

Urban Gardening in Shaping a Creative City

*Motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners in
Amsterdam's Betondorp neighbourhood*



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Summary

Urban gardening in the context of the creative city sees spaces that are designed and maintained to be attractive, inviting, and memorable for the communities they serve. Creative city policies form an approach that stems from urban development theories that foreground the importance of cultural aspects in building and designing urban environments. In addition to reshaping spaces through placemaking, urban gardening may also encourage placekeeping as those who benefit from the spaces wish to maintain and sustain the elements that contribute to pleasant and enjoyable areas.

The central question of this study asks what the motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners in Amsterdam's Betondorp are in relation to placemaking and placekeeping of their neighbourhood through the activity of urban gardening. Through qualitative research in the form of walking interviews data was collected at two urban gardens in the neighbourhood of Betondorp, located on Amsterdam's east side.

The focus of the interviews lay on discovering the motives and strategies that each gardener employs to create a space in their neighbourhood that serves a different purpose for each gardener. The findings suggest that cohesion and connection among neighbours facilitated by participation in creating an attractive and inviting shared space is a central motivating factor for Betondorp's urban gardeners. Furthermore, making a space multi-functional in producing food to harvest as well as a public gathering space establishes a place considered worthy of stewardship.

Urban agriculture is emerging as a practical and purposeful measure that combines necessary city greening efforts with opportunities for residents to design their own green spaces that can be used to grow food, support local ecosystems, and be used as an inviting place for community members to gather.

Introduction

Background

The efforts of urban gardeners manifest tangibly and enliven city spaces by greening and invigorating areas that otherwise may lay vacant or derelict. As urbanization continues to increase year over year with cities growing denser and more populous, there is a need to preserve and provide green spaces for residents. The presence of green spaces plays an important role in the lives of urban residents from providing recreational respite to extending essential support in managing urban heat, storm water, and greenhouse gas emissions (Lee et al., 2015). Initiating and maintaining green spaces is par for the course as part of the planning obligations of cities and municipalities, but oftentimes green spaces are designed and planned by people who will most likely not use them in daily life. In a more bottom-up approach, urban gardens take on the dual role of providing valuable green space in urban settings as well as providing the opportunity for gardeners to take on the role of leaders in undertaking community projects. As residents who can tend to and maintain such spaces frequently and regularly, urban gardeners allow creative spaces to flourish in a local and accessible area where the effects can be felt directly.

Efforts that promote community building, safety, and character are important aspects of urban development that may demonstrate why some places successfully make people want to live there and invest their efforts into placemaking and placekeeping activities. The term placemaking conveys the creation of places. Places can be created through formal channels such as government plans, but increasingly there are small-scale and citizen-led projects focused on redefining and creating city spaces (Sweeney et al., 2018). Placekeeping denotes the long-term management of such spaces and the upkeep of physical amenities as well as nonmaterial elements such as funding, partnerships, and governance ties (Dempsey & Burton, 2012). Placemaking and placekeeping as informal and citizen-led initiatives are exemplified in urban gardening projects wherein citizens play an active role in designing and maintaining a community space.

Urban gardening is an emerging contemporary solution to decades of technocratic planning that left little room for ecological considerations. Understanding the motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners is at the centre of comprehending how such individuals organize and mobilize their efforts in a way that produces their intended results. Such efforts that encourage placemaking and placekeeping are important in building sustainable and lasting governance dynamics that all citizens benefit from over time (Spijker & Parra, 2017). Research gaps regarding urban gardening as a creative city approach exist in the sense that most research being conducted on the topic concerns the promotion of sustainable development and citizen health and well-being (Kohout & Kopp, 2020; Cackowski & Nasar, 2003; Bieri et al., 2024).

The importance of social cohesion and the promotion of one's values is underrepresented in the study of urban gardening. Additionally, observers and researchers who study the creative city approach generally promote traditionally artistic forms of expression such as

graffiti, street performances, and artisan commodities as the main components of urban creativity (Martí-Costa & Miquel, 2011; Borén & Young, 2017; Pappalepore et al., 2010). The focus of this study pertains to urban gardening as a tool to encourage innovation of urban spaces, aesthetic improvement, and community stewardship.

Research Problem:

The aim of this research is centred on understanding the motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners in Amsterdam's Betondorp as related to placemaking and placekeeping through urban gardening efforts. The combination of these motives, goals, and strategies is then examined as part of the creative city approach, which is a broad formation of urban governance and city development theories that position culture, creativity, and innovation as tenets of progressive urbanism (Segovia & Hervé, 2022).

The main research question asks how does active participation in urban gardening encourage placemaking and placekeeping for urban gardeners? Three sub-questions further address

1. What are the motives, strategies, and goals of urban gardeners in their communities?
2. What do placemaking and placekeeping achieve in the context of a creative city?
3. Is there a difference between how large scale and smaller scale efforts foster placemaking and placekeeping?

Structure of Thesis

The structure of this thesis consists of a theoretical framework summary acting as the main body that discusses the relevant theories and concepts of urban gardening in relation to placemaking and placekeeping through a creative city approach. The following sections address the methodology employed and the obtained results. The thesis closes with a final conclusory summary where the findings are discussed in a broader theoretical context. The thesis concludes with a reference list of all the sources used in compilation of the work and appendices that include data collection tools and transcribed interviews.

Theoretical Framework

Placemaking and Placekeeping – A Contextual Understanding

Urban gardening is in and of itself a creative activity that may influence and develop the transformation of places to spaces. Every urban garden begins as a space that through design becomes a place as it is bestowed with new function, utility, and purpose (Akbar et al., 2021; Strunk & Richardson, 2017). Placemaking in the context of urban gardening relates to the creation of an attractive place through the intentional modification of an existing space to provide an area for community members to participate in the creation of a collectively maintained area (Akbar et al., 2021). After the implementation of such a place there is then the job of maintaining, sustaining, and conserving it to reap and enjoy the benefits. The motives, values, and goals of the individuals involved in such a transformation are central in understanding why a place takes on certain characteristics or challenges in its creation.

Placemaking is a widely used term with a myriad of definitions depending on individual understanding of place creation and the corresponding design elements that allow a space to develop distinctive qualities. As a concept or process, placemaking does not hold one academic definition and varies across literature (Ellery et al., 2020; Akbar et al., 2021; Dempsey & Burton, 2012). While there is no singular definition of placemaking, and by extension the succeeding concept of placekeeping, it is widely understood to be a process of changing spaces to make them more attractive and useable (Sweeney et al., 2018). The term placemaking encapsulates the transformation of making a space into a place and holds the connotation that an area is created through efforts that transcend beyond the physical. The act of placemaking is one of creation, and thereby the concept of the creative city is inextricably linked to any actions that contribute to any transformative spatial endeavour.

Ellery et al. (2020) see the term placemaking as an umbrella term that encapsulates the two conceptualisations of formal and informal practices of planning and redevelopment in urban areas. The differentiation between the two conceptualisations of placemaking primarily lies in the scale and authority involved in the implementation of developments. Smaller scale efforts instigated by individuals or small collectives are often labelled as tactical or DIY urbanism and can oppose the narrative of larger scale regeneration projects holding more validity and potential for transformation (Finn, 2014).

Placekeeping follows as an extension of placemaking as the long-term management of places after they are created (Dempsey & Burton, 2012), and herein the strategies of urban gardeners are exemplified. Activities such as utilizing rooftops to expand gardens, maintaining community garden wait lists, and continuing working relationships with governing bodies for grants and subsidies all promote the placekeeping of urban gardens (Bieri et al., 2024; Cilliers et al., 2014). Dempsey & Burton (2021) find the concept of placekeeping extends beyond the physical environment as the temporal element converges with non-physical dimensions integral to its endurance such as funding,

relationships, and policy among others. The continuing nature of placekeeping exemplifies stewardship and attaches commitment to community (Spijker & Parra, 2018).

Community Building in the Context of Placemaking and Placekeeping

A prominent facet of the study of public places are the intangible elements that develop beyond the physicality of the space. Activities that promote civic stewardship hold the potential to promote creative capacity and adaptability in cities and may be a method used to bridge the connection between environmental practices and community initiatives (Langemeyer et al., 2018). W.H. Whyte (1980) discusses successful high-quality places as those that address issues of activity and use, comfort and image, and sociability among other aspects that denote liveability. Public space quality is dependent on user experience, and according to Whyte (1980) quality of life closely corresponds to the way places are made and utilized in daily living (Elsheshtawy, 2015).

A sense of community develops from the combined efforts and contributions of a collective group and can be a driving factor for increased participation and community development (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Furthermore, proximity and connection to surrounding communal elements such as green spaces allow potential connections to develop in the third place. Oldenburg & Brissett (1982) discuss the importance of the third place beyond the home and workplace, which are respectively termed first and second places, as public places that facilitate sociability. Access to a high-quality communal area can foster a sense of belonging, improve well-being, and act as an opportunity for civic participation among community members. Connection and motivation to participate in collective endeavours can develop from access to a high-quality public space in a neighbourhood where social interaction and chance encounters between residents become possible due a common shared place (Francis et al., 2012).

Shared motives and goals can lead to the development of common strategies that lead to the actualization and effective implementation of projects that build place attachment among community members. Chavis and Wandersman (1990) find that a sense of community can be a catalyst for community development and participation in local initiatives and organizations. Participation in community efforts further adds to the improvement of the physical environment while enhancing social conditions that make a place desirable to live in and worthy of continued maintenance. Chavis and Wandersman (1990) further posit that three key components play a crucial role in the participatory efforts of individuals. The combination of the perception of the surrounding environment, the social relations present, and the individual's perceived control and empowerment inside the community are three powerful elements that shape the feelings that encourage or discourage participatory contributions to take place.

Values of Urban Gardeners Within the Scope of Schwartz's Value Theory

The motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners in Betondorp encompass many aspects of communal and ecological values. Values vary among individuals, but for a cohesive collective endeavour to continue beyond its inception, required shared values should exist between members of the group. Schwartz (1992) describes values as the conceptions of people 'regarding the goals that serve as guiding principles in their lives'. Based on this concept there are ten motivationally distinct categories of basic human values, and Schwartz (2012) delves into the dynamic relations present between them, finding there to be strong evidence that a universal structure regarding human motives exists. Despite this universality, individuals and collectives attribute varying degrees of importance to different values, and subsequently this allows for differing priorities or hierarchies to develop.

Values exist based on motivations according to Schwartz (2012) and are socially desirable concepts that represent goals used to help cope with the requirements of human existence. Furthermore, values can be seen as representing the mental goals people create as they situate themselves in an environment that requires cooperation and communication. Behaviours are then shaped by underlying motivations that stem from our held values to achieve desired goals (Spijker & Parra, 2017). There are ten values described in Schwartz's value theory which are indicated in the terms of the broad goals they express. The listed values are composed of hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. Some values complement one another and can coexist, and others are in direct contrast to the expressed goals underlying them. Additionally, each value is accompanied by a listed defining goal that sets out the main elements that are encompassed within the value itself.

Furthermore, Schwartz's human value theory frames six key features surrounding the conception of values found to be widely inferred in the work of theorists on this topic. Firstly, values are beliefs, and when activated they are charged with feeling. Secondly, values refer to desirable goals that inspire action. Thirdly, values transcend specific actions and situations which differentiate them from norms, and instead inherent guiding principles. Fourthly, values act as standards or criteria. Fifthly, values are ordered by importance in relation to one another, akin to an individual ranking system. Lastly, values have a relative importance when considered with other values in guiding action. The differentiation in ranking of importance among competing values is key to understanding expressed conduct, behaviour, and attitudes.

Table 1

Selected Values from Schwartz’s Value Theory as Applicable to Collected Data

Goals (based on Schwartz’s value theory)	Motives (Values based on Schwartz’s value theory)	Strategies
Being a reliable and trustworthy member of the in-group	Dependability	Active participation in daily task required to maintain urban gardens
Devotion to the welfare of in-group members	Caring/Benevolence	Collaboration with the municipality to secure funding
Preservation of the natural environment	Universalism – Concern/Nature	Organizing/facilitating community participation
Freedom to cultivate one’s own ideas and abilities	Self-direction	
Pleasure and sensuous gratification		

Ecosystem Services in Urban Gardening

Ecosystem services (EC) describe the various benefits that humans derive from healthy ecosystems. The concept centres the services of ecosystems provide as valuable factors that allow humans to successfully access food, clean water and air, and encapsulates essential functions of nature such as natural crop pollination and waste decomposition. The concept has grown in relevance in the fields of scientific research and policymaking as environmental matters continue to gain greater relevance in the face of increasing climate concerns (Mengist et al., 2020).

The advantages of preserving and encouraging the stability of ecosystem services through green spaces in urban settings are evident in the reported and studied well-being of communities that enjoy access to such places. Communities that actively participate in the facilitation of ecosystem service preservation embody attitudes and values that promote social cohesion (Langemeyer et al., 2018). In an urban setting a community garden allows for direct interaction and active participate with ecosystem services.

Contributing to a sustainable ecological practice brings to the forefront the human well-being effects that are possible from such an effort in the form of increased community cohesion on a social level and improved physiological and psychological well-being on an individual level (Summers et al., 2012). Summers et al. (2012) further describe the four primary components of human well-being to comprise of basic human needs, economic needs, environmental needs, and subjective happiness.

Ecosystem services share many qualities with the concept of placemaking in that an environment is positioned centrally in relation to the community it serves or benefits. Regulatory ecosystem services provide further benefits and are focused on regulation, i.e. maintenance, such as ecosystem protection (Mengist et al., 2020). Regulatory ecosystem services correspond more so with the concept of placekeeping in the sense that the regulating qualities that contribute to the maintenance and protection of a place such as a garden reflect the same qualities require in successful placekeeping efforts.

Outline Framework for Analysis

The framework that will guide the analysis of this study will examine the motives, goals, and strategies applied by the Betondorp urban gardeners in their practices. This study of urban gardening in the creative city context investigates these principles within the themes of placemaking, placekeeping, and stewardship of both social and ecological environments.

Expectations

Voluntary green space initiatives that require collaborative effort carry the connotation of cooperation, creative perspectives of group members, and a shared set of values. I expected to find a strong sense of place attachment among interviewees and a shared commitment to the gardens they tend to. I expected to encounter reports of well-being resulting from spending time in a natural setting within an urban environment. Respite from built spaces and pollution along with the bonus of growing one's own food are other factors I was prepared to hear about. Overall, I expected the motives, goals, and strategies of the urban gardeners I spoke with to differ based on their personal experiences and perspectives, but to fit within the overarching aim of caring for their neighbourhood.



Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Explanation of Conceptual Model

Urban gardening is centred as the anchoring creative activity in the conceptual model for this study. Triangulating this central element are the motives, goals, and strategies that are employed by the Betondorp urban gardeners in their projects. Schwartz's (1992) value theory positions motives at the top of the structure as motivations underlie expressed values. Goals and strategies follow the implementation of value-based motives and act as supporting elements that differ between individuals based on their perceptions (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).

Connecting the three principal factors of urban gardening are the themes of placemaking, placekeeping, and stewardship. The process of placemaking facilitates connection between community members and place (Ellery et al., 2020) through the creation of high-quality public spaces that promote a sense of community (Francis et al., 2012). Placekeeping then facilitates the maintenance of the established place through the deployment of strategies to achieve goals (Dempsey & Burton, 2012). Stewardship encompasses the management of the physical and social environments as related to civic engagement and ecological considerations (Langemeyer et al., 2018), and acts as a foundation for an ongoing and dynamic process (Sweeney et al., 2018).

Methodology

Case Selection

The research regarding urban gardens and their stewards consisted of qualitative primary data collection in two urban gardens located in the Betondorp neighbourhood of Amsterdam. The initial garden that was contacted is called Zuiveltuin and was found listed online on the Municipality of Amsterdam's urban agricultural map known as the Stadslandbouw map. The map depicts various urban agriculture projects that can be found throughout the city. Using this map, I contacted several urban agricultural initiatives whose information was provided and requested an interview. Additionally, I provided a pamphlet (see Appendix 1) explaining the nature of my research to address any additional questions respondents may have as to why an interview was requested (see Appendix 1).

Primary Data

The primary data is composed of interviews of three residents of the Betondorp neighbourhood who partake in the maintenance of the Zuiveltuin urban garden, one interview with a sole gardener in a nearby garden that was requested be anonymized, on-site visits, as well as photographs depicting the gardens and their surrounding area (see Appendix 4). The interviews took place between April and May of 2024 and were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. In addition to primary data, secondary sources were used to supplement theoretical information regarding motives, goals, and strategies as they relate to placemaking and placekeeping in an urban gardening context.

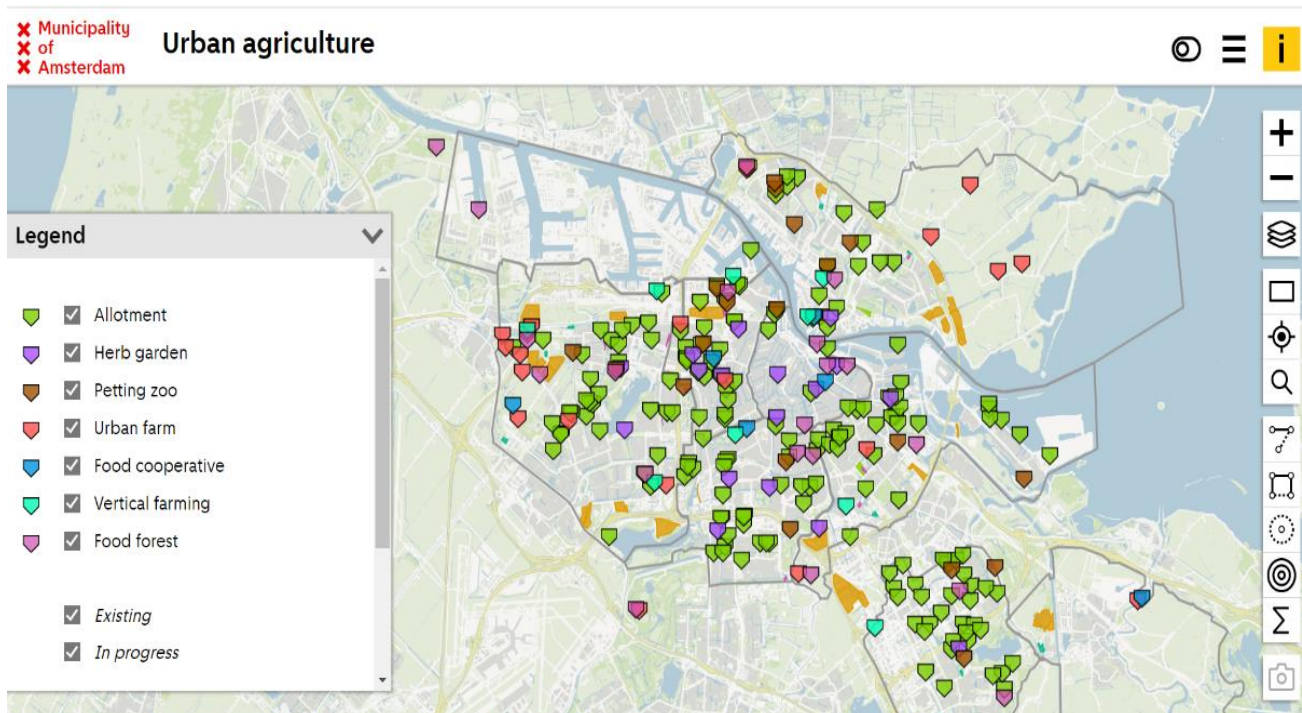


Figure 2: Stadslandbouw provided by the Municipality of Amsterdam

Participant Recruitment

Walking interviews were conducted based on an interview guide that contained twelve core questions focusing on the motives, goals, and strategies of the subjects regarding their roles as urban gardeners. Walking interviews were deemed to be the best fit for the research due to the place-oriented nature of urban gardens, and to allow for the potential of a more dynamic conversation (Bilstand & Siebert, 2023). By speaking with the gardeners in the physical space that is central to the research topic there was an expectation that a greater scope of understanding may be conveyed or that gardeners may feel more inclined to provide answers that delve deeper into the topic.

Employing walking interviews proved to allow me to see the spaces at the centre of our discussions and allowed for the opportunity to ask about the finer details and points of the urban gardening experience as it related to the gardens central to our discussion. The gardeners were willing and enthusiastic to show the different elements of their gardens and provided additional insights as we walked through the plots. The changing environment allowed for a more spontaneous style of discussion and incorporated an engagement with the placemaking history of each garden as the gardeners indicated the differences between the state of the place beforehand and after the addition of the gardens.

Each gardener brought their unique personality to the interview, and resultingly each interview garnered distinctive information. Consequently, the quality of the data collected

differed as some interviewees answered questions directly and succinctly and others provided longer answers that encompassed additional information that was not directly linked to the topic. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in English with speakers whose native language is Dutch. All interviewees possessed excellent command of the English language, but there were slight misinterpretations along the way. Google Translate was used to supplement any words that may have been lost in translation or misheard by the interviewees, and additionally I applied my limited understanding of Dutch to the best of my ability when I was listening to answers that contained a few words or phrases in Dutch.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed from the recordings and the resulting data was inputted into Atlas.ti to perform a code analysis. Findings were divided into the main categories of motives, goals, and strategies, placekeeping, placemaking, and stewardship, and inputted into a findings chart and code tree (see Appendix 2).

Ethical Considerations and Data Management

Qualitative research aims to capture why people have thoughts and feelings that may influence their behaviour, and the role of the researcher is to attempt to access and understand the thoughts and feelings expressed by participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Such an endeavor requires careful consideration and management of ethics and data when handling sensitive information, personal insights and opinions, and potentially identifying data. Employing a Research Data Management Plan (RDMP) is a comprehensive tool that provides an overview of how data is collected, stored, owned, and documented, as well as who is responsible for the management and processing of the data. For this study, the template for a standard RDMP provided by the University of Groningen was used in a modified capacity to track data collection and management (see Appendix 1).

The ultimate task of data management is creating a storyline based on the categorized and coded data to provide a well-rounded and communicative recounting of the findings (Stuckey, 2015) within the scope of informed consent. This entails the analysis of interviews and supporting literature to find common themes that lend supporting evidence to the posed research questions. Themes are then linked to findings, quotes, and reoccurring concepts that form an interpretation of the data based on the theoretical standpoint of the researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

According to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018) the principles of honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence, and responsibility are the basis of integrity in research. These are the foundations of the ethical considerations that are crucial in ensuring that positionality, power, and privacy measures are adequately considered and addressed throughout the study process. Regarding privacy concerns the

names of interview participants were anonymized through pseudonyms and the retraction of any information pertaining to their exact addresses. The gardener responsible for the unnamed garden I visited requested that I do not share photos that I was permitted to take on social media. I honoured this request, and only used photographs for the intended purpose of academic research.

The principles of honesty and transparency further call upon the researcher to exercise reflexivity in relation to their positionality and biases. By making clear one's background, intentions, and research methods there is space for an open dialogue to exist with room for reflection on the part of the researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The personal lenses that the research is inevitably conducted through must be acknowledged at the start. Power considerations in qualitative research can be found in the setting of the interviews wherein places of meaning and importance can influence the behaviour of participants (Elwood & Martin, 2000).

Findings

Case Study of Betondorp

The interviews conducted for this study took place in the Betondorp neighbourhood in Amsterdam at two different gardens. I visited the neighbourhood on two separate occasions and conducted four walking interviews with four urban gardeners. Three of the gardeners held plots in the Zuiveltuin community garden, and one gardener had transformed a strip of grass along a canal into a thriving urban garden. Conducting walking interviews allowed me to see the gardens firsthand and allowed for the conversations to flow around the elements of particular significance or importance to the interview participants. This allowed for a deeper understanding into why the gardens were created, how they were maintained, and the importance of environmental stewardship in an urban setting.

My first interview was with the treasurer of the Zuiveltuin garden where she explained the system of labour division of plots. There are approximately 20 different plots in the garden, and the middle of the space holds a communal gathering place underneath a bough arch with a picnic-style table and benches shaded beneath it. The treasurer then offered to show me another urban garden nearby where we met with the gardener responsible for transforming an unassuming strip of land into a lush and inviting space. I returned to Zuiveltuin subsequently once other urban gardeners who had been informed of my research by the treasurer agreed to be interviewed.



Figure 3: Map depicting locations of urban gardens visited in Betondorp

Motives of Urban Gardeners in Placemaking

The creation of the urban gardens in Betondorp were motivated by the desires of community members to make a place in their neighbourhood that serves the purposes of fostering social cohesion and providing an ecological oasis in the urban landscape. Throughout the interviews a range of motives was expressed, including community building, connection with neighbours, environmental stewardship, and staying physically active and healthy. Contributing to an activity communally appeared to be a common thread in all four interviews, and that was underscored by several neighbours we met walking in the neighbourhood who stopped to chat in the gardens. Dale, who created the garden on the canal, supplemented this by saying,

“People, they're coming through here, and when I'm working there on the side for an hour then I can talk 50, 45 minutes with people over the garden. Everybody stops here. It's against loneliness also.” – Dale

The most unique motive I encountered in my research was that of providing a space for children and young people to experience food harvesting in an urban environment. The gardener who expressed this motive explained the importance of this for him being that he believes fewer young people are aware of how food is grown, saying,

“And I also work with the children. I want to make gardens for the small children. It's very important. And also the children are working with their hands in the ground.” – Dale



Figure 4: Canal Garden



Figure 5: Flowerbeds in Canal Garden

Another gardener I spoke to shared that since she has no children of her own, she wishes to leave something tangible behind that is beneficial to the community she cares about. The third gardener I interviewed shared how her health struggles have limited her mobility and that she finds a healing aspect in participating in urban gardening. Three of the four gardeners I spoke to individually shared their concern for the environmental degradation being experienced globally and cited their participation in gardening as playing a role in ecological improvement.

Placekeeping Goals of Urban Gardeners

Maintaining and continuing the gardens were the most common goals cited during the interviews. Placekeeping goals of the Betondorp urban gardeners encompassed promoting ecological sustainability, continuing social cohesion, and growing a sense of community among neighbors. Each gardener employed methods that were unique to their interests, but with the overarching theme of keeping the gardens inviting and attractive.

Ecological Sustainability

The goal of ecological sustainability resounded through most of the discussions with the gardeners. The importance of ecosystem services and the inclusion of native species was

indicated as a significant aspect of the practice. Laura shared her view on what is important to preserve and consider when planting, saying,

“It's functional, but the aesthetic for me is more important like to keep it a little like inheems. Like, Dutch flowers for our Dutch bees. And also because a lot of people just take out all the plants, put in what they like, but they don't consider that it's maybe not good for the wildlife around. A lot of people take out the brandnetels. But it's really important for lots of butterflies which we don't see anymore.” – Laura

Donna spoke of the importance of bees in the ecosystem, and how the inclusion of certain plants may be detrimental to the health of the bees. She discussed the Zuiveltuin garden's quest to find a bee hotel and the importance of its location in the garden, stating,

“We want a very huge insect hotel. But actually, we are looking for a good insect hotel, and this is too small. You know that the bees are dying. And it's also because people buy non-biological flowers. If you put a bee hotel next to the geraniums that are not biological they'll die.” – Donna

Social Cohesion and Sense of Community

Maintaining social cohesion and growing the sense of community between neighbours was also indicated as important to the Betondorp gardeners. Each interviewee has been a resident of the Betondorp for over ten years and expressed that the neighbourhood has maintained and even improved its character over the last years. Transformations in the neighbourhoods saw empty patches of grass become thriving urban gardens through the combined efforts of residents.

Continuing the gardens from year to year was cited as both a challenge due to the effort required, but also as a goal to continue having a community gathering place. Donna spoke of how the Zuiveltuin hosts gatherings throughout the year, saying

“And we have in September every year the bessonfeest. The berries feast. And children paint with the water of the berries and so on. And we have a lot of nice things there. And music and so on, and cakes baked. And on the 11th of November we have the St. Martin's. We do that with warm chocolate and so on. People come with their children.” - Donna

Nadine also discussed how a monthly meeting takes place in Zuiveltuin where urban gardeners are assigned maintenance tasks that contribute to placekeeping as part of a community initiative to meet with other members. Nadine recollected how the groups and tasks are divided, saying,

“The only point is that once a month, one Sunday in a month we come together, and then everyone has his own task. So I, with a man and a woman, I am in the group of the strawberries and the fruits and the herbs.”



kindly granted permission for this photo to be included.

Strategies for Urban Garden Stewardship

The strategies of the urban gardeners interviewed were largely based on being stewards of their gardens. They mentioned active participation in gardening tasks, collaborating with the municipality for funding, and organizing community events in the gardens as being strategies they used to continue and grow their practices. The strategies of the gardeners diverged depending on their levels of involvement. The responsibilities required for different types of gardening can be divided into a micro-level and a macro-level perspective. The individuals responsible for the organization of the gardens demonstrated more proactive approaches in the context of contacting the municipality regarding subsidies and in the acquirement of contracts and materials. Individuals who were responsible for just their plots had to only consider how they were going to arrange and maintain a small section of the garden.



Figure 7: An individual plot in the Zuiveltuin garden



Figure 8: A row of plots in the Zuiveltuin garden

Micro vs. Macro Level

I interviewed two gardeners who had to consider the macro-level perspective of their gardens, and two gardeners who held individual plots and were tasked with micro-level considerations. The gardeners who were responsible for macro management detailed the planning strategies they had to employ such as drafting the subsidy proposals to obtain subsidy funding, arranging the organisation of plots, and being points of contact. One of the interviewees also shared a cost breakdown of the subsidy during our discussion and showed me the contract with the municipality that her garden held. On a micro-level, the strategies required were much more self-contained and revolved around the individual plants that were to be included in the garden and the maintenance of a schedule to ensure proper upkeep.

Laura, who maintains an individual plot, shared a strategy for greater participation and contribution to the whole garden was to use her knowledge of creative subsidies to help obtain funding to fix the bough that hangs over the picnic table area in the centre of the Zuiveltuin garden. At the time she was still a new member of the garden and wanted to apply her knowledge and skills for the greater benefit of everyone. Laura describes her strategy to help her fellow gardeners saying,

“But when they wanted to fix this one, this bough, they needed, like, a budget of, like, 700 Euros. So where do you get this? And I have a lot of ideas for it. And I knew where to knock on what door. I want to participate. I just got my streak of gardening, and, like, two months later they were, like, we have to do something with this. So, yeah, that was my big contribution when I started.” – Laura

Ultimately, Laura’s contribution helped the Zuiveltuin secure a new fixture for the picnic area. As a result, the garden has a striking centrepiece where people can sit and enjoy the scenery.

Discussion

The motives, goals, and strategies employed by the Betondorp urban gardeners promote placemaking, placekeeping, and stewardship in their gardens, and resultingly contribute to creative city activities in Amsterdam. The genesis of placemaking for the gardens began with individuals who share common values coming together to organize and transform a space into a place. Values such as being good neighbours, devotion to neighbourhood welfare, and preservation of the natural environment were expressed by the participants as driving motives for their practices. Subsequently, these values impact and influence the actions of individuals which plays a large role in determining whether gardening efforts are successful or not (Spijker & Parra, 2017). Consequently, the motives of the participants for becoming involved in urban gardening shaped the trajectories of how the gardens developed. Each effort is rooted in a motive, and the collective combination of motives

shape dynamic and inviting places in the community that are used as gathering points and opportunities to interact with nature and neighbours.



Figure 9: The centrepiece of the Zuiveltuin garden

As both gardens were developed and already in existence for some years, placekeeping activities appeared to be the focus of the gardeners. Placekeeping activities differed based on the perceptions and interests of the gardeners, but the main goal that was broadly shared was to maintain the gardens through tending to plots and effectively deploying strategies to achieve goals (Dempsey & Burton, 2012). To keep the gardens functioning each year residents must invest significant time and effort and coordinate accordingly with one another.

The participants expressed that sharing duties related to collective goals made them feel connected and comfortable with their neighbours. Ellery et al. (2020) observes that connections can develop between community members and a place aided by participation in voluntary neighborhood organizations. Furthermore, the creation and maintenance of high-quality public spaces can promote and strengthen a sense of community (Francis et al., 2012) as places that safe, clean, and attractive are pleasant and tend to attract more users (Whyte, 1980). This is demonstrated in the growing demand for plots in the Zuiveltuin wherein a wait list is now in place for interested residents.

Stewardship of the physical and social environments was an overarching theme throughout the interviews that linked motives, strategies, and goals. Appreciation for ecosystem services was an underpinning motivating factor that encouraged gardeners to become involved in their practices, which relates to the findings of Langemeyer et al. (2018) that individual ecological consideration incentivizes stewardship practices.

Donna's statement that the point of an urban garden was to promote social cohesion in the community and Laura's strategic planting of native species to encourage the presence of butterflies and other insects demonstrate the presence of civic engagement and ecological considerations among gardeners. Stewardship of the gardens and the surrounding community is built on a dynamic assembly of factors that share the same goal of maintaining a shared place.

Conclusions

The study of the motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners in the Betondorp neighbourhood of Amsterdam found that active participation in urban gardening encourages placemaking and placekeeping by promoting a sense of community while fostering ecological preservation. By actively participating in the maintenance of communal urban green spaces individuals found themselves feeling positively towards their fellow gardeners and the space they were creating.

It was observed that placemaking and placekeeping play important roles in a creative city in that residents of all backgrounds can contribute to the creation of a shared space. There was little information obtained on the difference between how bigger corporations and/or organizations and smaller scale efforts foster placemaking and placekeeping.

A comparison of macro-perspective and micro-perspective regarding level of responsibility and contribution to the gardens was identified, and correspondingly different levels of attachment of placemaking and placekeeping efforts was observed.

The urban gardening practices observed in the Betondorp exemplify the values of ecological stewardship, social cohesion, and the importance of a sense of community. The combined actions of the urban gardeners have contributed to the creation of an attractive, inviting, and inspiring neighbourhood. Different perspectives, personal histories, and future aspirations have found a common ground in the urban gardens of Betondorp.

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Appendix 1 – Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Instrument

<i>Interview guide</i>
1. Do you live in this neighbourhood? <i>(follow up if yes)</i> How long have you lived here?
2. What role do you think this urban garden fulfills in this neighbourhood?
3. How would you describe the atmosphere of the urban garden and also of the neighbourhood?
4. What are the benefits or best parts of being an urban gardener?
5. What are the challenges of being an urban gardener?
6. Why are you an urban gardener? What is your motive?
7. What goals do you wish to achieve as an urban gardener?
8. What is the strategy you employ to achieve those goals?
9. Is this solely an individual effort or have larger organizations or the government reached out to provide any assistance?
10. How has urban gardening changed in the time you have done it?
11. What is your hope or vision for the future of urban gardening?

<i>Observation checklist</i>
What is the physical appearance of the urban garden and neighbourhood?
What does the atmosphere of the urban garden and neighbourhood feel like?

Information Pamphlet & Consent Form

Urban Gardening in Amsterdam

What?

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the motives, goals, and strategies of urban gardeners in Amsterdam.

Who?

Anyone who practices or participates in urban gardening.

How?

You are asked to participate in an interview which will last +/- 30 minutes. I would like to know more about how urban gardeners view their roles in community building and creation.

Confidentiality

At no time will the researcher release any information to anyone other than individuals or institutions working on the project without your written consent. During the data collection process your name will be anonymized.

I understand and consent that the interview I participate in will be audio recorded, transcribed, and stored securely for research purposes at the University of Groningen.

Name

Signature

Date

Research Data Management Plan (RDMP)

1. Administration

1.1 Name of student/researcher	Name: Anna Klimkiewicz S number: S4868730
1.2 Name of the research group	Research group: The Right to the Creatice City
1.3 Name of the project	Project title: Urban Gardening in Shaping a Creative City
1.4 Description of the project	Project Description: A study into the motives, goals and strategies of urban gardeners in the Betondorp neighbourhood in Amsterdam. Through walking interviews themes of placemaking, placekeeping, and stewardship are explored. The expected results are that individuals who share similar values will employ strategies to placemake and placekeep communal areas with a strong sense of stewardship.
1.5 Institute Project code	GEBPROJHGP

2. Data Collection

2.1 Description of the raw (primary) data	Data obtained from walking interviews that was audio recorded and then transcribed and coded using Atlas.ti
2.2 Description of the processed (secondary) data	Academic articles from public sources
2.3 Methods of Data Collection	Walking interviews – individual interviews in the setting of the urban gardens visited in Amsterdam

3. Data Storage

3.1 Data Storage	Long-term storage: Personal server of researcher Cloud-based storage & sharing: NA Short-term storage: Research's PC Laptop Flash memory
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Appendix 2 – Data Analysis

Table 2

Coding Chart

Motives	Goals	Strategies
Social cohesion	Keep neighbourhood beautiful.	Participation
Community building	Have a meeting point for neighbours.	Action
Connection with neighbors	Have something that requires active participation.	Planning and researching
Providing a place for children to learn about gardening.	Provide a natural space for people and animals/insects alike.	Making commitments with other neighbours.
Environmental stewardship	Grow healthy food.	Organizing community events in the gardens.
Staying physically active		

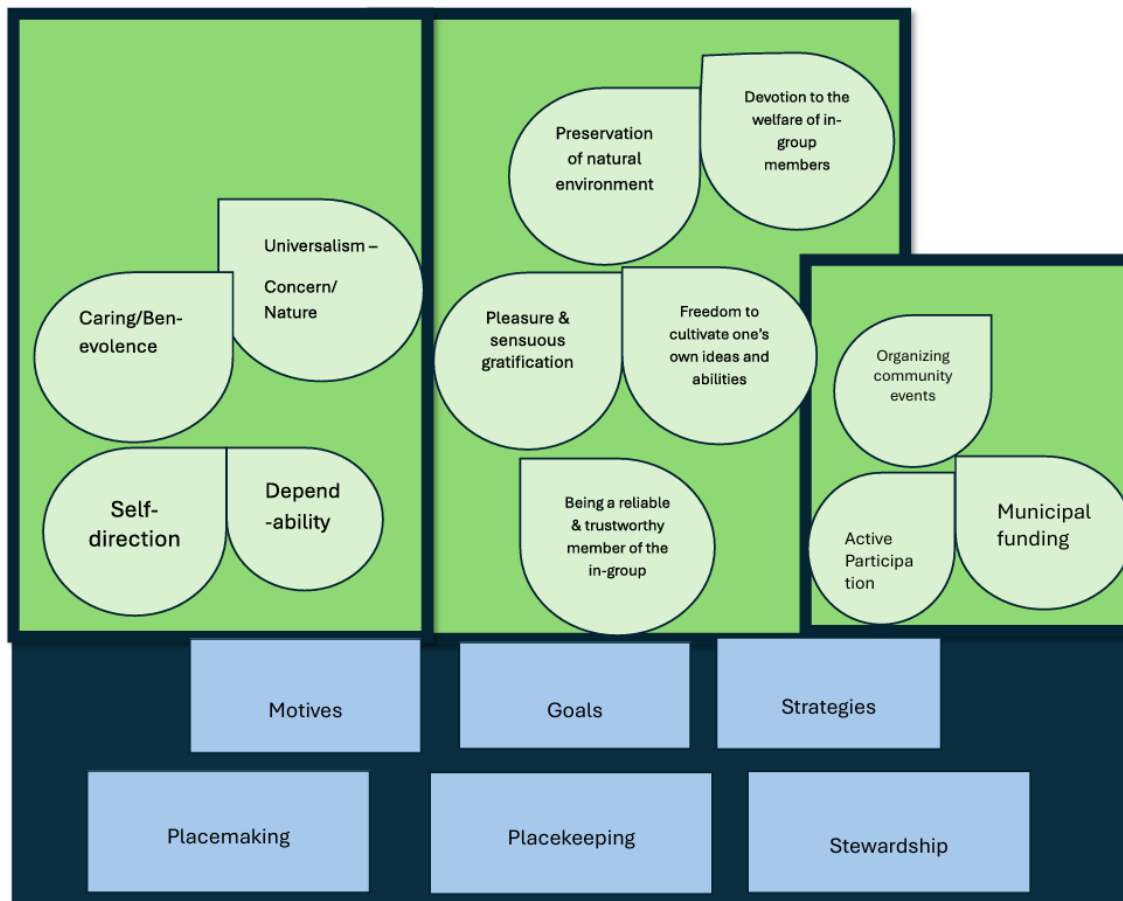


Figure 10: Code Tree

Appendix 3 – Interviewee Information and Interview Transcripts

Table 3

List of Urban Gardeners Who Participated in Walking Interviews

Interview	Name	Age	Occupation
1	Dale	60 +	Retired salesman
2	Laura	45	Not working
3	Donna	72	Retired teacher
4	Nadine	50+	Fashion Designer

*Pseudonyms are used in place of real names in data provided by participants

Interview 1

Interviewee Name: Dale

Location: Canal garden, Betondorp

A. What do you want to know?

Q. So I want to know how long have you been an urban garden for?

A. About seven years.

Q. Seven years. And what motivated you to start it?

A. The madness from my -- I had two selling sites on Ebay from stamps. I sell stamps. And on the end I was so frustrated I stopped with Ebay, and go start here with a table. And I had a little bit success. And then I go, and so on, and so on. I had a few --

Q. Some boxes?

A. I make the wooden --

Q. The beds?

A. The beds. Okay. And I had four, five beds. And then I let little bit vegetables growing. And slowly I take more and more and more space.

Q. It's a lot of space now.

A. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. Did you have to ask the municipality? Did you have to ask the city or is this --

A. Yeah, yeah. The city help me with the bonus. Money for it. And then I can buy wood, other things, what I need. And I give them the price, and they say yes or no. It's always good. And then I buy some vegetables, flowers. A lot of flowers. Bulbs. And I also work with the children. When I have enough I think I must -- I want to grow -- grow up. I said to the community -- I said I want to make children -- gardens for the small children. And now that is okay. They give me some money, and I make that for the children.

Q. What gave you that motivation for the children?

A. Also for the communication with other people. And also for the children, that they know the vegetables growing. Not in the shops, you know.

Q. So they know what it's really about?

A. It's very important. And also the children are working with their hands in the ground. It's good.

Q. And before this did you have any experience with gardening before?

A. Nothing. No, no, no.

Q. So it sounds like you were very frustrated with Ebay, and you just quit?

A. Yeah.

Q. And this was the first thing that came to your mind?

A. This was the first -- in that first year I put some vegetables in the ground. And the 50 percent I lost it. But -- yeah, not a problem. No problem, I buy some seeds, and I do it again.

Q. That's amazing.

A. But now we are -- we do it together with seven, eight other people. All pensioners. The people come here, and they're sitting here. They're drinking coffee. Every day over there also.

Q. So have you met new people or are these people you already knew before?

A. People they're coming through here, and when I'm working there on the side for an hour then I can talk 50, 45 minutes with people over the garden. Everybody stops here. It's against loneliness also. It was also with the COVID, the whole day people, walking, walking, walking by. And yeah, there is also a lot of people drive with the car here, and they stop, going out. Make pictures. And I said to the people don't put it on TikTok or something else. And then or else they're coming buses with lots of tourists maybe. And they're coming into my -- in the flowers.

Q. And then you'll have none left. So you reached out to the city after doing some research online about the different subsidies?

A. I did nothing online.

Q. Okay. But how did you get in touch with the city then to get subsidies and information?

A. There is one or two people. They're walking around here. And then they have the neighbourhood -- buurtrecht. And so neighbourhood regisseur.

Q. The director kind of?

A. Yeah. And he looks everywhere, and when you have some problems or you want something you can call him.

Q. How do you know how to get in touch? Does every neighbourhood have one?

A. Yeah. So if there is a lamp broken, or there is a bench from the municipality that is rotten or whatever. Yeah, the pavement is --

Q. It's like city maintenance?

A. When the tiles are not good you can contact with him. When you want a big bag with flowers you can talk to him, and then he said yes or no.

Q. Okay. After looking at the space?

A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I have also signed a contract. All the people, just around all the neighbours who has a small garden they must sign also on the contract.

Q. So it's a big responsibility? It's official?

A. Yeah. And it is necessary for the people. When you talk with people -- it must happen that the people has also interest in the garden.

Q. Or else they will not do it?

A. And it's also for social feelings and social -- they must not be against it. When there's a few people against it then --

Q. That's a problem?

A. Yeah. It could be a problem.

Q. So how has it changed in the seven years that you have been doing it?

A. What it changed?

Q. The urban gardening for you, how has it changed? How has it evolved? Or is it the same as it was when you started seven years ago?

A. Yeah. It start like this small, and -- it start small, and now it's about 30 metres long. And yeah, I do a lot of things, and I make a lot of things. And I like it. I'm busy now also with the nice weather. My stomach is hurt, and I must go over there. I must go to the garden.

Q. So what is your biggest goal for the garden?

A. The goal?

Q. The biggest goal, yeah.

A. That it stay like that -- like this. And every year a little bit different. I make something extra. I take something away, or try something else. Every year it's different. And also different flowers.

Q. This year I see you have a lot of tulips.

A. I have now for five years a lot of tulips. And maybe next year I think I take some other flowers. Other vegetables.

Q. What's the best vegetable to grow in this garden for you?

A. Beans.

Q. Beans?

A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q. Green beans?

A. Stick beans. Sugar beans.

Q. Sugar snap peas?

A. Sugar snaps, yeah. Chinese beans. And also boerenkool.

Q. Kale?

A. Yeah. And also Italian -- the palmemkool. Cabbage. Like a palm tree it's growing. And something also, melons. Small pickles.

Shall we walk around? Maybe --

Q. And what is the strategy that you use most? Like, the best strategy if somebody wants to start a garden, like, what can they do?

A. Try it, do it.

Q. Be active in it?

A. Start it. And you are not perfect the first year.

Q. It's a learning curve?

A. Learning, yes. When I put something -- this is also from the community. The community, they -- when the tree is dead, then they put it down and throw it in the shredder. And I go to the community and I ask them do you have some snippets. And then they put the car over there, and then --

Q. So it seems like it's very simple to communicate with the municipality for everything you need here. There's a response.

A. Yeah. There's a lot of response. Yeah, yeah.

Q. So how would you say this feels today than it did before you started this beautiful garden?

A. Again, again?

Q. How does the space feel now compared to how it looked before?

A. Before it was five days a week working. And planting. But now it's only -- I have some maintenance. The wood is sometimes going not so good. Then I make a new one. I have my compost. My compost boxes.

Q. You make your own compost?

A. Yeah. This is -- I make this new. And here that is resting few -- few -- five, six weeks. And then I put it on the other side. And when I need compost then I put this on here. And I take it inside, and then I shake it, and the big parts, they I throw back. And earth is coming down.

Interview 2

Interview Name: Laura

Location: Zuiveltuin

Q. Laura, how long have you lived in the neighbourhood?

A. This neighbourhood, for almost 20 years. I came here in 2005.

Q. Okay. And are you from Amsterdam originally?

A. Yes.

Q. And how is this neighbourhood different from where you lived before?

A. It's really old. It's a hundred years celebration this year, so there's a lot to do also in this thing. Yeah, it's old, and you see there's not really a lot of people living on top of each other because,

you know, in Amsterdam you see, like, four or five people on top. So it's maximum two. There's one downstairs and one upstairs. Maybe two on the others, but not more than that. So it's really green. There's all these little streets and nooks and little plantsjes, corners. So it's just green. A lot of cats, and dogs, and there's a really nice green stroke on the end. I have a dog also as well so I'm always walking around.

Q. That's so nice. Is it a bigger dog or a smaller dog?

A. It's a four kilo dog. Yeah, he's really nice. I wanted to bring him, but people are always a little bit, like, ooh, but he's really -- it's just a nine year old dog.

Q. Probably very calm.

A. Yes. Yes, he is.

Q. So what role do you think this urban garden fulfills for this neighbourhood?

A. It's different for everybody I think. I've been sick for five years now. I'm recovering from cancer three times already. But I'm doing good. But I've also lost a lot of mobility I think, and this is just around the corner, you know. I don't go far, but I can go here and in my own garden. Yeah. I just popped in and there was one little stroke free and I said yeah, I would like to put some effort in. And I was welcome. Because I've been doing this garden for now -- this is my second summer. And before -- I lived around the corner. Just if I go across this street between those two houses you have an intern garden, and there's my garden too.

Q. So you have two gardens?

A. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q. Good.

A. Right now I'm planting plum pink tomatoes and chillies for -- because I didn't do much yet. I just leave it to grow a little bit, and then when my tomatoes are big enough --

Q. You transplant them?

A. -- then I put them in here when they're strong enough so the snails won't eat them and stuff.

Q. Yes, I heard from your neighbour that they're very bad here sometimes.

A. Very bad. And I could do, like, really neat like this, but then here it only dries out a little bit. So everybody does their own thing, you know. It's easy going. And when I do, like, one day of gardening all my muscle aches -- I have to do, like, nothing for two or three days maybe.

Q. It takes energy.

A. Yeah, but good energy also because I have to keep moving, you know, and it's really physique. It's really good for your body. So for me it's, like, yeah, working out also, and just feeling the ground, the flowers. I also really love the marigolds. They are all around when it's high summer. And I pick them and I save the flower heads, and I dry them, and I do them through my tea and also through my bath salts together with also rosemary and a little bit of the ajania. You know, I just gather the things and I take the figs and the -- there's a lot of raspberries. There's everything, you know. You can collect everything here.

Q. So is there like a creative element for you in this practice?

A. Yes. Yes. A lot. Yes. I am a very creative person. I paint and I do everything.

Q. And so how can you, like, for yourself link this creation process to other forms of creativity that you do?

A. Yeah. For me it's colours and just -- yeah. Some output instead of only input, you know. Everything around you is, like, really busy and all the television -- a lot of sounds. It goes really quick. You just tune out when you do this.

Q. It sounds very calming.

A. Yeah. Exactly. That's why I like it. It's like meditation.

Q. So is that kind of your motive for it, like, to be --

A. Exactly.

Q. -- to be more in touch with something?

A. Yeah. But also to keep moving, you know. What I said, I've been really sick. I recovered from cancer three times and my body is really -- like, it's 80 years out with moving and things. You don't see it from the outside, but I feel it from the inside, you know. And this just keeps me moving, and healthy, and young, you know. I can just stay at home and watch television. But when you're outside it's just -- and I'm also all about the energies, you know. The colours, the ground, the smells, the herbs. What I say, I use it in my bath. I use it in my -- and you just

feel more connected every year, you know. You get to learn your space. Know what plants do good or not.

Q. Speaking of that is there like a connection with the people around as well that gets better with every year that you're doing this? Or do people kind of do their own thing and you them?

A. People do their own them, but we have, like, a meeting once a month so you do get to know -- like I said, this is my second year. And you get to know the people. And instead of only seeing them here you also -- you see them when you walk around. So this is a process of years I think, you know, really. But it does -- yeah, because of I started here and because of the hundred year of the Betondorp celebration they are also making, like, a wall carpet embroidery thingy with the whole neighbourhood. And one of the ladies who is also, like, the organizer here she also organizes the evenings for the embroidery together. So she is my connection to also go there, and there you meet all the other people around, and they do soup at the fifth of May before the -- so yeah, you do get to meet a lot of people. But because I don't work anymore it's easier.

Q. Yeah, you can spend more time?

A. Yes. Yes. I walk here every day. I get to know my people now. But I think when you're working five days a week, four days a week, you have a family next to it, you have lesser time to really come here every day. I get to know Tamar for the second time today. So yeah, but she is here maybe in the weekends more. I'll be here maybe -- some other people will be here in the morning. Some people only once a month when the gathering is doing. And you also see there's a really, like, old

couple next to my garden. And he's getting -- he's already 90 years old maybe, and they're really fanatics, and they know so much. I always try to get information from them. But she had some back problems so she's out for a while. She's coming less, so you don't see them as much. So it's different. We don't have rules like we have to be here this this this. No, everybody does their own thing.

Q. So there's a lot of freedom and flexibility here for you?

A. Yeah. Sometimes people say yeah, I don't have enough time, I'll give it up. And then somebody else jumps in. So it's also rotating a bit.

Q. What are the best parts of being an urban gardener here?

A. Here? Yeah. It's the same -- same story. It's just being outside. Being connected with nature. Not going to the television. I'm 45, so I used to go out a lot before but doesn't fit me anymore, you know. Too much people, too much sound. I get a buzz head. It's just, no.

Q. So the best thing is you have like a sanctuary to be?

A. Yeah. You have to find some new hobbies. I have a body like an old lady, so I need hobbies like an old lady. But fun hobbies, you know.

Q. I totally understand. It's also interesting because a lot of younger people are getting into this type of lifestyle too because it's just so calming and good for your mental health.

A. But they forget that it takes a lot of time. A lot of work. And when you sow something you also have to make an effort to take it out of your garden and cook it, you know. That's what I -- sometimes I

walk around and I see all the fruits and vegetables growing, and it's like I want to pick it.

Q. Yeah, you don't want it to go to waste.

A. I don't want it to go to waste. But when you get to know people better you can ask hey, you have, like, five courgettes, are you going to eat them all?

Q. It's always the courgette.

A. It's always the courgettes.

Q. I was just thinking it's got to be courgettes.

A. Yeah, exactly. But courgette's really nice, you know. But you have to pick them before they get too big. Stuff like that.

Q. So what are the challenges of being an urban garden, or the biggest challenge?

A. Yeah. It's hard work. Look, if you don't do some maintenance it just overgrows and you have nothing.

Q. It's easy to maybe let it just --

A. Yeah, and that's what people -- when you're younger don't really understand I think. You have to go there at least once a week and put your hands into it. You have to make a plan, you know.

Q. So it's about the commitment?

A. It's a commitment. It's a really big commitment. Just like a dog, you know. It's not, like, it stays a puppy forever. It grows, and it needs attention, and it's physical. Like, you know, for me pretty physical -- a pretty big workout. And if you go on vacation what you do is you see contacts can water your plants a bit.

Q. It's kind of like having a child.

A. A little bit, yes. Yeah.

Q. So how do you stay motivated when you're going through a time where you just, you know, don't have the energy or want to come and do it all the time? How do you make yourself do it?

A. I have a dog, so I walk around every day, you know. I just start with the walk of the day with my dog, and then I walk past and I look, like, no, this is good, this is that. My tomatoes are not ready yet, so take it easy. Also physically when I feel good or not is also a big issue of course. And the weather has to be nicer.

Q. That's hard sometimes.

A. You see now when it's getting better everybody's coming out again. All the gardens get cleaned again. And that keeps you also motivated. When you see other people do stuff then it's, like, yeah, yeah, I can do this too.

Q. That's true. So, like, it's a collective effort, and when you see other people do it you're also --

A. Also.

Q. -- motivated to contribute?

A. But I'm always motivated to be in nature.

Q. That's part of your personality or values?

A. Yeah, I think so. Yeah. If you see my garden also as well at home it's, like -- it's full of plants. I'm not the person who takes out all the plants and put in the stones. I take out the stones, put in the plants. So different with every person how you do it.

Q. It's an expression of who you are and how --

A. Very much.

Q. -- process is?

A. Very much yes.

Q. So what goals do you wish to achieve as an urban garden?

A. Well, this year it's the pink plum tomatoes. Yes. I like to put in the garden what I also like to eat. And also the flowers. I have some nice lathyrus which will smell really nice, and I have to pick it a lot. The marigolds are really important. Yeah, stuff like that.

Q. That's such a reward though, smelling them in the high peak of summer.

A. Yeah. And then gathering it. And I've been having, like, these marigold baths, like, whole winter through, you know. And when I put it in it's, like, a sprinkle of sunshine in your bath, and it's just -- yeah.

Q. How do you find out about these kinds of things like the plum tomatoes?

A. The plum pink tomatoes I got for my birthday from a friend because they know I love these things. When I have my birthday I take everybody to the garden. You have to see my garden.

Q. That's amazing.

A. I show everybody. And so I get a lot of plants and seeds because my birthday's at the 12 of July, mid summer. And so my husband gave me some really nice blue lathyrus because I said they smell so nice.

So I'm a very vocal person. My heart is at the tip of my tongue, so I'll just spread around all my ideas and all the people around me, they just --

Q. And then they come back to you.

A. They come back and I get all these presents, yeah, it's really nice. I have a skin problem. I was born with ichthyosis which is pretty severe, but, yeah, I can manage. But it's also a lot of -- needs a lot of attention. Good quality products. So I like salt in my bath and I like the flowers. She always walks by when we're gardening, starts to talk.

Q. Nice. It's like a social place for people to just see one another. You don't have to pay attention to come here, you just have to enjoy it.

A. Yeah.

Q. What is a strategy you employ to achieve the goals you just mentioned?

A. It's trial and error. You never know if it works. You never know if the snails are coming, if the weather's going to turn. It's just all magic.

Q. Showing up every day?

A. Yeah. Yeah. Look around and -- but I'm just, like -- that's how I see it. I'm kind of, like, a fairy kind of person, you know. I just go around, see what's growing or not. I'm not really manipulating a lot I think. Just let it be. And then I clean up and put in the tomatoes and some chillies and peppers.

Q. So you're not involved with the bigger organization of it?

A. Not at the moment. It's my second year and I've been really sick, so I'm not -- yeah. I try to participate and then -- but when I go I go, like, 200 percent. So I'm here with everybody and I'm talking, I'll help you with this and I'm taking the shovels and I'm plowing, and I'm doing everything. But my hips don't work that well. So then after two hours I'm, like, maybe I did too much everybody, I'm going home. And then two days I'm, like, everything is hurting, and all the muscles. So I have to really step on my brake a bit. So when I'm feeling a bit, like, I'm not going because if I go I go 200 percent. So I try to participate a lot more every time. But when they wanted to fix this one, this bough, they needed, like, a budget of, like, 700 Euros. So where do you get this? And I have a lot of ideas for it. And I knew where to knock on what door. So that's also important, you know, for the ideas.

Q. And how did that work with fixing the arch over here?

A. Now, you have here -- we live in Amsterdam Oost, the gemeente Amsterdam Oost, and there's this, like, creative platform where you can knock on and with a good plan which also is for the community and the neighbours and everything around. They have budgets like 1500 Euros. And because I do art myself and I had some paintings I wanted to put on the Oosterpark. Do you know the Oosterpark?

Q. I do. One of my really good friends is actually living there, and I'm going to visit her after this.

A. Okay. Well, on the Oosterpark you have these big vitrines where they put art every, like, few months. Well, I did that too.

Q. Cool.

A. So for that I also posted a subsidy which I got, but that was, like, in 2020 I think.

Q. So a few years ago.

A. A few years ago. Really beautiful. But with this, because I did it before and now it's for the community, and we connect a lot of people. They're never going to say no. So I said, yeah, well, knock on this door. Write a letter. Make it sound like you want to be here.

Q. Can you tell me a little bit more about that actually? Because that's so interesting how the Gemeente supports these creative projects.

A. Yeah. It's just from the Gemeente.

Q. Is it like an incubator for artists that you did the vitrine display with?

A. I have to look it up for you. It's a few years ago. But it's also you have to get creative, you know. You have to know which doors to knock. There's a lot of subsidies for such things.

Q. And how do you find about subsidies as a creative?

A. Google.

Q. You just Google it?

A. I do.

Q. Okay. And the Gemeente has, like, a very easy to use interface?

A. Yeah. You could just go on the net on the website and they have, like, a form you have to fill in. You need good words and

writing, you know. You have to just -- by the words you put down you have to, like --

Q. Use, like, key words?

A. Yeah. You have to, like, tickle them and that sounds nice, I have to go there. Yeah.

Q. So this is, like, a collective effort, but then the Gemeente is very supportive if you apply for the right subsidies?

A. Yes. You have to know which doors to knock, you know. And yeah, that's -- on Google you find a lot. And you shouldn't be afraid just to say where can I get this. You know, it's not that it's -- it'll come to you, like, when you sit here, like, I need some money. That's not working. So you really have to be creative, look around. Maybe people in -- yeah. I don't know.

Q. So what was your biggest motivation to go out and get the subsidy personally for the arch?

A. Yeah. I want to participate. I just got my streak of gardening, and, like, two months later they were, like, we have to do something with this. So, yeah, that was my big contribution when I started.

Q. And it feels good to be able to help your community like that.

A. Yes, of course. Yeah. Yeah. Do you know, like, the feest on the 11th of November? You have the children with the little lights?

Q. Sint Maarten?

A. Sint Maarten, yeah. We also celebrate it here in the garden. There's, like, fires and hot chocolate. A lot of children.

Q. That's really nice because children don't really live in cities so much because it's so expensive.

A. Yes.

Q. So you've only done this for two years, but you were doing gardening before.

A. Yeah.

Q. And how has urban gardening changed in the time that you've done it?

A. Well, when you have more time to do it you get to know your garden better. So everything is flowering better. You know what works and what doesn't. So it's just growing process. You get an adult. You start, like, a little child. You try this, you try that. Does it work? More effort, more you need to go more often. Need to water the plants more often when it's dry. Don't think you can stay off a week when the sun is shining. You know, it's thing you have to learn.

Q. And how important is the aesthetic of the garden for you? Do you think that's important as well or is it more of a like a functional thing to grow things to eat and have --

A. It's functional, but the aesthetic for me is more important like to keep it a little like inheems. Like, Dutch flowers for our Dutch bees. And also because a lot of people just take out all the plants, put in what they like, but they don't consider that it's maybe not good for the wildlife around. A lot of people take out the brandnetels.

But it's really important for lots of butterflies which we don't see anymore. That's what I really started to notice also because I'm in the garden a lot. You know, it's the best place just to recover a little bit. But there were so less butterflies the last few years, so I really started thinking about what can I do to make them come back. Which plants have to stay. Just leave them in the corners where they don't bother you. It's really important.

Q. So it's about the native species and plants also being retained?

A. It's more important than you would think, you know. You start a garden maybe because I want this and the beautiful -- the flowers. And then you notice this doesn't work, those plants don't like this kind of ground, or they need more shade, they need more sun. Those are things, yeah.

Q. You have to consider it.

A. You don't understand it's all important when you start.

Q. So it like an eye opening process?

A. Yeah. When you really, really, like, love a flower you really like it in your garden and it doesn't work you start reading about it. And that makes you, like, yeah -- it's, like, you have to go -- you do like a whole study through your garden with the years.

Q. It's an educational process.

A. Exactly.

Q. And what is your hope or vision for the future of this community garden?

A. Just keep it like it is. More beautiful. Onderhoud. You know, you have to keep it -- onderhoud.

Q. I'm trying to -- my brain is --

A. Yeah. The Danglish again. Yeah. And then for me it's really important to get to meet more people in my neighbourhood because I don't go far. So I have to look what's around really close.

Q. So connecting more --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- with people?

A. And because of this also that's really nice, I started this -- the wandkleed borduren for the honderd jaar Betondorp.

Q. Yes.

A. Yeah. But there's also a little store opened, really creative bubble store, where they also -- where all artists in the neighbourhood, they sell all kinds of stuff. And they also do some courses, like, water painting and things like that. So I'm starting on Tuesday, like, with the water colours.

Q. I love water colours.

A. Yeah. Exactly. I need to know more about it. But it's not even like -- it's a beginners course and I do a little bit more maybe already. But that doesn't matter. It's just near, and it's in your own neighbourhood with the people around, you know. When you're really creative and you want to be an artist, like, creating a creative bubble with people that give you feedback and give you another side in what you see or you don't see is more important maybe than doing, like, this great

course because everybody says that it's the best one to do or something I think.

Q. So important to -- for you it's the integrity to be true to what your values are? And also it's interesting you said the word near because I think walkable communities are so undervalued.

A. Exactly this. And because my mobility's really small because what I've gone through I can cry about it, but I can also start looking what's around. And look what's around. We have this garden. Which really sounds like old lady thing, but it was so fun to do. And I'm really looking forward to go every week. Like, are we going again? And there's this lady who's 92, and I am here and I'm 45, and there's this lady who's 50.

Q. That's so nice.

A. You know, it just really mingles. So that's really, really. And you get to know your people.

Q. So it's a mix of different people and it's an environment that is special to you?

A. Yeah. And it's near, you know. You cannot save the world, but you can save the world around you. That's a big start. And from there out you can, you know -- it's one drop makes the rain go.

Q. You can't change the world around you, but you can change the world that's near you.

A. Yeah. Exactly.

Q. Thank you so much. I really appreciate this interview. I think I got a lot of valuable insight from talking to you.

- A. It's my pleasure.
Q. Thank you.

Interview 3

Interviewee Name: Donna

Location: Zuiveltuin

A. Okay. Now, let's start. Or do you want me to show something on forehand?

Q. Of course.

A. We have had to sign a contract.

Q. Okay. With the city of Amsterdam? The municipality?

A. Yes. And that was this.

Q. In 2006?

A. The (unclear) of the public green. And so this is my name, and there's another name, Marie. We were in contact with Marie at first, but she --

Q. Yes, she forward my information to you.

A. She couldn't be here.

Q. Okay.

Q. So it opened in April of 2016?

A. Yeah. At openingsfest you'll understand.

Q. Yes, the opening party.

A. So Simone tells our vision is community cohesion, a spot to do something together on a summer evening.

Q. So part of it is also like aesthetic for it to be something beautiful like a centre point of the neighbourhood?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. And it is even so the people -- the real estate agents, they even make a photo and they put it on their to advertise.

Q. So it's very popular?

A. Yeah. It is this tree, and it is so lovely in this season. That is our famous poet Joost van den Vondel. Now, this is at the -- well, that is not to start, but it was in 2016.

Q. Okay. July.

A. Yeah.

Q. That's the centre of the park? It looks so big.

A. The centre -- initially we got only the centre. And then all during some time we just moved over. And then they saw well, that we are really doing serious stuff here, and they said it's okay if you do so.

Q. How many people work on the garden on average per year?

A. 16 I think.

Q. 16. Okay.

A. So we have our own lot here on the sides. And this is together. We work together on the middle. And I even get some subsidy for the middle. And for instance, for the shed that we bought and so on. This bench doesn't exist anymore. This one was stolen.

Q. Even here?

A. Yeah, even here. Yeah. So this was in the 30s of the other century.

Q. In the 1830s?

A. Yeah. This house is built in one hundred years ago. Actually this year is 100 years. We have a lot of festivities. Yeah. Well, the municipality takes care of course of the trees and the stuff that we are not responsible for. This one was ill. So they took it.

Q. So you have this since 2016, but before that what was there? Just a patch of grass?

A. It was just -- well, you'll see. We'll have a look there. And the hedges were high like this. And there weren't even lamps of the municipality in former days. And we asked for them.

Q. So it seems like the goal of this project for neighbourhood cohesion.

A. Yeah.

Q. And the strategies for that, is it just regularly meeting once a month?

A. Yeah. And we have in September every year we have the bessonfeest. The berries feast. And children paint with the water of the berries and so on. And we have a lot of nice things there. And music and so on. And cakes baked, and well -- and on the 11th of November we have the St. Martin's. We do that with chocolate -- warm chocolate and so on. People come with their children. There are a lot of initiatives because in the centre place there is a family. They are called Zen and Naomi. They

do a lot for the village here. In June -- no, in July and August they always have every weekend music in the central spot -- brink. Brink is the central place in the village. It's called brink. All the street names here are named after agricultural things. Zuivel is dairy. And it was built as a socialistic --

Q. Experiment almost?

A. Yeah. Yeah. So people that were able to live here, they were not allowed to drink. There was not church in the middle. The churches are built in the 60s at the outskirts of the village because after the war they needed churches. But in the library -- the library is the central place because that is where you get the knowledge instead of in the church.

Q. So besides cohesion what is the next largest goal of the garden?

A. We want a very huge insect hotel. So we have of course an app group. This was a suggestion to make little -- probably we are not going to do so. But actually we are looking for a good insect hotel, and this is too small. So probably we will have another one with -- not this one. Well, anyway it has to be standing because we cannot hang it in the trees.

Q. And it's going to be in the centre of the garden?

A. Well, no, not in the centre. But face today the sun. So this is the south. So probably to that side. At the northern part facing the sun.

Q. And what is the reason you want an inspect hotel as the main goal at the moment?

A. Well, you know that the bees are dying. And it's also because people buy non-biological flowers. If put a bee hotel next to the geraniums that is not biological they'll die.

Q. The bees will die?

A. Yeah. Yeah. They will fall apart. We need bees. We need bees for our food.

Q. To sustain us. I am also the pennymesiter. What is the pennymeister?

Q. I don't know actually.

A. Treasurer.

Q. The treasurer.

A. Well, that is very simple because I do not want it on my own account. So in and outs.

Q. 1,464 Euros for 2023.

A. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. That's how much you got from everybody?

A. It's called in. Yeah. Subsidy also. Subsidy of the municipality of Amsterdam, 800. And we have other subsidized by another account.

Q. Is all government subsidies or do any of the residents put their money forward?

A. Well, for the compost because it was quite expensive we said well, if you want a lot of compost, sorry, you have to pay for it. So

but now we ended up with too much. With the end balance. This is the treasury.

Q. So the garden is taking care of itself financially?

A. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We have a cash audit committee because it is a lot of money, and I don't want them to --

Q. It's a big responsibility. So besides taking care of the financial side what is the hardest part about running an urban garden here in Amsterdam?

A. Well, I don't know whether it's here in Amsterdam, but it is problem to get the others to do something.

Q. Like, putting labour?

A. They are committed to collaborate and do stuff, but not all of them do so. That is perhaps a bit annoying sometimes. I asked for instance the others -- there are quite a lot of people that work of course on a Thursday. So I asked -- I said tomorrow Thursday afternoon at 14 a student all the way from Groningen comes to my house to have a look at the Zuiveltuin. So if you are around 14 hours -- if you have some time to fill in something.

Q. No answer? But thank you for asking. I appreciate that. That's nice. Do you prefer to have a look first?

Q. Sure, I would love to.

Q. So it's you and the women's name is Marie?

A. Marie.

Q. Is it you and Marie who are the main people who are --

A. Yeah, we --

Q. -- organizing --

A. We had a contract with the municipality.

Q. So your names are on the contract, so you have the most responsibility?

A. Yeah.

Q. And for the municipality, who is the person or part of the government that you contact with the most?

A. Amsterdam is divided in a couple of parts. And we are the eastern part. East and this area called is Watergraafsmeer. So the duke of the water and the lake. We are here on five metres below sea level.

Q. So the garden is five metres below sea level?

A. Yeah. So that demands a lot of water management. Anyway in the complete city because you know that Amsterdam is built on wooden poles. And the top of those poles should never become dry because then they start to rot. So they have to be left under water.

Appendix 4 - Photographs



Figure 11: Zuiveltuin sign



Figure 12: Zuiveltuin and surround neighbourhood



Figure 13: Individual plot in Zuiveltuin



Figure 14: Zuiveltuin in bloom



Figure 15: Sitting area in Canal Garden

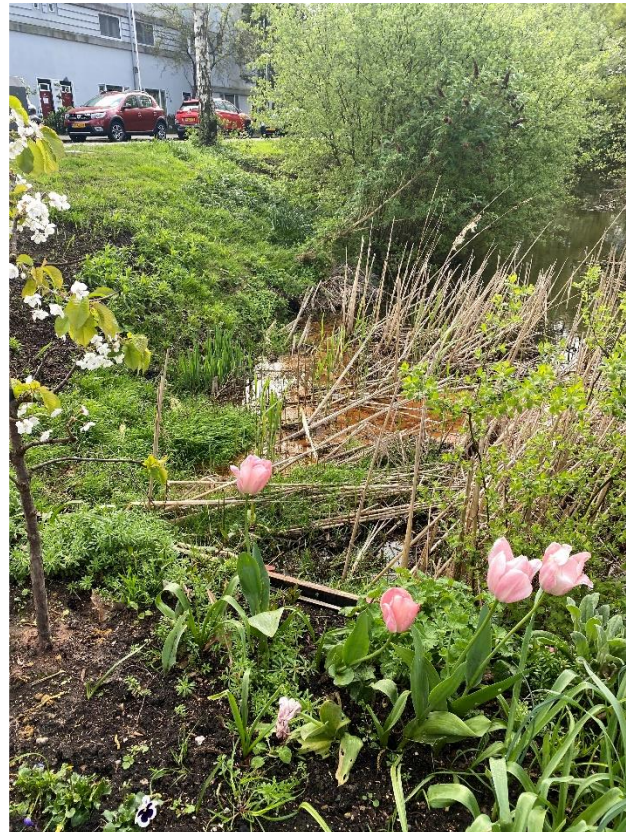


Figure 16: Canal in front of Canal Garden