space.

Phase Four: Continuing the Cultivation

This progress continues with phase four, which occurred 1 month after phase three, on the 27th March 2011. I immediately noted, on my arrival, how attendance drops significantly to a mere four guerrillas: Sarah, Mark, another female and Anna. At this point, due to my regular attendance, I had built up a reasonable rapport with the 'permanent' troop members, thus the greeting process was now rather relaxed, with members comfortable with my presence at the site. However, I noted, in my personal reflection on the dig, how this rapport requires management: as a researcher, one cannot become too close to the subjects in the investigation.

The dig began with troop members ensuring that the produce was still present. They surveyed the original sites and noted how the vegetables were coping. It appeared that, remarkably, the vegetables were flourishing in the relatively harsh climate and surroundings. The leader of F Troop felt that this was due to hidden nutrients contained within the soil. She elaborated and explained to me that, although the soil looked poor, deeper down beyond its membrane were richer layers, which allowed the water-intensive vegetables to grow so well. She also acknowledged that the constant watering of the produce, by her friends and colleagues, would have played a large factor in their survival.

Fig. 4.9 Arranging the plot closest to the pub (Hardman's photograph)

Phase four, unlike the previous phases which concentrated on patches close to a busy intersection, was located further away from the road and towards the pub (see Fig. 4.4). This land was, originally, particularly hostile; the pub patrons would regularly throw disused cigarettes and other forms of rubbish into the shrubbery. Therefore, the first, and largest, part of this dig was spent clearing the debris from the site before planting could begin (Fig. 4.9).

The site featured in Fig. 4.9 was an area of high pedestrian activity. On this particular dig, however, due to the concerns about the edibility of the produce, the troop decided against planting more vegetables. The troop leader explained that the risks were too great with positioning produce in sight of the pub patrons, who may recognise the produce and attempt to eat it. On this occasion, the troop concentrated on improving the environment through the planting of bulbs and shrubbery. Their efforts were thus for aesthetic purposes and did not include any form of UA.

Nevertheless, I noted how they also focussed particularly on the vegetables in phase three and contemplated replicating this model on the phase four site but were held back by their worries with regard to the pub patrons eating the vegetables and the litter's effect on the site. Interestingly, as a compromise, the leader opted to plant more vegetables further along from the pub, between the phase three and four sites, forming a sort of connecting corridor of produce to link the sites which were rather isolated. There was a considerable amount of discussion on the idea of UA, particularly how other projects could be started in less affluent parts of the city, helping communities to supply themselves with fresh produce. Potential projects involved using schools as an avenue to gain more numbers: with children becoming vehicles for guerrilla gardening.

The phase also provided evidence to suggest that the rapport with the pub continued, with the troop leader venturing into the establishment to fill up the

water can again. On this occasion, I noted how several patrons, due to the proximity of the guerrillas to their pub, ventured outside to see what exactly was going on. They make mostly positive remarks about the state of the patch. In an attempt to speak with the patrons, Sarah playfully shouted at these individuals for making the site so shambolic, instructing the males to keep the space tidy in future.

Phase Five: The Winter Dig

This particular dig was rather unusual as, unlike the previous digs which occurred during the warming months, phase five was scheduled in November, a late autumn/winter month. It became immediately apparent to me that only three guerrillas had appeared for the dig: Sarah; her male friend, Mark; and the 'second lieutenant', Anna. Sarah, the leader, stipulated that others had sent their apologies and were unable to make this particular date. This poor attendance appeared to anger Sarah, since most of the nonattendees had apparently wished for the original date to be moved in order to accommodate their needs and hectic lifestyles. In a similar manner to previous digs, she had advertised this event on Reynolds's forum (guerrillagardening.org) and received some responses, although in the event this communication medium attracted no new participants for the dig.

The dig's aim was also out of the ordinary when compared with the previous phases. Phase five was, like phase three, primarily designed to provide general maintenance (Fig. 4.7). This was a rather large undertaking, since three sites had been established in the area, each of which had taken several hours to cultivate and create. Evidently, the large task at hand resulted in a long amount of time at the site: almost 5 h in total, the longest time I have spent on a dig. Tasks included uprooting rotting vegetation and replacing crops with fresh plants. The priority lay with the aesthetics of the site, with F Troop appearing to divert from their crop-cultivating objectives. However, I noted how nasturtiums were still planted in this phase, although it appeared this was not a conscious decision by the group, rather the seeds and bulbs were leftovers from a previous venture.

The troop members appeared extremely relaxed and cared little for passing emergency vehicles or interested pedestrians. The only dialogue exchange between F Troop members and non-members were the occasional jokes exchanged with pub patrons who were smoking nearby. This discussion was rather short and predominantly involved F Troop members repeatedly instructing the customers to not litter the area. It was evident that each of the three members understood their position and duties, carrying on with jobs without consulting with Sarah. Their skills and confidence seemed to have developed during the successive digs. The troop moves from plot to plot, beginning at the far end with the space closest to the traffic light junction (phase one) and finishing with the area cultivated in phase four (Fig. 4.10). The only male member, the leader's friend Mark, preferred to take on less horticultural-centred tasks, such as cleaning spaces and moving equipment, whilst the females favoured the planting and general site organisation.

Fig. 4.10 The winter dig and the maintenance of previous plots (Hardman's photograph)

The dig culminated with a social drink in the pub, again to thank the staff for their supplies. The landlady, serving behind the bar, was approached by the troop leader who asked whether the patches could be watered in their absence. The leader was surprised with her answer, since the landlady declared that she has already been watering the various plots. Interestingly, other staff members also claim to have maintained the spaces in the guerrillas' absence, tending to the vegetables and flowers throughout the week.

The Women's Group

Whilst the above paints a detailed picture of F Troop's action, we now wish to focus on the opposite side of the guerrilla spectrum: bringing to light the WG's activities and their substantially different practices. Through a similar format, we provide a chronological account of their actions, which will be deconstructed further in the next chapter. Through adopting this approach, we hope to highlight our experiences on the ground with the guerrilla gardeners whilst simultaneously providing a review of their actions.

Figure 4.11 provides a spatial context for the size, and positioning, of the WG's site. The locale is evidently urban: housing surrounds the site on three flanks, whilst a large industrial complex is situated adjacent to the garden and across a rather busy road. The space now occupied by the community garden was once used by local children for play. Whilst there are other patches of open spaces around the area, it became apparent, during the informal discussions on-site, how parents preferred their children to use this particular patch due to its proximity to the large tower block where most of them lived.

Fig. 4.11 The WG unpermitted community garden (Map data copyright of Google 2014, Bluesky)

The community garden is approximately 13 m in length and 5 m wide. In stark contrast to the environment of F Troop's digs, this space appeared relatively secure; a large black fence encircled the site preventing outsiders from entering and those using the garden from walking on to the busy road network. Nevertheless, due to the revelation of the unregulated nature of the community garden, I realised that this site did not conform to health and safety regulations; tools were occasionally strewn across the grass; and the beds were poorly arranged, creating obstacles as one wandered around the site. The site itself was also on a slight slope, which in wet conditions proved rather dangerous. Due to the nature of the WG's actions, I spent little time on the community garden itself and more in the adjacent community centre, where community lunches where held: these were often fortnightly, using produce from the informal community garden. This enabled me to witness how the produce was used, who attended these lunches and generally assess the impact of this site on the local community.

The following section adopts a slightly different approach to that of F Troop's narrative in exploring the various interactions with the WG and community. The number of lunches attended would result in this section dominating the book. Due to the frequency of the WG action, I attended substantially more lunches than F Troop digs; thus, a similar approach to that of the exploration of F Troop would be inappropriate. Instead of a chronological description of UA-related revelations, in this instance, I have opted to reflect on the seasonal cycle: grouping the field notes and exploring the WG's activities in the various seasons. This provides details of a full cycle of events, including how the WG operated during the harsher months and whether the UA suffered. Owing to the timing of the research, the

cycle begins in the autumn. These were the earliest recorded interactions with the WG, and thus, due to time constraints, the only option was to start recording from this point in time.

Autumn 2010

I scoped the site for a few weeks before pursuing the data collection. This was mainly to ensure that I had sufficient access to the various attendees and the site itself. I regularly attended the lunches in order to build a rapport with the women, realising that, as a male, it would perhaps be difficult. Access was duly granted and I was able to collect field notes towards the beginning of September 2010.

The community garden at this point was rather bland; poorly cut-out plots existed with a few raised beds surrounding the perimeter of the space (Fig. 4.12). I was told that the WG had received training from an outside body, arranged and funded through a local charity. Yet it was still rather surprising to see the garden in this state, as one

Fig. 4.12 The community garden in September 2010, the early stages of development (Hardman's photograph)

would presume that, at this time, the WG would be well into preparations for the next growing season, using the space effectively during these more productive months. Nevertheless, September's lunches featured some produce from the garden; Box 4.4 contains my reflections on the last lunch of this month:

Box 4.4: An Extra from My Field Diary

- Residents have a choice with the main course; a curry, shepherd's pie or lasagne. 'Mon' explains that wherever possible the ingredients are sourced locally. The tomatoes in the lasagne are from the garden as were the potatoes that made the shepherd's pie.
- Attendees are herded to a bowl of salad adjacent to the main service counter. The bowl is filled with other vegetables from the growing site.
- Rhubarb and custard is the dessert; the rhubarb is sourced from the community garden.

I regularly noted how vegetables, such as tomatoes, lettuce and rhubarb were used during lunches. There appeared to be a repetitive use of these vegetables; nothing new was introduced and only a small portion of what was growing in the garden was used in the lunch. However, productivity soon plunged, with subsequent community lunches – during the autumn months – unsurprisingly featuring less locally sourced food. This was especially evident in the November notes I took, which featured no food sourced from the community garden. I noted how Mon and the WG tended to buy in food from large popular supermarkets, using donations from those who attend the lunches. There was little to no planning for the next growing season, with discussions focussing more on local politics as opposed to the community garden's future.

Perhaps one of the other surprising observations, which arose during practically every field investigation, surrounded the access to the community garden. I noted that nobody seemed to interact with the space itself; the two access points were cut off and regularly locked. The windows which overlooked the garden steamed up, due to condensation from the cooking and sheer number of attendees; this further isolated the community garden from the attendees' gaze. I felt that this space was disconnected from those who attended the lunch, with only select WG members allowed to use the area at permitted times.

Winter 2010 – Early 2011

The winter months were, unsurprisingly, rather unproductive. Britain endured a hard winter with large amounts of snowfall, which prevented some lunches from going ahead. The WG relied heavily on supermarket items to keep the community lunch functioning when the weather permitted. No produce was used from the garden throughout any of the lunches in this season. Interestingly, my notes revealed that

Fig. 4.13 The beds in 2011, now surrounded by a concrete border (Hardman's photograph)

some vegetation remained in the beds, which had by now been lined with a rather bleak-looking concrete border, making them stand out more from the surrounding grassy areas (Fig. 4.13). At this point, I was interested in what happened with this vegetation: who accessed it and how it was used.

I also noticed how the WG had erected several new raised beds surrounding the main plots. It was startling to see that site expansion had taken place in perhaps the most unproductive of seasons, with the women attempting to grow produce in these structures (pictured in Fig. 4.13). In a similar manner to my autumn observations, I noted how the site was constantly locked; no resident, apart from the WG members, interacted with the space or acknowledged its existence. During the only December lunch, which was specifically designed for local pensioners, I asked whether anyone was allowed out on the site, 'no way, too dodgy, they'd fall and hurt themselves' replied a group member: it appears that the WG members were fearful that someone will trip and injure themselves whilst out in the garden; thus, access has been restricted, partially for this reason.

Spring 2011

The WG had planned for the new planting season by installing what appeared to be protective barriers for the large main plots (Fig. 4.14). These were funded by a local health organisation, which the women had persuaded to support the garden's development and maintenance. To the untrained eye, and at first glance, one could mistake the plots for raised beds; but the vegetables were still grown in the soil and were not elevated from the ground. The beds, throughout this season, appeared rather empty; the WG members stated that planting is sporadic and conducted 'whenever we have the chance during the week'.

Fig. 4.14 The barrier installation on the community garden (Hardman's photograph)

I note how this addition of a more sophisticated infrastructure was yet another sign of expansion, with WG members – especially Mon – stating that they have even more ambitious plans for the future. These plans include acquiring fruit trees, to create a small community orchard, and purchasing a greenhouse for the site. Interestingly, there was no mention of this expansion, or alteration to the site, during the subsequent spring community lunches. The site was still ignored by the community attending and was inaccessible due to the locked doors. In a similar manner to the winter lunches, no produce was featured in the lunches. This was apparent until the 28th of April, when a small salad bowl appeared.

Summer 2011

This was perhaps where the largest alteration of the site occurred; large amounts of produce could be seen growing in the space, due to a combination of ideal weather conditions and time spent on the site by WG members. Figure 4.15 displays a colourful site, which featured large amounts of vegetables rising from beneath the barriers which surround the plots: lettuce, tomatoes, courgettes and a variety of herbs were grown in large numbers. It becomes apparent, during the lunch discussions in the kitchen, that WG members spent large amounts of time on the site, enjoying the sunshine and cultivating the space. All but one of the WG members was unemployed, and thus, they have ample time to put into the community garden.

Despite the obvious impressive display featured in Fig. 4.15, my summer field notes demonstrated the lack of attention given to the space from community members at the lunch. The weather was frequently beautiful with clear skies and high temperatures; whilst windows were opened to let in fresh air, the door providing

Fig. 4.15 The community garden flourishing during the summer months (Hardman's photograph)

access to the community garden remained locked. Attendees did not pay any attention to the scenery and seemed to focus predominantly on their lunches and discussion groups. Nevertheless, the ever-enthusiastic WG members attempted to engage with attendees and educate them about the benefits of eating healthily, using the lunch as a tool to get their message across.

Late 2011 – Early 2012

As the months progressed, I began to tone down my interactions with the site, instead conducting interviews and, as part of an 'exit strategy', making sure that the WG members understood that I would have to retire to write up my findings. Before departing, my field notes demonstrated, during the autumn months, a continual worry from the WG regarding the continued existence of the community centre, the building to which the community garden is attached. Whilst produce in the garden was flourishing (for instance, see Fig. 4.16), the economic climate could see the adjacent community centre shut down. Obviously, this is a huge worry for the women who rallied to prevent such a measure from the local authority: protesting to local councillors and other key actors.

Perhaps one of the most notable additions to the site was a series of fruit trees (Fig. 4.17): some of which had been planted in the autumn, bought new from garden centres and placed around the edges of the fencing. Surprisingly, I was only notified about these during my winter observation; for some reason I had earlier missed the obvious inclusion of the trees in the space. Extra trees were added through liaising with a contact in the city who was supportive of their cause.

Fig. 4.16 A marrow in the community garden (Hardman's photograph)

Fig. 4.17 An unsupported
fruit tree on the community
garden, close to the pavement
(Hardman's photograph)

The positioning of the trees, according to Mon, allowed those who passed the site to freely pick the fruit, whilst the women could enjoy the apples which fell within the community garden's perimeter. The ambition of the WG was to create an orchard on the site, once the weather improved in the following year. They were to purchase trees using funding acquired from a local health centre.

The Stories of F Troop and the WG: Key Messages

Through the section above, we have highlighted the story of the two groups with which we had the most interaction. Whilst there is little reflection on the solo guerrilla gardener, due to a lack of access, the narratives provide a unique insight into two significantly different forms of guerrilla gardeners who pursue a UA agenda. Ultimately, we aim to reveal how these groups go about their action, the actors involved and how it progresses over time.

The purpose of this chapter was to enable the reader to experiences the two settings in which the researcher was embedded. Too often guerrilla gardening is viewed as a secretive activity, with little exploration of the practices on the ground. The field notes reflected on in this chapter and more detail on the various stages can be found through Hardman's (2013) PhD thesis; this document contains the raw field note and interview data on which we will reflect further on in the following chapter. This following chapter takes this exploration forward and provides a more abstract reflection on the guerrilla gardeners. In particular, we focus on *why* these actors have opted for an unpermitted route and then relate this to wider debates in the area. We then proceed to challenge some of the actions by these guerrilla gardeners and reflect on how the activity is portrayed in academic and media circles.

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Chapter 5
Deconstructing the Key Messages: Analysing F Troop and the Women's Group

Abstract In this chapter, we reflect on the material gathered through our ethnographic-influenced exploration of several guerrilla gardening troops: in particular reviewing our interactions with F Troop and the Women's Group. Each of the guerrilla gardener groups are reviewed in isolation, before we compare and contrast them in the latter parts of the chapter. Ultimately, this chapter aims to deconstruct the groups' actions and compare them to other 'types' of guerrilla gardeners. Perhaps unlike other texts which have reflected on guerrilla practice, within this chapter we hope to provide an objective account of their actions; from further investigating the types of produce grown to their interactions with the community, we stand back from the guerrilla group and critically review practice. Through adopting this approach, we hope to pave the way for a critique of the groups' actions and, in particular, the idea of guerrilla gardeners pursuing an urban agricultural agenda.

Reviewing Practice

Within this chapter we proceed to deconstruct our reflections on the guerrilla gardeners observed in Chap. 4, critiquing practice and reviewing the reasons behind the action. Beginning with an evaluation of their actions, we proceed to focus on why they pursue an informal approach to UA before situating their actions within the wider guerrilla gardening movement. In doing so, we pave the way for subsequent chapters which delve deeper into the 'impact' of their activities, using the community as a tool to evaluate whether the UA action has affected them or the locale in any way.

Summarising F Troop's Actions: Unpacking the Digs

Fundamentally, the troop's primary aim was to rejuvenate the area, through creating what appeared to be a temporary or semi-permanent patch of green space. Reverting to the dig process, my chronological exploration of the phases demonstrates the leader's wish to cultivate the patch and provide a space for the local community,

changing it from an everyday, unused, bland plot of land to a colourful display of vegetation. Simultaneously, these observations also highlight the thrills achieved by adopting this unlawful approach, in essence, the buzz acquired from the naughtiness of doing something 'without permission' (Anne).

This section further explores the phases, covered in Chap. 4, highlighting interesting revelations, through a variety of headings. The main focus of this piece is to investigate F Troop's stance on UA, who leads their ambition, their use of UA and ideas for the future. The most important question will also be answered during this segment: does F Troop actually perform UA? In order to further explore the troop and UA, it is vital that one understands the group's structure and how decisions were made, particularly whether the ambition to pursue UA was a consensual decision or an individual's goal. Thus, the first segment deconstructs the decision-making process of F Troop, allowing the origins of the UA dialogue to be reviewed. I then further unpack F Troop's pursuit of UA, how they practise and the food displayed on their site. Once this issue has been explored, my concentration then shifts to the reason(s) for pursuing unregulated activity.

Deconstructing F Troop: The Decision-Making Process

It becomes evident that most of the decisions appear to originate from one source: the leader of the troop, Sarah. This one-dimensional approach contravenes the very nature of guerrilla gardening, as portrayed by Reynolds. He states that the troops should opt against a hierarchical structure, instead relying on a process which involved mutual decision-making (Reynolds 2008). Inevitably, this strategy would allow all attendees to share a 'piece of the action': a feel of belonging and ownership (Hardman et al. 2012). One could question whether this hierarchical approach to the guerrilla action has affected those who attend the digs: perhaps one of the most interesting aspects discovered during the observation was the fluctuation in attendance numbers between the digs, with phase 1 and 3 attracting in excess of seven guerrillas whilst phases 2, 4 and 5 only attracted less than four. The 'usual suspects' turn up in all five phases (the troop leader Sarah, her close male friend Mark and the 'second lieutenant' Anna).

Whilst this overview of attendance figures may appear superficial, when one investigates the attendees further, it appears as though a pattern of peaks and troughs emerges. Peaks are situated on phases one and three, two digs which attract new faces, but the digs immediately following these phases do not feature the same guerrillas and demonstrate a drop in numbers. This could obviously be down to a number of factors; perhaps the digs were not to the participant's liking or other issues were in the way; the decision-making, which is dominated by the leader, could be an issue which causes this drop. However, this instability with attendees appears commonplace with guerrilla action; Reynolds (2008) for instance, highlights how rare it is to maintain a steady stream of volunteers. Retaining these volunteers is vital for the survival of a guerrilla troop; hence, decisions should be mutual and not led by one individual (Johnson 2011; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007).

Nevertheless, my field notes demonstrate the dominant position of the female who started F Troop. I was also able to witness first-hand what I deem an absence of a group-like atmosphere between the guerrillas. I did not feel that this was a unified collective, but a group of individuals ordered by the leader. Frequently my observation notes demonstrated the dictating nature of the female in charge: 'The leader splits the group into two smaller teams, one focuses on the phase one site whilst the other clears up phase two'. This lack of belonging was also evident when one explores the language used by the remaining guerrillas: there was a distinct absence of togetherness. Although the troop name exists, there is no real identity. In essence, I argue that whilst there is a group, the fluid nature of F troop – with its ever-changing demographic – makes it difficult for a collective 'we', or group identity, to form.

This correlates with thinking by Melucci (1996), particularly his thoughts on collective action and the creation of a 'we' identity. In essence, Melucci explores the creation of movements, but when one unpacks his thoughts and discussions, he also investigates how groups form, organise and operate. In this instance, with troop members opting to avoid the use of 'we' frequently, and the shifting nature of F Troop, it makes it hard for an identity to form (Starr 2010). One can understand that the frequent appearance of new faces, fresh to the guerrilla concept, a dominant individual perhaps needs to take charge, leading those who are inexperienced and require direction. Nevertheless, this hierarchical structure appears to have a damaging effect on the subsequent dig, with those who attended not appearing again.

My belief that these drops relate to the group's structure and operating style is further reinforced when one considers the observations outlined above. My personal reflections, which accompany each field note, repeatedly highlight the aggressive nature of the female leads: Sarah and Anna, providing orders and direction to the rest, including myself. I felt particularly awkward when asked to help out with tasks: the simple clearing of litter, for example, or other menial work. The two females would speak to me in a manner which made it difficult to refuse to help, providing me with instructions and tasks to complete. I had to explain, on several occasions, how my research ethics prevented me from being actively involved in the guerrilla gardening dig.

Fundamentally, this discussion highlights the hierarchical nature of F Troop, which is led, predominantly, by one female whose decisions are then reinforced by another female friend. The dialogue also suggests that F Troop is not a holistic entity: a collective 'we' is noticeably absent and a sense of belonging does not appear to exist (Melucci 1996; Starr 2010). The group is fluid, with an ever-changing member base; numbers fluctuate and only a few actors are present for all five phases. The remainder of this chapter builds on the ideas presented here, shifting to focus more specifically on the UA aspect of F Troop. I investigate whether this was a group decision and specifically why produce was planted: its edibility and the troop's plans for further cultivation. Perhaps most importantly, I question whether F Troop's actions 'fit' with the UA ideology: are they *actually* practising the cultivation of food in the city and, if so, to what end?

Food and F Troop: Recreating the Urban Landscape Through Guerrilla Gardening

My observations indicate that F Troop demonstrates a form of UA, albeit not on the scale of other city-based food initiatives; they do not harvest nor eat the produce planted in the space. Based on this realisation, one could question whether F Troop is practising a form of UA at all. However, UA is a term which incorporates a large variety of initiatives which grow food in the city environment (Viljoen 2005). This is reinforced when one considers the breadth of UA showcased in Gorgolewski et al.'s (2011) account of projects from across the globe: from relatively well-known community gardens, innovative hanging systems and large extravagant vertical farming systems to small informal projects, all features side by side, the latter is perhaps most appropriate in this circumstance. Several of the smaller projects featured in the text began as guerrilla initiatives and sprouted into something much larger, such as the McGee University 'Edible Campus' which has transformed from an unlawful project to lawful (Gorgolewski et al. 2011).

Most importantly, Gorgolewski et al.'s (2011) account reveals the broad remit of UA: it can be large and expensive with high yields, or small, perhaps even unproductive, simply demonstrating where produce can be cultivated. Strengthening this idea that UA incorporates a whole host of projects are a variety of authors, from Viljoen and Wiskerke's (2012) recent piece to Smit et al.'s (1996) early take on the concept; all appear to view this form of activity as any form of food growing in the city. With this in mind, I proceed to investigate the reasons for F Troop's adoption of food and how they incorporate the produce into the landscape, providing an overview of the somewhat under-researched topic of informal UA.

Why Food?

The phase descriptions reveal the disjointed approach and somewhat individual-led efforts on food cultivation. The numerous observations highlight the great ambition of Sarah to pursue the UA discourse and, particularly, how she is able to influence other members to adopt a similar rhetoric. One obtains the feeling, through the field note chronological description, that the ambition to grow produce was not a unanimous decision, rather a personal objective to prove her horticultural abilities. This solo quest to use the land in a productive manner contravenes the majority of the thoughts contained within the literature portion of this book: best practice dictates that in order to create and maintain a successful grow space, there must be a group of willing bodies, who share the same views and passions (Cyzman et al. 2009). FCFCG (undated) adds weight to this by stressing the danger with adopting an individual-led approach, which often results in failure. This team approach is not isolated to groups which obtain permission, but is also favoured with grass-roots action, adopting a loose network which allows all involved having an equal say on proceedings (Mckay 1998).

The chronological discussion of the troop's actions also reveals the ambivalent nature of the group. Whilst initially it appeared that the troop planned their digs thoroughly, as phases progressed, it became evident that the troop act on instinct, designing the site 'then and there' whilst preferring to keep prior planning to a minimum. This approach results in various forms of vegetation planted alongside one another, in a random pattern. Ironically, maintenance intensive plants and crops appeared to be preferred, which inevitably suffer greatly, practically disappearing in the harsh environment.

Perhaps the largest shift in practice occurs during phase three, in which the peas and spinach replaced the original display, which was established in phases one and two. This alteration resulted in vegetables replacing flowers; in essence, the troop transforms the site, which then became mainly populated with vegetables following this 'clear out' stage. One could argue that this demonstrates the shifting principles of F Troop, from a group of guerrillas who discussed the possibilities of UA to attempting to demonstrate UA. Sarah realised that the vegetables required maintenance and planned to provide water on her daily journey to the office. However, the field notes also highlight the one-dimensional approach to UA, with only a couple of members appearing to favour the planting of vegetables on the dig sites.

This indecisiveness emanates in other forms, especially with regard to the troop's philosophy and intentions. The troop's stance on cultivation alters throughout the various phases. Whilst in the initial stages the troop is eager and very pro crop cultivation, the latter stages provide evidence that this enthusiasm has waned, with the troop preferring to concentrate on the site's aesthetics and less on its productiveness. This reinforces FCFCG's earlier guidance regarding the need for a variety of actors to hold this enthusiasm for cultivation. Evidently, the reduction in numbers and decrease in the leader's keenness, coupled with the lack of interest from other members, has resulted in the leader's founding ideology fading. They transition from a troop of food cultivators, with specific aims and objectives surrounding UA, to a more traditional guerrilla group, who prefer to tackle the aesthetic discrepancies of the land, creating a uniform, continual pattern with flowers and other fauna.

Evidently, this suggests that in order to retain this food growing idiom, a much wider circle of enthusiasm is required, a circle which encompasses a variety of motivated group members with the same ambitions, drive and thoughts. In this instance, F Troop, with its hierarchical structure and individual-led UA discourse, fails to continue its cultivation ambitions and slowly declines with time.

The Vegetables and Flowers: Are They 'Appropriate' for the Space?

Edging away from the food displayed by F Troop, one could question the choice of original vegetation planted by the group, which appeared somewhat foreign in the once undisturbed, barren landscape. The appropriateness of the vegetation has already been questioned several times during this chapter alone. My observations

highlight the wide variety of plants, herbs and vegetables which were planted next to the dual carriageway; according to the leader, these included:

> Hollyhocks, Miscanthus sinensis (grasses), Nasturtium – flowers and foliage you can eat, Pansies – edible flowers, Marigolds (summer bedding), Jasminum officinale – common jasmine, peas, Lemon balm – herb, Geranium phaeum, Sedum 'Autumn Joy', Astrantia major, Iris siberica, Gladioli, Anemone, Daffodils, Tulips, Bedding begonias, Seeds – wildflower mix ('Bee seeds'); Echinops seeds from my garden; poppies and spinach. (E-mail from Sarah, November 2011)

The various plants and vegetables were spread across the three plots, which were created and maintained during the five phases. The lack of organisation, coupled with the novice grouping of vegetation, creates the sense that F Troop's members understood little about horticulture. Contrary to this, F Troop's leader, through her extensive dialogue with me, presents the picture that she has a considerable amount of horticultural knowledge. The leader has worked for several years as volunteer landscape gardener. The various phase figures demonstrate how other members appear to hold a basic knowledge of horticulture; in these figures, troop members turn the soil, plant crops and maintain the produce. The troop uses a variety of garden tools, from spades to rakes; they ensure the soil is correctly prepared and that the site, and nearby pavement, remained clear following their dig.

Nevertheless, the mismatching of plants and vegetables creates the sense that the troop was either uncoordinated or inexperienced, perhaps even a combination of both. I obtained the feeling that they cared more for the aesthetics of the site than its functionality, imposing their own views and ideologies on the space to obtain, what could be deemed, 'private satisfaction' (Porteous 1996: 5). I deem this private satisfaction due to the lack of involvement of those who reside nearby; the troop never consulted with the immediate population nor did they explain to these individuals their actions on the site. Therefore, their actions and decisions made on the site – including the produce and flowers planted – were decisions made exclusively for their own pleasure.

Fundamentally, these decisions to include a wide variety of produce and flowers have implications for the space. Whilst the primary purpose of F Troop may have revolved around promoting the idea of UA, the processes and actions the group pursued inevitably caused damage to the environment they occupied. Although not the most glamorous of locations prior to F Troop's intervention, the site held a variety of plant species, ranging from large bushes to smaller saplings. These were duly eradicated throughout the five digs, cumulating in the land almost being forcibly adopted by the troop and recreated according to their image.

Productivity: UA Without Yield?

The commentary throughout this chapter has already established the lack of produce sourced from the site. To some, UA is all about economic gain and productivity (Caputo 2012), whereas others regard the mere cultivation of food in the city as UA (Gorgolewski et al. 2011). I regard F Troop's attempts as a fairly

'watered down' version of UA; they were conscious of the concept and actively pursued it, although to an end, which sees the produce not utilised nor easily noticed. Nevertheless, F Troop was demonstrating the ability for vegetables to thrive in even the harshest climates; poor soil conditions, constant vandalism and pollution were only a few conditions these vegetables had to endure. This, in my opinion, is where their actions can be situated under the ideology of UA: they are actively pursuing the idea of harbouring vegetables in the urban environment and hold several discussions over associated future projects, to make this happen.

Surprisingly, regardless of the troop members' hesitation surrounding the edibility of the produce, Beesley (2012), a soil scientist interested in UA, claims that vegetables are a fantastic filter which would eradicate most pollutants. There is ample literature concerning soil quality and issues with growing vegetables, so much that this research could quite easily focus on the pollutant issue alone. The majority of these texts believe that significant harm can be caused by eating produce grown on contaminated land (Cook et al. 2005; MeUser 2010; Turrio-Baldassarri et al. 2007). Worryingly, one text in particular highlights the dangers with certain types of vegetables and how some are most susceptible to pollutants: 'spinach accumulated significantly higher Pb, zinc (Zn) and Cd levels than lettuce and radish' (Cook et al. 2005: 213).

This information adds weight to the troop member's concerns with regard to the produce and the dangers associated with picking the crops to eat. Although I am unable to divulge the exact location of the dig, observations demonstrate how this portion of land appeared too small to be a former site of a factory, or something which could leave contaminants in the soil. Nevertheless, the proximity of the site to the large inner-city road network, coupled with openness of the space, presents an eminent danger that the ground could be in a state of disrepair, possibly harbouring unwanted bacteria which could be picked up by the vegetation. Evidently, a further output of this research could focus specifically on the edibility of the vegetables in this location, testing soil and examining the land to determine how safe the soil is for cultivation. Essentially, one has to be mindful that the contamination levels will vary depending on location (Cook et al. 2005).

Whilst Sarah and other F Troop members realise that the vegetables may be polluted, apart from their efforts during phase four, there was little evidence to suggest that they attempted to ensure the public does not consume the produce. For instance, Anna was more concerned that if the public recognise the vegetables, they will steal the produce: 'I think we talked about maybe doing a pumpkin too [however]. I think one of the dangers of that, it becomes more noticeable it would draw more attention. I think someone would nick it or something like that'. Surprisingly in this interview, Anna reveals how she felt disillusioned by this pursuit of UA, especially since the produce was not edible. This revelation, regarding how Anna views the space, raises questions about who benefits from this UA: Sarah is adamant that their actions could influence the local community, yet thus far, there is little to suggest that the latter are involved or are aware of the vegetables.

Who Benefits from the UA?

The sections above reveal the somewhat self-centred nature of troop members, particularly the leader, Sarah, who controlled the action of the guerrillas. Essentially I argue that, besides the eventual willingness of the troop to involve the community (discussed in a subsequent chapter), the guerrillas colonise the land from the outset, imposing their character, beliefs and thoughts on the space. Parallels evidently exist between F Troop's actions and that of other grass-roots activity: from Edensor's (2005) account of graffiti artists on neglected land to Jordan's (1998) commentary of the Reclaim the Streets party on the M41 in London, these groups have imposed their character on space.

Although initially my narrative appears to demonstrate how F Troop is aiming to improve the space, through introducing a variety of new plants and vegetables, a more in-depth dissemination of their activities reveals a hidden agenda. At first sight, someone may be in awe of these volunteers who partake in the grass-roots action, surrendering their spare time to improve an area which, in this case, was situated far from their homes and areas of immediate concern. In stark contrast, when one investigates the observation portion of this research in an objective manner, it reveals that the troop, in all five digs, destroys and removes the existing vegetation at the site; although not 'roots and all', some still exists albeit only in a minor form. The troop appeared to adopt the area and claim the space for future digs, preferring to start with a blank canvas as opposed to working around the local authority's pre-planted flora.

This requirement for a fresh start, without consultation with the nearby community, suggests that the colonisation and privatisation of the space were present from the outset. This correlates with Porteous' (1996) earlier suggestion regarding the adoption of space and how some individuals order the land in accordance with their values. Ironically, the above sections have already determined how the vegetation planted was inappropriate for the landscape the troop adopted. In essence, F Troop has stripped the area of its natural foliage and replaced it with unsustainable, unmaintained (for the most part) vegetables and inappropriate plants.

Maintaining the UA Site

The plan from the beginning was considerably different from reality, with the troop members originally intending to maintain the area, due to their places of employment being located close to the site. However, my observations reveal that this maintenance aspect lasted for only a short time, before several key players from the troop's ranks moved locations. This relocation forced the plants and vegetables to survive alone in the harsh environment: the peas and spinach suffered greatly without constant care and attention. Figure 5.1 features the site, which should hold the spinach and peas, after it was left for several months.

Fig. 5.1 Phase five and the site in slight disrepair (Hardman's photograph)

Figure 5.1 does not reflect the sheer disorder of the site when I first arrived for the dig. Unfortunately, the guerrillas had already started working on this occasion; thus, Fig. 5.1 only shows part of the destruction: some foreign vegetation lying dead across the patch, whilst most of the leaves have been cleared from the space. The background, with the leaves piled up, resembles the space as it would have looked before troop members began working on it. The troop, on reflection, acknowledged that this was a naïve move; they recognise that a more strategic vision should have been implemented from the outset: planting self-sustaining vegetation from the beginning to ensure that maintenance was not necessary.

This dilapidation effect occurred on several occasions: following phases two and four, when a substantial amount of time had passed. This requires two phases: three and five, purely fulfilling a maintenance role. The troop's time was thus spent repairing damage they had caused to the site. My account of phase five describes how one of these purely maintenance ventures proceeded. In this dig, the troop aimed to clean up all of the sites created during the previous action. This dig involved F Troop moving from phase one through to phase four, removing months of accumulated litter and general debris. The troop also managed to plant several, more adaptable pieces of vegetation, which they argued would survive longer through the winter months ahead. This dig was rather unusual, as it was the first to be conducted outside of the summer months. The troop chose this peculiar time due to a member noticing the horrid state of the site they had previously created. This dig, arguably, was therefore out of necessity as opposed from a desire to further improve the space.

F Troop and the Wider Guerrilla Movement

Whilst the above sections provide an in-depth view of the UA actions of F Troop, it is important to situate these attempts to cultivate food in a wider context, particularly whether other guerrillas have this ambition, whether F Troop is encouraging others and to what extent their action is being recognised. To investigate all three of these issues, it is vital to recognise whether the troop is part of a larger guerrilla movement, connected to the grass-roots world or an isolated element of UA without any impact on other guerrillas.

> I suppose it feels very isolated at the same time, in terms of it is a fairly small bunch of us who come down on a regular basis. Not that many people know about it, I mean other people have contributed in other ways…I've got family members that come down, but they contribute by giving us plants they don't want, or whatever. (Anna)

Firstly, it is important to recognise that the troop itself was created around a group of work colleagues; this was established in Chap. 4. However, as Anna notes, the troop also had support from distanced members: individuals who did not show up to the digs, but sustained the action through the provision of plants and materials. Reverting to the wider discussion on the movement, it is important to view the practices of F Troop and how these differ from, or follow, other guerrilla troops. I often refer to these individuals as 'traditional' guerrillas, in the sense that they conform with popular practice: using 'loose', leftover space around the city and transformed the site in a relatively short period of time (Lewis 2012; McKay 2011). However, I also highlight the differing actions of the troop, how the troop varies and how the troop is unique from the wider movement of guerrilla gardening. Obviously guerrilla troops are not the same; they each have their own objectives and ways of achieving these (Crane 2011; Crane et al. 2012; Reynolds 2008). However, there are common practices: operating at night, avoiding busy places and creating extravagant displays to name just a few (McKay 2011).

It is also important to realise whether the troop communicates with other guerrilla gardeners, informing them of progress and their attempts to practise UA. This would inevitably have consequences for the wider grass-roots movement, perhaps with copycat examples cropping up around the country. Finally, I investigate the future of F Troop, particularly in line with thoughts from Reynolds who stipulates that guerrillas eventually legitimise their action. This latter point is particularly important, as UA – even in lawful terms – tends to be treated as an alien concept by authorities in the UK (Caputo 2012).

Guerrilla Practices: How Does the Troop Compare?

Perhaps the most significant revelation from my time with F Troop was that, unlike most guerrilla gardeners, who operate at night or in a less conspicuous manner (McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008), these individuals conducted their digs in broad

daylight. This was a constant trait I witnessed throughout all of F Troop's digs: their obsession with marketing or promoting the activities they practise. They regularly exchange humorous remarks regarding contacting local newspapers in order to raise awareness and speak to passers-by who stop near the dig sites, telling them about previous efforts and why they are doing the work voluntarily. The troop appears proud of their work, and the timing of the dig – in broad daylight – also suggests that F Troop wants to be seen as opposed to remaining underground. One could argue that this stance emits a sense of arrogance, with the guerrilla gardeners pursuing their action in means not accustomed to the rebellious movement, attempting to draw as much attention as possible instead of remaining invisible. However, this visibility has resulted in the nearby community eventually becoming conscious of the activities occurring on their space. Pub patrons have increasingly become aware of the guerrillas' actions, and the troop has responded to this interest from the establishment's customers.

This is against the norms of guerrilla gardening (Reynolds 2008) and inevitably resulted in the troop attracting a substantial amount of attention. This revelation, arguably, could signify both the inexperience and confidence of the troop members to expose themselves openly to the public. For instance, troop members only realise, when the dig commenced, the implications of their overt approach, with nearby CCTV systems and passers-by paying particular attention to their action. This lag in comprehending why most guerrilla troops prefer night time digs resulted in the member's identities being revealed instantaneously.

This open approach inadvertently exposed the troop members: the dig location was situated in close proximity to their office; a colleague merely walking to or from the office would result in exposure. This could result in the troop members being caught in the act or, at least, close to the dig site with gardening equipment. This was especially dangerous since the troop members were employed by the local authority, which ironically is the very power deemed to control the land they unlawfully altered. This particular point, regarding land ownership, is elaborated on in Chap. 6 of the book. Secondly, their daylight action renders the troop open to police or local authority wardens catching them in the act. As demonstrated in Chap. 3, on several occasions guerrilla gardeners, like other unlawful acts, have faced hostility from authority which often ends with the site being destroyed (Hou 2010; Reynolds 2008; Rosa Rose 2007).

Fundamentally, the adoption of an unconcealed approach distances F Troop from the perceived and routine practices of other guerrilla groups (Flores 2006; McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007). Guerrilla gardeners are considered to predominantly operate at night or in conditions which mask their action; this conceals troop members and, thus, safeguards their identities (Douglas 2011; Johnson 2011). F Troop, through this bravado display, contradicts the very nature of guerrilla gardening and in particular Reynolds' view on how action should be safely implemented. Their overconfidence or arguably unaware nature may expose not only their own action but that of other guerrilla gardeners, who usually prefer to remain part of the larger, internet-based, 'submerged network' (Hardman 2011: 15).

In addition to the above revelation, F Troop further contravenes the guerrilla 'doctrine of invisibility' during all of their digs. This invisible approach is quashed at the 'first hurdle', with my notes demonstrating how a troop member dons a reflective orange vest. This, inevitably, resulted in the enhancement of the group's visibility to passing cars and pedestrians, in essence, the parallel opposite of a typical guerrilla troop, who usually attempt to remain invisible or undetected whilst on site at a dig (Metcalf and Widener 2011; Tracey 2007). Ironically, this bold move appeared to add an official aura to the group's actions, which may have resulted in the troop's activities appearing somewhat lawful, passers-by presuming that this was an organised piece of action, since the vest garnished a logo of a local charity.

Whilst I have 'cherry picked' the differences between F Troop and other guerrilla troops, I still argue that these individuals would fit within what one could deem a 'traditional' guerrilla troop: middle-class, ambitious, somewhat naïve and looking for impact. Evidently, these are my own thoughts, but when one investigates how guerrillas are portrayed in the mass media, books and other texts, F Troop comply with how they characterise those involved (see, for instance, CBC 2012; Lewis 2012; Thompson and Sturgis 2006; Winnie 2010). The troop was about quick impact, and although they visit the stretch alongside the dual carriageway several times, it was not a permanent fixture. My views are reinforced by previous experiences with guerrilla gardeners (see Hardman 2009) who practised in a similar way to this troop.

Reynolds and F Troop

In order to view whether F Troop is spreading the message about their UA exploits, it is vital that their association with the wider guerrilla movement is explored. The literature portion of this book has already established that guerrilla gardening, with its virtual forum and shared objectives, is a form of a social movement. Furthermore, authors such as Reynolds, who have experienced interacting with several troops, claim that the guerrilla gardeners, whether they form a part of the Internet network or not, are a cog in the movement (Reynolds 2008).

This chapter has already discussed how I engaged with F Troop, starting on Reynolds' guerrillagardening.org site, using e-mail and then eventually transitioning to reality. I was therefore fascinated to engage with the guerrillas, during interviews, to understand how they positioned themselves with other guerrilla gardeners:

> …I ended up getting a little troop, primarily together through work. So to start off with I thought 'yeah guerrilla gardening' and the website looks great. Then because the website isn't that helpful…I thought we'll just do our own thing. I don't see us as part of the bigger movement now anymore. I see that as quite distanced from us really. (Sarah)

Sarah, the leader of the troop, clearly felt disheartened and slightly distressed by the lack of interest on Reynolds' website. She noted that the website approach

failed and she instead turned to recruiting locally, with the leader primarily using her employment connections. Thus, far it appears that the troop, in particular the leader who coordinated the communication, does not liaise with other guerrillas nor shares the outcome of their action. However, attempts were made to do exactly this: 'I sent Richard some stuff, some photos and stuff. He was 'great we'll put this on the link to it'. That never happened either so I thought 'hmm yeah'' (Sarah). This disappointment with the forum soon turned to anger, with the leader openly criticising Reynolds, the website's founder, for ignoring her requests to display dig pictures. This eventually resulted in the female leader deeming the term 'guerrilla gardener' to be only loosely applied to F Troop, predominantly for the 'fun element'.

Since this chapter has already established the dominant nature of this female and that she controlled the communication arm of the troop, her thoughts are vital in understanding how F Troop relates with the wider guerrilla network. In her opinion, and thus that of the troop, the lack of communication on Reynolds' part has resulted in their demonstration of UA failing to be broadcast across the guerrilla forum. Although F Troop's origins lay with Reynolds' network, their future appears distant and abstracted, frustrated by the lag in communication.

Reinforcing the suggestion that these guerrillas are abstracted from the wider network is the absence of a troop identity or number. Reynolds provides numbers to individuals who request them via his site; his designation is 001, which indicates Reynolds' self-perceived position as the founder of the movement: the 'general' of guerrillas (McKay 2011: 189). F Troop's leader opted not to adopt one of these numbers, preferring to use the guerrilla network as and when required, but avoiding full integration into Reynolds' project.

Contrary to some of the above suggestions, several posts on the guerrillagardening.org forum emerged following the leader's statement regarding Reynolds.

Whilst she may dislike Reynolds, regardless of whether other members write back, Sarah constantly published updates and remarks about their activity. Box 5.1 is an advertisement for phase five, asking whether others could attend to help. This strategy proved successful only once, with a student appearing to help the troop out during phase three. Therefore, regardless of Sarah's feelings towards Reynolds, she still publicised the troop's activity on the forum, connecting with other guerrillas about their action. Whilst Sarah may be the focal point for most of these interactions, her leader position results in her taking charge of the communication for the wider troop.

In essence, this is an example of information exchange using a form of social media (Della Porta and Diani 2010). Whilst it may have initially appeared that F Troop was distanced from the guerrilla network, evidence in the form of updates and these calls to arms (Box 5.1) create the sense that this group is, at least loosely, part of this wider movement. Whilst the troop's leader may not hold an optional troop number or necessarily agree with Reynolds' management of the network, she still utilises the virtual environment for connections. Arguably, this in turn demonstrates how the troop, through their leader, is part of the wider guerrilla movement regardless of the comments made during the interview.

Box 5.1: A Communication from Sarah, the Leader of F Troop
Hi,

On Sunday 6th of November, a small group of us are going back to tidy and reinvigorate our patch of land near the********.

We'll be meeting from 1.00 pm onwards, if anyone wants to joins us. If you do, and have any plants or bulbs spare, that would be great. There's a lot to do, so the more the merrier!

An extract from guerrillagardening.org by the F Troop leader, October 2011.

More recent thoughts by McKay help to clarify the situation on F Troop's association with the guerrilla gardening movement. He argues that the guerrilla movement encompasses a large variety of actors, yet there are basically two types of guerrilla gardeners: those who fit with Reynolds' ideology and those who reside outside of this network (McKay 2011). Basically, McKay (2011) claims that more radical guerrilla gardeners generally sit within Reynolds' view of the activity, whilst the less radical lie somewhere outside this: still guerrilla gardening, albeit in a slightly different manner.

Legitimisation: The Ultimate Path for F Troop?

Perhaps one of the most important points made by Reynolds is his claim regarding the progression of guerrilla troops: Chapter 3 discusses a variety of literature and examples which state that guerrilla troops eventually legitimise their action or decline (cf. Green Guerrillas undated; Reynolds 2008; Rosa Rose 2007). Reynolds (2008) in particular argues that a troop will eventually arrive at a crossroads, where they must choose to carry on with their action or work with organisations to grow. In this context, it is vital to understand whether legitimisation is a possibility with F Troop and what implications this may have on the surrounding community and spaces.

My observations indicate that numbers begin to dwindle in the latter digs. There are only three characters that are in attendance during all five phases: the troop leader Sarah, her second lieutenant Anna and their male friend Mark. The troop was extremely fluid, ever changing and never a static entity. There were, however, attendance peaks and troughs throughout my 2 years with the troop; on some occasions digs attracted more than seven guerrillas, whilst others only featured three. Perhaps most significant are the later digs: phases four and five, which demonstrated a large drop in numbers. F Troop was down to its 'bare bones', with only a handful of dedicated guerrillas in attendance.

Purely on the basis of numbers, it appears as if F Troop is declining; the excitement shown in the earlier digs is waning, with guerrillas hesitant to attend planned events. One could question what has caused this drop in attendees; perhaps the management style of the leader was to blame. Reynolds warns against following a strict hierarchical structure: 'a leader does not have to be a boss, and a guerrilla gardening group will flourish when the troops feel emancipated' (Reynolds 2008: 166). He feels decisions should be made unilaterally across members with loose leadership in place; this allows a sense of ownership for the site across the group (Reynolds 2008).

However, I do note, on several occasions, how there was discussion surrounding legitimisation, with some troop members feeling that they could make a real impact on communities. The legitimisation discussion centres on UA and how to involve those who surround sites in a greater capacity. The following section investigates this dialogue in a more detailed manner, before exploring the group's future at the end of the chapter.

Evidence for Legitimisation

There were various references, made throughout the digs, to the idea of legitimisation. Perhaps the earliest mention of adopting a legal approach was featured in phase one, when a fairly hesitant attendee questions whether the plan adopted was necessarily required. There was a rather swift response to this request: 'when he first came [he] insisted we should wear fluorescent jackets so that we'd look official. We were like 'get lost', that's the fun of it, we might get told off' (Sarah). Evidently at this early stage in the action, legitimisation was unthinkable and not in the interests of the majority of guerrillas who attended this dig. This is not unusual, as Reynolds (2008) declares that thoughts about legitimisation only surface once a site has been established for some time, predominantly when guerrillas want to move on to something new and different. In this case, F Troop has only just started to cultivate the land and thus this is a new journey for them, something exciting and different.

As the phases progress, I reveal several items of discussion which centre on progression from unregulated action to that of a legal approach to cultivating produce. Perhaps the most notable discussion concerned the creation of a new site adjacent to a well-known 'council estate' situated not far from the sites F Troop currently occupy. My field observations demonstrated how this idea was first proposed by Anna who wanted to propel the UA idea forward even further, adopting a site in this relatively deprived area and transforming it into a community garden for the locals. Interestingly, I note how the F Troop leader feels this site should remain in the unregulated realm, which would apparently enable the guerrillas to freely choose how to organise the space.

With regard to the current site, there was evidence to suggest that the troop members were starting to think about developing the space, perhaps even legitimising their current action. As the phases progressed, F troop became more confident,

tackling larger amounts of space with, what were increasingly, outlandish displays of vegetation. In later phases I noted how F Troop asks the nearby pub landlady for access to water and refreshments. Subsequent interviews suggest that the troop's members are willing to work with the pub, in the future, in order to cultivate potatoes and other vegetables close to the premises (see Chap. 7). Arguably, although this interaction is not with the local authority, this is still an indication that F Troop is opening up their action to those who surround this site, involving the wider community, which is not a traditional stance adopted by guerrilla gardeners (Scott et al. 2013; Tracey 2007).

Whilst the majority of this interaction with the community will be explored in a subsequent chapter, these revelations add weight to Reynolds' suggestion regarding the majority of guerrilla troops eventually transitioning their unlawful acts into a legal form of action, involving others to grow the site. In this instance, although not wishing to work with authority, F Troop is open to the idea of including the local community in their action. This conversion from insurgency to inclusion is a rather difficult transition for any guerrilla troop to tackle (Reynolds 2008). This prediction of a boundary cross, from the unlawful to legal, would inevitably result in the very nature of F Troop changing significantly. The troop would lose the sense of danger and arguably the ownership of the space, with others assuming command or playing a role in its development. Quite clearly this is a large step for the guerrilla gardeners; rather working with those who reside near the site is more appropriate to shape the future of the space. The maintenance aspect of the site, which has been a problem throughout the 2 years of phases, could surely be tackled if the troop adopted this new approach.

F Troop: Questioning the Group's Future UA Ambitions

Whilst I have established that F Troop is considering the idea of legitimisation, it is important to understand the wider ambitions of the group in order to view where the UA action is moving, whether a legal transition is possible or the unregulated approach will continue to be the preferred route for the troop. It is also important to understand if passion for the action still exists amongst the troop ranks, and if UA will be continued to be practised in future digs.

UA: Immediate Plans and Future Objectives

Realistically, although the troop members have lots of ambitious ideas, their immediate actions lay with the current site where the five digs have taken place, in particular the idea of adapting the vegetation to suit the environment: 'well Anna and I were talking about that site and saying we need to have it more, self-sufficient, more sustainable' (Sarah). It appears F Troop's core priority centres around creating a

sustainable site for the local community; they realise the plants and vegetables currently cultivated were not suited to the environment. Sarah explained that the troop needs to be more strategic with their planting, including vegetation such as geranium, 'which are quite drought tolerant plants' (Sarah), as opposed to spinach and peas, which are soil intensive.

This quest for a more sustainable landscape somewhat diminishes hope for future UA at the site. Surprisingly, contrary to this initial thought, evidence collected in the form of interviews, from those who surround the site, demonstrated the impact of F Troop's actions, influencing the local pub landlady, for example, to consider growing vegetables in raised beds. Whilst it is tempting to elaborate further on this revelation, I explore this in more detail in Chap. 7, which investigates the impact of unregulated UA. Rather I am using this example here to illustrate that UA will still be apparent at the site, albeit in a different form.

F Troop's distanced plans are more ambitious than their immediate strategy. I highlighted earlier how informal discussion during phases one and two showed that F troop's leader, and the second lieutenant, wished to develop a community based scheme north of the city centre. This scheme would initially be started by F troop and then handed over to local residents, providing them with access to fresh organic produce. Initially the group deliberated over whether they should take the official channels on such a project, but the leader quickly denounced this explaining that 'there's no fun in that' (Sarah). Basically Sarah, and the other frequent members of F Troop, felt that working with authority would take away the thrill element of guerrilla gardening.

> I think I felt that I didn't want the council to take credit...I think if they wanted it to look nice they should do it themselves. They should find the money! It's probably also coloured by the fact I work for the, well I did at the time work for the council, and I didn't really enjoy it. (Sarah)

This anti-authority rhetoric is embedded in all of F Troop's current and, inevitably, their future activities. It predominantly appeared to originate from the leader's dislike for her employers. Her strong influence on the group is revealed when other members suggest working with authorities in order to complete projects. My field observations, during phase three, show how a troop member appealed for the local authority to be included, but his pleas were quickly disregarded by the troop leader, who in turn declared 'you know what they are like; they will just take the credit' (Sarah). It therefore appears, whilst the current leader remains in control of the troop, that F Troop's future will not include working with authority. The leader's ambitions are clear: she wants to work directly with the community, cutting out what she labels the 'middle man' (Sarah).

I noted, during my observation, how several future projects that appear to already be underway or at least in the planning stage. Phase four field notes demonstrate how some of F Troop's members were already involving the wider public in their illegal escapades and excluding authority from their activities. One troop member, for instance, Anna, was working with a class of local children to improve a neglected piece of space adjacent to their school's site. Anna appeared to be unaware that she

was involving children in illegal activity; instead, she perceived it to be an exciting way to helping and maintaining the area surrounding the school. Ironically this member, during phase one, was hesitant that the local authority was not included in the digs conducted by F Troop. Clearly this individual's original hesitation has shifted, replaced by an anti-authoritarian view which was closely once held by F Troop's leader, Sarah.

It becomes evident that F Troop is an ambitious and motivated guerrilla gardening group. They are establishing links with the nearby community, attempting to maintain the site in a more effective manner and trying to educate those who reside nearby about the possibility of growing food in the urban context. The troop's use of the produce and why they are reluctant to work with authority are explored in the following chapter.

Diminishing Numbers: Does F Troop Need Change to Survive?

The way I have portrayed F Troop throughout this chapter, particularly the leader, creates the sense that this guerrilla entity may soon cease to exist, scuppering any plans for the future. One may question whether I have been too harsh on these individuals. For instance, I may have presented F Troop as a rather selfish body of individuals, content with altering land without permission. I have also highlighted the strict hierarchical structure of the group and the strict manner in which it was operated. In my opinion, this is an honest, critical reflection of how F Troop functions, taking over land without consulting those who reside nearby, planting unsustainable produce and then not maintaining the space.

The fluid nature of the troop is not unusual, with grass-roots groups often experiencing similar fluctuations in attendee numbers (McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008). However, the recent drop in numbers and overreliance on only a few members could indicate a bleak future, if any future, for the troop. As I have already discussed, I feel this drop could be aligned to the operating policy of F Troop: the leader's exploitation of the labour she has to hand. One of Tracey's (2007) most significant tips for successful guerrilla troop concerns the management of these volunteers. He highlights the need for troop leaders to realise that these individuals are giving up their free time and this should be rewarded: they should be kept in the planning loop and involved in all aspects of the site (Tracey 2007). In the context of F Troop, it becomes clear that this has not taken place: volunteers, those who work with the leader, were treated purely as labour, instructed to undertake certain tasks and comply with her vision. This operation policy is in direct conflict with Tracey's best practice guide and could be one of several reasons why numbers dwindle at digs.

One of the other issues concerns this obsession with UA, which is predominantly driven by the leader and her second lieutenant, the two gardening enthusiasts. Clearly, other troop members do not share this view that vegetables should be cultivated in the space, yet in a similar manner to the surrounding community, this belief is forced upon them without consultation. The lack of joined-up thinking again

contradicts Tracey's guidance with regard to how troops can successfully operate. It therefore appears that F Troop's leader opted against following advice from Reynolds and other experienced guerrilla gardeners, choosing to pursue her own way of coordinating a troop.

Is There Any Hope for the Future?

Whilst the above section has created a bleak picture for F Troop's future, my field notes and discussions with members also show some hope for the future. I have already mentioned the strengthening of ties with the local pub, with the landlady taking a particular interest in the group's work. The troop's leader recognises this enthusiasm and responds accordingly:

> I thought we could do the plot next to the pub this time and split some of the geranium that are already there as well as plant the rest of the things we bought. I also want to see how our peas and bulbs are doing! (Sarah)

The conscious decision to conduct a dig closer to the pub has further linked the troop to the pub and its patrons. The pub will supply F Troop with water and food, whilst in return F Troop will cultivate and beautify land closer to the pub. Phase four was eventually conducted further along the dual carriageway's barrier and closer to the pub. However, food was consciously omitted from this particular dig site. This omission was due to the troop realising that the soil could be contaminated and if pub customers eat the food, they could become severely ill.

The constant calls for arms, published on the guerrillagardening.org site, also provided some justification that F Troop will continue their pursuit of UA. The leader's discussions on the forums have received some feedback, with volunteers occasionally asking whether they could come along to digs, pulling out at the last minute due to other commitments. Nevertheless, the lack of digs in 2012 perhaps signifies that their pursuit of UA is elsewhere, through projects with other groups or individuals and not as the F Troop entity which was observed during this research.

The Women's Group: Unconscious Guerrilla Gardeners?

In a similar manner to the previous section, this section explores my interactions with the Women's Group (WG) food growers. This group is, arguably, situated at the opposite end of the guerrilla spectrum to F Troop and provides a case for comparison for reasons which will be explored later in this chapter; as McKay (2011) suggested in previous chapters, there are two types of guerrilla gardener: those who are part of Reynolds' network and those who lay outside. With this in mind, this chapter enables the reader to understand the complexities and diversity involved

with guerrilla gardening, providing a flavour of other troops who practise a form of informal UA by further exploring the unorthodox side of this grass-roots activity.

Whilst the seasonal observational accounts, in Chap. 4, provide an overview of the UA related matters in each of the seasons, this following section further explores the WG's use of food in the area. I begin with a section detailing the unpermitted nature of the WG's activities and why, alongside F Troop, they are featured in this book: comparing this community garden with the antics of the more 'traditional' guerrilla gardening troop.

The WG and Guerrilla Gardening

Initially, since the community garden project has been highly publicised by various local organisations and the city's council, I presumed that the relevant documents were in place prior to the transformation of the land from a green patch of grass to six large plots (these were subsequently divided into 12 smaller, albeit still large beds). Observations demonstrated how 'environmental volunteers', 'community payback' (juveniles) and other such organisations have been involved in the construction of the community garden. My observations also indicated that the community garden attracted a large variety of high-end council employees, community leaders and publicity through the local press. It was only during an observation in March 2011 did it become evident that Mon had not consulted anybody about the change of land use: 'we just did it, didn't ask permission, no need to is there, who's gonna say no to this?' (Mon).

The plots were relatively large and machinery was required to create the large rectangular beds. Within the UK context, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires planning permission to be sought and granted for any type of material change (Scott 2001). What it deemed 'material change' is, however, subject to each case (ODPM 2005). I note, during my observation in March 2011, how Mon realised that such permission would be required for the space. Nevertheless, Mon opted not to investigate the matter further and went ahead with digging the plots regardless of this and without the knowledge of the planning department. When asked whether she had gained explicit permission, Mon replied 'Erm, not really no [long pause]' (Mon). Mon then attempted to divert my questioning, before reluctantly admitting that they just went ahead with changing the space, refusing to further investigate as to whether planning permission was required for the space. At the heart of this argument is Mon's position as a community worker with the local authority.

Mon is assigned to the centre to oversee activities and has embedded herself in the local community, having served in the area for a number of years. This individual was the decision-maker and thus felt that the centre, and its land, belonged to her. In my opinion, this is one of the many reasons why permission was not pursued by Mon or other WG members. Mon appeared to realise that, in order to keep the new use of the space a secret, it would be unwise to attract unwanted attention. She was particularly concerned with the health and safety aspects of the community

garden, since the land to the rear of the centre was positioned on a slope. In particular, she was reluctant to allow just anybody to interact with the space, especially elderly members of the WG. She eventually conceded that by cutting corners she had to be careful, 'well yeah, but it is a bit…it's on a slope and it can be a bit slippery' (Mon). Any accidents on the community garden would evidently attract the attention of unwanted parties wishing to know Mon's health and safety policy with regard to the site.

Ironically, Mon was ensuring that her 'back is covered' by implementing an informal policy on the space. Evidence, in the form of community garden advisory bodies (for instance FCFCG undated; PlanLoCal 2012), suggests that a stringent health and safety policy would be required if the site was legitimate. In a sense, Mon realised that it would be irresponsible to not control the site in some way and thus attempts to restrict access to those less able bodied, who may have an accident on the uneven surface; by preventing accidents, she is also ensuring that this site remained invisible.

The WG: Unconscious Guerrillas?

Evidently, a contradictory argument may focus on the issue that the WG was merely performing a form of unpermitted development, which occurs rather frequently (Scott 2001). Nevertheless, I align this group with guerrilla gardening due to the process through which they are undertaking unpermitted action. One could argue that this deliberate attempt by Mon, to hide the actions of the WG, falls squarely within the underground nature of the guerrilla movement: the tendency for those involved in the act to hide their action and avoid authority (McKay 2011; Tracey 2007). Her conscious avoidance of authority further aligns the women with F Troop: both aiming to remain unnoticed yet ironically noticed: their sites are the focal point, not themselves (to an extent). Considering these revelations, it could be argued that the WG was performing the act of guerrilla gardening. Reynolds' basic definition of guerrilla gardening as the 'illicit cultivation of someone else's land' (Reynolds 2008: 16) has already been discussed during Chap. 3. Some of the WG members knowingly partake in the act: cultivating land without the landowner's permission. Members understood that they were not allowed to let anyone frail in the garden and try their best to avoid questions regarding the origins of the community garden. The awareness exhibited by group members was, evidently, similar to that of those who were part of F Troop: the more 'traditional' guerrilla gardeners.

> To some, cultivating land without permission is so straight forward and uncomplicated that they have not even considered that what they do is rebellious or that they are part of a global guerrilla movement. Reynolds (2008: 24)

Although the WG members may never have heard of the guerrilla gardening movement or what the activity involves, they are, as Reynolds suggests, practicing

a different 'form' of guerrilla gardening. Furthermore, my previous research with guerrilla gardeners (Hardman 2009) suggests that some individuals are unaware of the implications of activity they perform, adding weight to the argument that the WG could be considered as taking part in the movement. In essence, like Reynolds, I feel that one does not need to be conscious of the movement to be part of it.

When considering these thoughts by Reynolds, it becomes clearer how the WG could be seen as a guerrilla gardening troop. This is reinforced with thoughts by similar authors: from McKay (2011) to Tracey (2007), these individuals believe that guerrilla gardeners can be anyone, from any background. The comments featured by McKay (2011) at the beginning of this chapter make obvious his thoughts with regard to guerrilla gardening: how the act is effectively split in two: those under Reynolds' network, or aligned to his interpretation of the activity, and others who may be taking part in a less radical form of the activity.

The WG conform to the founding principle of guerrilla gardening: tackling another's land without direct permission, remaining submerged and operating carefully to ensure that their site is not discovered (cf. Crane et al. 2012; Hou 2010; Johnson 2011). In essence, they are performing the act of guerrilla gardening, but in a completely different manner to that of F Troop. I hesitate to link the WG to Reynolds' wider movement: they are indirectly taking part in the activity through their mindful avoiding of authority and their proactive attempts to cultivate land without permission, as opposed to consciously pursuing Reynolds' 'trendy', somewhat niche and 'arty' version of the act.

This idea of submergence appeared several times during my observations. In a subsequent interview with Mon, when asked about the site's legality and the potential implications of the local planning authority becoming aware of the unpermitted development, she responded: 'nobody would say anything about it anyway because of all the good stuff it's been doing'. The group's leader appeared to realise that, if discovered, the authority may take action on this unauthorised use of land owned by the city. My field notes often demonstrated how Mon prevented vulnerable and less able-bodied members from venturing into the garden. This prevention was fuelled by her fears that a simple slip or fall, by an elderly person or less able-bodied attendee, would create unwanted attention for the site from the local authority. This clear aversion to authority again provides evidence for the submersion tactics employed by Mon and the wider WG.

The Broadness of Guerrilla Gardening

Hardman et al. (2012) claim that the term 'guerrilla gardener' is a trendy phrase describing that what could be argued is a very basic activity. Hardman et al., like Reynolds, dispute the notion that one needs to be conscious of the movement to be a guerrilla, unpacking the term and simply regarding any form of unlawful land use as guerrilla gardening. McKay (2011) is another who suggests that guerrilla gardening is more complex than purely Reynolds' vision of the act. With this in mind, I

argue that the term can be applied to the WG to summarise its action, since after all, they are displaying the core tendency of a guerrilla: 'the illegal cultivation of someone else's land' (Reynolds 2008: 16).

> These [numbers after name] are troop numbers, assigned to volunteers when they enlist at GuerrillaGardening.org. Surnames have been omitted because some guerrilla gardeners prefer to remain anonymous. Only guerrilla gardeners who are no longer alive are referred to by their full name. Reynolds (2008: 10)

Whilst I argue that the women are guerrillas, I fall short of labelling them a 'troop'. The reasoning behind this decision lies with Reynolds, the individual who coined the term. I deem the term 'troop' to be a construct of Reynolds and something which is adopted by those guerrillas who have networked via his site to start their action. In this case the women, being unaware nature of the network, cannot be labelled a troop, a term which aligns that particular collection of individuals with Reynolds' view of a guerrilla gardener. Rather, the WG fit with McKay's (2011) idea surrounding guerrillas which lie outside of Reynolds' more radical form of guerrilla gardening; they are not in the same category as F Troop, but can still be considered a group who are pursuing the activity, albeit unconsciously.

In an attempt to reinforce my claims, regarding the guerrilla nature of the WG, I initially attempted to create a sort of 'spectrum', which would provide a visual representation of the ideology (see Hardman 2009). However, it soon became apparent that this was impossible to create: guerrilla gardening is extremely complex, involving a large variety of actors who, consciously or unconsciously, pursue the activity (Crane et al. 2012; Tracey 2007, 2011). Fundamentally, the WG was pursuing an unpermitted form of UA: this is the link which binds both F Troop and this group. They are pursuing the cultivation of produce in the urban context in a similar manner, albeit that one is conducting the action with Reynolds' 'trendy' take on the activity in mind, whilst the other is blissfully unaware of the act of guerrilla gardening.

Deconstructing the WG: The Decision-Making Process

In a similar manner to the previous section, before delving into the UA performed by the WG, I review the decision-making processes of the group. Understanding how decisions were made within the group enables the reader to grasp the drive behind the community garden and who was truly responsible for this UA project. Evidently, similarities exist between F Troop and the WG: the latter is led by Mon, who dominates the group and makes all of the decisions. The women's pursuit of unpermitted development is due to Mon's decisions to avoid authority and take the quicker route of starting the site without the knowledge and consent of the appropriate authorities. The interviews with the various WG members highlight their lack of awareness of the unauthorised nature of the site's development:

> Well Mon dealt with all the paperwork and all the permission needed to be taken care of. That's not our [WG member] side of it; we are just there to help, as volunteers. (Sal)
>   …the garden's Mon's domain, so-to-speak, anything that needs permission or whatever she would have dealt with and sorted and made sure it was ok. (Nicki)

I think it was Mon…she would know more about that side of [things]. (Maggie)

I think it was Nicki and Mon [who got permission], although I couldn't really tell you. (Affiliate of the WG)

The statements above are only a selection of responses from WG members, but it becomes evident that all decisions were left to Mon. Some of the other women were unconscious of their role in developing a space which was unregulated and without local authority approval. One could argue that, as a researcher, this puts me in another ethically insecure position (Seale 2004): should I warn these individuals about the site's lack of accreditation or continue with my research without acknowledging this issue? Evidently, due to the passive participant role I held and the need to continue a lasting connection with the WG, the latter would be a much easier option. Since the other women members were mostly volunteers, and would not be in any trouble if the site was found, I decided not to divulge this information.

In this case, I sensed that the WG members knew that Mon had cut corners. Their responses to the question regarding permission were somewhat hesitant, as if they understood Mon was not complying with guidelines. I was also confident, due to my intense observation of the group members that their devotion to their leader would result in such knowledge being swiftly 'swept under the carpet'. This was not a crucial piece of information which needed to be divulged, and as a researcher it was not my responsibility to tamper with the inner workings of the WG. Evidence, in the form of Scott's (2001) Brithdir Mawr study, provides insight into what would happen if the women were to be caught: in that case no criminal proceedings were brought against a group who practised permaculture on land without permission and those involved in the project were asked to take down anything erected without permission. The Brithdir Mawr case demonstrated how enforcement officers could close an unpermitted site and prevent its continued operation. With this in mind, I argue that there would be no need to depart from my passive position and speak to the unaware members about the unpermitted nature of their actions.

Fundamentally, it becomes clear that the WG was coordinated one dimensionally through this individual named Mon. This contradicts the generally accepted ideal of how a community garden should be operated (FCFCG, *circa* 2005; Holland 2004). If at all possible, such a narrow approach to operating the space should be avoided; enthusiasm and decisions should be shared amongst the group and, ideally, the surrounding community (Nettle 2010). Thus far, my observations demonstrate the inability of the WG to engage with the surrounding community over the site; decisions were made internally, and the space was treated as something other than a community garden. This latter point, particularly the language used to describe the space in which the WG grew produce, is developed later.

Food and the WG: Transforming Urban Green Space for UA

It is evident that the WG performed what could be deemed a form of UA. Urban community gardens are a less radical form of UA in comparison to the more far-reaching vertical wall systems and structures being developed in other countries

(Gorgolewski et al. 2011). Community gardens may not be able to sustain those who surround them in the city, but form invaluable assets, especially in the deprived urban area, for vegetable and fruit growing (Holland 2004; Steel 2009). Sites, like that of the WG, can be found across the world, from the metropolis of New York City to the relatively deprived urban areas of Havana and many other cities across the UK (Angotti 2013; Diaz and Harris 2005; Mougeot 2006).

The WG action at first appeared extremely similar to the example in Milbourne's (2010) exploration of a community garden in Salford. Like Milbourne's, it was coordinated by women and aimed to provide fruit and vegetables to residents living in a deprived locale. However, a large difference is present with the spaces occupied: in Milbourne's (2010) piece, the women use neglected alleys for their community garden project, whereas the women here have used an area of green space once belonging to the community. Perhaps one of the largest questions raised here, with regard to food production, is whether these types of green spaces – which are rather scarce in the urban environment – should be transformed to accommodate UA. If they are altered, such as the one depicted throughout this chapter, then what implications and gains does it have for the nearby residents? The following section, in a similar manner to that of F Troop's section on analysis, explores the reasons for the WG's action, in particular why it has pursued the creation of a productive space and how it incorporates the produce into the landscape, providing an overview of the somewhat under-researched topic of informal UA.

Why Food?

Where the passion lies for the creation of a community garden on this site was slightly fuzzy. The original intentions of the WG, to supplement the community lunch and educate the local populace about produce, are admirable. The WG tool is the community garden, a place, although unlawfully created, intended to serve the residents, providing them with access to fresh produce. The WG, like F Troop featured in Chap. 4, stipulated that it aimed to bring food into the urban context, educating local residents and providing free fresh, healthy food to the otherwise impoverished locals.

> …there are a lot of people in flats and they have only got window-sill plants and stuff. You can't really grow a lot from a flat, a block of flats, and sometimes you will try but you won't get the right sun. (Sal)

The community garden was intended to be a site for experimentation and a space which could enable residents to grow larger yields of vegetables. Above, Sal touches on a well-documented subject regarding the lack of urban space to grow edible produce, especially for residents of high-density housing. These large flat complexes make it extremely difficult to grow any meaningful amount of produce in the space available (Ruppenthal 2008). Since the majority of the WG reside in these local authority-owned apartment blocks, this appeared to be another reason why the WG have pursued a space to grow food.

It becomes clear, through my intense interactions with the WG, that these individuals have no idea about UA, at least as an academic concept: what this incorporates and the growing research behind the food movement. Nevertheless UA, like the term guerrilla gardening, is extremely broad – an umbrella definition for any form of agricultural activity in the city context (Smit et al. 1996). Although the women are not conscious of UA, they, on several occasions, discuss the need to bring food closer to the local residents: from the outside, this appears to be the core drive for creating a space for food. In particular, Mon, the WG leader, felt that the lack of retail options in the surrounding area, coupled with her worries that many residents do not know the origins of basic fruit and vegetables, results in a need for this site to be embedded in such a locale.

This suggestion by Mon, regarding the lack of amenities in the nearby area, reflects some thoughts by Viljoen et al. (2005): they wish to promote, and grow, UA in areas where locals do not have acceptable access to fresh produce. Viljoen et al. declare these locations to be 'retail deserts', in essence, areas which have inadequate access to food for the residents (Viljoen 2005; see also University of Warwick and Sandwell Health Action Zone 2001). The WG adopts a proactive approach to counteract the lack of amenities in the area, whilst also educating the local populace about where food comes from and how it can be grown. Fundamentally, these two core principles, as stipulated by members of the group, align the women, unknowingly, with the majority of Viljoen's thoughts on how and where UA should be implemented.

> I think the main reason was because when we do community lunch it's such a good turnout. We wanted to reduce the amount we was spending on community lunch and we also wanted to provide home-grown produce, you know, get your five-a-day sort of thing, promote healthier eating. (Nicki)

Whilst most of the issues for pursuing food on the site appear relatively harmless and beneficial for the locals, as Nikki's statement above suggests, my interactions reveal a less admirable side to the transformation. Interestingly, interviews conducted with the WG members suggest that the main reason underpinning transformation was, in practice, to provide the WG members, rather than the wider community, with access to fresh produce. One member, for example, explained that the main reason behind establishing the grow site was to increase 'healthy eating and [the] growing [of] your own vegetables' (Sal). This is reinforced by several others: 'it's better that we know where the vegetables come from and know exactly what has gone into it' (Janet). On the other hand, Mon's thoughts surround the topic of finances, 'well we thought it was about time we grew our own vegetables, because they're expensive to buy' (Mon). When the women use 'we', they are not using the word in the sense of the wider community, but themselves, as illustrated in the decision-making section of this chapter.

My observations and interviews contradict most of the idealistic imagery presented from the first part of this section. The season-by-season discussion provides an example of how only a minimal amount of produce was used in the lunch; often no vegetables or fruit was featured at all. Furthermore, evidence from the formalised interviews suggests that the fortnightly lunch was the only time that residents were

able to access the produce cultivated at the site. When questioned about how the produce was used, and whether anyone can request something from the garden, Mon replied 'It doesn't work like that. What we do is we grow for ourselves and whatever surplus we use at community lunch'(Mon). It therefore became apparent that most of the produce was used for the personal consumption of group members, with Mon stipulating that the WG used the majority of the vegetables and fruit, with the community receiving leftovers.

> It's mainly the Women's Group, obviously, we do it as the Women's Group because we just found that as a group of women it just brings us together and it gives us something to do together. We pick some of the veg, cook it off and sit and eat lunch. (Nicki)
>
> They've [the women] all got their separate sections. It just seems like everybody goes to a certain section, it hasn't been actually nominated, and that's why I said I don't have too much input on that side, because I wasn't there when they planted it. Mine will be next seasons more than anything. (Janet)

Mon's claim is reinforced with other comments from the WG members, such as Nikki's and Janet's above. The former, when asked the same question as Mon, abruptly answers 'no', cutting me off mid-sentence. This resistance about giving the produce to community members was emulated in all of the interviews: from Janet's above discussion on how the beds were allocated to other member's comments surrounding how the produce was distributed. It appears that Mon's view about the general access and purposes of the garden was shared by other group members. The conflict demonstrated here forms the core of Chap. 7, which investigates the real impact and benefit – to the community – of the two guerrilla groups' sites.

Are the Fruit and Vegetables 'Appropriate' for the Space?

The appropriateness of UA, and the vegetables cultivated, is a widely discussed topic, with some local authorities questioning whether produce should be positioned within cities at all (Komisar et al. 2009; Tracey 2011; Viljoen 2005). Concern appears to focus on the type of produce grown, the yields produced and whether any livestock is included on the site (Van Veenhuizen 2006). Scott et al. (2013) feel that more radical sites, such as vertical systems or large sites, find it difficult to gain approval, both from planners and the general public.

In this context, it quickly becomes evident that the WG site did not house animals, nor was the vegetation grown here particularly out of the ordinary, in comparison to the more adventurous projects featured in Gorgolewski et al.'s (2011) account of UA. Although a definitive list does not exist, due to the fluid nature of the site, I have thus far witnessed a variety of produce grown within the garden: lettuce, tomatoes, courgettes, maize, radishes, rhubarb, potatoes and lots of herbs. If this produce was planted on F Troop's site, I would perhaps question its appropriateness; however, due to the high level of maintenance and attention the community garden received from WG members, there was no concern with regard to the vegetation cultivated from this site, apart from the potential contamination issue.

One of the most important of these is the historical use of the land. If your site or project is situated on land that in the past was used for industrial activities, or is in the immediate vicinity of past or current industrial activities, there may be a possibility that it could be contaminated. North West Food and Health Task Force (2002: 3)

One could question how the produce was grown: from untested soil in the middle of a heavily urbanised environment. This raises the question whether the space is appropriate for vegetables and fruit. In a similar manner to F Troop, the women have no knowledge about possible soil contamination. They did not know the history of the site or the surrounding areas and automatically presumed that growing food in the soil would not be an issue; this in turn contradicts the advice given by the North West Food and Health Task Force. Another worry, highlighted by the North West Food and Health Task Force, is the presence of industrial activity and its detrimental impact on food production; this form of industry exists directly opposite the community garden, with large factories operating throughout the day and night. Evidently, this should be enough to concern the women to at least consult with the FCFCG, which commissioned the North West Food and Health Task Force document cited above. Thus, whilst the vegetation may be suitable, the physical space in which it is grown may not be entirely safe (cf. Cook et al. 2005).

Productivity: The Yield and Use of Produce

In stark contrast to the previous section on F Troop, this commentary has established that large amounts of vegetables, and more recently fruit, were sourced from the WG site. The community garden partly conforms to Caputo's (2012) ideology on how UA spaces should function, through high productivity and economic gain. The latter is absent, although the site – which relies partially on donations from the local health care centre – is moving towards a structure which will one day allow it to be economically self-sufficient, bringing in funds from community visitors and other wealthy sources. The latter is a strategy which Mon has employed, which sees her inviting medical professionals and other friends for private lunches at the centre, in a hope to gain support from them. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the vegetation produced is admirable, in the sense of productivity, with Fig. 5.2 demonstrating the impressive array of produce on offer.

It would be reasonable to presume that, with the large amount of produce on the site (Fig. 5.2), this would be used in a way which benefits the local community, as had been stated by the WG members when I first encountered the group. However, my observations raise concerns with regard to how the vegetables and fruit were used: frequently I highlighted how there was an absence of garden produce at the lunches. A comment repeated throughout my field notes concerns the salad bowl, which makes a brief appearance until it emptied, never to be refilled. Community access to produce from the site was limited to this salad bowl and rhubarb. This repetition was also apparent in other dishes served to the community. Although the group attempted to accommodate the needs of the various faith cultures, it became

Fig. 5.2 The community garden's vegetables and fruit in 2012 (Hardman's photograph)

evident that these specialised dishes were used week after week: rasta pasta and curry were regular features on the menus dotted around the community centre.

Subsequent interviews add to my belief that this space was predominantly used for private production and consumption. In particular, Mon's earlier comments regarding surplus only being used for the community reinforce the notion that this site is an allotment space, as opposed to a community garden: a space primarily for communal growing and social cohesion (Milbourne 2011, 2012). In contrast, this community garden was constantly locked: inaccessible and only open for select members of the WG. These observations demonstrate how the garden is closely aligned to the principles of an allotment, which 'represents a more regimented, regulated and individualised form of communal gardening' (Milbourne 2011: 5). Chapter 7 specifically focuses on this revelation and the WG's operation of the space along with its impact on those who surround the site.

Who Benefits from the UA?

The narrative of the WG's actions has highlighted the group's attempts to provide produce for the nearby residents, whilst on the one hand, it has also shown that access to the vegetables and fruit was restricted. This produces a conundrum: whilst their intentions may be good, their actions, in terms of access to produce and the space, demonstrated a disregard for the community. When one analyses the language used, especially during interviews, it appeared that the space was created with the WG in mind, contrary to the claims that the space was colonised to supplement community lunches. The members often referred to the garden as an allotment, an important revelation which is discussed further in Chap. 7. Fundamentally,

the discussions throughout this chapter create the sense that the WG members were the ones who benefited from this UA site. The community, in this instance, was clearly an afterthought and somewhat of an excuse to transform the site from the grassy area to that of a community garden.

The danger of adopting an unregulated approach has been highlighted throughout this chapter: I argue that the women, like F Troop, layer their beliefs, thoughts and perceptions on a space which should be available for the wider community. For instance, the design element of the garden was entirely conceived by the women, for the women. One could argue that if the women had attempted to gain permission, the authority would have ensured that the space was managed appropriately and the nearby community would be able to use it as they wished (see FCFCG, *circa* 2005). However, this research suggests that the unlawful development excludes nearby residents; the women have appropriated the only available piece of green space without consultation.

This failure to engage with the community again raises concerns about the intended beneficiaries of the garden: the women or nearby residents. FCFG, an advisory body for community gardens, has mentioned the need for a heterogenic approach to designing, conceiving and managing such spaces (FCFCG undated); one could argue, with the evidence portrayed during this chapter, that the women fail to embrace such a philosophy and, like F Troop, go it alone (cf. McKay 2011).

Nevertheless, the garden, a flourishing haven of vegetables and fruit in an otherwise glum location, adds new charm to the area (Fig. 5.3). I cannot help but admire the juxtaposition of a high-rise council block emerging from the orange beds of vegetables and fruit. There is no argument that, whilst the women have changed the space significantly, this material change has certainly brightened the concrete and

Fig. 5.3 The community garden design conceived and implemented by the women (Hardman's photograph)

inhumane environment. However, this must be treated with caution: the literature underpinning this type of research insists that, as a researcher, one must step back and assess the extent to which local food initiatives, such as the women's site, enhance or fail to aid the nearby communities (Born and Purcell 2006, 2009; Purcell and Brown 2005; Purcell 2006). In particular it emphasises how a researcher must avoid presuming that this form of local action benefits individuals more than a global food system (Marsden 2008). This narrative of the women's actions perhaps reinforces Purcell's suggestion that some local food initiatives are not beneficial for the community. This particular argument is yet again discussed in Chap. 7, which explores the women's use of this land, providing a critical perspective on unregulated local food projects, in combination with views from the community.

Maintaining the UA Site

In contrast with the F Troop example, the WG spend a considerable amount of time maintaining the community garden: 'If I haven't done my little bit I get called 'Oi you! You're doing the watering this week'. So then you realise 'Oh God I haven't done my little bit', so then you feel a bit guilty and so you get roped into little things' (Sal). The women share site maintenance across the group, ensuring that each has an equal measure of work to complete. This results in the community garden receiving a lot of attention, which shows in the lavish display of produce which eventually blooms when suitable weather permits (Fig. 5.4).

The equipment used to maintain the site was stored in lockers, secured by small padlocks, on site. The women were provided with some training on how to use these tools effectively, receiving some funds from the trainers, and a local charity, to

Fig. 5.4 Maintenance equipment held in the containers (Hardman's photograph)

purchase these rather expensive items. Evidently, in comparison to F Troop, the WG was extremely organised and proactive around the site. The proximity to this area results in WG members easily accessing the space to ensure the produce was kept in top condition.

Whilst focussing on the maintenance of the sites, it becomes evident how the women allocated themselves to one of the six plots. In essence, they adopted a plot and regarded it as their own. Spaces were then maintained as they desired; the plots become individual representations of the WG member's interpretation of how the space should be constructed. Some plots were rather extravagant with more radical vegetation, such as the Marrow's in Mon's plot, whereas others were awash with tomatoes and other everyday pieces of produce. I say radical, due to the less intensive vegetables usually grown by guerrilla gardeners, such as those demonstrated in the previous chapter with F Troop.

This personalisation of the plot again highlights the WG's allotment-type operating policy over the space. Community gardens are usually built around the idea of sharing knowledge, tools and produce with one another (Nettle 2010; Winter 2007); it is a space to network and so be creative (Holland 2004). Rather these notions of how a community garden should function are only shared amongst the WG; the wider public are isolated and excluded from these actions.

The WG and the Wider Guerrilla Movement

Whilst it may seem odd to connect the WG with Reynolds' online movement, its unpermitted actions, particularly the submerged nature of the garden's development, inadvertently align this group with the guerrilla movement. This chapter has already established my views of the WG, particularly how I loosely align them to guerrilla gardening, predominantly due to this conscious avoidance of authority. With this in mind, I wish to further compare the group to F Troop and consider whether they eventually wish to conform to legislation: gaining permission for the space they have been using for over 2 years.

The WG: An Unsuspecting Cog in a Wider Movement?

One may presume, since the women are unconscious of the guerrilla movement, that they are not part of this wider action. However, as this chapter has already demonstrated, Reynolds appears to believe that the act resembles an organic movement: likening the movement to species of plants, each with their own unique form: some appear radical, whilst others are more everyday (Reynolds 2008). In essence, Reynolds (2008) is attempting to explain that guerrilla gardening is not a rigid movement, rather a free-moving entity which incorporates a whole host of individuals and groups: this would even include the women with their unpermitted community garden.

Reynolds (2008) claims that the only form of action which cannot be considered 'guerrilla' is anything which has permission. Evidently, this suggestion results in a large number of actors being potentially labelled as part of a movement, whether they are conscious of it or not. Whilst this has been covered earlier, it still reinforces the idea that the women's actions could be considered part of this wider – loosely held – organic movement (Reynolds 2008). The bond, which binds guerrilla gardeners, appears to be the conscious colonisation of another's land.

In a similar manner to Reynolds, Hou (2010) and McKay (2011) appear to characterise guerrilla gardening as including anyone who displays resilience to the dominant forces of society. However, unlike Reynolds, both Hou and McKay stop short of suggesting that a large organic-like movement exists, with guerrillas inherently bound by their desire to cultivate space without permission. Nevertheless, it appears that some authors considers any form of unpermitted development to be guerrilla action, yet only Reynolds suggests that the actors involved in these acts are linked: part of this wider organic movement (Reynolds 2008).

In my opinion, the abstraction from guerrilla gardening, in this case, is almost too great. Whilst one may characterise the action of guerrilla, this does not mean that the WG is part of the wider movement, sharing the similar desires and practices as other grass-roots groups. The women have not interacted with Reynolds' website nor are they deliberately defying authority, merely appearing to avoid what they describe as an over-bureaucratic system. In this instance, unlike F Troop featured in the previous section, the women are not pursuing the unlawful discourse for thrills but adopting the easiest route which entails a minimal amount of work to 'get the project off the ground' (Maggie). Guerrilla gardening, in this context, has been adopted to 'get the job done quicker' and to avoid 'the hassle of [the] authority' (Nicki).

Nevertheless, although the women are not adhering to Reynolds' concept of guerrilla gardening, they are practising a form of the activity: arguably a 'watered-down' version of the grass-roots action. Surprisingly, they share similarities with F Troop, who fit more with Reynolds' view of the activity (McKay 2011). The soil in which they grow their produce remains untested; they fail to include the community in both the development and daily operations of the site and, fundamentally, the WG is consciously avoiding authority. For these reasons, and those explained earlier in this chapter, I see the WG as guerrillas.

Legitimisation: The Ultimate Path for the Women's Group?

In a similar manner to the previous chapter, it is important to consider whether the UA displayed by the WG has the possibility to transition. One may question why such a large site has yet to be 'discovered', especially since senior local authority officials regularly visit the adjacent centre. This particular point is developed during Chap. 6, which investigates the authority's' and planners' response (or lack of them) to these sites.

Since the site has yet to be discovered, and has clearly grown, becoming a space showcasing a vibrant display of vegetation, one may question whether there is a need for the WG to legitimise. The land currently occupied by the group is sufficient and resources appear aplenty. One would suggest that legitimisation would surely require opening hours and other traits of accessibility usually found at community gardens (Cyzman et al. 2009; FCFG undated; Holland 2004). Legitimisation in this case could arguably, restrict their action and significantly alter their current practice, with explicit adherence to regulations and other formal arrangements becoming a requirement (Holloway 2005).

The leader of the WG has already expressed, several times, her reluctance to pursue a legal route due to the excessive amounts of paperwork, a critique which will be explored in a later chapter. One would presume, based on these comments and the leader's power over the women, that an opportunity to work with authority would be swiftly quashed. Nevertheless, Mon's appetite for funding and expansion could possibly push the WG to legitimisation. Evidence collated during a November community lunch demonstrated the possibility that the WG is considering legitimisation, but on its own grounds. This push towards a more lawful approach involves the creation of a management committee, which would oversee the community garden and associated activities. Whilst this is an important point, it will form part of a subsequent discussion on the management of the community garden and possible strategies for the WG to interact with authority.

Is This Narrative Fair?

It is legitimate to question my stance and portrayal of the WG throughout this chapter. In a similar manner to the previous section, the narrative of F Troop, I have been critical of the women's actions, in particular their rather ironic failure to involve the 'community' with the 'community garden'. However, one has to realise that the depiction of the women, during this chapter, is rather simplistic and merely provides an overview of the group's agenda; subsequent chapters will delve further into the group's actions.

Nevertheless, I feel that this current chapter provides a revealing evidence-based account of the women's actions. They evidently began the community garden with themselves in mind and appear to contravene the recommendations of guiding bodies as to how these spaces should be utilised. The unpermitted development on show here is further investigated in Chap. 6, which specifically focuses on the reasons why the women adopted this particular route. This section highlights how the area was altered, significantly, without consultation or interaction from community members. This particular issue is further explored in Chap. 7, which specifically focuses on the impact on, and the value of this space to, the surrounding residents.

This example of guerrilla gardening is a lot 'fuzzier' than that of F Troop (Hardman et al. 2012). The WG shares traits with F Troop, but this form of action is significantly different to those of their guerrilla counterparts. Fundamentally, they

still tend plots which are unpermitted; this is an illegal form of cultivation which underpins, and is in its entirety, the act of guerrilla gardening (Johnson 2011; Lewis 2012).

Looking Forward: Where from Here?

The WG's immediate ambitions appear to lie with the financial aspect of the community garden. One obtains the feeling that the women are aiming to expand their operations on the community garden, 'There's about eight in the women's group, we would like more of them to get involved and actually do something' (Mon). Evidently, this expansion appears to revolve around recruiting more women, perhaps individuals who would fit with the current body. This expansion does not appear to be an indication that the group is attempting to open up the garden's activities for the nearby residents, although this point will be explored further in Chap. 7.

This expansion appears to rely on the 'dwindling' funding stream on which the women currently rely and the adjacent centre's pending closure: 'they would like to put more beds in, I know that! It's trying to find the funding and knowing whether the centre will be open still' (Toni). This reliance on external funding, from local residents and nearby small businesses, results in the future of the group initially looking rather bleak. They feel that authority would not support their project and fear that the realisation that unpermitted development that had occurred on the site may result in an excessive amount of paperwork appearing before any more digging could take place; perhaps retrospective planning permission, which is often not granted, may have to be sought (Scott 2001).

In a similar manner to F Troop, the anti-authoritarian rhetoric continues with the women and has been present since the formation of the group: 'we had a lot of busy bodies telling us how to do this and how to do that – men – got no objections about men, but it was just peeing us off' (Toni). Whilst their anger is initially aimed at 'men', other members turn their attention to the authority's politics and members. This suggests that the future development of the site, and the guerrilla group, may not rest with authority.

Besides the doubt over a future relationship between the women and authority, this chapter also raises questions regarding the impact of unregulated action, particularly informal gardening on a relatively large scale, such as that practised by the WG. I depict the women as colonisers: taking the only substantive section of green space in a relatively deprived built-up area which severely lacks open space. The section also suggests that the site is used incorrectly: coined as a 'community garden' yet operated as a private allotment. Chapter 7, which focuses on impact and community involvement, will follow through these initial observations to provide a detailed conclusion on their action: assessing the extent to which this informal action hinders (loss of green space, exclusion) or enhances missing aspects of community life (increased food security, innovative use of space).

The immediate ambitions of the WG appear to centre on the continuation of this unpermitted form of action; little evidence is offered, in this chapter, which suggests the women will open the community garden to members of the public. The continual practice of hording produce, using leftovers for community lunch and proceeding without resident involvement, may paint the women's actions in an unfavourable light. However, there were hints from the leader of the group that efforts are being made to transition parts of the spaces for local use:

> Well we've planted them, there's an apple and a pear along the sides, by the fence. What we're going to do is what grows on the road-side the community can have, and what grows our side we will use for community lunch and ourselves. (Mon)

This comment from the group's leader indicates a wish to grow the site whilst at the same time opening up accessibility for the community. In this instance, there is a push to install fruit trees along the border of the community garden; the trees would be positioned to enable passersby to freely pick the produce whilst also allowing the women to harvest the fruit. My field notes, from the second year of action, demonstrated how this was eventually realised in late 2011, with the trees carefully planted along the border as per the leader's wishes. The distant future appears unclear for the WG direction: will there be more community participation with the garden or less? This book now proceeds to observe the impact of such informal activity, through exploring unpermitted development and community reactions to the guerrilla gardening action.

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Chapter 6
Who Owns This Space? Authorities and Guerrilla Gardeners

Abstract Ranging from private land to public land, guerrilla gardeners colonise space which is not their own. This chapter proceeds to critically discuss the land used by guerrilla gardeners: from questioning the suitability of the spaces to host urban agricultural activities, to considering who owns the land, we proceed to delve deeper into these spaces on which guerrilla activity is occurring. This chapter demonstrates how some adopt the 'guerrilla route' to avoid authority schemes, along with the perception that pursuing a formal route would result in copious amounts of paperwork. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the idea of guerrilla gardeners eventually working with authorities and whether this would be feasible: using the examples of F Troop and the Women's Group, we conclude that whilst some will embrace legitimisation, others would avoid authority in order to not lose the 'thrill' element of their actions.

Introduction: Contesting the Ownership of Space

Since there are numerous suggestions that this type of grass-roots activity is growing in popularity (Cobb 2011; Crane et al. 2012; Douglas 2011; McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008), it is important to understand why individuals or groups opt to act in this way, seeking to hide beneath the 'radar' of authority. It is especially vital in this context since, in the previous chapters, both of the guerrilla groups being studied claimed to have the interests of their respective communities at heart: essentially both sought to demonstrate the possibilities of urban food growing within inner-city locations. This conscious avoidance of authority is something which will be teased out throughout this chapter. We also explore whether the legal route can be made more 'attractive' to guerrilla gardeners; if so this could open up a pool of volunteers for a wide range of lawful activities – although, equally, it could further discourage those who seek the thrill of illegality. To begin with, the chapter revisits contemporary literature on the reasons why the guerrilla approach may have been adopted: this involves a specific focus on recent rhetoric from authors who investigate UA and the perceived restriction on the practice in the UK (see Chap. 2 for more information).

Challenging Conventional Practice: Is UA Suitable for the Two Sites?

Through their repetitious digging of authority-owned land and planting of vegetables in the urban, the three guerrilla groups explored in Chap. 4 inadvertently challenge the everyday perception of traditional food cultivation: the idea, dominant in Western industrialised society at least, that agricultural activity should take place in the rural, far away from our cities[1] (Steel 2009). These groups not only challenge the public's perceived everyday use of space but contest a core principle held by land owners, managers and planners: that space should be used in a particular way, by particular individuals (Lefebvre 1991; Qviström 2007). In a manner similar to New York's community garden movement, the guerrillas challenge how inner-city areas should be used and by whom (see, e.g. Holland 2004; Pudup 2008).

Planning and Local Food: Ordering the City

At the heart of the city's control system is 'the planner', an actor (in reality, a group of trained professional planners and elected representatives) who controls what is in place and out of place in the urban environment (Creswell 1996; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012) according to particular sets of values at a particular place and time. In the UK, authors such as Scott and Carter (2012) and Tornaghi (2012) are especially critical of the planning system, suggesting that it fails to efficiently value the potential of the landscape and facilitate local food projects. Perhaps the most recent and significant comments relating to the planning system and these non-traditional forms of agricultural activity surface from the WRO's (2012: 17) report: 'planning was identified as a major barrier to the formation of new community growing sites and activities across Wales'. Whilst only around a third of the sites the WRO analysed were urban, this comment is still significant and highlights the need for planning practice to further change to facilitate these activities:

> Established growing projects and groups also reported problems in negotiating the planning system. It was suggested that there were difficulties on both sides, with many communities and groups often lacking the necessary expertise and experience in dealing with the planning system, and planners uncertain about how to deal with applications for community growing activities. WRO (2012: 17)

The WRO report elaborates further on the difficulties faced by communities attempting to work with the planning system, suggesting that both find it difficult to deal with applications for such agricultural projects. This is reinforced when one

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[1] In the UK, allotment gardening and leisure gardening activities have been common practice for many years; this runs somewhat counter to Steel's argument.

explores the previously mentioned case of Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET), which began as a guerrilla gardening project due to difficulties with obtaining permission for such a revolutionary activity: whilst community gardens and allotments had existed in the town for some time, the idea of cultivation outside the police station, train station and other public locations was certainly new.

One must be careful when using the term 'planner', since there are several 'breeds' who would comfortably fit under this homogenous title (Taylor 2010). According to Adams et al. (2014), within the UK context the onus is on spatial planners: those responsible for managing the environment in which the guerrilla groups practise and who fail to adhere to the theoretical principles of their relatively new 'trade'. Spatial planning was conceived in order to move away from the controlled, negative paradigm associated with planning regulation towards more positive and enabling functions (Middleton 2010). However, Taylor's (2010) narrative of spatial planning highlights the failure of this new form of planning to adequately enable innovative thinking. His argument centres on the changing of the term, as opposed to the act: 'spatial planning, at least as it is conceived by the British government, is not as different from traditional urban or land use planning' (Taylor 2010: 201). Carter and Scott (2011) add weight to Taylor's synopsis of spatial planning, by claiming that this form of land management fails to embrace the theory which underpins its practice; little appears to have changed, apart from the title.

Authors such as Scott and Carter (2012) and Tornaghi (2012) are especially critical of the planning system, stipulating that it fails to efficiently value the potential of the landscape and enable local food projects. The former feels this is due to planners acting in silos (similar to Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012) that their failure to embrace new concepts, such as the UA, results in decisions not valuing the environment in an effective manner. Planners are the individuals who can either support, or restrict, UA practices (Neegard et al. 2012; Shackleton 2012). Whilst the UK's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stipulates that planners should be proactive in supporting change – using land in innovative ways – in reality they are risk averse and afraid to go 'against the grain' (White and Natelson 2012: 514). These planning-centric criticisms, stated by White and Natelson (2012), surround the lack of support from planning systems for UA. Ultimately, Wiskerke and Viljoen (2012) feel that this lack of support is predominantly due to urban planners acting in silos, isolated from designers and others who are engaging with UA on a more intimate level.

Fundamentally, the message emerging from the literature illuminates the barriers preventing the implementation of UA. Whilst this chapter has thus far revisited the current debate on UA and the restrictions facing the activity, it now proceeds to focus on the two groups being studied, in an attempt to discover whether these barriers have affected their decision to adopt the grass-roots guerrilla approach. Ultimately, this chapter questions why the guerrilla gardeners being studied decided to pursue UA without authority support or permission.

(Re)imagining Urban Space: The Adoption of an Illegal Route

Chapters 4 and 5 alluded to the idea that the guerrilla gardeners avoided authority and had little interaction with those who owned and controlled the land. This section concentrates explicitly on their reasons for pursuing guerrilla gardening, as elicited through interviews and discussions during the extended period of fieldwork. Through drawing on the empirical material, we hope to provide a snapshot of two significantly different guerrilla gardening groups and their reasoning behind pursuing this activity.

F Troop and Authority

In the context of F Troop, the chosen site appeared unnoticed and the only interaction with any element of authority was the 6-monthly prunings of the vegetation which took place across the dual carriageway barrier. However, the observations and interviews collated revealed two primary reasons why F Troop opted for the illegal route. The first appeared to centre on their resentment of the local authority – their employers – who, at the time of the first dig, were making redundancies: 'we do it [garden unlawfully] to piss the council off' (Sarah). This hostility continued throughout the five dig phases, with jokes, gossip and negative comments regarding the local authority constantly emerging during discussions. These interactions create the sense that F Troop's action, and its avoidance of the legal path, is partially due to this negative perception of the city's authority, members' personal interactions within departments and reluctance to allow their employers a 'slice' of the action (or perhaps the credit for the improvements):

> It's probably also coloured by the fact I work for the, well I did at the time work for the council, and I didn't really enjoy it. I should have known better, I should have just stuck with being a teacher in a school and not have anything to do with the local authority. (Sarah)

This interview extract, obtained after the leader left her role within the local authority to pursue her desire to garden more, reinforces the suggestion that one of the reasons for the action was due to resentment – bitterness towards those in power: the 'council'. It is a telling point that such comments anonymise those being criticised: 'them', 'the planners' or 'the council'. In a small part, the action appears a form of retaliation, with the troop members escaping the hierarchical local authority environment to tamper with council land:

> I understood what she [Sarah] was doing and agreed with it I guess. It's all that New York stuff again isn't it? I mean, planting vegetables in a city, crazy [laughs]! You're best speaking to Sarah about that though. (Mark)

> No I wouldn't [work with authority] not at all. Nobody has ever approached us, we have never approached them. I think it would feel more like a job and this is something we do, fairly spontaneously and it's something about enjoying it. (Anna)

Mark and Anna reinforce this suggestion by claiming that the council has forced them down this route. The former explains how New York's community garden movement inspired him and his colleagues to transform the space: he realises that, as Pudup (2008) and Creswell (1996) claim, vegetables do not belong in the city and can be viewed as 'out of place'. In a similar manner, Anna's reaction against her employers aligns her closely with Sarah's views as to why she pursued guerrilla gardening, avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy and opting to avoid authority entirely. Quite clearly, this dislike of authority is not the sole purpose of the action, but certainly appears to be one of the key driving factors, with F Troop specifically adopting a piece of land which clearly belonged to the local authority.

Thus far, it appears that what is emerging as F Troop's 'bitterness' is focused towards the local authority as a whole, and not towards any specific individual department, such as the planning team. However, there was a hint, during phase one, that some members blamed their dissatisfaction, and reasons for avoiding authority, on planning: being particularly critical of the time it takes for a planning application to cycle through the formal route – 'it's much quicker this way' (anonymous male interviewee). Although this comment may appear out of context, this individual, who only appeared during one of the five digs observed, is referring to the planning team and the bureaucracy involved with applying to change the use of land. He initially appears as the main character blaming the planning team for not facilitating such innovative action, claiming that the 'average Joe' is stifled by the sheer amount of paperwork required for permission. In fact, the vast majority of decisions on planning applications are made within 8 weeks in the UK system (cf. Scott 2001; Scott et al. 2013).

Although this particular male group member only made a one-off appearance, his negative thoughts on planning remain evident in later stages, particularly the interviews with other group members. Sarah, for instance, reinforces this suggestion in a subsequent discussion, when asked whether working with the local planning team would be an option: 'It'll all become 'official' and have to be done a certain way, and I guess there will be health and safety and all those kind of things. You just want to go and dig your bit and make it look nice'. Her grievances reflect those displayed by the other members during phase one, particularly how excess paperwork, such as health and safety forms, would ruin the fun and satisfaction which the troop obtains from digs. This objection to legitimisation appeared to centre on the perception that working with the planning system would result in an excessive amount of paperwork; and there was also confusion regarding whether permission should be sought, due to the scale of their action and lack of outputs from the UA. In a similar manner to the WRO (2012) report, Anna, the troop's 'second lieutenant', firmly believes, like Sarah and the other members discussed and quoted above, that working with the planning department would result in risk assessments and a ridiculous amount of paperwork:

> As soon as you start going into authority they will be going for risk assessments, insurance, you know, I work for the council, I know what they'll do – especially the planners who manage the land. I do that in my job, that's not what I want as my hobby. I suppose a bit of a dislike for committees and things like that. (Anna)

In a similar manner to the anonymous male interviewee already quoted, Anna feels that the problem lies with planning and the large amounts of paperwork required for permission: stipulating that planning, or planners in this case – the individuals of the system – are the cause of most of the problems. All members, even the 'fluid' less regularly attending members of F Troop, feel that gaining permission to use the land would be an unduly lengthy process:

> Yeah I think the first thing we started, we were a bit like 'oh'. There were some sort of joke amongst the troop, because I think there was a good turnout the first time we came, about the over the legality of it; if anyone would stop you and say anything. You soon found out that nobody was really going to bother you. I mean a couple of people came by and asked what we were doing and seemed to be supportive. (Mark)

> I just suppose I hope other people like it, I enjoy doing it too I suppose, it's naughty. So I get something from it, socially, as well as physically looking at it and thinking "oh that looks nice". (Anna)

In addition to their view of the planning system, and the perceived over-bureaucracy, Chaps. 4 and 5 provided evidence that F Troop also appears to adopt the guerrilla route in order to gain 'thrills' from the action (as Anna's quote above also suggests): it was necessary to avoid authority, and the planning system, in order to achieve this taste of disobedience. This narrative of F Troop also provides evidence to suggest that the members involved in the action had, and have, no intention of ever interacting with the planning system, due to this pursuit of an adrenaline rush. This pursuit of the illegal, for thrills, is well documented amongst guerrilla groups, for example Crane's recent study of a troop in Ontario indicates how these individuals thrived on the 'creativity and autonomy' associated with the activity (Crane et al. 2012: 14). This is reinforced when one explores the literature: Reynolds, McKay, Tracey, and others all suggest that a main draw to guerrilla gardening is this escape from reality and the opportunity to break rules.

The interviews with F Troop, away from the dig site, provided a rich description of their feelings and hunt for this thrill element: 'I think because its kind of a naughty thing to do because it's a slightly rebellious thing to do but also because it's about making something nice' (Sarah); 'there were some sort of joke amongst the troop, because I think there was a good turnout the first time we came, about the over the legality of it; if anyone would stop you and say anything' (Mark); 'it's all a bit naughty isn't it, and something totally out of the ordinary' (Anna). Furthermore, the idea of losing this 'naughty' angle was elaborated by Anna: 'one of the party, which we did it with, he was very much like 'oh we should get permission'. Both myself and Sarah felt quite strongly that we shouldn't because it kind of takes out a bit of the excitement'. The troop leaders clearly wanted to retain this 'thrill' as an integral part of the group's activities.

The various observation notes collected also record several instances of social bonding through the shared feeling of doing something without permission. The early digs provide instances when group members would hide from passing emergency vehicles and 'giggle with delight at the adrenaline rush achieved'. One gets the feeling that these individuals are normally law abiding: observations, for example, indicate how those who attend the digs were from rather privileged backgrounds.

Whilst this may be a large assumption, evidence in the form of their roles in the local authority, which centre on working with children, provides a basis to suggest that any criminal history would have hindered their attempts to remain employed in these positions. Fundamentally, it could be argued that F Troop's members have never disobeyed authority, and thus, guerrilla gardening enables these individuals to be rebellious in a constructive way: transforming neglected land for the 'better', for a wider social benefit.

In summary, when the reasons why F Troop has pursued this illegal route are reviewed, several factors appear to drive their action:

1. The dislike of the authority, their former employers
2. The perception that engaging with planning would result in too much bureaucracy
3. The quest for thrills, taking part in something which is naughty

The WG and Authority

In the case of the WG, whose site contains the most substantial physical alterations, the group felt that the lack of attention from the local authority planning department, particularly the enforcement team, implicitly provided them with permission to continue their actions. When Mon, the WG leader, was questioned about why she went ahead with the project without explicit permission, she sharply answered 'cos nobody can say anything'. It appears, in this case, that the absence of any direct intervention on the part of 'authority' has led the group to believe that their actions were acceptable; they as individuals understood little about procedure, and, as will be discussed, argue that working with the system would result in excessive amounts of unnecessary paperwork.

Mon felt that the garden's benefits far outweigh any need for permission from the local authority: she explained that applying for planning permission would take a considerable amount of time, hindering the process of establishing a lively community lunch centred on the community garden. Essentially, Mon personally took the decision to streamline the process by avoiding authority altogether, adopting an approach which involved gathering together volunteers, calling in favours from partner projects and digging the site as soon as possible, presenting a *fait accompli*, implicitly feeling that nobody could (or perhaps would) then interfere:

> I actually contacted the allotments planning person to begin with, I wished I hadn't. Then I said to him 'oh forget it, we're not going to do an allotment', and we're not. We're not an allotment, we are a community garden. (Mon)

Mon acknowledged that she should speak with the planning department regarding the change of land use and was aware that permission should be sought. The original strategy involved attempting to gain permission for an allotment space on the site, but due to her realisation that 'if you call it an allotment you've got to have

all sorts of permits', she quickly refrained from pursuing this route further, instead preferring to adopt a model which would bypass this perceived obstacle. It becomes immediately clear that, due to the significant alteration of space and use, planning permission would certainly be required in this context. Chapter 5 and discussions earlier in this section have already highlighted the views of several community garden advisory bodies, particularly the Community Land Advisory Service (2012), FCFCG (undated) and PlanLoCal (2012), which stipulate that groups should consult with advice-giving organisations or their local authority before changing a space. The WG has ignored, or not obtained, this advice and constructed the project without any form of consultation.

Ironically, high-level local authority officials regularly visited the WG lunches, yet failed to realise the site's unpermitted origins (Box 6.1). This failure in realising the drastic change to landscape perhaps highlights the disconnection between authority departments, with councillors and neighbourhood managers not communicating with the planning department, which would know whether or not permission had been sought or granted. This echoes the views discussed earlier, particularly by Wiskerke and Viljoen (2012) and to an extent Qviström (2007), regarding the silo mentality of departments which fail to communicate effectively between one another. In this situation, the lack of communication sees councillors promoting the women's activities, apparently without realising the unpermitted nature of the community garden.

> **Box 6.1: An Extract from Hardman's Field Diary**
> I speak with Mon about the future of the space. She feels that the centre, and thus the garden, is now secure. Recent discussion with local authority members and councillors has revealed that the centre will survive the 'council's ruthless cuts' (Mon). She tells me how some of these high-level officials visited the centre to discuss future impacts of the cuts and provide clarification on the garden and centre's existence.

This incident of a rather dramatic transformation going unnoticed again echoes the case described by Scott (2001) surrounding a permaculture project in Wales. Brithdir Mawr remained unnoticed for years, beneath the planning authority's noses (Scott 2001), and the WG community garden is in a similar situation, with the local planning department failing to identify significant changes to authority-owned land. In this case, the WG created six large allotment-type beds and erected small hut-like buildings for tools as well as raised beds around these plots. The site development, as shown in Fig. 6.1, was vivid and radical, altering from a strip of grass to the food beds that are in existence today.

Another surprising observation was that the funders – local organisations – knew little if anything about the garden's unpermitted origins. Ironically, a local health-care trust funded the community lunch element of the project for over a year.

Fig. 6.1 The WG site in its early stages (*left*) and its state in 2013 (*right*) (Hardman's photographs)

The trust also provided, without hesitation, money for tools and training. Following the closure of this funding stream, Mon opted to approach nearby companies and other local resources for funding; succeeding in obtaining support which would enable the garden to function for a substantial amount of time. These funders, in a similar manner to the health-care trust, failed to realise the project's lack of engagement with authority and presumed that Mon had all the permissions, and paperwork, in order. Whilst the WG did not consult the local authority for support, it had clearly liaised with third-party organisations in order to fund and realise its ambitions for the site.

One could argue that this suggests that the local authority is not the only organisation unaware of this grass-roots action: others, such as the local health-care trust and key community players, are also oblivious to the garden's origins. Evidently, this revelation creates a dilemma, with funding appearing to be diverted to unregulated projects – funders perhaps not exploring and researching the applicant thoroughly to ensure that the project complies with appropriate regulations. Whilst it may be seen as a positive move that local businesses are willing to invest in local community projects, in this instance, the money is used on a project which, technically, does not exist: like other guerrilla gardeners, the WG is part of a submerged network (cf. Melucci 1996), which is clearly not visible to a variety of key actors keeping the community garden functioning with funds.

In a similar manner to the previous sections, three points can summarise to reasons as to why the WG pursues the guerrilla route:

1. The dislike of some authority employees
2. The perception that an excessive amount of paperwork would need to be completed
3. A fear that they would lose control over the community garden

The Solo Guerrilla Gardener

Whilst the last few chapters have focussed on F Troop and the WG to expose the practices of guerrilla gardeners who pursue a UA agenda, we must not forget the solo guerrilla gardener. Interactions with this guerrilla gardener were more limited compared to those with F Troop and the WG. It would therefore be both impossible and inappropriate to be able to delve into the same amount of detail with this case study. Nevertheless, it was ascertained that her avoidance of authority and 'due process' was owing to the perception that obtaining permission would be too lengthy a process.

The solo guerrilla gardener had previously applied to use a different space from the local authority and was infuriated with their lack of response. Furthermore, she had petitioned on numerous occasions to have the local authority clean up the alleyway next to her house: the space now occupied with her guerrilla food corridor. This in turn pushed her down the route of adopting guerrilla gardening: enabling her to escape unnecessary attempts to gain permission and get straight on with the task at hand.

This guerrilla explained that the economic downturn has affected authorities, resulting in previously well-managed spaces falling into disrepair. In this case, the solo guerrilla argued that authority land is the community's land and something to be freely tampered with, especially when those responsible for the space are failing to address the neglect. She justified her action by arguing that she was improving the space, through cleaning up the mess and replacing it with vegetation. In addition, she stressed how she had transformed a useless space into a productive one, through adding beans, tomatoes and other vegetables to the alleyway.

In summary, the solo guerrilla gardener holds similar thoughts to those of the WG, in that guerrilla gardening enables her to bypass 'the system' and immediately start on her project. She perceives her guerrilla gardening as adding value to the area, and thus does not feel the activity is illegal. Even if discovered, the solo guerrilla gardener declares that authorities would not destroy her project, but rather encourage it to grow even more.

Hidden Sites: Over-Bureaucracy and the Failure to Notice Change

The guerrilla groups make out that authority is perceived as an enemy of enterprise and innovation. Two interconnecting themes surround the idea of *perception* and *sovereignty*: the former sees both groups avoiding obtaining appropriate planning permissions on the ground that the process would be too arduous, and the latter concerns the two groups' reluctance to relinquish control. Their subsequent avoidance of the planning system has demonstrated that the projects have become hidden from not just the local authority but third parties – local residents or

organisations – who presumed that their projects were legitimate uses of land. Fundamentally, it becomes evident that both groups adopted this informal type of action to avoid a system which was viewed as over-bureaucratic, heavily regulated and inflexible, an entity which would not appreciate their form of land use and perhaps would perceive it as out of order, thus not accepted by those in power (see, e.g. Creswell 1996; Pudup 2008; Scott and Carter 2012).

Questioning the Route Adopted: The Power of Perception

When one delves further into the language used and why they adopted the guerrilla approach, it becomes evident that the group's views were different. With F Troop, for instance, a specific department of the local authority is targeted for negative comments from group members. Whilst F Troop places a lot of the blame on 'planning', the majority of WG members repeatedly opted to use the word 'council[2]'; this was apparent with the solo guerrilla gardener too, who also blamed 'the council'.

A possible explanation for this is that F Troop members have a more informed understanding of the inner workings of the local authority and which department has responsibility for the land. On the other hand, both the WG and solo guerrilla understood little about the departmental responsibilities and refer to the authority as a holistic entity, blaming their reasons for avoiding legitimacy on the 'evil council' (anonymous female WG interviewee). In the context of the WG, the term 'planner' is only explicitly used by Mon, the individual at the forefront of the group's unpermitted actions. She repeatedly uses the term when referring to her early attempts to obtain permission but, upon realising the process, quickly withdrew and pursued the guerrilla approach instead.

In all three contexts, it was the perception of the planning system which hinders interactions, with the leaders – Sarah, Mon and the anonymous solo guerrilla – deliberately opting to avoid obtaining permission. With the two groups – F Troop and the WG – Chapters 4 and 5 alluded to the idea that the dominant positions of the two leaders swayed the decision of the other members; this was clearly apparent in the context of adopting the guerrilla route. It could be argued that, due to the adoption of this position, planners – those with whom the guerrilla gardeners would first need to speak to in order to obtain permission – are unfairly treated, excluded from the decision-making process and, from the outset, unable to involve themselves with the community garden or dual carriageway UA projects.

Essentially, the two group leaders conformed to Greed's (1994: 18) notion that some view planning as a department with 'unlimited power', which is solely responsible for any activities in the built environment. Nevertheless, from the interactions with both groups, it appeared that previous interactions with their planning departments, on legitimate projects, have partially resulted in this attitude. In the context of F Troop and the WG, the perception centres on the restriction element of

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[2]A term used in the UK for the local authority.

previous legitimate projects, which have endured long and difficult application procedures: Mon's experiences with the planning department's failure to embrace her idea of self-built homes is perhaps an indication of how she now views the system – she said 'Yeah but they are no use. Remember I was sayin about those self builds which I wanted them to do, well the first ones went well but then they weren't interested. I'm not bothering again, no point'. Whilst this is at a significantly different scale from a community garden, Mon still assumes that the local authority will respond in a similar manner. She does not give any weight to any reasons why decisions might be slow or not producing the result she required.

Ironically, in the case of the WG, there is evidence to suggest that if Mon had approached the planning department, the action may have been supported. Chapter 2 of this book demonstrated the government's commitment to creating more community garden sites: strategies, notably *Food 2030* (see DEFRA 2010; Marsden 2010), encourage planners to be more adaptive and facilitate the expansion of urban food projects; ironically, Marsden (2010) comments on and critiques the local-centric approach exhibited throughout the strategy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a document aimed at improving planning practice, also provides guidance which aims to encourage further use of stalled space. This is further reinforced with the UK's Localism Act 2011: its sole purpose is to facilitate community decision-making and action (Oyarce and Boardman 2012). Other examples exist with the increase of Green Infrastructure strategies (Scott and Carter 2012) and the wider recognition of UA, such as via Birmingham City University's recent hosting of the Carrot City exhibition: displaying UA projects, and their benefits, from a variety of locations (Nasr and Komisar 2014).

With this in mind, one would presume that if the WG had approached their authority's planning department with an idea of how to use the space, permission may well have been granted. Arguably, this is a large presumption, especially with comments from the WRO (2012) which suggests that planning practice, and the permission granting process, is inhibiting the creation of some community food sites (see Chap. 2). However, legislation, in the form of Section 106[3] agreements, may also offer hope here. This is again explored by Scott (2001) who demonstrated how this form of legislation was used to facilitate a project in Gloucester which otherwise would have been refused: it provides those who receive the agreements with an opportunity to experiment on the land and make obvious the *worth* of their project.

In the case of F Troop, it became clear from the outset that the group presumed, and were determined that, permission would not be granted for their action had it been sought through the proper channels. F Troop members, with their inside knowledge of the local authority system, stipulated that planners would merely slow down their action with 'red tape' (Sarah). They felt that their action was too innovative and would challenge the system beyond its means: a radical ideology which would be beyond the scope of planners to approve. When speaking about possible

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[3] Legislation which 'allows a Local Planning Authority (LPA) to enter into a legally binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner in association with the granting of planning permission' (Cheltenham Borough Council 2014).

future action, at another location, Sarah acknowledged that she had attempted to speak with the planning department: 'I've since phoned them up, the planning guys, and they told us it was council land'. She was disheartened to realise that if the permitted route was to be pursued, this could result in their action being seen as a local authority initiative or something too radical for the space. The interview with the landlady of the nearby pub to some extent reinforces this suggestion regarding the radical nature of using urban space for vegetables: an earlier attempt by the pub to utilise the land, for a growing competition and for recreational purposes, was turned down by the planning department; and the land remained unused and characterless until F Troop's interactions:

> I mean we tried to get some stuff done on the grass down there, spoke with the planning and property lot but they said no. So it's just left like that until those guys come along. (Landlady)

Although F Troop was unaware of this previous approach for permission to use the space, it demonstrates the authority's view that the land should remain untouched. In the case of the solo guerrilla gardener, the restrictions placed upon the research resulted in little evidence being gathered apart from the interview with the guerrilla herself.

The two groups felt that previous, less-adventurous requests to these departments resulted in more radical ideas (such as UA) automatically being pushed aside. These thoughts echo views from a variety of authors on barriers preventing the wider implementation of UA (see, for instance, Caputo 2012; Scott and Carter 2012; Tornaghi 2012). This situation also echoes the battles in New York during the start of the community garden movement, and how guerrilla gardening was used as a mechanism by which to gain space and obtain territory, due to the perception that authorities would not be open to such radical suggestions (Johnson 2011; McKay 2011; Pudup 2008; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007, 2011).

Sovereignty: Retaining Control Over Land and Fear of Integration

Perhaps one of the other major concerns, exhibited repeatedly by both groups, was the fear that their action could be integrated into wider local authority programmes. These concerns can be legitimised if one observes existing UA schemes: Chapter 2 reinforces the groups' concerns with Hardman and Jones' (2010) explanation of Birmingham's GEML project, which demonstrated how those who work on the various community gardens in the scheme are recruited as authority volunteers; they become part of the council, working for the city's services but in an unpaid capacity:

> I am absolutely opposed to anyone trying to suggest that this is part of the Big Society movement. Just for the fact that Cameron[4] stood there and said "I'm going to put a name on a concept that people have been doing for years and years and years and try and claim it as his own political kudos". I just can't go there. (Anna)

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[4] David Cameron was the UK Prime Minister at the time of this discussion.

Whilst this reluctance to be embedded within wider authority schemes is demonstrated by both groups, Anna's responses exemplify the anger and the forthright determination of some members to hold control over their respective spaces. Comments by Anna and colleagues demonstrate that the troop's objections to working with planning go beyond the local authority and are deeply embedded in current political rhetoric. Sarah and Anna, the two troop figureheads, fear integration would result in the group's actions being aligned with Cameron's Big Society[5] ideology. They are not willing to be labelled a Big Society initiative, fearing that ownership would be relinquished to authority:

> I don't like using the term 'Big Society' but it's part of society. I think if the council hasn't got money to do certain things, do the upkeep or promote these things. I think we need to stop thinking 'oh that's council property', it's not, its ours, its everybody's. So if it's been wasted or being degraded, I mean if you're not doing anything wrong, making it unsightly or making it annoying for people, then just do it. (Solo Guerrilla Gardener)

This is not an isolated incident: an interview conducted in the pilot study phase provided evidence to reinforce the idea that there are more guerrillas who do not want to be seen as part of Cameron's Big Society. The solo guerrilla gardener, who, like F Troop, leans towards the Reynolds version of guerrilla action, prefers to stay away from this political idea. One could argue that the idea of guerrilla gardening, volunteers transforming land for communities, would fit squarely with the idea of the Big Society. However, F Troop appears to dismiss the notion that planners and guerrillas can work together, members argue against any form of interaction, suggesting that engagement would result in the end to their action, 'If someone turned around to me and said it was part of the Big Society, that would actually really make me question whether I would want to do it again' (Anna).

Although this book is not designed to focus on the current political agenda and its relationship with guerrilla gardening, it must be noted that guerrilla gardening does appear to align with this recent rhetoric. Contrary to this suggestion, it became evident how F Troop and other guerrilla gardeners, those more aligned towards Reynolds' thoughts, wish to avoid being categorised in this manner: the notion of the Big Society appears to further push the guerrillas from working with planning and the wider authority. This is especially prevalent with F Troop whose two main actors, Sarah and Anna, become enraged with the thought of Cameron's ideology. Unlike their guerrilla counterparts, the WG does not care for Cameron's rhetoric, focussing more on money and the opportunity for extra resources: they would happily embrace the idea if it led to further funding.

Sovereignty also played a part in the reasons why the WG did not pursue the official route. Control was a core part of the women's actions, yet evidence, in the form of observations, suggested that the WG is more open to the Big Society idea. Mon and a few other women explain how they would welcome any funds from this scheme being diverted to the community garden. Yet this would only be

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[5] The Big Society idea is a government programme encouraging people to volunteer and help out more in their local area (Dillon and Fanning 2011).

on the understanding that control was maintained by the women and not the local authority or any other organisation. This discussion suggests that, unlike F Troop, the WG would not mind being aligned with the notion of the Big Society and is more concerned about the opportunity for funds which could grow or maintain the existing facilities. Whilst the women may be open for working with authority in some way, they have neglected to realise that any form of interaction or application to the Big Society fund would require background checks which could reveal the unpermitted nature of their community garden (see Big Society Capital 2012).

The majority of these thoughts on sovereignty, particularly the stance from F Troop, create the sense that more radical guerrilla gardeners share this bond against the often neoliberal agendas of authorities and governments (Holland 2004; Milbourne 2010, 2011). The less radical – those using guerrilla gardening as a mechanism to avoid bureaucracy – are more inclined to adopt such rhetoric if it provides them with resources and funding to pursue their action. Whilst it is not the purpose of this research to further investigate the guerrilla gardeners' views towards wider government and its strategies and policies, it must be acknowledged that some of these rebellious horticulturalists share values with others pursuing similar agendas (see Pudup 2008).

Unlawful Action Under the Noses of Authority: Implications of the Illegal Route

This failure to notice clear adaptations made to the natural landscape is a strong link between the two guerrilla groups featured in this research; from F Troop's nasturtium display, and a later more radical inclusion of recognisable vegetables, to the WG's six large plots (Fig. 6.2), both appear unnoticed and, arguably, invisible to those who are responsible for the land: to some degree this cascades down to passers-by and the local community, who on occasion are unaware of the developments (see Chap. 7). In both instances, the groups have made a substantial change to the land, altering both spaces from everyday pieces of landscape, to areas which now harbour a form of agricultural activity. Whilst local community members have noticed the changes in both locations, the planning departments and the local authorities appear oblivious, with some presuming that permission had been sought. Arguably, this only fuels both groups' attempts to build on their respective spaces and personalise the sites further.

Whilst this chapter has established the hesitation of F Troop and the WG to work with authority, primarily due to their perception that the permission system is overly complex, it has not yet explored the implications of this guerrilla route. To begin with, it is important to understand the two groups' relation to the land they opted to manage and how they have altered the space, without permission: particularly the type of UA demonstrated and vegetation planted in these locations.

Fig. 6.2 A comparison of both sites: F Troop's nasturtium display (*left*) and the WG plots (*right*) (Hardman's photographs)

Investigating the Use of Space: Appropriateness in the Urban Environment

Defining whether an area is used 'appropriately' is somewhat subjective and entirely dependent on the location, the surroundings and what is exactly *done* on the space. There is also a need to consider what was there before and its value to the community and economy. In this context, due to the two group's plans to practise a form of UA, appropriateness relates to the environment in which the food is grown (Capital Growth 2012): whether it is suitable for the produce cultivated and the land's relationship to the guerrilla group. There are numerous texts which provide a step-by-step guide on how to create an urban grow space, from tools to appropriate vegetation, what to plant and what to avoid (Flores 2006; Ruppenthal 2008; Trail 2010).

Previous chapters, particularly the observational accounts of each group, provide an indication that the vegetation was not entirely suitable to the environments in which it was grown. This section builds on this and explores the implications, in this case, the negatives of unregulated guerrilla UA. To begin with it is appropriate to acknowledge the origins of those who alter the space and their relationship with the community, which has already been commented upon in the in-depth group chapters.

The Guerrilla Sites: Assessing the Hidden Cultivators

Before delving into the vegetation used (in the following section), it is useful to view the two groups' relationship with the patches they cultivate. F Troop was the more controversial of the two, since group members travelled a relatively large

distance to the site; they had no personal connection with the space, apart from their place of employment which was located a few minutes' walk away from the site. This is a typical trait of guerrilla gardeners, who do not always occupy space near to their area of residence (McKay 2011), instead opting to approach a patch of neglected land somewhere else, perhaps a considerable distance from where they live (Reynolds 2008). In comparison, the WG has adopted a site local to where they reside, with all but one member living less than a few hundred yards from the community garden. Ironically, the individual with the most power – Mon – is the only WG member resident outside the ward in which the community garden was situated, only entering the locale to make decisions or coordinate the community garden.

This raises questions about how the two groups use the occupied space. In both instances, the key decision-makers reside far from the spaces which they have colonised. One could question that if the groups had chosen to seek planning consent, whether it would be given to individuals who are located a considerable distance from the site which they wished to transform, especially with the shift in planning practice, which demands more local community involvement (Marsden 2008, 2010; NPPF 2012; Scott and Carter 2012). Perhaps, due to the overwhelming number of locals in the WG, this would not be a particularly contentious issue; however, with F Troop – who all resided far from the space – this could be more of a concern: of course, this is presuming that anyone in authority knew of F Troop's action.

In essence F Troop has entered an area, altered the landscape according to their principles, introduced unsustainable vegetation and departed. They have significantly changed the original landscape in favour of a UA-themed display. Simultaneously, the troop failed to communicate effectively with the community, making them aware of this alteration, instead excluding those who surround the site from the decision-making process. The exclusion of the community was not isolated to this context, but was repeatedly noted during the observation of the WG's community garden. Although some of the women were local, the space adopted – which was once used by local children – has been changed without notifying other residents. Throughout the entire observation portion of the research, it was noted that no children or young adults interacted with the community garden, either during the lunches or other special occasions.

The youths in particular appeared restricted, almost herded into the community centre's ageing hall, with a few board games and computers for entertainment. These restrictions imposed on the children appeared to affect their behaviour, frustrating the youths, with WG members strongly advising against the children from 'playing out on the street, cos it's unsafe' (Anonymous female). Eventually, in this particular incident, it appears as if the WG members gave in and allowed the children to play on the street, next to the busy road. The 'unsafe streets' statement constantly made by this anonymous female appears to be grounded on reliable evidence. Whilst the ethics of this research requires the non-disclosure of the city where this action takes place, the area where the community garden was situated is a notoriously dangerous inner-city ward of the Midlands. The area endures a high level of crime and gang-related activity. This surrounding area was aesthetically displeas-

ing; gang slogans were etched over nearby abandoned buildings, whilst litter covered the public footpaths.

One could not accuse the WG members of being overly cautious when it comes to letting children out onto the streets; however, the destruction of the children's only outdoor safe haven, the patch of grass that existed before the community garden, resulted in youths either congregating inside the community centre or venturing out onto these busy streets. The observations, in particular those featured in Box 6.2, show that the restrictions imposed on the children result in a negative 'domino effect', with the parents growing frustrated, angered by the constant disruptions and not being allowed to socialise at the centre in peace. Battles ensued when children, who were frustrated with being contained in such a small building, often angered the adults and caused conflict.

Box 6.2: An Extract from the Field Notes
I notice that some of the children are getting a bit restless. The weather is nice but they are being cooped up in the hall, and not allowed out. Mon will not open the rear door, nor will she let the kids out into the garden. They appear angry and are repeatedly told to be quiet. They are eventually let out onto the front, with the busy road.

In contrast, an interview with a teenage member of the local community contests the notion that the loss of this grass area was negative, 'it wasn't really used no … much better the way it is now'. In this instance, the transformation was portrayed in a positive light; the teenager felt that the grass space had not been used and the community garden that now exists is more beneficial to the local community. Whilst it would be unwise to discount these views, observations indicated that this particular teenager had a close connection with the WG and frequently helped with community lunches. Furthermore, it appeared as though the teenager was hesitant to make any negative comments about the WG or their garden, fearing exclusion or rejection from the group. Nevertheless, his views are reinforced when one considers the WG member Toni's statement, particularly her views on how the space was underused and derelict, only coming to life once the garden has been established.

Regardless of the impact of this transformation, this shows a disregard for certain members in the community and was yet another strong link between the groups. A key factor in any urban growing initiative is to ensure that those who surround the site are aware of, and included in, the proposal process (Iles 2005; Milbourne 2010; Tracey 2011). In both instances this has not happened due to the unpermitted and slightly rushed nature of the action. This particular point, due to the complexities associated with such a finding, is elaborated in the following chapter, which investigates the sites' impact. Nevertheless, the negative implications of unregulated UA are vivid throughout this section: whether or not permission would have been granted, with the community garden is now debatable, since the space has occupied the only substantive amount of open greenery in the relatively deprived neighbourhood.

The Vegetation

Previous chapters, notably 4 and 5, contained information on the various vegetables, fruit and plants grown in both F Troop's and the WG's spaces. The former included several examples of edible produce: nasturtium, spinach, peas and herbs. These were designed to be noticeable and recognisable forms of vegetation, particularly the spinach and peas which formed the backbone of their UA activity. The vegetation contained within the WG's community garden was more varied, with large marrows and a wide variety of other vegetables, along with some fruit trees.

In particular, Chap. 5 contained sections on the 'appropriateness' of this vegetation in this urban landscape. In both situations, it demonstrated how both groups held a basic idea of gardening and put this into practice on their sites: using the spaces for experimentation and to challenge their knowledge and skills. This came across particularly strongly with the two leaders, Sarah and Mon, who coordinated most of the action on the two sites. These two individuals shared a close bond over this control aspect, with each wishing to put their imprint upon the land through the vegetation used. A link also emerged with regard to the destruction of pre-existing vegetation: how the UA replaced the species which were originally present on the land.

The strongest message from the two sections, featured in Chaps. 4 and 5, centres on the lack of investigation into the soil quality and its potential effects on those who notice the vegetation. Beesley (2012), Cook et al. (2005), the North West Food and Health Task Force (2002) and others suggested that any form of urban food growing scheme should consider testing soil. Whilst this may not be practical in the context of guerrilla gardening, alternative methods, such as elevating the vegetables from the soil, could prevent contamination (Edible Eastside 2011; Nasr and Komisar 2014). Essentially, the message appears that the vegetation in both locations could be dangerous to eat: F Troop's positioning of the produce next to a dual carriageway and the WG's community garden next to a large industrial estate results in both sites harbouring potentially contaminated land. There were limited conscious and unconscious efforts by both groups to ensure that contamination was not an issue: with F Troop in phase four, they were reluctant to plant vegetables next to the pub, this was an attempt to prevent intoxicated customers from eating the produce. With the WG, a lack of access and restriction on the produce used during community lunch events results in exposure to the nearby community being minimal (explored in Chap. 7).

Site Design: Constructing an Informal Site Without Permission

Chapter 4, the prolonged observation of F Troop, presents the idea that the group created the site to improve the local community's space. F Troop's members picked the location because of their perceived lack of maintenance of the area; the space looked 'scruffy', 'abandoned' and in need of repair. In a similar manner, the WG chapter created a similar idea, albeit that the community garden was specifically

Fig. 6.3 A time lapse of the WG site – 2010–2012 (Hardman's photographs)

designed to supplement the fortnightly community lunch and thus residents' diets. Whilst these aims were arguably heroic and admirable, the nature of their action, unregulated and unaccountable, resulted in these ambitious targets being quickly neglected in favour of a more personal-centric approach.

The very construction of the two sites demonstrated the groups' immediate straying from their original values. In neither instance was there consultation with the community, rather guerrilla tactics were employed on those who resided around the sites: both groups altered the space under the noses of authority and the nearby residents. Figure 6.3 demonstrates the drastic change exhibited at the WG site. It is striking to consider that this was carried out without community involvement; a space, belonging to the residents, was transformed without any form of consultation. Similarly, Fig. 6.4 shows the change exhibited at F Troop's phase one site. Clearly, this is only a snapshot but is a visual representation of how one of the three sites cultivated has transformed over time.

With F Troop's site, it is important to remember that dilapidation occurred several times between the phases; thus, Fig. 6.4 is unable to capture this in a meaningful manner. In both instances, one may feel that F Troop and the WG have drastically improved the sites; this may be so, but they have improved them according to their logic and interpretations of space. Whilst the vegetation on display in Fig. 6.4, for example, may look beautiful and appealing, it is left to thrive or survive on its

Fig. 6.4 A time lapse of the F Troop phase one site – 2010–2011 (Hardman's photographs)

own and thus rapidly dies. Meanwhile, the vegetation featured in Fig. 6.3 was not used for the community, but appeared to be for personal consumption for WG members.

The unregulated action results in both groups being able to design the site and use the area however they wish; they are in charge, are their own bosses and need not answer to anyone. Evidence, predominantly in the form of the earlier featured guidance documents (FCFCG), suggests that if an 'official' route was taken, and permission was given for both sites, F Troop and the WG would have to conform to regulations: allow access, speak with the local community and only use vegetation which was appropriate for that environment (Tracey 2011). This again circles back to the issue of sovereignty, with both groups losing overall control over the sites if planning permission had been sought. The site designs may have been radically different, incorporating not only their own views but those of the community and key authority players. Perhaps most notable in the design of the two sites is the lack of safety features. A primary goal for any UA site designer is to incorporate features which will protect both gardeners and visitors or passers-by (Peters and Kirby 2008): F Troop failed to label the produce, which was grown in untested soil, whilst the WG – on their large site – did not include barriers or guide rails for the more fragile members. There were no risk assessments of the two sites, nor health and

safety procedures in place, which are fundamental requirements of operating a grow site (FCFCG, circa 2005). Although this latter issue may not be as relevant with F Troop's space, it is particularly prevalent with the WG, who cultivated on a sloped area.

However, not all elements of the site designs were dangerous. The WG's use of the community centre's fence reduced the risk of non-WG members from entering the space and perhaps injuring themselves. This restriction on access partially complies with Peters and Kirkby's (2008) advice on the need to carefully manage urban grow spaces, particularly how in certain areas it might be advisable to have a physical barrier between the community and the garden. On the other hand, F Troop made a conscious decision not to plant food in the phase four portion of their dig, explaining that the recognisable vegetation may be consumed by unsuspecting pub patrons. This resulted in the produce being situated far from the prying eyes of the pub patrons but still in reach of other passers-by who may recognise the vegetables.

Summarising the Unregulated Approach

Fundamentally, the actions performed by both groups have implications for the surrounding communities. The WG, for example, has impacted on the residents surrounding the site: children and young adults were displaced and removed from a spot they would frequently use, whilst those who attend the centre to socialise were angered by the constant presence of youths. In essence, the WG has claimed a community space for their own use, converting common land to a set of allotments for private cultivation. In a comparable manner, F Troop has significantly altered the barrier landscape in favour of their own unsustainable designs, placing vegetables in a place with poor soil conditions and with no maintenance support.

These revelations paint a negative picture of the unregulated approach to UA. Essentially, it shows the groups to be self-centred, adopting an approach which relates with their member's values: predominantly that of the two leaders. It could be argued that this contravenes how guerrilla gardening is portrayed in the majority of sources, as something positive and which needs to be encouraged (Cobb 2011). From key guerrilla texts, such as Crane et al. (2012), Reynolds (2008), McKay (2011), Flores (2006) and Tracey (2007) to the mass media, Sky News' (2009) article on the 'shrub man' or BBC's (2009) focuses on guerrilla gardening; in all cases the activity is only seen from the positive perspective. In a similar manner to how some authors critique planning, in this instance the evidence collated here critiques the vast majority of literature surrounding guerrilla gardening, particularly how many authors adopt this one-dimensional perspective to narrating the activity.

In this context, it becomes immediately apparent how the WG, and F Troop, conducted little to no consultation with certain elements of the local community. Whilst they regenerate the areas, they fail to include those who experience and interact with the sites on a daily basis. They are shown as exclusive clusters of individuals who have adopted an unpermitted approach because of their impatience. Whilst

most authors take the side of the guerrilla grass-roots activity (for instance, Crane et al. 2012; Douglas 2011; Harrison 2010; Tornaghi 2012), the commentary above demonstrates how the restrictive planning system could aid in creating UA sites which would be open, and accessible, to all: perhaps improving practice. Evidently, as Scott and Carter (2012) explain, this would first require a shift from planning to realise the potential of UA. This section challenges the perception that guerrilla gardening is an act which should be encouraged. As stated earlier in this chapter, due to the complexities associated with this statement, the chapter which immediately follows this section will investigate this revelation further (Chap. 7).

Working with Guerrillas: Constructing a Future with Authority

This chapter highlights the explicit nature of the groups to avoid the legal route and, in particular, their apparent desires to not work with planning or any form of authority. Following a 19-month period of interaction with the groups, and once it had been established that both neglected authority, it was important to consult members on their attitudes towards the site's development, particularly questioning members on their likelihood to work with authority to develop the spaces. This was an attempt to discover whether it is genuinely possible for guerrillas to one day work with authority. The focus remains on planning since this would be the first 'port of call' for the guerrilla gardeners (cf. Tornaghi 2012).

Several chapters in this book have already explored claims by Reynolds (2008) that guerrilla gardeners eventually legitimise their action. Hardman (2011) depicts an incident where this happened in Germany: Rosa Rose, a guerrilla group turned lawful, worked with planners to obtain temporary permission to use the land. The planners acted as 'middlemen', ensuring that both the developer and guerrillas were satisfied with the length of the lease and implications once it had ended (Rosa Rose 2007). Unfortunately, when the lease expired, the guerrillas refused to migrate and resorted to violence in an attempt to prevent eviction (Reynolds 2008; Rosa Rose 2007).

This case paints a bleak picture for any interaction between guerrillas and authority, offering little hope for a potential successful collaboration. However, Chap. 2 also featured a more positive narrative of the Green Guerillas in New York, one of the founding groups of the modern informal movement (McKay 2011; Tracey 2007). In this example, the Green Guerillas legitimised their action and worked alongside the authority to create havens for wildlife and cultivation (Reynolds 2008). The group, to this day, encourages the transition of brownfield, underused spaces into green havens for communities (Green Guerrillas undated; Pudup 2008). Some authors, such as McKay (2011), credit the group with the boom of community gardens in the city: transforming vacant lots into spaces for local residents. Similarly, in the UK context, Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET), a scheme which began as a guerrilla gardening project, eventually legitimated and worked with planners to

establish a form of UA across their town (IET 2011). In this example IET (2011) were able to negotiate with the planning system to use spaces around the town for UA. However, Reynolds (2009: 33) is extremely negative towards planning practice, explaining that 'planning rules and codes of conduct' create places without personality; it is the guerrillas' responsibility to add character to these banal spaces. The rhetoric throughout Reynolds' texts add more weight to the suggestion that guerrillas, following his particular take on the activity, will be much more difficult to interact with.

Not Consulting the Authority or Planners: The Absence of a Voice

Earlier chapters have already alluded to the idea that there was a conscious decision not to speak with the local authority responsible for the areas in which F Troop and the WG operate. Firstly, to echo earlier statements: the two groups wished for the researcher not to engage with any form of authority, fearing that this would render their action visible. It is important for any field researcher to share a close bond with research projects, especially during an ethnographical influenced project, which requires a level of trust in order to obtain rich information (Klenke 2008; Silverman 2010). In addition, one had to be conscious that only so much can be achieved during this research; parameters had to be set for the information collected.

The presence of an emerging database of academic literature concentrating on the interplay between planning and grass-roots UA adds further weight to the need not to consult planners in this instance (for example Cobb 2011; Tracey 2011; Viljoen and Wiskerke 2012). Furthermore, guidance documents available in the UK, from food strategies/charters to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local controls, create more evidence to understand the planners' and, more crucially, the wider local authority's points of view. Fundamentally, consulting with local authorities would require the precise location of these sites to be divulged, resulting in the ethics section of this research becoming obsolete and neglected. One could argue that speaking with authorities at a local level would merely provide an even 'messier' array of responses, which would not be context specific: Scott's (2001) argument demonstrates clearly how planning enforcement officers have differing opinions, and thus consulting only a few would still not provide a definitive answer to whether they would engage with guerrillas and UA.

Guerrilla Gardeners' Attitudes Towards Authority

Ideally, you will choose the time to seek legitimisation. Do this when you judge that you and your guerrilla garden will be more at risk if you continue illegally than if you try to go legit. Once you call a truce and offer to negotiate, it is crucial you do this from a strong position. Reynolds (2008: 226)

Legitimisation or decline are the ultimate paths for guerrilla gardeners, with Reynolds (2008) claiming that troops will, at some point, need to think about working with authority. Reynolds' language, in the above extract from his book, signifies how any transition should be conducted on the guerrilla's terms: the constant use of *you*, for instance, implies where the power should lie in any potential relationship; the illegal cultivators should be in the dominant position, with the local authority submitting to their demands. He also refers to legitimisation as a negotiated truce between authority and the guerrillas, in essence, somewhere they can meet in the middle. The picture painted here is again militarian, with the guerrilla portrayed as heroic fighters being asked to put down their arms. They should be in control with authority responding to their commands.

Previous discussions featured McKay's (2011: 189) critique of this military tone, explaining that '[Reynolds's] self-appointed general's position in the organisation' results in him encouraging followers to adopt a more radical version of the activity. Fundamentally, he argues that those who pursue Reynolds' suggestions will perhaps lean towards the less willing side of guerrilla gardening or those who will not embrace authority as easily (cf. McKay 2011). These thoughts reinforce ideas expressed throughout this chapter, how some guerrilla gardeners may embrace authority, yet others, such as F Troop, will opt to go with it alone regardless of how approachable the legitimate route may eventually become. Apart from the Green Guerillas and Todmorden project, both featured in Chap. 3, there are few successful examples of this relationship working: with constant struggles ensuing between gardeners and authorities who often pursue neoliberal agendas (Pudup 2008). This again casts a dark shadow over whether the groups featured in this study, F Troop and the WG, could ever work with authority.

F Troop and the WG: Embracing the Legal Route

The previous chapters have already established that the F Troop and WG can both be seen as guerrilla gardeners. The latter can be a particular thorny issue, since many view guerrillas as radical, hippy-like individuals with a political agenda (Adams and Hardman 2014), nevertheless '… guerrilla gardening can be much less radical as well … anyone can be a guerrilla gardener' (McKay 2011: 189). In this instance, the research is comparing two guerrilla groups which lie at complete opposite ends of the spectrum: F Troop radically alters land next to a dual carriageway, whilst the WG are consciously colonising local authority space for UA activity.

It becomes immediately clear that the groups share some values for adopting the illegal route, in particular, their fear of integration and general negative attitudes towards the system. The idea of perception plays a large part here, as this chapter has already alluded to the idea that it is very difficult for planners to demonstrate that they have changed, in order to attract guerrilla groups. There is also this issue of sovereignty, with both groups clearly indicating that any form of legitimisation

would have to be on their terms, and not that of the local authority. However, there is a slight difference with one of the other core reasons: the idea of a 'thrill' angle to guerrilla action. This is only apparent with F Troop members, who pursue guerrilla gardening for the excitement, ecstasy and delight which comes with avoiding authority (Crane et al. 2012; Adams and Hardman 2014). As admirable and innovative as F Troops' action may appear, their core aim is to garden unlawfully for this pleasure element. F Troop's stance towards authority is more rigid and less flexible than that of the WG. Whilst the latter do not like authority, they appear open to suggestions of working with them if funding is provided. This quest for money is at the centre of the WG's future plans; support is a vital component of keeping the community lunches going, providing materials for the garden and the general purchase of more stock to add to the space.

This quest for capital pushes the women to consider embracing Cameron's Big Society scheme and applying to a new bank scheme launched in April 2012 (Big Society Capital 2012). Yet another difference arises here, earlier discussions in this chapter highlighted how F Troop's core members were adamant that they should not be seen as part of the Big Society initiative. Anna in particular became irate at the very notion of this political idiom. One obtains the feeling that the current political rhetoric has also heavily influenced F Troop's decision to adopt the guerrilla approach and avoid legitimate transition at all costs. Local authorities may attempt to be bolder and frame the legal option in a more favourable manner, but they are ever susceptible to the current political rhetoric, which may prove to be a barrier.

Summarising the Future: Legitimisation or Collapse?

Throughout this chapter, discussion has centred on whether F Troop and the WG will one day interact with their respective local authorities. Planning has been blamed in a variety of other contexts for restricting creativity (Edensor 2013; Edensor and Millington 2012; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012; WRO 2012). The onus is also placed on planning, by some guerrillas, for creating unimaginative spaces which are increasingly 'anodyne' (Reynolds 2008: 33). In this instance, Reynolds (2008) creates the sense that the strict controls of planning is fuelling the guerrilla movement, causing radicals, and the everyday person to revolt. With regard to UA in particular, some radical authors create the sense that there are 'unconcerned planning departments' (McKay 2011: 166) responsible for the shortfall of food growing spaces, particularly in the urban environment. Hou (2010) explains that despite the often top-down approach of planning, guerrillas turn it on its head: shaping the contemporary environment according to their perceptions of reality:

> Rather than being subjected to planning regulations [guerrilla gardening] recognises both the ability of citizens and opportunities in the existing urban conditions for radical and everyday changes against the dominant forces in the society. Hou (2010: 15)

F Troop, disgruntled with the system, resort to tactics which shape the very fabric of that space, actively resisting, as Hou describes, the planning regulations of the area. F Troop is making a radical change to the environment by including vegetables and attempting to demonstrate that food can be grown, even in the most unlikely of locations. They have been able to 'get away' with this, without being noticed, hounded or hampered by the authority (Mark). One may question what benefit a legitimate approach may provide to F Troop. If the local authority is not forward thinking enough, would they even consider vegetables being grown for symbolic reasons, or would this be too radical? The latter appears to be the case when literature, surrounding the inflexibility of authorities and planners, is taken into account. Therefore, in the case of F Troop, it is unlikely that they will ever transition to work with authority or apply for permission. Their strong anti-authoritarian stance, anger towards current political rhetoric and general need for a 'buzz' will see the troop continue the unregulated approach:

> If you go ahead with a development without the required permission, the local planning authority may ask you to make a retrospective planning application. If it decides that permission should not be granted it may require you to put things back as they were. Planning Portal (2012)

With regard to the WG, the future is not as straightforward. Already mentioned during this chapter is the idea that Mon would gladly welcome more support. If the authority was to be approached, the unpermitted community garden would certainly need to acquire retrospective planning permission, due to the substantial change in land use (Scott 2001). Planning departments could request a proposal to be submitted, which if denied upon review, may see the garden transition back to its former incarnation (Barclay 2012). In a similar manner to Scott's (2001) account of the Brithdir Mawr, which attempted to gain retrospective planning permission, the WG may face a battle to retain the space they love and use so much.

In summary, this chapter has shown how both groups have pursued guerrilla gardening for similar reasons: Mon and Sarah's reluctance to engage with their local authorities, and particularly planners, which they view as over-bureaucratic and a system which would take over control of the sites. The following chapter will explore the implications of an unregulated approach, particularly how the two sites operate and if they involve those who surround them. It will also investigate how the UA is distributed or, in the case of F Troop, who aimed to provide information regarding the ideology, whether this has been effectively communicated.

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Chapter 7
Exploring Impact: Consulting Actors Surrounding Guerrilla Gardening Sites

Abstract Guerrilla gardeners are often portrayed as heroes by the media and academics. Existing accounts fail to critically explore the activity and are often 'guerrilla-centric'. This chapter delves further into the activity and considers the 'impact' of this action on those who surround colonised sites. Using the examples of F Troop, the Women's Group and the Solo Guerrilla, the three types of guerrilla gardeners explored in this book, we proceed to engage with the nearby communities to explore this idea of impact. In particular, we question whether the communities are involved in the urban agricultural activities practised on the three sites to whether the guerrilla action has had a positive effect on the locale. Ultimately, the chapter aims to consult those who are often forgotten and bring to light other views on guerrilla gardening.

Questioning the Impact of Guerrilla Gardening

This book has thus far explored two guerrilla groups in some detail, supplemented by reference to the activities of a lone guerrilla, and provided an overview of the reasons for pursuing such a course of action. An important point which we have highlighted throughout this text is the lack of objectivity with regard to the very practice of guerrilla gardening: it is often deemed 'heroic', anti-authority, with mass media and academics alike branding guerrillas as saviours and with much writing on the topic very closely embedded in action rather than objective evaluation.

In this chapter, we reflect on the two guerrilla groups[1] primarily explored throughout this book in greater depth, through engaging with those who surround the sites 'occupied' by the guerrilla activity. This chapter compares the two and how the sites were used, relying on the extensive observation notes and interviews to establish whether their actions have the desired impact on their respective communities. Are they aiding the community through their promotion of local food production? Or are their actions not as effective as they may initially seem?

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[1] The solo guerrilla gardener did not wish us to engage with her neighbours; thus, only F Troop and the Women's Group (WG) are explored in this chapter.

It has already been established why F Troop and the WG are being compared. It would be impossible to compare all groups that partake in guerrilla UA; thus, the option was taken to investigate two groups at the opposite end of the activity: one part of Reynolds's network and the other sitting outside of his take on the activity (cf. McKay 2011). Both groups evidently disobey authority, preferring to 'get on with things' (Sarah) as opposed to waiting and working with the system. It could be argued that they both sit at opposite ends of the 'disobedience scale', with F Troop attempting to be almost completely covert, avoiding authority and the police, whilst the WG invites authority members and allows the police to use the community lunch as a forum for discussion with the community, innocently ignorant of (or ignoring) the fact that their community garden required planning permission or at least some basic form of consultation.

In its most fundamental form, this chapter focuses on those who are often neglected when guerrillas gardening is mentioned: actors who live or work close to the sites which have been colonised and transformed. Through adopting this approach, we hope to add knowledge to the nascent guerrilla gardening literature, providing a viewpoint from those who are often sidelined and forgotten.

Assessing the Impact of Unregulated UA

This book has already discussed a considerable amount of literature which portrays guerrilla gardeners in a purely positive manner, with many authors attempting to promote the activity, both for aesthetically improving an area and for the creation of local food sites (for instance, Crane et al. 2012; Cobb 2011; Douglas 2011; Lewis 2012; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007, 2011; Zanetti 2007). Whilst it may be true that this unregulated activity can deliver improvements to unused or underused spaces, there is little or no evidence which suggests that guerrilla gardening can have an adverse impact on those who surround these sites (Adams and Hardman 2014): from Reynolds, to the more recent views of McKay or Lewis, academic authors and the mass media appear to ignore the residents and other users close to these colonised spaces, which are often conquered and altered without the permission of authority or local residents (see Chap. 2). Therefore, there is a significant lack of data on how these alterations affect those in the immediate vicinity of guerrilla gardening projects, so, whereas the previous chapter investigated the guerrillas' relationship (or lack of one) with the local authority, this chapter proceeds to explore their relationship with the nearby population.

In terms of assessing impact, we focussed on whether the unregulated sites have made any impressions, negative or positive, on those who live near the guerrilla projects: whether they were included in the guerrillas' planning process, have accessed the spaces or used the produce cultivated. These principles are all used in various guidance notes on what urban food sites should contribute to the locale (see Community Land Advisory Service 2012; FCFCG *circa* 2005; FCFCG 2009) and thus provide a set of criteria for assessing impact, or the value, of the space for local

residents and other users. Clearly, in order to analyse the impact of guerrilla action, it was vital to speak with the local communities of the WG and F Troop sites. To begin with, it is important to review the two groups' claims as to why the spaces were cultivated and their intended aims.

The intent of both groups to include their immediate community in any action has already been established (see Box 7.1). With F Troop this was demonstrated throughout multiple observations and interviews. Anna, for instance, explained 'I think that's about bringing the community and getting them involved and getting them to be part of it'. Others added to the discussion by suggesting that liaising with the community would result in mutual benefits: 'I think I like to do it to make it a nice space for people, to make it look nice, because I like growing things, I like gardening' (Sarah): in this case Sarah was aiming to use her horticultural skills for the wider benefit of the community (at least as she saw it).

Box 7.1: F Troop's View Towards the Wider Community (Author's Field Diary)
'Following the dig, on the walk back to the vehicles, the guerrillas continued to discuss the theme of food production. They wanted to take illegal food production to those who need it, in particular a council estate located further away from phases 1 and 2. They had the idea of creating a space for food and transferring it to the community once they had cultivated it enough'.

In the context of the WG, this came across strongly and repeatedly, with the community lunch designed especially to engage those around the site. Box 7.2 demonstrates how the WG would provide special events to cater for vulnerable and elderly local residents, supposedly using the community garden as a vehicle from which to deliver fresh produce and arrange lunches. The WG explains that they cater from the young to old: 'the community lunches are really good and whatever we grow we eat… the children do a little patch as well, we're enlightening them about green fingers and growing your own and eating your own' (Sal).

Box 7.2: The WG Accommodating Elderly Guests During Christmas (Author's Field Diary)
'The women's group have decided to put on a lunch exclusively for local OAPs. The lunch is designed to provide a social atmosphere for the OAPs during the Christmas holidays; most of those attending live alone. On arrival, I am asked to help out as a waiter, providing the tables and attendees with the food so that they don't have to get out of their seats'.

These comments are vital pieces of information, demonstrating the 'backbone' of both pieces of action. F Troop wished to rejuvenate the space for the locals and include an element of UA – 'the peas should go against the wall; they'll be noticed more there' (Sarah) – whilst the WG used the community garden to supplement the fortnightly free lunches provided for local residents – 'we wanted to reduce the amount we was spending on community lunch and we also wanted to provide home-grown produce' (Nicki). These motives and aspirations were only unpacked once the intensive, 19-month observation began. Only through this meticulous passive-participant role were hidden, previously unknown details revealed. In the case of Malinowski and his observation of a Trobriand Island tribe, his role enabled him to witness many practices of the tribal community (Malinowski 1978). For instance, his description of the tribal economics revealed the formalities accustomed with the giving and receiving of material goods (Malinowski 1978). In a similar manner, the prolonged observation in this study was able to expose information regarding F Troop and the WG which would possibly have not been revealed if another, less comprehensive, technique was used.

The Community and F Troop: Deconstructing the Relationship

> Well things want to grow, they [the vegetables] can grow, I think that's what's always quite amazing about gardening. You'll find things in the most inhospitable of places against the odds… vegetables, I think, because it's unexpected that's what I like the idea of: it's unexpected; you wouldn't expect to see that there. (Sarah)

The self-declared intention of the group was to grow and create life in areas that are often left untouched or are abandoned. Their core objective thus surrounded promoting the concept of UA: demonstrating that vegetables can be grown even in the most inhospitable of places, 'I think we talked about maybe doing a pumpkin too, or something like that' (Anna). Troop members were influenced by similar action in New York, in which a large community garden movement was created through guerrilla gardening: 'I understood what she [Sarah] was doing and agreed with it I guess. It's all that New York stuff again isn't it? I mean, planting vegetables in a city, crazy!' (Mark).

Whilst the troop is often referred to as a holistic entity, it has already been shown that it was mainly the leader's idea to pursue the UA concept: testing her horticultural skills and beautifying the space (Box 7.3). For the purposes of this chapter, and in order to not complicate matters, the troop will continue to be referred to in this manner. However, the reader should note the somewhat one-dimensional approach to UA exhibited in the troop (see previous discussions). The original plans of F Troop were rather ambitious, but still involved the notion of community involvement, rejuvenating a neglected space for the nearby population.

> **Box 7.3: Sarah's Persistence to Use Vegetables on the Land (Author's Field Diary)**
>
> 'Towards the end of the dig, the guerrillas talk about future plans. In particular they discuss the use of vegetables in their digs, from the idea of food production to using vegetables for purely symbolic means; showing where food can grow in the urban. The guerrillas realise that planting vegetables next to phases 1 and 2 would need to be for the latter reason rather than for food production; soil contamination, passing cars that would pollute the vegetables and the general location were the reasons given for this stance. Sarah is the one pushing the group, adamant that she can grow vegetables in the soil'.

On reflection, whilst this might be an admirable objective, the troop's operating structure prevented anyone learning about or interacting with their action. Field diary entries demonstrated the tight clustering of the group: Figure 7.1 and Box 7.4 shows troop members huddled in a tight-knit group. Inevitably, the group language displayed here repels those who reside near the site and want to know more. This was repeated throughout the five phases, with group members huddling together and discouraging onlookers, and the nearby community, from speaking with them.

> **Box 7.4: A Snapshot of the Troop's Movements and Arrangements (Author's Field Diary)**
>
> • The group constantly work close together, possibly due to the site's small size.
> • There is no gender segregation, unlike phase one. All group members work in the same area and continue to discuss proceedings in a circle (for equal say).

Contrary to F Troop's initial claims, the guerrilla troop did not interact with the community in the first two digs (a year), with field notes reinforcing this suggestion: 'patrons from the local pub seem interested in the dig and approach the site a few times, keeping to themselves rather than interacting with the group'. This is a typical trait of guerrillas, who prefer to act in isolation, usually arriving under the dead of night to alter a space without speaking to those living nearby (McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008; Winnie 2010). Since the grow site was located in a commercial hub, the local community consisted principally of users of a small, traditional pub situated towards the far end of the dual carriageway barrier. This, along with a small car parking business opposite the site, formed the core of the community. Evidently, this is not how one would perceive a traditional community. Nevertheless, the pub patrons and car park attendants interact with the space on a daily basis, with the staff at the pub residing on the premises. It was imperative that these individuals were consulted, since they were the nearest dwellers, and individuals, who interacted with the site.

Fig. 7.1 Some F Troop members make decisions in a small cluster during phase two (Sarah's photograph, permission obtained)

Further reinforcing this notion that F Troop failed to interact with those who surrounded the site were interviews conducted in 2011. It appears that during their first year of operation, phases one and two, the guerrillas did not speak with any community members, at first excluding the pub's staff and patrons from being included in their action: 'no we just stood there watching them do it. As far as I'm concerned, there was no conversation with me, to them. If they'd have spoke to me, I'd have spoke to them' (Male pub patron 1). This somewhat quashes the almost romantic, rogue notion of F Troop's action. In this instance, the troop is shown as a set of foreign individuals who enter an area they have little connection with, transforming the zone and not consulting the local populace.

Comments from other patrons repeat this feeling of isolation and neglect:

Well just before spring, noticed students' under-cover of darkness planting stuff down that end. They didn't say hi or owt. (Male pub patron 2)

I have, but I don't stare at them because I think if somebody's working the last thing they want is somebody you know, saying 'what's your life history'. Get on with your job! (Male pub patron 3)

Ruth [landlady] was talking about the secret gardeners or something. Something about them doing stuff on their own without the council. (Male pub patron 4)

It must be noted that this particular portion of the research involved the interviewer being embedded within the pub and speaking with these individuals: using the landlady as a gatekeeper to introduce the study. This tactic worked well, with patrons highlighting their personal views towards the space. Some of these comments are more positive towards the action than others, with the occasional

interviewee feeling so perplexed by vegetables in such a barren landscape that they appeared somewhat angry towards the researcher:

> I don't think they'd last long… I don't think people would leave [the vegetables] alone [they] pinched the flowers so I'm sure they'd pinch the food. (Male pub patron 5)

> It's just the simple minds of people you know, they've got nothing else better to do, they're bored, they're fed up. That's what they've got to do! (Male pub patron 6)

This anger was surprising and is quite difficult to display in an abstracted manner; the tone of the interviewees' voices demonstrated dismay at the thought of vegetables being planted in this location. This was primarily due to their assumption that vegetables would attract the wrong crowd, who would vandalise and hang around the spot because of the produce (Box 7.5).

Box 7.5: Interaction at the F Troop Dig (Author's Field Diary)

- Drivers that stop at the adjacent traffic lights peek over to see what the group is doing.
- Patrons from the local pub seem interested in the dig and approach the site a few times, keeping to themselves rather than interacting with the group.
- The site is located close to a university, so students seem to make up the majority of passersby who look over but don't stop to interact.

Whilst these comments suggested that the pub patrons have been isolated, the troop's strategy, to practise in daylight, attracted a considerable amount of attention, with some originating from this nearby community. The patrons, who regularly would have a cigarette at the front of the pub, notice the troop but presume they are something that they are not, 'to be honest with you I thought they were on community payback' (Male pub patron 3). This individual, along with others, presumed that the guerrillas were something else entirely, perhaps part of an official scheme. The interview extracts, on the previous page, also display confusion regarding their identity, with a patron presuming they were council employees and another claiming that they were students. This disconnection fuels a debate as to who these individuals were: suggestions range from council officers to other paid forms of employment.

This relationship appeared to improve in the second year of operations, with some patrons demonstrating an informal relationship developing between themselves and F Troop: 'I've spoken when they come in. They come in for lemonade and stuff like that … seen them a few times' (Male pub patron 5), 'I'm not sure what she was… she didn't say her name. It was the same girl I were talking to on the first plot up the top end there' (Male patron 6). The landlady, the main contact person between F Troop and the pub, adds weight to the suggestion that these second year interactions brought the guerrillas closer with the community – 'yes come in for a drink and water… water for the plants' (Landlady).

Whilst this provides some evidence that F Troop was connecting with the community, there was still a lack of communication between the group members and

patrons regarding what exactly they are doing with the land, 'she didn't say her name. It were the same girl I were talking to on the first plot up the top end there. To be honest I don't know what they're doing on there, Ruth said something about veg?' (Male pub patron 7). Confusion continuously surrounded the objectives of F Troop and their pursuit of UA, a concept which is still treated as foreign by those who surround the site.

Whilst the relationship between F Troop and the community, predominantly the pub, improved in their second year of operations, it became clear how the troop excluded those who surround the site. They prevented those who were potentially interested from interacting with the digs, which results in a site created according to the troop member's values and decisions; the design was entirely conceived by F Troop without any external input. When one reviews the core literature on guerrilla gardening, this appears to be a typical trait of groups: materialising overnight to transform a space without consultation (McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007, 2011). This strategy inevitably raises questions regarding the appropriateness of an unregulated form of UA, particularly when the troop members are the only individuals with knowledge as to how, and why, vegetables were planted in this space. Ultimately, the lack of communication and explanation of their actions results in the UA remaining, for the most part, unnoticed.

> It's all right, if it makes a difference, but after they've done it, its gone wild again. I know things have to grow, don't get me wrong, but I think it's a lot of people really that tend to just throw their rubbish in there. So the work that they done a day later, I think that whoever they were done that work then couple of days later or so it was like a shithole. Which for the work that they done fair enough, it looked nice afterwards, but as I say, couple of days later it was just like a bloody dustbin. (Male pub patron 10)

Another barrier to forming a relationship with this community appeared to exist with the operating procedures of F Troop, particularly their lack of maintenance with the site. The male, above, highlights his anger towards the site's fluid, erratic state: how, for a short while, the space improved and then fell back into disrepair. These feelings were echoed by other patrons and staff members. A barman, for instance, acknowledged that the space was temporarily improved: 'a lot of it was just weeds and now you've got all this wild stuff growing' (Barman). Another pub patron explained that the site once looked beautiful, 'but it's gone now; everything's come out then gone'. Other community members were blunter with their comments, with an elderly patron, for example, when asked his thoughts on the space, responding 'it's just crap you know'.

> It's a lot cleaner than it has been, there's not as much rubbish about, but I think that's basically not the council, its people who go by and respect it and pick it up. I think the council quite truthfully has neglected it. Despicably, I mean that underpass is not an attractive structure. (Male pub patron 4)

Nevertheless, there were some comments to suggest that the troop's actions slightly improved the appearance of the area, in this case a male comment on how they have tackled the rubbish problem, making the structure attractive. Similar comments erupted from other patrons, with a few suggesting that the once

neglected space had been transformed, for the better, by F Troop. The landlady adds further comments by explaining that the troop was able to do what the local authority could not and put in more effort than those employed to maintain the space:

> Well it's nice to have a bit of colour as you can see. I've got my hanging baskets out and everything and I think it add a nice bit of colour, bit of flowers and that. You need it as much greenery in the city centre as you can get. (Landlady)

The landlady appeared to appreciate the aesthetics of the plots as opposed to their purpose, which during some 'phases' was as a space for food. Her focus was specifically on the flowers planted, and whilst she eventually discussed the presence of vegetables, this was only after some prompting during the interview. This focus on the aesthetics was a common place amongst those interviewed around the site, with those who noticed the change of space commenting firstly on the plants and eventually the produce located in the area. Mark, one of the guerrilla gardeners, acknowledged that this could be due to the lack of communication between the troop and community, a factor already discussed earlier in this section and previous chapters.

> I don't really think they fully understood the concept, because it wasn't formally explained to them. They might think it's a nice idea, but on a bigger scale guerrilla gardening it needs a whole bunch of people working together as a team to keep it on-going. Whereas they just thought it was nice, sort of thing to happen, I should imagine. The landlady in particular seemed to be quite keen. We'd have to really work to involve them, to keep it going. (Mark)

This lack of an explanation resulted in some patrons and other interviewees not realising the site's existence. A few interviewees, for instance, suggested that they had not noticed any change, despite interacting or passing with the space on an almost daily basis:

> No I haven't actually because obviously I'm working on this side but never really noticed anything no. Until you said that I was clueless about it to be honest. (Car Park Attendant)

> Outside the front door? Only the grass is mown, that's about all… Where the bushes are and the weeds? Ahhh its just crap you know. (Male pub patron 5)

> More cigarette ends … More cigs yeah, gets filthier by the day … No [change] not that I can see anyways. (Male pub patron 9)

Evidently, there was no point carrying on with the interviews once this had been established. The core point of consulting the nearby community was to discover their attitudes towards the guerrilla, unregulated adaptations to space close to where they reside, work or socialise. Most of these discussions with community members were short and to the point, primarily due to the lack of a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee: the establishment of which, in the pub context, relied on the landlady as a gatekeeper to get the discussion started. In other situations, such as with the car park attendant, the relationship was even more difficult to establish. Nevertheless, these discussions – albeit short – proved useful and presented further evidence to suggest that the community felt disconnected from F Troop's action.

Reflecting on the WG: The Community Garden…A Place for the Community?

In a similar manner to F Troop, revelations also emerged regarding the WG and their community garden. This chapter has already established how the WG created the site to supplement the community lunch; the garden appeared to be for the community and managed by community members. In essence the WG were aiming to return to the traditional notion of 'Community Supported Agriculture' (CSA), where food is sourced from community gardens and distributed locally (WRO 2012). A local funding body supplied the WG with the financial ability to create a communal plot with the aim to increase access to fresh produce for the immediate area.

Contrary to the claims of the funder and the WG about the apparent communal space, several field notes and interviews demonstrated how members of the WG often referred to the garden as an 'allotment'. A reflection on the field note data reveals how the WG members appeared to take ownership of the space, using the garden for their own personal uses. With this exposure in mind, subsequent interviews were adapted in an attempt to divulge the reasoning behind this choice of name and why the term 'community garden', not 'allotment', was only used in the company of residents. For instance, during the interviews, when the leader of the WG was questioned about how they refer to the grow site, she responded:

> Community garden, because if you call it an allotment you've got to have all sorts of permits and it just opens a can of worms. (Mon)

The original intention of the WG was to establish an allotment, a space of their own, with produce which could then be used in the occasional community lunch (Nicki). Janet, the most recent WG recruit, when asked about whether it was a community garden argued 'an allotment I would call it'. This is furthered through field observations, which demonstrated how WG members personalised and claimed certain beds: 'it's more or less just for their own needs at the moment' (Janet). Whilst it is not unusual for spaces in community gardens to be personalised by those who use or operate them (see, for instance, Milbourne 2010), in this instance the restriction on access has resulted in the garden becoming inaccessible and colonised by the WG.

This revelation starts to quash the notion of the community garden, with the grow space appearing to be mainly for a select few in the locale. An allotment is typically a portion of land, restricted in dimensions and leased by the local authority, for the private production of food (Groundwork 2011). Indeed, the modern idea of an allotment has not altered from the original nineteenth century concept: 'his Lordship, we believe, had the honour of being the first individual who let out small portions of land upon the plan which is now universally known by the name of the Field Garden or Allotment system' (Burchardt 2002: 242). In essence an allotment is a controlled space and a space which is in short supply, but high demand, in many UK cities (Stokes 2011; WRO 2012).

Mon instead opted for a community garden, which varies significantly from an allotment space: 'community gardens are places where neighbours and residents can gather to cultivate plants, vegetables, and fruits and, depending on local laws, keep bees and raise chickens or other livestock and poultry' (Planning for Healthy Places 2009: 3). Plot sizes are less restrictive and, with government proposals such as the community land bank scheme, which will provide land for more community gardens (DEFRA 2010), this form of communal agriculture is heavily promoted. Unlike allotment spaces, community gardens are controlled by the immediate community or organisation starting the project (Milbourne 2010; Stokes 2011), in this particular case, Mon's WG.

This alternative to an allotment appears – due to the push for more community gardens – much easier to set up and establish. The label 'community garden' is only loosely applied and does not fairly represent the space's use, especially since Mon disclosed the purpose to initially house private allotments for WG members on the site. This obstacle, with starting a legitimate allotment, resulted in the WG adopting the community garden term to bypass legislation and what they viewed as unnecessary paperwork. Ironically, the women's total avoidance of the system arguably results in this adopted name becoming irrelevant, since the pseudonym, like the group, was invisible to authority.

The interviews with other WG members also reinforced the suggestion that the term 'community garden' does fully encapsulate the activities which were currently practised in this space:

Well we are not allowed to call it our allotment, as it's not politically correct, so we just call it our community garden. (Sal)

Some of us call it the allotment, some of us call it the community garden … (Nicki)

We can't call it an allotment because we'll have to pay for the land, so that's why it's called a community garden. (Maggie)

I just call it our garden or an allotment. (Anon Female 1)

The women's group have some of the goods out of the garden or the allotment. (Anon Female 2)

I see it as kind of a mini allotment. (Janet)

A community garden should have the neighbourhood at the heart of its actions (DEFRA 2010; FCFCG 2009; Holland 2004; Milbourne 2010, 2011, 2012); it appeared that although the WG garden supplements the fortnightly community lunch, the main purpose remained to provide the members with a space to cultivate their own crops. This idea is further strengthened during an interview with a new member of the WG who explained that she was unable to garden because other members have claimed their own plots; there was no space left for this individual due to the personalisation of space in the community garden, with current members declaring certain areas to be their own.

In summary, the observation technique employed revealed some surprising facts: at first it appeared that the community garden was legitimate, due to its construction and popularity; it was almost unquestionable that this was created without permission. It was only through the research strategy that the unpermitted

nature of the community garden was discovered. Similarly, it was only through these personal interactions that the second large revelation became apparent: this garden was for the women, not the community, and was created due to their inability to secure the space for an allotment. As Mon suggested, this was their original intention, but due to the restriction in place, they opted to pursue the matter independently, without authority and using the label of a community garden to mask their activities.

Critically Assessing Guerrilla Practice

Whilst the previous section has already suggested some negative attributes of the two sites, we now proceed to investigate this in more depth. Literature, covered in Chap. 2, suggests that UA sites should hold certain characteristics, such as the need to allow access and involve communities (FCFCG 2009; Gorgolewski et al. 2011; Viljoen 2005). Using some of the comments above, we now provide an analysis of some of the core issues around the two sites and general community views. In doing so, we hope to highlight how some guerrilla gardeners operate and the perceptions from community members of their actions.

Access

Access to produce is a key attribute associated with a range of food strategies (Born and Purcell 2009; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). Born and Purcell (2009) are especially conscious of the need for groups who operate local food sites to provide access for the nearby population. This is especially prevalent in neighbourhoods which are less affluent and whose residents generally maintain poor diets (Milbourne 2010). Although this discussion is prevented from disclosing the locations of both group's site throughout this book, both sites were situated within deprived urban areas of the Midlands; ex-industrial spaces are now occupied by a predominantly working-class population.

'The variety of citizens involved in the project was the key to its success' (Gorgolewski et al. 2011: 95), whilst this extract specifically focuses on a project in Quebec, the 'Edible Campus', a recurring theme emerges throughout their text regarding the need for UA to be inclusive and something which can be shared amongst nearby communities. In essence, UA schemes – such as community gardens and edible landscapes – which do not include those who surround the sites appear doomed to failure (FCFCG 2009). Fundamentally, UA enables residents, who perhaps are unfamiliar with crop cultivation, to understand where their produce originated from; the process from 'farm to plate' is simplified (DeSoucey and Techoueyres 2009). In the context of these two guerrilla projects, previous chapters have already alluded to the idea that both groups restrict access, preventing individuals who are not part of their 'inner circle' from interacting with the site. This

issue regarding the lack of access was followed up in both the observation and interview stages of the research; similar to Chaiken et al. (2010) who conducted a study on access to food sites, by speaking with the community, as well as the guerrilla gardeners, one was able to establish who had access and who, in reality, was denied access.

The WG site was situated in an area accustomed to high volumes of social housing (Box 7.6). Observations noted that the homeless, elderly and unemployed working age residents regularly attended the community lunches. F Troop's site, although not located in a residential area like the WG garden, was opposite a traditional pub, whose patrons were all resident in a particular part of the city which has a similar demographic to the community garden's surroundings. These revelations were made prevalent during the interview process of the research, when patrons spoke of the areas in which they resided.

> **Box 7.6: A Description of the WG's Immediate Area, Early on in the Research (Author's Field Diary)**
> The community lunch is situated at the usual venue, a community centre located in the Midlands. There is a gang of youths at the entrance of the building, around 8 of them casually dressed and lingering outside.

Accessing the Unpermitted 'Community Garden'

This chapter has already discussed some ideas about how a community garden should function. A community garden is often seen as a shared patch of land which is open for local residents (Holland 2004; Nettle 2010). One would expect that to contain the word 'community' to describe the space's use, the area would be open to residents in some form; perhaps through informal opening times or periodic events which are situated around the garden (see, e.g., Milbourne 2010). However, with the WG it was noted, in every field observation recording, that access to the community garden was restricted. The observation portion of the investigation often begins with an account describing the lack of movement and interaction with the community garden. It becomes clear how residents and members of the centre were pushed to the front of the community building, away from the garden; a bleak setting which overlooks a disused pub and a somewhat well-trodden, heavily eroded highway.

This discovery reinforces the suggestions, mentioned throughout earlier chapters, how the WG operated the site for personal use; in this case, produce appears to remain restricted and practically inaccessible. A large black fence surrounded the community garden (Fig. 7.2), access could be sought either through a door located at the rear of the centre or an external gate. Observation notes revealed that both entrances were permanently closed, with the door and gate appearing to be locked during community lunches. The space was restricted with access, only granted to those who held the key to the gate or Mon, the only access holder for the community centre.

Fig. 7.2 The black fence, a fruit tree and a raised bed in the community garden (Hardman's photograph)
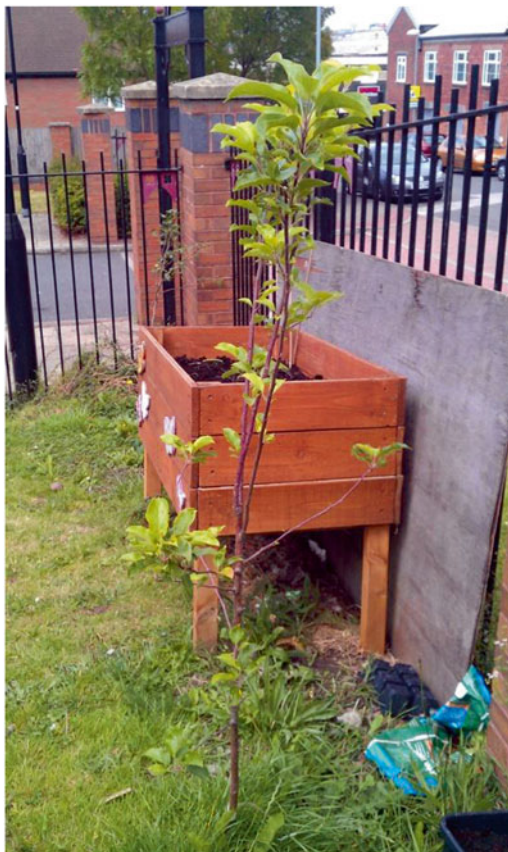
Due to this repetitive observation of the limited access, questions during interviews focussed on who has access to the produce. Each of the WG members stipulated that access was only granted with permission. Nicki explained 'that there are a couple of us who have a key for the gate but generally the gate's not locked anyway. We just make it look locked', this was in order to prevent unwanted people from entering the community garden. Her thoughts were reinforced by other WG members, who provided a strong message regarding who was allowed to access the community garden:

> There's me, Mon and Nikki, we've got keys for the gate, so that we can come in at weekends to water. Me and Nikki mostly, cos we live the closest, not just anyone can come in though its [the community garden] our baby! (Maggie)

> No they [resident] wouldn't be able to go in. If you tried you'd be being watched from upstairs [adjacent tower block]. (Female)

> Well they would have to ask Mon's permission or the women's group. (Sal)

This permission for access hindered residents and prevented the free unsupervised use of the space. WG members continued to specify that produce was not available outside the community lunch; when asked whether produce was freely

accessible any time of the day, Mon responded: 'It doesn't work like that. What we do is we grow for ourselves and whatever surplus we use at community lunch'.

> We had loads of lettuces one year we were giving them away as bingo prizes and everything… a blooming lettuce 'do you want a lettuce, do you want a lettuce, we've got loads of the bloody things'. We were cutting all these fresh lettuces and Mr Singh comes along and we give him a lettuce every couple of days, cos he's got a lettuce fetish. (Mon)

Nevertheless, there was a reason for restricting access: this was to ensure that residents were not injured on the site. There was also a reason for not allowing a 'free for all' outside of the community lunch. Through controlling the space in this way, Mon and her team could ensure the safety of those who benefited from the site. Furthermore, by operating the site like an allotment, the women gained as much yield from the space as possible and, whilst they took produce home themselves, the group were extremely proud of their achievements in encouraging community members to eat the produce too. Mon, above for example, shows how surplus stock was used and freely given to community members. Stock was tightly controlled, hence Mon's rule of not allowing complete access for residents to pick their own outside the community lunch. In terms of impact one could argue that the WG are directly influencing the eating habits of those who surround their site and, in doing so, are transforming the lives of many residents. So, whilst the site is not operated like a 'traditional' community garden, it is arguably having more impact on its community, encouraging teenagers, single mothers, families and the elderly to eat more healthily.

Access in the 'Fast Lane'

Access to F Troop's site was evidently much easier in comparison to the WG and their community garden. The F Troop site was permanently accessible, with the vegetables spread over three plots (Fig. 7.3), thus measuring access purely on the

Fig. 7.3 The publicly accessible F Troop site (Hardman's photograph)

ease to reach the site would not be applicable in this situation. However, the negative issue concerning F Troop's projects was the lack of promotion, primarily regarding the produce cultivated in the space. F Troop failed, for their first operative year, to raise awareness about their grow site. For instance, a car park attendant, who works 7 days a week at the location, explained that he was not aware of the site and had no input into the project, 'I work here Monday to Saturday. I'm here every day, apart from Sunday obviously. I'm here every day and I've not noticed anything of the stuff there being changed or anything' (Car park attendant). On this occasion, whilst F Troop have no option but to allow physical access to the site, which itself appears unintentional, they restricted access on the basis of knowledge; the majority of interviewees who had not witnessed the troop in action were unaware the space had changed.

It became evident, throughout the observations and interviews, that no locals, from those who worked in the car park to those who were customers or own the nearby pub, were able to choose the produce or recommend a suitable planting arrangement for the environment. Throughout the field notes collected, it became evident how F Troop altered the area without any interaction whatsoever with community members. They changed the space without the permission of not only the local authority or planners but also those who interacted with the area on a regular basis, the community surrounding the dig sites. In this instance F Troop, like the WG, prevented access to the site's redesign and new function. Whilst the site itself was accessible, unlike the WG site, the space has been adopted by the troop, interpreted according to their views and opinions of how the area should be ordered. The troop in effect took on the role of the authority which they constantly criticised, arranging the space and adopting the land without consulting the nearby population. One could argue that this is a transition of authority, from the 'council' to a different form of governance, coordinated by F Troop.

This neglect and restrictions on the local population were not unique to F Troop; already explored was how the WG and other guerrilla gardeners have operated in a similar manner (see Crane et al. 2012; Hardman 2009). Chapter 3 of this book discussed more cases when guerrilla gardeners have failed to involve the nearby community with their action. Regardless of the restrictions, one may wonder why locals would require access to a site which harboured produce for symbolic reasons and not consumption. F Troop's restrictions on the community, particularly those that prevent locals from being involved with decision-making process of the project, resulted in the space being used in a manner which the locals did not wholly agree with. For instance, a subsequent interview with the pub landlady revealed how she was interested in producing vegetables for consumption in the area. If F Troop had involved this resident from the beginning, one could argue that, instead of cultivating vegetables for symbolic reasons – demonstrating that produce can be grown in the urban – F Troop may have worked with the landlady, enabling her project to go ahead and *actually* producing food in the city: opportunities were missed due to the lack of communication with those surrounding the sites.

The thought-processes – acknowledging that UA is possible – were already present at the site. The landlady was conscious that food could be grown outside

her pub, yet did not receive any support to pursue the matter, such as simple hints or tips to get started, 'I've got my hanging baskets out and everything and I think it add a nice bit of colour, bit of flowers and that, even tried veg a while ago too' (Landlady). A consultation with the local community may have revealed this requirement and desire from a resident to act on her ambitions to perform UA. One could counter-argue this by questioning whether conscious guerrilla gardeners, such as F Troop, would wish to speak directly with those surrounding the sites, since this interaction could possibly defeat a key objective of guerrilla gardening (McKay 2011). Nevertheless, although extremely speculative, it may have been possible for F Troop to achieve its desired aims if members had felt able to work with this landlady earlier in their action.

The Community's Experience and Their Perception of the Groups

So far this chapter has primarily explored the views from the author's perspective, critically reflecting on the actions of F Troop and the WG with regard to their local communities. The chapter has identified that both troops excluded community members from the planning of their sites, the type of produce cultivated in the space and the access rights for the local community; this was a conscious move by the WG to maximise the site's usage. This particular segment proceeds to investigate the community's views of two UA sites, how much they have been included in action and how easy the produce was to access. Fundamentally, this section provides a basis for investigating the public's reaction to guerrilla gardening and UA in two significantly different forms: the symbolic and radical, as demonstrated by F Troop, and the high-yield, everyday form, as practised by the WG.

Gauging Opinion: The Locals and UA

It appears that those who surround the WG garden shared the view that the community garden was environmentally beneficial and open for everyone; few residents were negative with their comments. When residents, who resided near this particular garden, were asked whether the local grow site was a positive addition to the community, responders answered in a constructive manner: 'Fresh produce…good idea!' (Elderly male); 'She cooks it from the garden you know, it's lovely, it's really nice' (Elderly female); 'You can take them home if you want. We've just used some for cooking' (Middle-aged female). These sample reactions, which reflect the majority of views, suggest that the garden's immediate community was satisfied with the land-use change, from the once everyday grass surface to a set of beds for cultivation.

However, not all of the comments made by the local residents were positive, some of the more 'formalised' conversations revealed the resident's feelings of how

the site could be improved. 'I'd like to see more access' (Male resident 1), 'More access would be good' (Male resident 2). These views concentrated on the lack of access and highlight the need for the community garden to enable wider admission to the local residents. The majority of the unenthusiastic perceptions of the community garden were caught primarily in the informal discussions, with most respondents appearing reluctant to speak in a negative manner during the more formalised interview process.

The views captured in the informal discussion reinforce the comments made by a few of those in the formalised interviews, particularly the issue with access to the site. Some residents felt that they only had a 'window of opportunity' (Female resident 1) to access the space and use the produce. This window was situated in the fortnightly community lunch, when residents, who were unable to choose the produce, supposedly consumed the vegetables in the food served to them. The breakdown of UA-specific observations, in Chap. 5, detailed that the majority of the time produce from the garden was only used in the salad bowl as opposed to the main course and dessert course served at the lunch; this salad bowl emptied relatively quickly and was not refilled.

In a comparable manner, those surrounding the F Troop site had some positive feedback regarding the space, particularly the concept which the group were attempting to push and the idea of local food: 'I was craving peas yesterday and went and brought some frozen ones. If I'd have known that I'd have gone out and picked them' (Landlady); 'Makes the area attractive and it's fed somebody' (Male pub patron 4). The respondents, who provided upbeat feedback, were genuinely intrigued and interested in the concept of urban food cultivation, questioning the researcher whether this practice is further and wider than that demonstrated by F Troop.

However, since F Troop's food arrangement was situated beside a busy dual carriageway, most of those interviewees appeared confused and thought the idea of growing food in such an area was not appropriate. One gentleman in the nearby pub, when asked whether he thought it was a good idea that vegetables were grown in that location bluntly, responded 'No, no no no!' (Male pub patron 8): this was put across in a very aggressive manner, as if the idea was so ridiculous it made the patron angry. When asked to elaborate on his response, the male merely stated that the area was not appropriate and locals would damage the produce, 'I mean how can you put vegetables outside there? Really?' (Male pub patron 8). This individual was not alone in their agitation over the positioning of F Troop's produce: 'Personally myself, I wouldn't think that would be the right area for vegetables' (Male pub patron 1).

These interviews with locals surrounding F Troop's site suggested that they were unconvinced that growing vegetables in this location was appropriate. The area was next to a busy dual carriageway, the residents are aware there is little protection around the food and, due to the radical nature of the site, opted against consuming the vegetables. The form of UA F Troop practised appears to scare and bemuse the majority of the local population; it was clearly a step-too-far for some of the community. On the other hand, since the WG grow space is less radical and appears – arguably – more everyday, the local population in this instance had no pressing

issues. They appeared to feel assured by the fence protecting the vegetation and the raised beds which housed the vegetables. Familiarity (similarity to an allotment site) and control (by the fence and plots) reassured the local population that the vegetables they were eating are safe, whereas with F Troop, the lack of these features appeared to cause concern amongst those who regularly passed the site.

This revelation was not surprising and was somewhat expected. UA is often approached with caution as it heralds a significant shift in the way food is cultivated (Angotti 2013; Komisar et al. 2009; Gorgolewski et al. 2011). Whilst city-based community gardens and less radical versions of UA do not evoke shock, the more drastic examples – such as F Troop's plots – occasionally startle the public (Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). The growing of crops in cities is still treated as alien in the UK, with the urban population usually unfamiliar with food growing in such a setting (Viljoen et al. 2005; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012). The findings here, particularly the comments regarding F Troop's site, reinforce these suggestions: the more far-reaching versions of UA cause confusion, and in this case, anger, with a few of the pub patrons reacting aggressively to the idea that vegetables were grown in such a place.

Impact on Eating Habits: Complying with the Philosophy of UA

It is evident that one can quite instantly appreciate the brave and somewhat admirable action of the two guerrilla troops. Their desire to alter space, without permission, and practise UA is unquestionably impressive at first glance. One of the core ambitions for any UA project is to impact on the eating habits of those who surround the site (Wright 2012): from relatively unknown small projects, such as Edible Eastside in Birmingham, to large extravagant displays of UA, such as the famous rooftop gardens in New York City, all aim to grow produce which will benefit those in the nearby area (Edible Eastside 2011; Gorgolewski et al. 2011). This correlates with an argument featured in the previous chapter by Caputo (2012) who stipulates that UA projects should produce sufficient yield to impact on the eating habits of the local populace.

Whilst previous chapters have hinted at the impact on eating habits of F Troop and the WG's UA action, the research has not yet fully explored the local population's responses to the site and their own opinions on whether the guerrilla activity has affected their intake of vegetables and fruit. Evidently, it is already clear how the WG, unlike F Troop, directly attempt to impact on their community's eating habits. It became clear that Mon repeatedly encouraged residents and other attendees to choose healthier meal options.

With regard to F Troop, one may presume instantly that because the produce was cultivated for symbolic reasons, demonstrating the possibilities for UA in the Midlands, obviously the eating habits of those who surround the site remain the same. The previous chapters have already alluded to the idea that F Troop's site, unlike the community garden, was not used for its crops, with the produce sometimes going unnoticed. However, it must be noted that edible produce was never the

intention, with the site initially designed by the group to highlight the possibility of harvesting vegetables in the urban environment; the peas, spinach and edible flowers were symbols of what could be possible, even in the harsh soil and surroundings in which they grew. They were never meant to be eaten by the locals, and conscious efforts were made, by Sarah and Anna, to ensure this did not happen.

Remarkably, it became clear, during the interviews with the community, how the UA exhibited by F Troop has impacted, quite dramatically, on some locals. The landlady of the pub was an illustration of this success: although F Troop failed to include her in any consultation over the site, their efforts at the location eventually prompted the landlady to revisit her ambition of growing vegetables near to her pub, 'we were having a conversation yesterday we was saying like 'ooo dig it over and put some spuds in" (Landlady). This desire to cultivate crops locally constantly reappeared in subsequent interviews, which were often temporarily interrupted by the landlady, who consistently voiced her wish to purchase grow bags, build raised beds and use the hanging baskets outside her establishment more effectively.

In this instance, F Troop accomplished their initial target of promoting the ideology of UA. Their actions have resulted in the landlady attempted to press forward her own plans to produce food in the environment. The landlady's produce is intended to be used in pub salads and for patrons to freely pick when they visit her establishment. However, this success was only achieved a year following the start of F Troop's action on the land. This occurrence was also accidental; they did not realise the pub patrons knew about the vegetables nor did they realise that the patrons were interested in working on the land.

> If they were interested in doing more vegetables around there I'd work with them. You see I wouldn't work with the local council, but I would work with the pub. I'd work with the people in the pub and help them do it. (Sarah)

Once Sarah realised the success of her troop's actions and their impact on the community, her aim was to provide support to the landlady; working with the pub in a partnership to use the land more effectively. Whilst this has not yet been realised, it provides evidence to suggest that the troop could shift their ideals from the guerrilla-submerged activity to a more inclusive form of action which involves portions of the local community. This again correlates with thoughts regarding the transition of some guerrilla troops to more acceptable and ethical operating procedures; in essence this could be seen as an example of F Troop legitimising their action in order to grow the project further and have deeper UA impact on the area (Reynolds 2008).

Who Benefits from the UA? Summarising the Impact of the Guerrilla Action

The revelations throughout this chapter, and previous sections, highlight both the positive and sometimes negative implications of adopting an unregulated, guerrilla approach to UA. Over the prolonged observation of these two groups, it became

evident that not all was as it first appeared. Through this study, it has been possible to 'dig deeper' and suggest the impact both sites have on their respective communities. The WG, for instance, claimed to widen access, increase the resident's intake of healthy produce and provide the community with a green space to be proud of, 'well, it's nice to look at, better than looking at just a plain piece of grass' (Toni). In reality the site was predominantly occupied by the WG members, few had access and the community garden was treated as a private allotment space: yet this was a decision taken to maximise the value of the space, with the women involving the nearby residents in other ways. We argue that this approach ensured that the WG were able to fulfil their target of impacting on individuals' eating habits. In a similar manner, whilst F Troop ended up encouraging others to pursue UA, initially they excluded their community members based on knowledge; those who do not witness the group practising were unaware of their existence and their message regarding UA.

This chapter has revealed the less glamorous side of guerrilla gardening. Yet it has also demonstrated the significant impact guerrilla gardening can have on the lives of those surrounding the sites, from improving eating habits to getting locals to think outside the box and practise UA. In both instances, whilst there have been a few negatives with how the action has been approached, they have both shown the potential for unregulated action, particularly how something so small can have wider impacts on an area.

The Community Garden: Exploring the Way Forward

In the case of the WG's community garden, consultation and collaboration are eradicated in favour of an oligarchy system (Born and Purcell 2009). In this instance, devolution to the local scale has resulted in negative impacts on the nearby community; the decision-making process was controlled and entirely operated by the WG, who disregarded the local population's perspective and pursued a course of UA without their consent or knowledge. In this context, it appears that the unregulated community garden development and local control stance by the WG was not the appropriate option for the surrounding residents; it excluded the community members from the decision-making process and created an exclusive structure solely around the WG members.

A 'top-down' approach, with the local authority in control, may pose a better option: Purcell (2006) argues that, in some instances, it may be appropriate for authority to impose such a system. However, in the case of the WG, who did not allow access or individuals to obtain produce from the garden, an approach incorporating the local authority would surely permit more use of the site by the local population. A 'top-down' official, legitimised approach could establish opening times for the garden, allowing resident access to the fresh produce. This approach would also improve the safety aspects of the site, ensuring produce is sourced in an appropriate manner and a risk assessment of the sloped garden would be carried out.

This approach has been considered previously, with the November 2011 field notes indicating that Mon, the WG leader, had future plans regarding who makes decisions over the site, with the possibility of a 'top-down' approach being employed. She felt that the residents were 'power obsessed' and the decision-making authority should lie with a committee of 'influential people' (Mon). This committee would oversee not only the community garden and lunch, but it would also manage the funding generated by these activities, supervising the distribution of this subsidy and ultimately controlling the affairs of the community centre as a whole.

Mon stipulated that her role in this committee would be that of a liaison between the WG and the chair person, with the real power lying with the 'advisory committee'. She explained that this advisory committee would coordinate the affairs of the WG, the centre's activities and the community garden; if there was a shortfall in funding, the advisory committee would become a 'management group', operating the finances of both the centre and garden. Evidently, this transition would involve the community centre and the community garden's affairs aligning; one could only ponder the outcome of merging an authority-owned centre with an authority green space which has been transformed without permission, through guerrilla gardening.

Whilst this chapter has been rather critical with regard to the WG's action, it must be noted that efforts were made to get more people involved in the community garden. Mon's original idea was highly ambitious and due to her perseverance, and that of other members, the garden was established. Whilst there may be some 'teething problems', plans for the future involve widening participation and expanding the group's action: attempting to source as much produce from the space as possible for the local residents.

Dual-Carriageway UA: Future Development

In a similar manner to that of the WG site, F Troop's action, although initially appealing and admirable, failed to involve the community in the decision-making process. The site was a creation purely of F Troop; from the positioning of the flowers to how the vegetables were planted, F Troop made all of the crucial judgments. The troop bypassed legislation and the correct channels to create a site for personal use. It becomes immediately evident that the vegetables cultivated by F Troop were of no use to the local community. The soil in which the vegetables were cultivated remained untested, presenting a potential danger to passers-by who may have recognised the vegetation and attempt to pick some for personal consumption (see Cook et al. 2005). The troop only acknowledged this danger a year following the first dig.

The location of the vegetables also appeared to create confusion amongst those who lived nearby and had not encountered the concept of UA. This chapter has already established that hesitation surrounded the location of the vegetables, with

some pub patrons questioning why the produce was cultivated in the city centre. Chapter 2 demonstrated how this bemusement is not new; UA is a relatively new practise in the UK; thus, the more innovative or bizarre versions of this act often confuse those who have not previously encountered the concept (Cohen 2010; Mohammed and Rajput 2007). Fundamentally, however, F Troop failed to explain to these individuals why the vegetables were in this area: their message was lost and the confusion was enhanced without this dialogue between the troop and the community.

One could argue that instead of symbolically cultivating vegetables, F Troop may have worked closer with the pub landlady to establish the raised beds she wishes to construct, putting their efforts to better use and involving the community from the outset. This alternative course of action, which was not pursued, highlights the disconnection between F Troop and the local community, particularly how the landlady's ambition of producing crops near her pub was only realised a full calendar year following the troop's initial dig on the site. This lack of community inclusion, and personal use of the site, echoes the situation which was present at the WG community garden. F Troop, like the WG, operated an oligarchy system (Purcell 2006; Born and Purcell 2006, 2009), in effect, using the site for their own personal gains and claiming all of the credit for its transformation. Their original claims, that the space was transformed to make a positive impact on the community, are distant from the reality of the present day site.

Nevertheless, Fig. 7.4 shows how both F Troop and the WG have created spaces of beauty; with F Troop this was only temporary, due to their disconnect from the environment. One cannot argue, especially with F Troop, how they have transformed the space into a haven for vegetables and flowers, at least for a short while. The negative argument, however, derives from the appropriateness of the vegetation in both contexts and how the space was operated, with both groups growing vegetables that were perhaps not suited to the spaces in which they were grown: F Troop and their unsustainable produce (spinach and peas) or the WG with their attempts to grow as much as humanly possible.

Fig. 7.4 The most recent images of the two group's sites, F Troop's phase five *left* (2012) and the WG's community garden *right* (2012) (Hardman's photographs)

Concluding Remarks: The Emergence of a 'Guerrilla Trap'

We have a 'strong tendency to assume that the local is more democratic than other scales' (Purcell 2006: 1926); the two case studies explored in this chapter demonstrate the dangers of harbouring this assumption, especially with regard to guerrilla gardening. The case studies illuminate an area not previously explored: the murky waters of unregulated UA activists or guerrilla gardeners. In both instances, the groups have restricted access and neglected the community, traits which are arguably found in other guerrilla troops across the country (Hardman et al. 2012). This revelation also reinforces the primary message of the local trap, in essence that not all types of localised food production have positive impacts (Marsden 2008). In this case, the two case studies reveal that Purcell's concept is pertinent not only with legitimate, authorised food sites but also for the unpermitted developments that may initially strive to bypass legislation and involve the community. In both instances, this chapter reveals the self-centred nature of the sites, with the WG creating, in essence, an allotment space, whilst F Troop created a corridor based on their own interpretations of how the area should be used.

However the research, especially in relation to the WG, highlights the potential of this form of local-level governance. Mon and her fellow members evidently provide a valuable service to the community, predominantly through their fortnightly community lunch and related events. Although they fail to manage the community garden effectively, the group is able to create a social event, which is valued by the community, surrounding the notion of food. They promote healthy eating and attempt, in some part, to include produce from the garden during the lunch. In this case, the WG begins to make, as Purcell suggests, 'a positive case for preferring the local scale' (Purcell 2006: 1924).

The WG's naivety could be blamed for the poor management of the community garden. The group has not managed a space like the community garden before nor has the group investigated 'best practice' and other examples of how these spaces are governed. Community garden advisory bodies (see Community Land Advisory Service; FCFCG) mentioned earlier in this chapter direct groups on how to effectively manage the areas within the UK. One could argue that if the WG was to receive guidance from a group, then their operating policies may alter, transitioning the space into a haven for the community. It becomes evident how the WG has a solid platform to work upon: they bring together residents from a variety of cultures during their lunches, and the community garden has the potential to supply this lunch with more produce. With the correct training and knowledge, the WG could operate the community garden in a more effective manner whilst still retaining local control (see for instance Milbourne 2010). This would in essence form a type of quasi mixture of top-down and local control over the community site. Evidently, before any of this could be completed, it would be necessary for the WG to achieve retrospective planning permission for the alteration of the space, the addition of furniture and creation of small tool sheds on the landscape. This is a difficult process, with authorities often reluctant to provide permission on retrospective grounds

(Scott 2001). Yet, due to the approach already adopted by the WG, seeking to work with another advisory body, this would be a requirement (FCFCG, *circa* 2005).

With regard to F Troop, whose members are the closest to Reynolds' image of a guerrilla gardener, there is also evidence to suggest that potential exists for promoting the activity which they demonstrate on the three dig sites. Essentially, F Troop, like the WG, is a group of volunteers who spend time regenerating neglected authority-owned land. Whilst their current practices are perhaps too radical and unsustainable, the time and energy they provide to rejuvenate forgotten land is a resource which, if made available, could be utilised in a more efficient manner. It became clear, in the previous chapter, how members are reluctant to embrace Cameron's 'Big Society' ideal, which may prevent the troop from ever interacting with authority.

Nevertheless, at this present moment, both of the groups have decided to skip the 'usual steps' (planning permission and authority support) and, instead, they have relied on their own instincts to manage the space. This unguided self-supported management style has, in both instances, mostly failed the group's local communities. This chapter has exposed the dangers with the assumption that guerrilla gardening is beneficial and an activity which needs to be encouraged. In a similar manner to Purcell's local trap, a 'guerrilla trap' has been exposed during this research: one automatically presumes that guerrilla gardening should be encouraged, but in reality, the activity, like some forms of local-level food cultivation, can result in a negative impact.

This research has mentioned several times the persistence nature of authors to describe guerrilla gardening as a revolutionary act which should be encouraged (see Chap. 2). Whilst this research only provides a glimpse into guerrilla gardening, the approach taken, which involves the investigation of a Reynolds-influenced group and non-Reynolds group (McKay 2011), suggests that the activity has flaws: one should not automatically assume that guerrilla gardening, like local food projects, provides positive outcomes for those who surround the sites.

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Chapter 8
Guerrilla Gardeners, Urban Agriculture, Food and the Future

Abstract   In this summary chapter, we revisit the key messages and tease out some themes for further research. Whilst the book covers a variety of themes, we highlight those we see as most important: ranging from why groups may pursue guerrilla gardening to the darker side of the activity. In doing so, we emphasise where we feel the core outputs of this book sit and how it could add value to debates around guerrilla gardening activity. This summary chapter first reviews the case studies, before using them as a springboard for wider debates around guerrilla urban agriculture. The chapter also includes a reflection on our methodological approach, which we argue that it can be replicated to gather more data around guerrilla gardening practices, enabling researchers to be integrated with the activity, yet provide an objective view of the action and its impact. Finally, we reflect on the wider relevance of this text in the context of urban agriculture and call for more research on this topic.

This book has journeyed with several guerrilla gardening groups which practiced two forms of urban agriculture (UA). The groups differed significantly in terms of the crops cultivated, the type of unregulated approach adopted and the spaces in which the UA was performed. The first few chapters set the scene, with an overview of UA and then an exploration of informal activities. We then proceeded to delve further into case studies collated during a piece of ethnographic-informed research, before probing their practices in latter chapters. In doing so, we hoped to present a unique perspective on the activity: something of a halfway house between Reynolds's text and McKay's overview.

Reflecting on the Case Studies

As we have mentioned previously, this book focuses quite explicitly on the case studies. The reasoning behind this is to engage with the activities of some guerrilla gardeners on the ground, providing the reader with a flavour of the action and an idea of the spectrum of groups/individuals involved in the activity. In this first section, we will summarise the key messages from these case studies and then reflect more on guerrilla practice as a whole.

Revolting Against Authority

Perhaps the first significant issue arising during the research was the role played by perception and its impact on groups adopting a guerrilla gardening approach. In several cases we have discussed, previous interactions with authority resulted in the groups deliberately adopting this guerrilla route to propel the idea and practice of UA. The groups portrayed in this book perceived the authority, and in particular the planning system, to be a negative entity which should be avoided. In particular, Chap. 5 demonstrates the guerrillas' views toward adopting a legal route and their many reasons for pursuing unregulated UA.

In the case of F Troop, members argued that working with officials would render them liable to be incorporated into the often neoliberal agendas of authorities. This clash correlates with the narratives provided by Holland (2004), Milbourne (2010, 2011), Pudup (2008) and others, all of which demonstrate the reluctance, in many cases, of gardening activists to engage with authorities pursuing these agendas. The research also demonstrates how group members were wary of new political concepts, such as the Big Society, which they felt would jeopardise the activity if a legal route was adopted.

In the context of the WG, members felt that current politics within the local authority would see the site transformed: with those in power taking the lead and deciding on how the community garden should go forward. They were less reluctant to engage with authority, but used guerrilla gardening as a mechanism through which to hasten progress and make change immediately. Finally, with the solo guerrilla gardener, it appeared that her attempts to take the official route, and constant encounters with barriers, pushed her to adopt guerrilla gardening.

It must be noted again that perception of authority, and current political rhetoric, plays only one part in both of the groups' reasons for adopting guerrilla gardening. To a large extent the pursuit of the 'thrill' element drives F Troop's action: this opportunity to disobey and retaliate is a pull for some guerrilla gardeners (Crane et al. 2012; Reynolds 2008). The need for this thrill again aligns F Troop with other urban practices which disobey authority and use the environment for pleasure (Adams and Hardman 2014): skateboarders, graffiti artists and free runners are very similar to these guerrilla gardeners in this sense. Inevitably, this quest for a 'naughty activity' is unlikely to be viewed favourably by any legitimate authorities and this presents a major challenge if guerrilla groups, like F Troop, were ever to legitimise.

This research suggests, in support of McKay (2011), that there is a divide between those who pursue Reynolds's philosophy of guerrilla gardening and those who are located outside this more militarised form of the activity. It will be more difficult to interact with the former, who may only be willing to embrace authority if directly approached or if their project grows to a significant level (Reynolds 2008). On the other hand, the less radical guerrilla projects, such as the WG's community garden or the solo guerrilla, would gladly engage with the wider authority if funds and attractive propositions were to be offered, and such offers would probably need to allow the group to retain some direct control over the space.

Inevitably, more research is required into this area to examine whether such a significant divide between guerrilla gardeners exists elsewhere: are there more 'unconscious' guerrillas, for example, or troops pursuing the activity primarily for thrills? A wider body of knowledge would enable a clearer picture of why guerrilla gardeners adopt this form of action, instead of working alongside authorities in order to obtain permission for creating and managing the sites with the support of other organisations. Future research may wish to adopt a similar approach to ours, or that of Crane et al. (2012) and Zanetti (2007), which enables researchers to engage with guerrilla gardeners on an intimate level. In doing so, they may be able to delve a little deeper and realise, like ourselves, that guerrilla gardening is perhaps more widespread and varied than initially perceived.

Contradicting Opinion: Avoiding the 'Guerrilla Trap'

Fundamentally, this research challenges the prevailing notion that guerrilla gardening should be encouraged or viewed in a purely positive light. Prominent, well-cited, guerrilla gardening literature, such as that by Flores (2006), Hou (2010), McKay (2011), Reynolds (2008) and Tracey (2007), fails to give sufficient weight to identifying and exploring the negative aspects of the act. Moreover, these texts are frequently used by other authors in an attempt to reinforce the idea that guerrilla gardening is a possible avenue for introducing crops into the city fabric (see, e.g., Astyk and Newton 2009; Elliot 2010; Lewis 2012; Pudup 2008; Winnie 2010 and others). Our detailed case studies suggest the significant limitations that can be encountered.

The evidence revealed, predominantly in Chap. 6, demonstrates the need to step back and assess the nature and extent of the impacts of guerrilla gardening on the nearby environment. A lens, the 'local trap', was used to ensure that the research adopted a critical perspective on the guerrilla gardeners' actions. In a similar manner to Purcell's (2006) formulation of the local trap, a 'guerrilla trap' appeared here: the unquestioning promotion of the activity by academics and nonacademics. Arguably, the interventions of both groups depicted in this research improve the visual/aesthetic aspect of the spaces in which they are situated. However, in both instances, the guerrillas have colonised land without prior notification and transformed it according to their own values. Whilst F Troop introduces unsustainable vegetation into a harsh environment, the WG transforms a patch of grass once used by the local children. Worryingly this practice of transforming land without consultation is not limited to these two groups: there are many examples when guerrilla gardeners have changed land – sometimes drastically – under the cover of darkness (Crane et al. 2012; Johnson 2011; McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008; Zanetti 2007). In a similar manner to the groups featured in this book, these modifications have occurred without either community or authority knowledge.

Understandably, this research only provides a snapshot into the operations of guerrilla gardeners, mainly due to limitations on its duration and scope

(cf. Seale 2004). Yet it highlights the potential harm, both to the environment and surrounding community, which guerrillas can unknowingly (or knowingly) inflict. Fundamentally, this work challenges the often heroic persona of this grass-roots movement and brings to the surface some dangers of unregulated UA. This research is crucial here, since some claim that the activity is growing, with the movement expanding rapidly across the world, primarily due to the popularity of social networks (Bennett and Moss 2010; Harutyunyan et al. 2009; Reynolds 2008). If this claim is accurate, then perhaps more unsustainable and intrusive practices could be happening not just under the noses of authority but also the communities which surround these informal sites.

Guerrilla gardeners are often viewed as positive enablers who transform space, for the better, without authority involvement (Johnson 2011; Lewis 2012; Tracey 2007, 2011). Taking this further, Metcalf and Widener (2011) argue that guerrilla gardening should be encouraged to transform neglected spaces; this could bring the benefit of increasing the quality of life and property prices by beautifying landscapes and impacting on the communities through UA. It becomes evident that this idea of the heroic figure of a guerrilla continues today, with recent authors still insisting – seemingly without much understanding of the issue – that these rebellious volunteers should be encouraged to transform more land. In each case, the guerrilla gardener is portrayed as a heroic grass-roots volunteer taking action into their own hands.

The observations undertaken during this research also challenge this perception that guerrilla gardeners are of a particular breed; agreeing with Reynolds's comments regarding the diverse nature of the act. Yet this study takes the idea a step further, by arguing that the WG, a collection of residents who tend the community garden, can be considered to be guerrilla gardeners. At first sight, the WG does not appear to conform to the rebellious nature of guerrilla gardeners. This leap in characterising a guerrilla gardener correlates well with McKay (2011), who stated that a guerrilla can be anyone of any age and background. Furthermore, McKay feels that there are guerrilla gardeners who lean towards the *guerrilla* aspect and those who lean more towards the *gardening* activity. This research provides an example of these two forms of guerrilla gardening: F Troop pursuing the act for thrills and the WG opting to create the community garden in this manner due to its ambition to plant crops. Whilst only a small portion of F Troop has this desire for UA, the WG comprises individuals who wish to spend more time in the garden alongside the vegetables and fruit: increasing their access to free, fresh produce. Inevitably, the divisions between guerrillas are considerably more complex than McKay states, with crossovers and multifaceted objectives emerging.

In this book, we suggest that there is a guerrilla trap and that future research should adopt a stance which provides a more holistic, honest recording and review of this unregulated action. It has already been stated that many authors tend to call for encouragement of grass-roots actions, from Bennett and Moss (2010) who call for this shift in order to move away from the damaged modern agricultural system to more recently Crane et al. (2012) who provide a somewhat one-sided perspective of the activity. In a similar manner to Purcell's local trap, the acceptance of a

guerrilla trap would help researchers to become more aware of the occasionally negative actions performed by guerrilla gardeners. In the context of this research, Purcell's ideas have promoted more conceptualisation of unregulated UA and have revealed this negative, somewhat hidden, side of guerrilla gardeners.

It must be noted that we are not arguing that all guerrilla gardeners damage land. Far from it, we just urge researchers to be mindful, when interacting with these groups, that objectivity is key. In the context of UA, guerrilla gardeners often transform neglected spaces into wonderful havens for produce, decorative plants and wildlife. This is reinforced by the likes of Milbourne (2011) and IET (2011), who demonstrate the positive impact guerrilla activity can have in our villages, towns and cities.

Key Points from the Case Studies

This research looks beyond the 'iron curtain' which cloaks the actions of those involved in unpermitted UA. It demonstrates the lengths to which individuals, and groups, will pursue the UA concept, avoiding authority in the process. This study not only adds to debates surrounding food in the city but provides empirical evidence on what could be termed 'rebellious' groups operating with the urban environment, producing spaces which are inherently 'out of place' (Creswell 1996; Pudup 2008). This exploration adds to the evolving knowledge base of submerged activities occurring within the urban and therefore provides more information on such secretive acts (Douglas 2011; Melucci 1996).

The extended observation during this research demonstrates that, as with certain instances of legitimate food projects, these unregulated sites can sometimes limit access and essentially privatise public space. This was particularly apparent with the WG, whose members created an allotment space and used the term 'community garden' to cloak their real intentions. Produce from this site was primarily used by the WG, whilst leftovers were sent forward for the community lunch: but first and foremost the site was an allotment space, intended for private cultivation and consumption. Public land owned by the local authority, intended for the community, was transformed from an accessible space to a restricted space. To an extent, there are similarities with the activities of the solo guerrilla gardener, who experienced hostility from her neighbour due to a lack of communication and his perception that she was privatising public land.

In the context of F Troop, this group's site was adorned with vegetables and flowers. The observations highlighted the nature of the group, in terms of discussing activities in small collectives and excluding any interested parties from understanding what was happening with the site. The pursuit of UA was predominantly a personal objective of the leader of the troop who, due to the lack of communication with the nearby populace, did not realise the related ambitions of the pub landlady, who wished to cultivate produce near the pub, in raised beds, to supplement the food served in her establishment. Subsequently, the observation approach revealed details

of the two guerrilla groups which, arguably, would have remained undetected if other research techniques were used (cf. Barker 2008; Haviland et al. 2010; Malinowski 1978). These observation-related revelations range from the general practice of the guerrilla groups (staged approach to UA) to the more complex account of their blunt view of authority: Cameron's 'Big Society' was a particularly problematic subject with F Troop, for instance.

The Methodological Approach: An Adaptable Set of Techniques

The wider relevance of this research is not isolated to the topics investigated, such as guerrilla gardening and UA, but the approach underpinning the data collection demonstrates a strategy which can be replicated in a variety of studies. We explored an unusual ordering of techniques in order to draw out as much information as possible from a complex and ever-evolving setting: providing a set pattern for the collection and a detailed analysis of the ethical implications of research intending to interact with what were, implicitly or explicitly, illegal activities. The latter is important here, as many studies – especially ethnographic – show little regard for the researcher's position when interacting with potentially illegal groups (see, for instance, Crane 2011; Crane et al. 2012; Patrick 1973; Whyte 1955; Zanetti 2007).

In the context of the themes touched upon throughout this book, the observation technique employed could be utilised in other research which focuses on UA and local food systems. To date, there are few studies which explore UA projects through ethnography (see, for instance, Milbourne 2011; Tomkins 2012); there are even fewer which observe urban illegal food growers (Crane et al. 2012; Zanetti 2007). What we uncovered about the guerrilla gardeners was only achieved through employing this prolonged observation of the groups. Arguably, some of the points discovered via this technique may be apparent in other UA schemes, even those which work with authority: issues of access and the misuse of space are bound to appear in legitimate urban food projects. Primarily, we highlight the need to consider observation for UA research. We call for more researchers to provide detailed notes on urban food projects, instead of the general practice of quick, sometimes one-off, visits which do not provide the whole story about these projects (Tomkins 2012).

UA and the Public: Perceptions of Urban Food Growing

In its most fundamental form, we attempted to make this a pioneering study into informal UA within the UK context. Whilst there is an ever-growing body of evidence on food in the city, relatively little research has been conducted outside North America and other UA 'hotspots' (see, for instance, Cobb 2011; Gorgolewski et al. 2011). This study has provided a review of two significantly different forms of UA: the radical (F Troop) and the everyday (WG and the solo guerrilla).

In terms of the urban food growing specifically, this research reveals the hesitancy, from locals, relating to more radical forms of UA: primarily F Troop's displays alongside the dual carriageway. Yet it also demonstrates an acceptance of more everyday forms of urban grow spaces, in this instance the WG community garden, which was generally positively received by the surrounding residents due to its less radical features. These points correlate well with literature concerning how the populace perceive these spaces: more radical forms are treated with caution, whilst spaces which the everyday person can relate to are usually viewed in a more approachable manner (Gorgolewski et al. 2011; Viljoen et al. 2005; Wiskerke and Viljoen 2012).

Whilst other countries, such as Canada and the USA, have embraced more radical forms of UA (Toronto Food Policy Council 1999; Johnson 2011; Komisar et al. 2009), the thoughts conveyed by the local communities in this study suggest that community gardens and other less drastic forms of UA would be more acceptable in the UK context. However, these comments only provide a glimpse into how the public might react to UA projects; it was not the intention of this book to provide a comprehensive analysis of the acceptance, or rejection, of UA systems. Nevertheless, the two communities' views of the unregulated projects demonstrate the need for UA to form part of the everyday urban experience, perhaps especially in less affluent communities, such as those featured in this study.

It is also relevant to realise that current European, national and local policy also favours the more 'everyday' forms of UA. Vejre (2012) noted that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) does not take the UA concept into account, seeing agriculture as very much a rural activity. In order for future policy to change, it may have to do so gradually, with more everyday schemes adopted first (Vejre 2012). This is echoed by Wiskerke and Viljoen (2012) who feel that less radical forms of UA will be embraced first, with perhaps the relevant authorities, and communities, accepting more innovative forms as time progresses. The various food policies featured in Chap. 2 reinforce these views, with each holding community gardens, and farms, high on their list of projects to be encouraged in the city context (DEFRA 2010; FAO 2009; London Food 2006; Marsden 2010). Temporary developments are also promoted through these strategies, with authorities encouraged to seize on the opportunity to use stalled spaces (Greenspace Scotland 2010; Scott et al. 2013).

Future Research: Observing Guerrillas in the Wild

The use of observation techniques to explore the hidden world of guerrilla UA results in the identification of more questions than answers. Fundamentally, this work suggests that guerrilla gardening can be harmful, both to the environment and surrounding community of their sites. It also suggests that some guerrilla gardeners will continue to avoid obtaining planning permission for their UA action and instead pursue the unregulated route until they decline – in some cases altering environments significantly. With this in mind and considering the movement is felt to be rapidly growing (Flores 2006; Hou 2010; McKay 2011; Reynolds 2008; Tracey 2007), more research is required to reveal the nature of the guerrilla projects. Furthermore, it

seems advisable to us that such research should adopt an approach which would allow a significant and dispassionate analysis of the guerrilla gardeners' actions and motivations, as opposed to most research to date, which seems to have largely focused on the guerrilla perspective, through the use of interviews and questionnaires.

We also suggest that guerrilla gardening is more 'hidden' than initially thought, with some groups, such as F Troop, using other social networking sites and avoiding Reynolds's forum. The inclusion of organisations such as the WG also suggests that there are unconscious guerrilla gardeners operating on everyday sites without permission. Inevitably, this shift from a central forum, and the realisation that some guerrilla gardeners operate outside the network, creates a dilemma for any future research: merely contacting these groups via Reynolds's forum is no longer sufficient. Instead, more comprehensive networking, both verbally and remotely, is necessary to gain admission to guerrilla gardeners. An open-minded approach is required when attempting to liaise with guerrilla groups for research purposes: it could be, for example, that one is operating much closer to home than initially thought, as this research demonstrated was the case with the WG.

There are many different angles for future research projects, particularly if one takes forward some of the new issues we have identified here: from testing the soil at unregulated guerrilla sites and evaluating the edibility of the produce to further investigating the roles of the guerrilla gardeners (e.g., in terms of geographies of gender) or focussing specifically on the deprived communities in which they act (see, for instance, Milbourne's (2011) work and associated papers on gardening in less affluent communities). Perhaps the most notable potential focus for any further research, and intentionally omitted from our own work, is the absence of an authority voice: whilst a range of documents and third-party views were considered, local authorities themselves were not consulted. Chapter 5 highlighted why this was deliberately the case. In other contexts, with different guerrilla gardeners less connected with the local authority, it may be possible to liaise with these practitioners. A strategy would need to be employed which would not reveal the precise location of a guerrilla gardening site, yet be sufficiently detailed to allow an idea about the development and to identify, and explore the impact of, appropriate regulations within that specific locale.

Evidently, in each case researchers should carefully adopt an ethical approach which will protect the guerrillas, themselves and their institutions. This is a priority since exposure, or incorrect research practice, could have serious implications for those involved. One must remember that interacting with guerrilla gardeners, on a meaningful level, will require large sacrifices and long amounts of time in the field: embedding one's self with the troop to fully understand their actions.

The Wider Relevance of This Book

Whilst we have focused upon two case studies for much of this text, with the occasional appearance of a third in the form of the solo guerrilla gardener, we now wish to reflect on how this builds on the wider field of UA research. The foregoing

sections hint at the wider relevance of this work, from the methodological approach to the idea that some forms of UA are less tolerable to members of the public. Yet we wish to conclude this book by moving away from the case studies and reviewing guerrilla UA more broadly.

On a much wider level, we believe that this study shows the determination of some, even in the Global North, to pursue UA, despite the lack of support through official channels. This echoes elements of the literature exploring the UA scene in the Global South, which mentioned how many are practising the activity without permission; of particular note were the African case studies, which showed how many were pursuing the unregulated path to produce crops for survival (see Chipungu et al. 2014; Lynch et al. 2013 and others). One could wonder, if we take Reynolds's (2008) wide view of guerrilla gardening, whether these actors in Africa could be guerrillas too. Whilst there is little reflection on guerrilla gardeners who practise UA in the Global North, there is even less in the Global South context: from South America to Africa and beyond, academic material is severely lacking. Apart from the odd mention of the practice being seen as unregulated, there is a significant need for more studies to uncover the exact impact of these actions, especially since unregulated UA practices are so widespread on the African continent.

Reverting back to the Global North, we demonstrate how UA is still viewed as somewhat alien by local authorities and other key actors, with those wishing to pursue the activity also unclear as to which channels they should pursue to gain permissions. The perception of planners, who are usually viewed as gatekeepers to land, is fuzzy from those we liaised with during this study. On numerous occasions, those wishing to practise UA did not understand the role of a planner and appeared to blame them for their lack of enabling. Politics, previous experiences and other issues were also viewed as reasons why some did not pursue a more official route for their UA activities. There is also confusion with regard to land owners generally, with those wishing to pursue UA lacking awareness about who to speak with and how to approach organisations or individuals.

In terms of general UA, the text also highlights the hesitancy of some members of society to adopt the practice. In this case, since the practice is still emerging in the UK, the public are not all ready for agriculture to appear in the city context: the idea of growing vegetables in the heart of a 'concrete jungle' is not viewed as appropriate by some. These thoughts were mainly raised during the interviews with those who surrounded F Troop's guerrilla site, with pub patrons showing disgust at the very idea of planting vegetables in such an area. Whilst this is obviously a radical example, evidence from the likes of Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET) and other schemes demonstrate how some are perplexed with the idea of UA.

Yet our study also shows how some are extremely passionate about the very idea of UA. This passion pushes these individuals to adopt a practice which is not officially backed nor endorsed by authority. In turn, this suggests that there is equally a collection of fervent individuals who wish to pursue UA; this is reinforced if one realises the sharp rise in bodies established to start such projects across the UK, from the Soil Association's 'Food Cities' programme to the national Big Dig events and the many local groups which have now sprung up; UA is on the increase

(Hardman and Larkham 2014). Most cities now operate some form of food-growing scheme in the city, often encouraged by movements in other countries, such as North America and beyond.

However, we do suggest that community gardens and allotments are more approachable than more revolutionary forms of UA. Whilst our exploration has predominantly focussed on guerrilla gardening, the text has also inadvertently investigated different forms of UA; responses from communities around the community garden, which was protected via a fence, demonstrated how they felt more relaxing about eating the food grown in this space. Contrary to this, views from those near to the more radical sites, such as the vegetables grown within the heart of a city centre, shows how they were less relaxed about consuming produce from this space. Whilst this study did not set out to gather perceptions about different UA practices, through the approach taken one can gain a glimpse into how the public may react to more radical versions of the activity.

Overall, this text has provided a glimpse behind those who practice guerrilla gardening: focussing explicitly on those who cultivate land and pursue the idea of UA. More research is certainly needed on the themes covered in this book to provide more details on the fascinating lives of these groups and individuals. Planners, sociologists and a whole host of other disciplines need to pay more attention to this under-researched activity, which is flourishing. There is also a need for local authorities to research those who engage in this activity, with the potential of somehow enticing guerrillas to move over to the more formal side, attracting an army of volunteers who are willing to make cities and towns more beautiful and productive.

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