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Foreign Roots and Local Gardens

Exploring the nature and nuances of community gardening among foreign-born individuals in New York City and Amsterdam

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Canny C. Sutanto

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ABSTRACT

This study explores motivations and experiences of foreign-born individuals in community gardening. Rooted in the experiences and viewpoints of nine foreign-born individuals--five in East Harlem in New York City, and four in Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam--the study seeks to make a contribution to the literature on place meaning in the context of community gardens. My analysis and interpretation of their perceptions and experiences suggest that meanings of community gardens are not necessarily tied to food production and urban agriculture. Nor are the study participants' motivations solely derived from the need to grow their own food. On the contrary, this study reveals a plethora of motivations that are first and foremost shaped by the study participants' past backgrounds and current situations, resulting in a diverse array of meanings associated with community gardens and gardening.

Keywords: community garden and gardening, place meaning, foreign-born, urban agriculture, East Harlem in New York City, Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to gain meaningful insights into the experiences of nine immigrant, or foreign-born community gardeners as they engaged in community gardening and urban agriculture practices in their adopted countries. A plethora of existing literature on community gardens have largely focused on the generalized physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of community garden spaces, which in turn are reduced to a homogenized and uniformed place, or landscape. In doing so, many a study tended to simplify the complexity and multiple meanings and motivations of community garden participants. Reasons for engaging in community gardening span much more than food production and accessibility. At the same time, as a subject of study, community gardeners of minority background which includes foreign-born participants, remains relatively unexplored. There is a limited amount of study regarding the experiences of foreign-born community garden participants and the challenges they face.

A total of nine foreign-born community gardeners, five in New York City and four in Amsterdam, were selected as participants for this study. They varied in age, country of origin, and experiences in gardening. However, one thing they share in common is their interests in community gardening. Rooted in their lived-in experiences and insights, this study sought to explore and describe the meanings and significances the participants attach to community gardening and garden spaces. Laura Lawson's (2004) prescription of what community gardens entail, and Lynne Manzo's (2005) conceptual framework of meaningful places are just two of several scholars whose works inform and provide literary backdrop against which findings of this study is evaluated.

This study employed a qualitative research design within a constructivist framework. It took place between the fall of 2012 and summer of 2013 in both New York City and Amsterdam. I specifically utilized grounded theory to unravel my study participants' own perspectives and perceptions of community gardening, thereby contextualizing the problem to be studied. Additionally, I relied on interview and participant observation as tools to gather and evaluate data. Analysis was then derived by using coding as prescribed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The findings are then presented in a narrative form, which gives subtle details that otherwise would have been overlooked.

My analysis and interpretation of the findings suggest that meanings of community gardens are not necessarily tied to food production and urban agriculture. Nor are the foreign-born study participants' motivations solely derived from the need to grow their own food. On the contrary, this study reveals a plethora of motivations that are first and foremost shaped by the study participants' past backgrounds and current situations, resulting in a diverse array of meanings associated with community gardens and gardening.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION



"Some people call it the Tree of Heaven. No matter where its seed fell, it made a tree which struggled to reach the sky. It grew in boarded-up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps and it was the only tree that grew out of cement. It grew lushly, but only in the tenement districts."

Smith, 1943, p.6



Figure 1.1. *Ailanthus altissima*
(Holmes, 2016)

Betty Smith's 1943 novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, begins with a depiction of a tree that grows outside the novel's protagonist's parents' home in Brooklyn in New York City at the turn of the 20th century. The tree, *Ailanthus altissima*, is an invasive species introduced to North America from China in the 18th century (Heisey, 1997). Its hardiness allows it to grow under even the most adverse conditions. It is often found thriving in the cracks of sidewalks, or in places where no other trees would grow. The tree stands metaphorically for the disposition and aspiration of Francie Nolan, the novel's 11-year-old protagonist as she faces difficult circumstances from early age well into adulthood. The figurative comparison Smith made between Francie and the tree is not without basis. Like the tree, Francie comes from a family of foreign origin. Born amid poverty and hardship, her life beginning is as tough as the soil in which the tree grows. Yet, through her unyielding and vigorous determination, she thrives under the most difficult of circumstances.

There is a thread of similarity running between the characters in Smith's novel--both Francie and the tree *Ailanthus altissima*--and the subjects of my study, which is concerned with the experiences and perceptions of community gardening among foreign-born individuals in community gardens in East Harlem in New York City, and in Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam. Like *A. altissima*, community gardens in New York City started out on vacant and abandoned lots amid the city's widespread urban decays in the 1970s. Their presence at first was considered a nuisance and provisional. Threats of removal are ever present and pervasive, yet community gardens continue to thrive in the city. Francie's coming-of-age story, on the other hand, could belong to any of the nine foreign-born individuals who participated in this study. Having been displaced from the familiar surroundings

of their home countries, they find themselves thrust in somewhat new and unfamiliar settings. Yet, with aspiration and perseverance, they navigate their foreign surroundings and adjust to their new lives in their adopted countries, namely the United States and the Netherlands.

This qualitative study embarks upon discovering interactions between community gardens and the foreign-born individuals who tend them. On the one hand, studies on community gardens abound and interest in the subject is ever increasing. On the other hand, participation of foreign-born individuals or groups in community gardens and gardening remains a topic that is less often addressed. What are the meanings of gardens and gardening for them? Why and how do they get involved in community gardens? What do they get from the gardens, apart from the fruits and vegetables they grow? These were the questions that piqued my curiosity for this study. Situated within the methodological approaches of case study and grounded theory, this study involved nine foreign-born community gardeners--five in East Harlem in New York City, and four in Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam. Interviews and field observations were conducted over two phases: from September to October of 2012 in New York City, and from May to July of 2013 in Amsterdam. Drawing on the nine study participants' experiences in and of the gardens they tend, this study seeks to gain insight into the roles community gardens play in the lives of foreign-born community gardeners.

The interplay between community gardens and foreign-born individuals, two seemingly apart subjects, grew out of my academic interest as a graduate student majoring in land use planning, and my own personal background as a foreigner. Having spent eleven out of the last thirteen years of my life in the United States, later in the Netherlands, and now in Sweden, life as a foreigner, or an immigrant is an experience I encounter on everyday basis. The impetus for this study thus began with my questioning what it entails to be a foreigner in a foreign country, and how it affects one's life. As I delved deeper into the subject, I found myself wondering specifically how land use planning, as both academic field and professional practice had responded to the aspirations and needs of foreign-born individuals, families, and groups. I believe that land use planning can be used to promote a more inclusionary and pluralistic society in the spirit of the politics of difference (Sandercock, 2005).

1.1. Purpose of the Study

Though the topic of community gardens and gardening has received some surface attention (see Chapter 1.2. Initial Conception of the Study), I feel that an in-depth, qualitative study of community gardening as practiced by foreign-born individuals remains relatively limited. Scholars and existing body of literature tend to focus on studies and assessments quantifying associated benefits attributable to community gardens' physical spaces and activities. This results in an overgeneralization of meanings and purposes of community gardening. The objective of this study, therefore, is to contribute to the emerging knowledge and growing discourse on minority engagement in community gardens. In other words, I seek to examine and gain insight into the nature and nuances of community garden and gardening by specifically exploring the experiences and perceptions of foreign-born community gardeners.

I wish for the findings of this study to reach audiences beyond specialist academic community and professionals. I intend for this study to be relevant for my study participants and wider audiences

in general by enabling them to make sense of an experience--in this case, something as ordinary as gardening--they go through in everyday life. In order to achieve that, I interview and observe nine foreign-born individuals from four different community gardens in New York City in the United States, and Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The four community gardens are: Carver and the East 117th Street community gardens in East Harlem in New York City, and Transvaalbuurt and Tugela 85 Binnentuin community gardens in Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam. Drawing much from the work of Lynne Manzo (2005), this study builds upon her notion of place-meanings, which emphasizes on the inextricability of physical spaces and people's experiences and perceptions of it. Therefore, in exploring and analyzing gardening practices and significances among the nine study participants, I look not only at the physical aspects of the gardens themselves, but also at the lived experiences of the foreign-born gardeners who view, use, and navigate these spaces.

This study takes a shift away from quantification and statistics of community gardening. Instead, the study seeks, to borrow L'Annunziata's (2010, p.iv) words, "to force a rethinking" of roles, meanings, or whatever implications a community garden has for its foreign-born participants. These qualities are not reducible to categories and figures. As meanings are socially constructed, the focus of the study lies on the study participants' experiences, perceptions, and expectations of community gardens and gardening, resulting in findings that are case- and individual-specific. They are bound by time and space. It was not my intention to derive generalizable findings as they lie beyond the scope and resources of this study. Rather, I seek to obtain a rich and detailed understanding and description of the roles and significance of the gardens and gardening for the nine foreign-born participants.

1.2. Initial Conception of the Study

Land use planners' involvement in food systems has been anything but constant during the last two decades. In their widely cited article, "The Food System: A Stranger to the Planning Field," the late Jerry Kaufman and Kameswhari Pothukuchi (2000) highlight the disengaged relation between planning field and food systems. "Planners have the professional expertise and community-oriented and interdisciplinary perspectives that could strengthen community food systems and food system planning," they argue (p.119). Yet, their analysis and survey on a handful of planning experts reveal that food systems have largely been neglected by the planning profession and academics. Food has been mainly seen as belonging to the rural domain that lies outside planners' 'turf' (Kaufman and Pothukuchi, 2000, p.116), a finding that is confirmed by Raja, Born, and Russell (2008).

A little more than fifteen years has elapsed since then. A great number of studies and reports I reviewed show how planners' perspective toward the systems has been greatly strengthened in recent years. There are now more professionals prioritizing the issues of local and regional food systems on their agendas. A multitude of scholars are publishing a steady stream of reports and writings on the topics. Students and academics are engaged in teaching and research activities concerning food systems and community health. A survey conducted by the American Planning Association (APA) in 2008, for instance, found that more than 70 percent of the respondents--all of whom were members of the organization--indicated that food systems occupied a high priority in their professions (Raja and Wooten, 2010). Policies and programs supporting community and regional food systems are adopted across many urban and suburban jurisdictions in the United States. Food issue is no longer being relegated to the confines of rural communities and agricultural industries.

The benefits a stronger food system offers vary. In its published seminal paper, "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food System," APA (2007, p.2) gives a long list of benefits that includes "economic vitality, public health, ecological sustainability, social equity, and cultural diversity." Such a wide span of benefits goes to show how food issue is "not simply a health issue, but also a community development and equity issue" (Hodgson, 2012, p.6). Consequently, increased understanding of the potential benefits a stronger food system offers has led to more policies, programs, and regulations being designed and put in place with these benefits as the intended outcomes. Community gardening, as Raja, Born, and Russell (2008) point out, constitutes one of the programs put in place. Arguably, its benefits mirror those of community and regional food systems, albeit on a smaller scale and scope.

At the same time, land use planners' concern over food systems need to be more intrinsically linked not only to the health and welfare of the general public, but also tailored to dealing with specific individuals and groups' needs and conditions. As societies, particularly in developed countries, become increasingly plural, land use planners need to come to an awareness of the existence of diverse and heterogeneous groups of people. Recognizing that these various groups may have different and sometimes competing concerns and needs as relating to food systems is aligned with what Leonie Sandercock (2005, p.437) views as paramount to planning in the 21st century cities. The 21st century cities, she points out, are cities in which "group identities became significant politically, and different groups began to demand a say in the shaping of the urban environment." A similar view is asserted by the APA (2007, p.2), stating the need for policies that "preserve and sustain diverse traditional food cultures of Native American and other ethnic minority communities." The inclusion of these culturally and linguistically diverse people in food planning and systems is regarded just as tantamount as serving the general populations.

The need for diversity and inclusion in the food planning and systems is as great as ever. Cohen, Reynolds, and Sanghvi (2012, p.82) voice their concerns about race- and class-based disparities within New York City's food systems between "one [that] is middle class and White, and one [that] is not." Minority individuals and groups--be they based upon ethnicity, race, gender, wealth, health, and sexual orientation--they argue, are more likely to be excluded from obtaining access to potential funds and resources than the majority. Meeting the need for inclusion in local food systems thus becomes more pressing when one realizes that minorities, including foreign-born individuals and groups, are at disadvantage when it comes to food and healthcare.

Families and households of foreign-origin are at the highest risk of food insecurity, as some studies have pointed out, e.g., Oliveira's (2008) and Chilton's, et al. (2009). This can be attributed to factors such as educational attainment, income and employment, and the availability of health care health care policy and insurance. Moreover, the neighborhoods where these families and households reside often have less access to supermarkets and farmers' markets providing affordable, fresh, and healthy food compared to neighborhoods where native-born families and households live (Raja, Ma, and Yadav, 2008). The term 'food desert' was coined in the Great Britain in late 1990s to draw people's attention to such neighborhoods (Cohen, 2011). Compounding this disparity are cultural and linguistic hurdles that have traditionally confronted them in their living and working environments. Altogether, these factors contribute to the disparities and lack of access to healthy food among specific groups, foreign-born individuals and families in particular in the United States.

Accordingly, this study had initially been an attempt to integrate knowledge about health and well-being of foreign-born individuals into the greater pool of knowledge of local food planning and systems. I had intended to contribute to the literature surrounding community gardening and health promotion among foreign-born individuals and groups. By drawing on the experience of several foreign-born gardeners from different community garden sites in New York City and Amsterdam, I attempted to find out how community gardens and gardening could contribute to their food choices and dietary habits. I postulated that by growing and harvesting their own produce, foreign-born gardeners could increase access to affordable, fresh, and healthy fruits and vegetables in spite of living in an otherwise food desert of a neighborhood. Additionally, they could also obtain culturally- and geographically-sensitive foods they could not get elsewhere. These initial posits provided the jumping-off point for this study.

As time progressed, it became evident to me that little of what I postulated took place among my study participants at the sites of my study research. A pilot interview with Anke de Vrieze, an Amsterdam-based expert on urban agriculture, contradicted my initial argument that such food desert of a neighborhood exists in Amsterdam, let alone in the Netherlands (Vrieze, 2012). Later on, a different picture of community gardening emerged from my observations and interviews with the study participants in New York City. Rather than solely perceiving community gardens as a place for food production, they assigned different meanings and significances to their communal gardening plots. Their motivations for gardening stemmed not so much from the need to acquire healthy- and culturally-appropriate food, but from something else altogether. The fundamental questions remained as to why they chose to be involved in community gardening practices, and what they derived from the gardens and the activities entailed. These questions helped me to reframe my theoretical framework and to develop a study grounded in the experiences of the nine foreign-born gardeners at community gardens in East Harlem in New York City, and in Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam.

1.3. Locating Foreign-Born Gardeners in Literature

Significant progress has been made toward developing, documenting, and disseminating knowledge pertaining to community gardens and gardening. Francis (2009) reports an increase in the number of interdisciplinary studies and publications within the last twenty years or so. He identifies several key areas of research on community gardening that have been well studied and documented. Such key areas include, among others, history, health benefits, economic benefits, and participatory methods. Alongside Francis, a handful of other scholars, such as Cameron, Manhood, and Pomfrett (2010), Draper and Freedman (2010), Leete, Bania, and Sparks-Ibanga (2010), and most recently, Golden (2013), also mention the multitude of studies which exist in the field of research on community gardens. Leete, Bania, and Sparks-Ibanga (2010, p.104) attribute this literary expansion to the "growing community concern with the relationship among place, food, and social well-being."

Despite the proliferation of literature on community gardens, a review of existing literature reveals gaps in several areas of research related to gardening practices among ethnic-minority populations, which include foreign-born individuals and groups. Consequently, the reason for this study's sole focus on foreign-born community gardeners arose from such deficiencies in existing literature as addressed by Francis (2009) in a report entitled "The Case for Community Greening Research Agenda," as described in the following:

Understudied minority participants. As a subject of scientific inquiry, community gardeners of minority backgrounds--including those of foreign origin--have not received as much attention as their majority counterparts. While I have come across several scholars focusing on the said populations, e.g. Baker (2004), Saldivar-Tanaka and Krazny (2004), Kindscher (2009), L'Annunziata (2010), Agustina and Beilin (2012), and Minkoff-Zern (2012), the number of such publications remains relatively low. A review of published studies indicates a lack of research underpinning community gardening practiced among minority individuals and groups. Draper and Freedman (2010) find that out of 55 scholarly literature published within 1999 and 2010 in the United States, only a mere four percent focuses on gardeners of non-Caucasian and non-African American backgrounds. While Draper and Freedman's finding does not distinguish between immigrant and non-immigrant gardeners, it nevertheless highlights the marginal existence of academic literature on minorities' experience and participation in community gardens across the United States. This finding is further strengthened by Wakefield, et al., (2007) who observe that only few of the existing studies involve community gardeners of various cultural backgrounds. Francis (2009) concurs by stating that community gardens' ability to bring together people of various backgrounds and cultures has been overlooked. He advocates for more studies on how community gardening and greening efforts could accommodate different group of users.

Gardeners' stories. Many of the existing studies rely on surveys and interviews with community garden coordinators as a means of data collection as opposed to using direct observation and interviews with the gardeners themselves. Wakefield, et al., (2007) ascertain that only a small number of the studies actually managed to interview community gardeners directly regarding their experience and participation in gardening. Knowledge that gardeners generate as a result of their experiences and perceptions stands in contrast to the knowledge of gardening that is generated by expert. Francis (2009) stresses the need for a new area of research that utilizes stories and quotes gathered from participants about their experience. He believes that "these quotes are often powerful statements to the use and meaning of community gardens" (Francis, 2009, p.62).

Multiple meanings and significance of gardening. Gardening holds different meanings for different users. The motivations and expectations one has for gardening influence the way he or she perceives and experiences community gardens and gardening. The vast majority of the research, however, offers little in the way of what and how various meanings and practices imbue and are embedded in the practice of gardening and the place itself. Instead, L'Annunziata (2010) points out that much of the literature tends to outline on broad generalization of social and physical benefits community gardening offers. Too often, she says, most research "has a tendency to overlook, downplay or oversimplify...instead advocating for garden space by highlighting the generalized benefits they produce for both humans and the environment" (L'Annunziata, 2010, p.12). While, arguably, these benefits are real and important, making community gardening a story of food production or countering food insecurity implies that garden members share a universal and homogeneous motivations and purposes. Consequently, "the tendency to universalize community garden benefits ignores the multiplicity and diversity of these spaces, including the diverse levels of support and access to resources that ultimately enable, or disable, garden members from being able to legitimize their use of city space for wide ranging purposes" (L'Annunziata, 2010, p.12).

What, then, do the shortcomings of extant academic research imply? Insufficient understanding of foreign-born participants' experiences, perceptions, and expectations of community gardening

often results in "services that are not attuned to the specific circumstances of their lived experience" (Duke and Mateo, 2008 cited in Bailliard, 2013, p.120). Given the limitations of the existing studies as summarized above, the justification for this qualitative study is heightened by a need for awareness and understanding of the experiences of community gardening among foreign-born individuals or groups. As put simply, why do they do what they do? Bringing clarity, and hopefully an answer, to this question could result in what Barritt (1986 cited in Creswell, 1998, p.94) refers to as "better understanding of the way things appear to someone else and through that insight, lead to improvements in practice." It is hoped that through this study, I could develop a nuanced, less normative, and more descriptive understanding of what community garden and gardening entail.

1.4. Research Questions

Problems facing foreign-born community gardeners are not readily apparent and easy to identify. As my preliminary study revealed, problems literature and authoritative texts dictated did not necessarily translate into problems that my study participants perceived and experienced. The issues of food production and food insecurity, while real and significant elsewhere, were not felt or shared by them. The mismatch between my preconceived assumptions and what I heard and observed from my study participants lent a great difficulty to formulating practical research questions at the onset of my study. Only after taking a step back from my initial hypothetical framework and realizing the social construct nature of the problems perceived by my study participants, was I able to come up with two research questions pertinent to their lived experiences of gardening.

The two research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. Why do foreign-born individuals make the decision to engage in community gardening? In other words, what are the motives or impulses in their lives behind their involvement in gardening?
2. What are the meanings of community garden perceived by the foreign-born individuals?

My research efforts focus upon finding motivations and meanings behind community gardening performed by foreign-born individuals. Without delving deeper into the theory of semantics, it suffices to say that motivations pertain to a reason that an individual, in this case a foreign-born community gardener, has for participating in a community garden. This brings to the second question which is that of meanings. Kockelman (2010, p.1), a linguist anthropologist argues "that neither [motivations nor meanings] may be properly understood without the other." To imply that something makes sense or has a meaning, then there must be a reason for someone to do it in the first place. As this research seeks to build understanding of the relation between community gardens and foreign-born individuals, the task of making sense of meanings the latter ascribes to the former only comes naturally.

In addressing these two questions, I explore the prevailing discourses of community garden from two dimensions of urban agriculture: that of environmental and social dimensions. I highlight how the former is not sufficient to represent the relationship between foreign-born gardeners and the gardens they tend. I then draw attention to relevant research and studies that fall in the latter domain,

specifically in the human geography tradition. Borrowing concepts from scholars, such as Relph (1976) and Manzo (2005), I relate community garden to the notion of meaningful places: what they entail and how they are constructed. This theoretical construct guides my way of seeing and thinking of the phenomenon through the perspective of everyday life rather than from an imposed, normative point of view dictated by experts and community leaders.

1.5. Characteristics of the Study

The first and foremost characteristic of this qualitative study is its exploratory nature. It is exploratory given the relatively recent introduction of the topics of food systems and urban agriculture in the land use planning field. Along the same lines, participation and engagement of foreign-born participants in urban agriculture programs, such as community gardening, is an emerging topic that has not received much attention from scholars and professionals alike, hence it warrants a research investigation. Thus, a lack of familiarity with the topic, and a need to better understand the issue call for an exploratory research. Furthermore, the study is exploratory owing to its data-driven approach. An exploratory study, unlike a confirmatory research, does not entail testing a theory or ascertaining laws, regularities, and conditions--an approach that can be classified as theory-driven. Rather, the study begins by allowing issues to emerge from interviewing and observing the study participants directly. The result is an exploratory study that is grounded on the lived experiences of the foreign-born community gardeners.

As meanings are socially constructed, this study is laden with subjectivities of the study participants, being conscious and thinking individuals, and that of the author. Not only that subjective experiences of my study participants are involved, there is also now the subjective observation and interpretation of mine to be considered. The use of first-person pronouns, e.g. 'I' and 'my,' denotes just that. By referring myself in first-person pronouns, I am asserting my role as a researcher in a social science study as I interpret and reflect upon the meanings of community gardening as experienced, understood, and interpreted by my study participants.

To the extent that this study is subjective and based on personal observation and interpretation, the findings this study present are not generalizable. The scope of this study is limited to the nine cases of foreign-born individual gardeners in East Harlem and Transvaalbuurt. This study and the findings it derives do not predict that a similar outcome will occur when a similar study is conducted in the future. Neither are the findings representative of the whole population of foreign-born community gardeners in New York City and Amsterdam as only a small number of participants were involved in this study. Having stated that, I do not mean to discredit qualitative research tradition. Rather, I wish to contend that the strength of qualitative methods of inquiry, as embraced by this study, are their ability to deliver a detailed, rich, and thick accounts of the study participants' experiences regarding a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; 2009).



1.6. Structure of the Study

This study is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter establishes the introduction and initial perspective of the research problem as summarized in the background to the study. It then presents the needs as to why such a study is needed, and the objective for the study. It addresses the research questions, describes the characters of the study, and elaborate on the structure of the report. Additionally, it provides a definition of terms used in this study.

Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature that introduces the all-encompassing term of urban agriculture, examines prevalent assumptions of community gardening among foreign-born individuals and groups, and set forward a framework for analyzing meanings attached to a place.

Chapter Three describes the development and execution of the study. It clarifies the research paradigm I espouse as the author and researcher of this study. It begins by discussing the appropriateness of the research design approaches, i.e. case study and grounded theory, I employ for this qualitative study. Lastly, it describes and reflects on my decisions and actions as I carry out data collection and conduct analysis.

Chapter Four presents the demographic and geographic settings of the two case studies. It addresses the state of immigration in New York City and in Amsterdam in general, followed by brief introductions to the four community gardens involved in the study and the neighborhoods they are located in, as well as a brief description of each of the study participants.

Chapter Five presents the data I gather from my field observation and interviews with the study participants. Nine foreign-born gardeners--five from community gardens in East Harlem in New York City, and four from Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam--have agreed to participate in this study. Their responses, which provide the findings for this study, are organized according to the research questions addressed.

Chapter Six examines the findings presented in the preceding chapter. It starts by a short comparison of the two case studies. It is then followed by assessments on the findings in light of the relevant literature presented in Chapter Two. At the same time, the chapter presents my own interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon. Lastly, a discussion on the limitations that arise from the methodology I employ for this study and from my part as the researcher is presented.

The last chapter, or Chapter Seven concludes this study by summarizing the significance of the findings, coming up with implications for practice, and directions for future research.

1.7. Definitions of Immigrant and Foreign-born

Before delving deeper into the subject matter, I would like to clarify the terms I use in this study, in particular the terms used to refer to my study participants. The terms 'immigrant' and 'foreign-born' are often used interchangeably both in many a study I have come across and in everyday usage. Their definitions and meanings vary from one country to another and from one jurisdiction to the other. Their uses are often conflated in literature and on everyday use. For the purpose of achieving

clarity and avoiding confusion in this study, I have adopted the US Census Bureau's definition of foreign-born. It defines 'foreign-born' as any person who is not a US citizen at birth (Grieco, et al., 2012). Under this definition, a foreign-born includes anyone who is either a naturalized citizen, lawful permanent resident, temporary migrants such as expatriate workers and foreign students, humanitarian migrants, and undocumented migrants. Accordingly, a foreign-born community gardener, in the context of this study, refers to any community garden participant who is either: 1) a non-US citizen by the time of his or her birth who resides in the United States now; or 2) a non-Dutch citizen by the time of his or her birth who resides in the Netherlands, regardless of his or her ethnicity, current citizenship status, and purpose of stay in the respective countries where he or she resides.

The term 'immigrant', on the other hand, is used to denote a non-citizen who lives, or intend to live permanently in his or her country of residence. I refrain from using this designation when referring to my study participants as some of them expressed their uncertainty whether they planned to stay permanently in their current country of residence. Furthermore, in light of the recent controversy over immigration crackdown and reform in the United States, as well as the ongoing European migrant crisis, the word 'immigrant' has somewhat acquired a negative connotation, being associated with the word illegal. For this reason, I prefer the use of the more encompassing, forgiving term 'migrant', which shall be understood as having the same meaning as 'foreign-born' for the purpose of this study.

The Dutch practice of classifying persons of foreign-origin based on their parentage and ethnicity needs further adjustment in order to fit within my definition of 'foreign-born.' The term 'allochtoon' originally refers to any person of foreign ethnicity residing in the Netherlands, or a person whom one parent, at least, is born outside of the Netherlands. Further distinction is made between first- and second-generation allochtonen. The second categorization, i.e. second-generation allochtoon, poses a difficulty in determining whether the term 'foreign-born' or 'migrant' is applicable to the respected person. To maintain consistency throughout my study, I decided to solely include demographic data of first-generation allochtonen. Nevertheless, there were certain instances where demographic data from CBS, the Netherlands' statistical agency, did not distinguish between the two categories of allochtonen. In such a matter, an exception will be made.

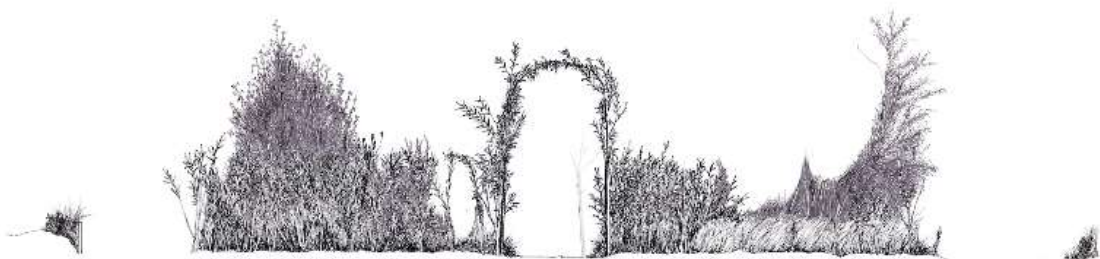


Figure 1.2. A drawing of an entrance to a community garden (Growing Space, 2015)

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW



"Take the example of Englishness. How do you imagine England? Different readers may have different answers to that questions: and, moreover, we will probably imagine England differently depending on where we are located, in both space and time...the word 'England' means different things to different people in different times and spaces."

Driver, 2005, p.150

Writing for a piece of introduction to human geography, Felix Driver, a professor of geography at Royal Holloway, University of London, questions what at first glance seems to be trivial and taken for granted. England--which ought to have been a fixed and precise of a word, a concept, an entity--upon closer inspection stands as something more varied and dynamic. England means differently to a 17 year old teenager stuck in the confine of her parent's suburban London house and to a middle-aged member of the House of Commons working from the comfort of his Westminster office. Whether it is portrayed as a landscape of green pastures and gently-rolling hills, or conversely, as a country of gray clouds and steady drizzle, the images and meanings of England vary depending on whom, where, and when the question is asked. This raises the question of how such an object or an entity, such as England, while appearing fundamental to some, is still subject to an indefinite range of different interpretations.

The same can be said of community gardens. As previously stated in the preceding chapter, I had initially perceived community gardens as a place to grow food. I postulated that community gardens could contribute to the health and wellbeing of foreign-born individuals by providing access to affordable, healthy, and culturally-appropriate food. My initial interviews and observations with foreign-born gardeners who participated in this study, however, yielded a different set of images and meanings associated to community gardens and gardening. I then questioned the assumptions of my initial framework, and turned back to literature to reformulate my research questions in light of the perspectives of my study participants: what could be the meanings of community gardens for foreign-born gardeners? In a move that Manzo (2005, p.69) calls "a return to broader conceptualiza-

tion," I tried to think differently of the meanings and nature of community gardens for foreign-born individuals.

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the phenomenon of community gardening particularly as practiced by foreign-born individuals and groups. It seeks to present a framework that provides a basis to analyze meanings attached to a place, i.e., a community garden. As much of the literature on community gardens is discussed from the perspective of urban food security and systems, I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of urban agriculture, an all-embracing concept that many believe to encompass community gardens. Following this somewhat general discussion is a review of literature at the intersection of community gardens and foreign-born experience. Since this research is looking at community gardens as both a place and an action (Lawson, 2004), I conclude this chapter by providing an overview of relevant theories that investigate how people attach meanings to places through their actions. To sum up, this chapter should be seen as both a conceptual and a theoretical framework that, in light of Manzo's (2005) call for a return to a broader conceptualization, extends conception of community gardens beyond the importance of urban food production and security.

The objective of this study is to deepen understanding of the nature and nuances of community gardens and gardening from the perspectives of foreign-born individuals. In keeping with the inductive nature of qualitative study, the literature reviewed in this chapter does not lend itself directly to the impetus for the problem. Rather, the research problem was generated based on my interpretation of the study participants' insights and first-hand accounts of their experiences as foreign-born community gardeners. Only when the problem had been defined that I turned to reviewing existing literature at the intersection of community gardens and foreign-born individual experience. This use of literature is therefore consistent with the method of inductive approach in qualitative study (Creswell, 2009).

2.1. Commonly Told Accounts of Urban Agriculture

The concept 'community garden' is often cited under the umbrella term, 'urban agriculture.' In her review of existing literature on urban agriculture, Golden (2013), for instance, finds that one-third of the articles and documents she has reviewed assess community gardens as a type of urban agriculture. Similarly, other scholars such as Raja, Born, and Russell (2008); and Cohen, Reynolds, and Sanghvi (2012) treat community gardens as a form of urban agriculture. In order to better understand community gardens and their implications for foreign-born individuals, therefore, I feel that a discussion of urban literature is inevitable.

Glancing at the term 'urban agriculture,' one might conjure an image of acres of arable farmland amid towering concrete jungle that is a city. Briefly stated, the term 'urban agriculture' implies to the practice of producing food in cities. The use of the word 'producing,' however, carries a broader meaning than just simply growing and planting one's own plants as source of food. One might, for example, be engaged in "processing and distributing food, collecting and reusing food waste and rainwater, and educating, organizing, and employing local residents" in an array of urban-agriculture activities (Cohen, Reynold, and Sanghvi, 2012, p.13). Furthermore, the word 'cities' does not necessarily correspond to regions that are densely packed with buildings, infrastructures, and people.

Urban agriculture can be practiced in a wide range of places in and around a city or an urban area.

As a concept, 'urban agriculture' is difficult to define. With such variation in its forms and purposes, definitions and meanings ascribed to urban agriculture differ from one scholar to the others. One of the most highly scrutinized definitions comes from the work of Smit, Nasr, and Ratta (2001). In their book funded by the United Nations Development Program, *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs, and Sustainable Cities* (Smit, Nasr, Ratta, 2001), they provide a detailed and in-depth definition of the concept. I find their definition, alongside that of Mougeot's (1999), continues to be featured in the literature I have come across. Urban agriculture, in Smit, Nasr, and Ratta's words, entails:

"an industry that produces, processes, and markets food, fuel, and other outputs, largely in response to the daily demand of consumers within a town, city, or metropolis, on many types of privately and publicly held land and water bodies found throughout intra-urban and peri-urban areas. Typically urban agriculture applies intensive production methods, frequently using and reusing natural resources and urban wastes, to yield a diverse array of land-, water-, and air-based fauna and flora, contributing to the food security, health, livelihood, and environmental of the individual, household, and community."

Smit, Nasr, and Ratta, 2001, p.1

Mougeot's (1999) definition of urban agriculture differs slightly from the above in the way that it introduces a nuance in which urban agriculture can be practiced. "Intraurban and periurban character of location," Mougeot (1999, pp.5-6) contends, determines what constitutes an urban agriculture and what separates it from conventional rural agriculture. However, both Smit, Nasr, and Ratta (2001) and Mougeot (1999) agree on a number of components that constitute urban agriculture; these include: location, type of activity, legality and type of land tenure, stages of production, scale, agent, and purpose (see Table 1. Components of Urban Agriculture).

"Little could be found in the academic literature which would condemn UA [urban agriculture] at large and advocate its ban under any form," Mougeot (1999, p.24) stated. Given urban agriculture's well-intentioned objective, i.e., contributing to the food security, health, livelihood, and environment, it is unthinkable that such criticism exists. However, urban agriculture does not come without its challenges and criticisms coming from academic and non-academic sources alike.

An example of public criticism toward urban agriculture perhaps could be summarized by what Raquel Maria Dillon (2010 cited in Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014, p.194) calls as "the typical NIMBY (not in my backyard) conflict." NIMBY refers to an attitude of defiance and opposition coming from residents and is directed toward a project or program that may be perceived essential but at the same time detrimental to one's health and property interests. NIMBY responses from neighbors and surrounding communities against an urban agriculture site might range from odor problem to noise nuisance, and from visual blight to decreases in property value. "The challenge for cities is to balance the potential to grow green businesses with the concerns of neighbors who do not want a thriving, for-profit enterprise next door, never mind the noise and smells that come from compost and small livestock" (Dillon, 2010 cited in Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014, p.194).

Other public challenge can take a more serious form. Stewart, et al. (2013) points at health problems and risks associated with urban agriculture that lie beyond the capabilities of often informal urban agriculture practitioners. Waste water, for example, requires extra treatment before it can be used

to irrigate plants. The soil in which the food is grown might prove unsuitable or contaminated with high concentration of metal. The use of fertilizer and pesticide also poses potential health risks for surrounding population. Another source of obstacle can be attributed to the planning community and city officials themselves, Raja, Born, and Russell (2008) find. Reasons ranging from lack of expertise and staff trained in the area to lack of resources and political supports have been cited as "significant factor[s] limiting planning organizations' involvement" in urban agriculture-related activities and processes (Raja, Born, and Russell, 2008, p.31).

At the center of academic discourse lies a different kind of criticism that is leveled against urban agriculture. Academic criticism does not only scrutinize the practices of urban agriculture, but also the terms and objectives associated with it. Consider Ellis and Sumberg's (1998) critical take on the practice, for instance. In their paper evaluating urban agriculture's alleged merit in food security especially in developing countries, the authors express their reservation by saying urban agriculture "claims too much by equating all food production in towns with improved food security for poor people" (p.221). While a lot of empirical studies have shown evidence linking urban agriculture with food security and livelihood, they argue that the same studies do not account for the survival strategies of urban poor who are not engaged in urban agriculture. Inferences of urban agriculture as a strategy for food security and sovereignty cannot be drawn solely from people who practice it. For these studies to be more conclusive, Ellis and Sumberg (1998) assert the need for including control groups in experimental or longitudinal studies.



*Figure 2.1. Agricultural development within the urban-rural continuum
(Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative, 2013)*

Building upon Ellis and Sumberg's assertion, Haysom (The Nature of Cities, 2014) maintains that "arguing urban agriculture as the solution to the growing urban food challenge can be likened to the notion that planting trees will resolve climate change." Too often, he says, assertions regarding the impacts of urban agriculture practices in tackling food insecurity especially among urban poor are made. These assertions, "that through urban agriculture, the 'poor' can counter the challenges of poverty and constrained food access, miss deeper considerations of the structural and governance nature of such predicaments" (The Nature of Cities, 2014). By highlighting urban agriculture as a panacea for the problem urban poor is facing, Haysom (The Nature of Cities, 2014) asserts that "such calls perversely place the responsibility on the poor to create the solutions without questioning the drivers of such predicaments."

Owing to the discrepancy between the intended goals and the actual practice of urban agriculture, Silvio Caputo (2012) comes up with a typology distinguishing the urban agriculture practiced in de-

veloped countries from that in developing countries. He argues that the rationale for participating in urban agriculture in developed countries stemmed mostly from environmental and social concerns. In this context, "preserving biodiversity, tackling waste, and reducing energy" take precedence over "fighting hunger and poverty in cities" (Caputo, 2012, p.260). Nevertheless, Caputo (2012) further adds, such a clear cut distinction in the typology of urban agriculture cannot be strictly enforced. Even within a city, variation exists as to the motives and objectives of urban agriculture from one site to another, and from one individual to the next.

I would like to refer to another criticism that may be of more relevance to this study. Writing for the book *Agropolis: The Social, Political, and Environmental Dimensions of Urban Agriculture*, Adriana Premat (2005, p.153) cites the "ever-increasing urbanization, ongoing food insecurity, and environmental degradation" as reasons to promote awareness of urban agriculture as "a food provisioning alternative that addresses the nutritional needs of city dwellers while potentially contributing to the environment health of cities and their surrounding territories." Urban agriculture has indeed been cited for its abilities to improve food security, alleviate poverty, and mitigate environmental impacts. In a time rife with environmental concerns and calls for food justice and sovereignty, urban agriculture is often seen as a panacea for addressing a variety of problems related to the environment and the scarcity of natural resources. Consequently, urban agriculture as a topic is often framed from the perspective of food production and security (Tornaghi, 2014).

What are the implications of approaching urban agriculture solely from the perspective of food production and security strategy? This is a point that L'Annunziata (2010), Tornaghi (2014), and Campbell (The Nature of Cities, 2014) have addressed on separate occasions. Tornaghi's (2014) review of existing literature indicates that many studies tend to focus on advocating for urban agriculture as a means of subsistence and livelihood. As a result, they reinforce "a benign and uncritical approach rather than one which should ultimately inform socio-environmentally just policy making" (p.5). Consequently, she calls for research that "goes beyond the naive and unproblematic representation of urban food production practices" (p.11).

In a way Tornaghi's (2014) criticism reflects a similar one made earlier by L'Annunziata (2010). In her dissertation on the political ecology of a Hmong community garden in California, L'Annunziata (2010) indicates that dominant discourse and framing contribute to a "homogenized" community gardens and universalized "reasons for engaging in urban agriculture and cultivating certain plants" (pp.12-13). These reasons, L'Annunziata (2014, p.13) argues, should not be "immediately articulated in terms of food production and decreasing food insecurity, but can also include more nuanced articulations that span medicinal, cultural, and spiritual reasons." And finally, to conclude this criticism can be added Campbell's (The Nature of Cities, 2014) argument against urban agriculture's (and community garden's) "enhanced attention to food." "In many cases," Campbell (The Nature of Cities, 2014) asserts, "the growing of plants and crops was more of a means than an end." By approaching it from the perspective of food production and security alone, she believes that "the nuance and history of gardening in the city that long precedes the current wave of interest in hyper-local food" are overlooked (The Nature of Cities, 2014).

TYPES OF LOCATIONS

The locations of urban agriculture sites stand in contrast to traditional, conventional agriculture. They may take locations inside (intraurban) or around a city (periurban).

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Examples of urban agriculture activities include: horticulture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, and forestry (Smit, Nasr, Ratta, 2001); community gardens and urban farms (Raja, Born, and Russell, 2008); and cooking and nutrition classes, rainwater harvesting, and storm water management (Cohen, Reynolds, and Sanghvi, 2012).

LEGALITY AND TYPES OF LAND TENURE

"The lack of accessible growing space is one of the most significant factors limiting the growth of urban agriculture" (Cohen, Reynolds, and Sanghvi, 2012, p.69). Several points addressing this issue have been introduced, ranging from "land cession, lease, sharing authorized or unauthorized" (Mougeot, 1999, p.8) to the use of planning tools and processes to formulate policies and strategies promoting urban agriculture.

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

Urban agriculture is more than simply production. Before production comes pre-production (acquisition of the necessary resources and services), and after it comes post-production (which may entails processing, packaging, distributing, and marketing).

TYPES OF AGENTS

People involved in urban agriculture are not necessarily limited to the urban poor. One can find an array of participants from different demographic, social, and economic backgrounds.

SCALES OF PRODUCTION

The extent and scale of an urban agriculture activity are often reflected in what kind of farming or growing is practiced. "Roadside cattle grazing and vegetable farming systems are predominantly small operations. Urban aquaculture, poultry farming, and orchards are dominated in most countries by medium- to large-scale operators" (Smit, Nasr, and Ratta, 2001, p.2).

PURPOSES

Cabannes (2006) introduced three purported goals or purposes related to urban agriculture. They are: (1) subsistence livelihoods and crisis mitigation, (2) market production enterprises, and (3) leisure and recreation.

2.2. *Community Gardens Revisited*

Having defined the concept of urban agriculture and critiques that come with it raises a question whether community gardens belong to the subset of urban agriculture. While many, if not most of the studies I have reviewed answer positively to this question, there are some dissenting voices against this general consensus (e.g., L'Annunziata, 2010; and Campbell, 2014). But, before I address these dissenting views, I would like to highlight what people exactly mean when they speak of 'community garden.'

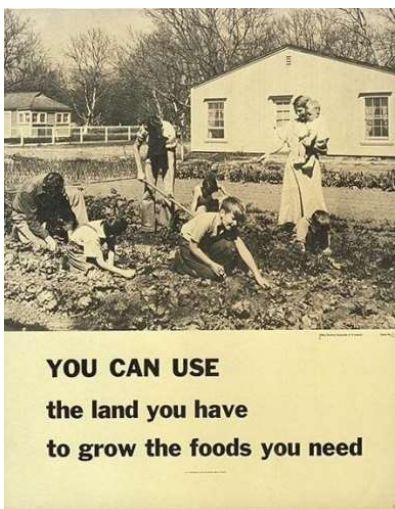
Just like 'urban agriculture', the concept 'community garden' remains elusive to define. Borrowing definitions from urban agriculture advocates, such as Raja, Born, and Russell (2008, p.8), community gardens can be defined as "shared open spaces where individuals garden together to grow fresh, healthful, and affordable fruits and vegetables." Notice that "fruits and vegetables" fall into the category of "food, fuel, and other outputs" as put forward by Smit, Nasr, and Ratta (2001, p.1). Smit, Nasr, and Ratta (2001, p.5) themselves characterize community gardens as "the most common site for urban food production...[they are] a condominium or cooperative, in which shareholders or participants each cultivate their own plots and share responsibility for common garden elements such as pathways, fences, water supply, storage, and security." Lastly, they are seen as green spaces where urban agricultural activities take place (Irvine, et al., 1999).

Seen from this perspective, community gardens are primarily described in terms of their food provisioning strategy. The deliberate emphasis on "grow fresh, healthful, and affordable fruits and vegetables," "urban food production," and "urban agricultural activities" illuminate the gardens' task as simply an outlet for food production. To stop at these definitions, therefore, would imply a homogeneity of meanings and representations of community gardens as feared by L'Annunziata (2010) and Campbell (*The Nature of Cities*, 2014). These definitions fail to capture the complexity and variation of beliefs, motivations, and meanings underlying the experience of community gardening. At no other time is Manzo's (2005) call for a broader conceptualization more needed given the prevailing community gardens' focus and approach on food production and the environment.

Before coming to a definition that addresses the complex and multiple dimensions of community gardens, let us take a look at the historical development of communal gardening in the United States and the Netherlands, in particular. Different authors have pointed to different stages in history as to when community gardens and gardening came into public consciousness. While arguably the origin of communal gardening movements in the United States extends far beyond the late 19th century, many scholars such as Lawson (2004), Hersh (2010), and Weissman (2010) believe that the earliest of such movements was launched in the 1890s. Others like Schmelzkopf (1995), and Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny (2004) attribute the development of communal gardening movement to the changing social, economic, and demographic trends in the latter half of the 20th century United States. Comparably, the Dutch equivalent use of communal gardening could be traced back to the mid 18th century allotment garden movement that was taking place not only in the country but in different parts of Europe as well (Berg, et al., 2010). Allotment gardens, or 'volkstuinen', were seen as an antidote to the rapid industrialization and urbanization taking place in many a city in the Netherlands.

It is safe to say that the community gardens as they are known nowadays are not a result of a single event or movement in history. Rather, they have been conceived and implemented at different times

and under different circumstances. Lawson (2004) and Weissman (2010) distinguish several gardening movements which they believed laid the foundation for the contemporary community gardens in the United States. They are: the Vacant lot cultivation association, or more commonly known as Potato Patches (1894-1917), the School Garden movement (1900- 1920), Garden City Plots (1905-1910), Liberty Gardens or the War Garden campaign (1917-1920), Relief Gardens for Distraction and Subsistence (1930-1939), Victory Gardens (1941-1945), and finally, the contemporary community garden movement as is known today. These movements, Lawson (2004) notes, occurred as either a grassroots activism or top-down pursuit of centralized planning, which often "frames community gardening in the context of serving larger social, economic, or environmental objectives" (p.152). In the context of Potato Patches, for instance, gardening advocates considered gardening as a temporary measure to aid unemployment and "keep the unemployed busy--thereby avoiding the idleness that business leaders feared would lead to union organizing and socialism" (Lawson, 2004, p.155).



*Figures 2.2. and 2.3. Propaganda art for Victory Gardens in the United States
(The National World War II Museum, n.d.)*

Much like its predecessors, the contemporary community garden movement in the United States grows as a response to social changes and crisis, as both Lawson (2004) and Weissman (2010) observe. Faced by disinvestments and urban blights that plagued their city in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some residents of New York City began to build "small patches of green" with the purposes of food production out of economic necessity, and revitalization of neighborhoods facing disinvestment (Smith and Kurtz, 2003, p.193). These efforts were directed toward vacant plots of land in nearly every neighborhood in the city. A particular example was carried out by a grassroots organization called the "Green Guerillas" in the southern part of Manhattan. Equipped with water balloons filled with plant seeds which they threw over a vacant lot, they intended to reclaim and rebuild the lot by transforming it into a garden. Once the objective was achieved, they would put pressure on the city government to make the garden accessible to public. This orchestrated effort, among others, demonstrated the way community gardening resulted as a response to address problems associated with urban changes and crisis.

In the Netherlands, communal gardening movements took a slightly different path in their course of development. 'Volkstuinen', or allotment gardens provided an outlet for production of fruits and vegetables for the urban poor from their inception from the 18th century onward (Berg, et al., 2010).

Following WWII, however, their uses and functions became increasingly ornamental and recreational rather than for subsistence (Leeuwen, Nijkamp, and Vaz, 2010). It should be noted that allotment gardens in the Netherlands differs from community gardens in the United States in a way that the former are managed individually rather than collectively (Berg, et al., 2010). These differences that exist could be attributed to the demographic, geographic, and temporal differences that span from one society to another. The distinction is thus drawn between the so-called 'allotment' gardens, on the one hand, and community garden on the other.

The introduction of contemporary community gardening as practiced in the United States to the Netherlands is a relatively new phenomenon. In June of 2011, VNG Magazine--an official publication representing municipalities of the Netherlands--wrote an article highlighting urban agriculture movement in the United States. It then proceeded to introduce what it called "volkstuin-nieuwe stijl," or 'new-style allotment garden' (Tabak, 2011). These gardens, the magazine points out, provide



Figure 2.4. An aerial view of Volkstuinen Nut & Genoegen in Amsterdam in 1992 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1992)

not only an outlet for gardening purposes but also promoted food security and community cohesion, among other things. "Creation of new jobs, improved social cohesion, and more access to healthy produce" were cited as what separated the new-style allotment gardens from the more conventional allotment gardens common to the country (Tabak, 2011). While the magazine's phrasing of community gardens may be regarded as some sort of advocacy, it nevertheless draws attention to the underlying difference between the new-style allotment gardens and the more traditional allotment gardens.

Summarizing her review of various communal gardening movements in the United States, Lawson (2004) concludes by defining community gardens as "a means to achieve multiple social agendas, such as shoring the economic resiliency of the laboring class, teaching desirable social behavior, and revisioning the urban neighborhood" (p.165). As the different but overlapping gardening movements revealed, food provision is never seen as an ends in itself. Even during times of hardship, such as the Great Depression, gardening was seen as a program, a means to encourage people to participate in an activity rather than being idle. Food subsistence came in forms of work relief, fuel voucher, and food supplies handed out to those who participated in Relief Gardens for Distraction and Subsistence (Lawson, 2004). These movements clearly carry associated actions and motives that extend "far beyond simple cultivation" (Lawson, 2004, p.152). Along the same line, Holland (2004, p.290) notes that "community garden movement...need not be exclusively concerned, nor indeed be concerned at all, with growing food or animal husbandry. In a

community garden context, the activities that take place have a linking theme of community involvement and participation."

The task remains as to come up with a definition that, as I have mentioned previously, extends beyond simple cultivation and is not necessarily concerned with growing food and raising animals (Lawson, 2004; Holland, 2004). The contemporary community garden movement, Holland (2004) pointed out, "is unlikely to be homogeneous, and in some cases, food growing will not be a priority. Therefore it is important to recognize that many different forms of community garden may emerge, and what will be captured will be points of difference as well as commonalities" (p.292). Along similar lines, Ferris, Norman, and Sempik (2001) heighten the call for a "very broad and inclusive vision of community gardening," lest that "a precise definition of community gardens...would impose arbitrary limits on creative communal responses to local need" (pp.560-561). Bearing this caveat in mind, I proceed with a definition that embraces the complexity and heterogeneity of community gardens.

At its most basic level, a community garden represents "a shared action on a shared piece of land" (Tomkins, 2012, p.420). This definition is aligned with that of Lawson's (2004), which contends that a community garden signifies both a place and an action. A shared piece of land, Francis (1987; 2009) points out, can range in size, location, and style. The land is usually divided up into smaller plots of land for individuals and/or groups' uses. Community gardens can occur either on publicly- or privately-held land. What separates them from allotment gardens as practiced in many European countries is the type of land tenure (or lack thereof). Colding and Barthel (2013) argue that whereas allotment gardens, particularly in Europe, enjoy greater stability and permanence, community gardens in the United States are less likely to be permanent due to their land use being seen as temporary.

An action refers to a state or an interaction between objects--whether they are living, non-living, or a combination of the two (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, n.d.). A shared action thus implies that the state or interaction is used, occupied, enjoyed, or possessed collectively with another or others. This collectivity ensures that some "degree of democratic control" is exerted when it comes to the actions carried out regarding the garden (Ferris, Norman, and Sempik, 2001, p.560). This perspective is also shared by Holland (2004), who asserts that degrees of control varies from one garden to the others--"community gardens may range from a collection of plots worked individually, but with some communal management, to schemes that are explicitly engaging the community in communal activity" (p.291). In this regard, a community garden is significantly different from an allotment garden in the way that the latter is usually tended exclusively by individuals or households (Berg, et al., 2010).

What is grown or produced in community gardens? Whereas advocates of food production gravitate toward definitions that emphasize on affordable and healthy produce, there is more to community gardens than just fruits and vegetables. Economic development, youth education, preservation of open space, and neighborhood beautification are just a few examples of intangible, nonmaterial properties that are often cited as being products or services of community gardens (Draper and Freedman, 2010). Kimber's (2004) definition of common, vernacular gardens thus can be added to the interim definition of community gardens I have developed so far: "A community garden represents a shared action on a shared piece of land, developed for the production of both material goods and nonmaterial values for individual, household, and/or group's uses."

2.3. *Through the Foreign-Born Perspectives*

Research works at the intersection of community gardens and foreign-born experiences are limited in amount to the best of my knowledge. While there is an abundance of studies on the general population of community gardeners, I have come across fewer than ten studies that specifically address the population subgroup (see Chapter 1.3. Locating Foreign-Born Gardeners in Literature). In this part of the chapter, I seek to highlight what can be learned from these existing studies on foreign-born community gardeners. A total of six studies were reviewed and analyzed, i.e., Baker, 2004; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004; Kindscher, 2009; L'Annunziata, 2010; and Minkoff-Zern, 2011, and Agustina and Beilin, 2012. Through the use of thematic analysis and concepts developed by Draper and Freedman (2010), I have compiled and categorized these studies into several themes. These themes are aimed at summarizing the findings of each of the studies.

It is worth noting that many of these studies embrace viewpoints that stand in contrast to the positivist ontology and epistemology dominant within the study of urban agriculture. Their findings are not intended to be conclusive or generalizable. Often, they conflict with one another as I will illustrate later. However, I do not mean to discredit the works these scholars have produced. Rather, I am alluding to the socially constructed nature of knowledge, in the way that the findings cannot be reduced to simple assessments pertaining to "purposes and benefits of and motivations for participation in a community garden" (Draper and Freedman, 2010, p.480). What follows are the breakdown of the themes I have identified in the seven studies.

Access to food. Throughout the literature reviewed, food provisioning is arguably one of the more frequently reported themes concerning community gardens and gardening. Not just any food, but food that is familiar and culturally-appropriate to the gardeners who grow and tend it. In a study of three community gardens tended by foreign-born gardeners of various origins, Baker (2004, p.322) notes that the gardens provide "an access to culturally-appropriate food for these new Canadian communities." In these gardens herbs and vegetables natives to the countries the gardeners originated from were cultivated. Additionally, one of the community gardens observed also functioned as an experimental ground where some tropical plants thought not to be hardy enough for Toronto's climate were sown and grown outdoor. Baker's (2004) findings illustrate the emergence of food production and localization amid the constraint of available land. Along the same line, Kindscher (2009) informs her North-American audiences of the various and seemingly obscure vegetables grown in many Southeast Asian community gardens in Columbia, Missouri. She reports of the high interest among the gardeners--all of whom were refugees coming from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam--to plant, tend, and harvest fruits and vegetables, such as bottle gourds (*Lagenaria siceraria*), lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), and daikon radish (*Raphanus sativus*). Additionally, Kindscher (2009) also makes note of the gardeners' interest to incorporate planting common North American crops in their gardens.

In addition to the two scholars I have mentioned above, Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny (2004) also report fresh food production to be a benefit of community gardening--albeit to a lesser degree--among Latino community gardeners in New York City. Their findings mirror those of Baker's (2004) and Kindscher's (2009) in the way that community gardens provide an outlet for growing fruits and vegetables familiar to Latino cultures. The foreign-born gardeners' choice of crops distinguished them from other gardens tended by non-Latino. Unlike Baker (2004), however, Saldivar-Tanaka and

Krasny (2004) cautiously note that the gardens observed were too small to contribute significantly to the individual and household food needs, let alone to food systems localization. Lastly, Agustina and Beilin (2012), in their study of community gardens in Melbourne in Australia, do not find any direct correlation between the countries of origin and the types of plants they grew.

Health provisioning. Along similar lines, community gardens are often used to promote the health and wellbeing of the gardeners and of the communities they are part of. Arguably, the two are strongly linked. Study by Minkoff-Zern (2011, n.d.) suggests that community gardening efforts in Northern Central Coast of California were targeted at "increasing the health of the indigenous Triqui, Mixtec, and Zapotec immigrant...by increasing access to local, fresh, and organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs." Minkoff-Zern (2011) notes, however, that such assumptions are often made by the funding organizations or authorities--in other words, the elite--without much regard for the actual practice of gardening among the foreign-born communities. The difference in climate between California and Mexico hinders growing and cultivating many of the plants that are native to the regions these group of people originated from.

Cultural preservation and expression. An old adage seems to reverberate concerning gardening as practiced by foreign-born individuals and groups. Community gardens help to maintain the foreign-born gardeners' identities and cultural inheritance by allowing them to plant fruits and vegetables native to their own countries, and to practice cultivation techniques from their homelands. Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny (2004), for instance, conclude that the community gardens they observed reflect the specific cultural identity and expression of the Puerto Ricans gardeners who tend them. The use of 'casita', a small wooden-house or -shed harboring different purposes, provides a distinguishing feature of these gardens. They reflect the gardeners' cultural identity and inheritance. At the same time, these gardens occasionally serve as hosts for events, such as dance and musical performances native to their culture (Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004).

On a different note, Minkoff-Zern (2011), and Agustina and Beilin (2012) question the presence of cultural preservation strategy as evidenced in the foreign-born individuals and groups' gardening practice. Minkoff-Zern's (2011) study involves a community garden in California tended by Triqui and Mixteco people native to Oaxaca in Mexico. She finds that "rather than choose cultivation techniques based on an abstract notion of indigenous tradition, participants utilize the most appropriate practices for their new environment" Minkoff-Zern (2011, p.1). The agricultural and culinary practices of the gardeners, Minkoff-Zern (2011) argues, are not static and place-based, but rather constantly changing "geographically and socially" (p.10). Similarly, Agustina and Beilin (2012) contradict earlier assumption made by Baker (2004). The gardening practice associated with cultural preservation and expression are limited to those who had "first-hand gardening experience back in their home country" (Agustina and Beilin, 2012, p.64). Rather than serving as a place preserving one's cultural identity and inheritance, the authors hint that community gardens ensure a higher degree of the foreign-born adaptation in their adopted country.

Economic development. Few of the studies reviewed here have tackled the issue of economic development through community gardening. One of these few studies suggests that there is a tendency among the funding organizations and higher-level authorities to make sweeping generalizations in regards to the motives of foreign-born gardeners and the alleged economic benefits of community gardening (Minkoff-Zern, 2011). By associating the practice of community gardening with economic

gain and advancement, Minkoff-Zern (2011, n.d.) argues that it might lead to "incorrect and potentially damaging assumptions about people's practices and identities."

Social interaction. Most, if not all of the seven studies reviewed, mentioned social interaction as a key theme of community gardening among foreign-born individuals and groups. Agustina and Beilin (2012) investigate the process of social inclusion and integration that occurs in community garden settings. They argue that the gardens provide spaces for interaction for newly-arriving foreign-born individuals as they participate in community gardening. At the same time, these interactions pave the way for the migrants to adapt to their new surroundings.

A more nuanced analysis of social interaction can be found at L'Annunziata's (2010) study on Hmong community gardens in Eureka, California. Her study's findings suggest a deeper tension running between the gardeners, most of whom were of Hmong origin, and the local authorities, in which the fate and future of the community garden rests. L'Annunziata (2010) attributes such tension to the discrepancy of viewing the community gardens between the community gardeners and the authoritative bodies. Arguing that the latter's conceptualization of gardening tends to universalize the purposes and benefits of community gardening, she demonstrates how a group has tried to impose its own paradigm of what constitutes community gardening upon another. The result is the level of resistance that the former exhibits in defining and reclaiming their gardens and gardening activities.

2.4. Manzo's Multiple Dimensions of Place Meaning

Having identified and reviewed a multitude of studies that have been conducted on urban agriculture, community gardens and gardening, I conclude the literature review with a theoretical construct, or a framework that seeks to unite the various and different strands of the literature. This particular framework should be seen as complementary to the previous discussions and references I have made concerning the phenomenon of community gardening among foreign-born individuals. However, rather than looking at specific concepts and detailed contents as I have done in the preceding sections, this theoretical construct moves from simply describing what community gardens might entail for foreign-born gardeners to looking at a theory providing a basis for analyzing meanings attached to a place. Lynne Manzo (2005), whose work has been influential in reframing and reshaping my understanding of the phenomenon for this study, provides a framework to analyze 'meaningful' places, "the roles these places play in [people's] lives and the processes by which they develop meaning" (Manzo, 2005, p.67).

Seeing and thinking of community gardens as a place, let alone a meaningful one, requires a consideration of what constitutes a place. Human geographers and other social researchers often quickly point at the distinction between 'space' and 'place', noting that the former is often viewed in the abstract and impersonal, while the latter is seen as space imbued with meanings and identities (Agnew, 2011). Works from scholars in the 1970s such as Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) are often cited as the cornerstone of the debate between space and place (Cresswell, 2004), although Farinelli (2003 cited in Agnew, 2011, p.2) argues that different approaches at looking at the two could be traced back as far as the ancient Greek civilization. A place, Relph (1976 cited in Seamon and Sowers, 2008, p.45) contends, concerns not only its "persistent sameness and unity which allows that [place] to be differentiated from others"--or people's identity of place--but also people's "identity *with* place," that

stands for "the degree of attachment, involvement, and concern that a person or group has for a particular place." Conversely, there exist oppositions to this binary notion of space and place among more recent scholars, including Henri Lefebvre (1991), who challenges the notion by introducing a three-fold division of space, and Doreen Massey (2004), who maintains that such dichotomy is groundless and problematic.

In keeping with the definition of community gardens that I have established previously, I uphold the distinction between 'space' and 'place', defining place as more than just a physical abstraction but also involves practices, meanings, and the degree of people's identification with it (Relph, 1976 cited in Seamon and Sowers, 2008). Thus, Carver community garden, among others, can be regarded as a place for it encompasses people's identity of and with it. It is situated on a specific set of coordinates on Earth, and marked by an address assigned administratively, i.e., 242 East 124th Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues in East Harlem on Manhattan Island in New York City. It is signified by activities such as gardening, gathering, and education classes that are held there. Different and varied experiences and intentions of the people who use the garden result in meanings that may be personal or collectively shared. Some may view it as simply a garden where produce is grown, while others may see it as an opportunity to engage with wider community members. Lastly, is the people's identity with it, which takes on different ranges of intensity in terms of how people identify with and feel about it, ranging from very strong to very weak, or even non-existent.

In exploring the mechanism behind meaning-making process, I turn to Manzo's (2005) place attachment study. In her 2005 study involving 40 residents of New York City, Manzo (2005) sets upon exploring people's relationship to places in order to analyze the kinds of places people consider meaningful, the roles these places have, and the processes that create them. She derives her concept of place from earlier works by the likes of scholars (e.g., Bachelard, 1969; Relph, 1976; and Seamon, 1982; 2000 cited in Manzo, 2005, p.68) who situate 'place' within the phenomenological understanding of lived, experienced lives. She regards places as being deeply embedded in the subjective lived experience of individuals and "away from the objectification of place and its meaning" (Manzo, 2005, p.68). Her view, with respect to this, reinforces Relph's (1976) concept of place that invokes something much less tangible and observable, but instead a much more complex and subjectively experienced phenomenon.

"People's relationships to the places embrace an array of places, feelings, and experiences" (Manzo, 2005, p.84). One way in which Manzo (2005) differs from many similar studies on people-place relationship is her inclusion of both positive and negative experiences and feelings of a place. In this sense, she reinforces Relph (1976 cited in Manzo, 2005, p.70), who argues that "relationships to places need not be strong and positive." Like Relph (1976), she calls for a consideration for an entire range of experiences and feelings in examining a place. At the same time, Manzo (2005) focuses not only on looking at residential places as meaningful places, but also extends her study outside of private houses and other modes of residential settings. Meaningful places, Manzo (2005) points out, do not have to be grand or expansive. Her study finding suggests that "the places which people found meaningful were not extraordinary...rather, they were ordinary places that are 'routine, experienced in everyday'" (Manzo, 2005, p.82). Citing an example of a study respondent who mentioned the bathroom as a meaningful place, Manzo (2005) illustrates that meaningful places vary in size and scale (think of a bathroom in a small apartment versus the entire city of Paris), location (outdoor or indoor, enclosed or open), time and continuity (places that no longer exist and those that are still

being used).

The questions remain as to how places acquire their meanings and for what reasons. Manzo's (2005) study reveals the complexity and nuance that accompany the processes of meaning-making. There are four themes, or reasons as to why places become meaningful and significant, some more than the others. Each of these themes should not be treated as a distinct and separate category but rather as overlapping and intertwining. A fundamental reason for the construction of meaningful places, Manzo (2005) argues, is the need of people to discover and evolve their own identities. Places afford people the opportunity to reflect who they are, by contributing to "one's sense of self over time" (Manzo, 2005, p.76). Manzo (2005) illustrates this by describing how one of her study participants talked about her parents' house where she grew up as defining and pivotal to her character development and relationships with others. The person reported that she could be herself in the house and felt much at ease there. In conjunction with the need for people to develop themselves, places that are meaningful beget the necessary space for privacy. Manzo's (2005) study suggests that places that are more likely to become meaningful provide some sort of sanctuary, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday lives. They facilitate introspection and reflection in their quietness and solitude. Nature, the study found, to be one of the more frequently cited meaningful places alongside "movement or traveling as a way of thinking and reflecting" (Manzo, 2005, p.76).

Another reason for the construction of meaningful places could be attributed to the experiences and events that occur in or associated with them. These places serve as a marker, or signifier of one's particular life journey (Manzo, 2005). This finding illustrates the inextricability of place and experience. Often, a place becomes meaningful not only due to its physicality but also for the action or event that is happening or has taken place there, impacting the meanings and feelings people have toward such place. Both positive and negative experiences contribute to making certain places meaningful and memorable. The last of the reasons Manzo (2005) cites pertains to the feelings of safety and belonging, as well as that of threat. In this particular aspect, Manzo's (2005) finding recalled Massey's (1994) suggestion that one's own race, gender, or sexual orientation, i.e., identity, determines people's experiences and perceptions of a place. While a place might foster a sense of belonging for a particular individual or group, the same place can also exclude and be alienating for others. A place therefore becomes meaningful for the reason it can welcome or shun someone.

"The experiences which people find important and meaningful," Manzo (2005, p.82) asserts, "often lead to significant bonds with the places in which these experiences occur--for better or worse." Reviewing the four themes posited above, it becomes somewhat evident that a place's physical identity, actions and events, meanings, and the intensity of feelings are all intertwined in developing a place that is meaningful. However, how do such places become meaningful? Manzo (2005) reveals two ways in which they develop meanings: through repeated use of place, or through a pivotal experience. The former contributes to "a layer of meaning of place," resulting from an increment of varied uses and experiences (Manzo, 2005, p.81). The latter, conversely, generates a meaningful place that is signified by either a significant or transitioning experience or event.

Manzo (2005) provides a framework to understand how meanings of a place, such as community garden, are constructed, either through accumulation of uses and experiences, or a life-changing, pivotal moment. Additionally, she highlights the purposes of people's attaching meanings and significances to such a place. The application of her theory to my study informs how the foreign-born

community gardeners in East Harlem and Transvaalbuurt generate meanings to the community gardens they tend and for what reasons. Together with the conceptualization of community gardens I have addressed previously, it provides a point of departure to develop an understanding of community gardens that extend beyond food production and security. It must be noted, however, that Manzo's (2005) theory focuses solely on individual meaning-making processes at the expense of collective ones. It remains to be seen how shared meanings of a place are constructed and transmitted.

Chapter 3

METHODS



I carried out the fieldwork of this study in two parts: the first part was conducted in New York City between September and October of 2012, and the second part in Amsterdam between May and July of 2013. Engaged in the fieldwork were nine foreign-born individuals, all of whom had participated in community gardening of some sort. Throughout their engagement in my study, they helped me perceive and define what was to become the research problem for this study. They played a role in determining the methodology and procedure I used for this study, resulting in a study that is grounded in their real life experience as community gardeners of foreign backgrounds.

This chapter details the methods and procedures I used for this study. In this chapter, I elaborate on my decisions regarding selection of the phenomenon, identifying and soliciting study participants, designing research instruments, entering the field, and lastly, analyzing the data that I obtained. The organization of this chapter follows a chronological order, which hopefully gives clarity to the course of actions and decisions I took, and serves as a contextual strategy allowing others to replicate my study. I intend for this chapter to be not only descriptive in the way it presents the methods I used, but also reflective as to why I engaged with the selected approach and methods. For this reason, I begin the chapter by describing the approach to identifying my standpoint for this study.

3.1. From a Positivist to a Constructivist Standpoint

Search for the words 'immigrants' and 'community gardens' on the internet. The results one most likely to get are laced with inferences that the former lives in low-income urban neighborhoods experiencing food insecurity, and that the latter might just provide the antidote to the condition. At the onset of my study, I was confronted with one of the most difficult tasks in conducting a research, i.e. selecting a research problem. A problem, in my opinion, entails something that needs to be changed, reduced, or solved. Thus I was set upon discovering a potential tangible research problem with a potential tangible solution. Based on my prior reading of Francis's (2009) piece of opinion, I had indicated three major areas of focus for my study, albeit somewhat general and vague. They were: significance of gardening, minority participants, and garden's stories (see Chapter 1.2. Need for the Study).

Yet, a thread of connection had to be drawn out of the three. As I navigated through a plethora of literature and pieces of journalism, I came to a conclusion that a problem indeed existed: minority individuals and groups, such as immigrants, experience food insecurity and they turn to using community gardens to augment their food and obtain culturally-specific fruits and vegetables. Surely, tens of the scholarly articles and media coverage I had been reading could not go wrong, or so I thought. I entered the fieldwork with this specific framework and a set of fixed research questions: how does community garden augment food supply and enhance access to culturally appropriate fruits and vegetables for its immigrant gardeners? These were two of the three main research questions that initially formed what I thought could be a potential research problem for my study.

It just seemed appropriate then to utilize a confirmatory research approach, in which I would attempt to test a specific theory or a priori knowledge against the data I would have gathered, and conclude by either refuting or accepting the former. With my research background and exposure--most of which had been limited to quantitative methods--added to the momentum, I was set upon conducting a study fully ingrained within a positivist tradition. A positivist tradition, as pointed out by Williams (2003, p.13), implies that "reality as theorized" exist, and through the use of "designed measurement", it can be measured and verified. As such, I postulated that the problem of food security is indeed 'real' and present among immigrants, as many a study has suggested, e.g.: Quandt, et al., 2006, and Chilton, et al., 2009. Many of the studies have also pointed out at community gardens' contribution to urban food production, thereby dampening food insecurity issue gardeners may have faced, e.g.: Kantor, 2001; Brown and Carter, 2003; Wakefield, et al., 2007; and Alaimo, et al., 2008. I hypothesized that the meaning of community gardening lay in its ability in providing foods for individuals and groups of immigrants who were at risk of food insecurity.

By concluding that an empirical phenomenon, i.e. food insecurity, could be mitigated by the use of another empirically and theoretically sound intervention, i.e. community gardening, I had fallen into making what is termed 'naive empiricism.' In other words, I perceived something and held it to be true. 'Naive empiricism' is an approach that assumes a presence of one fixed and measurable reality. It rejects a presence of different kind of 'reality' that is "heterogeneous and dynamic" (Williams, 2003, p.13). It became clear to me, as I began the fieldwork phase of my study, that the problem I conceived in mind was not necessarily perceived and shared by my participants. The food insecurity as I conjectured was nowhere to be 'discovered' in the everyday lives of my study participants. My 'naive empiricism' led to unfruitful interviews and observations.

There were two implications that I drew from this experience: firstly, on the suitability of the research design for the specific topic that I initially intended to undertake; and secondly, on the constructivist nature of the problem. These two points are interrelated and best addressed together. Food security (or lack thereof) does exist. However, it does not exist as a given object. Rather, it is constructed out of processes, namely intervention and policy, among others (Alcock, 2009). Therefore, how scholars and policy-makers view and approach food security differs significantly from the way lay people describe and understand it. This multiplicity of knowing results in different 'realities' for different people. Consequently, food insecurity might (or might not) be experienced, but it was neither acknowledged nor framed by my New York study participants in the same way as many a study would have suggested. Having said that, I did not mean to rule out food insecurity as a prominent issue in the lives of foreign-born populations. I also did not imply that gardening contributes almost none to a family or a household food security. In order to proceed the study as I had originally conceived, I would have to resort to changing my research approach, from a qualitative study into a quantitative one, in order to capture larger number of study participants who might better represent the phenomenon I intended to study.

Owing to the resource constraints I faced while conducting my fieldwork in New York, I did not proceed with a new research design. Instead, I reflected on the nature of what could be the 'real' problem my study participants face, and on my underlying positivist assumptions. By questioning and reconsidering my initial standpoint, I arrived at a new research problem and a belief, or perspective grounded in constructivism. Constructivism, or social constructivism--the distinction of which lies beyond the scope of this study--views the world as composed of "multiple, apprehendable, and sometimes conflicting social realities" as opposed to being made up of discrete and objective realities--a view assumed by positivism and postpositivism alike (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.111). It was developed from works by Berger and Luckmann (1967), and Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited in Creswell, 2009). Constructivism maintains that as individuals, humans construct meanings actively and continuously as they try to make sense and understanding of the world they live in. This implies that meanings are subjective and resulted from humans' interactions with one another. Knowledge and reality are neither fixed nor given; they are and should not be treated as a set of hard facts. It becomes the task of the researcher therefore to reveal these multiple realities "with quality arguments rather than statistical exactness" (Garcia and Quek, 1997 cited in Diaz-Andrade, 2009, p.43).

Constructivism guided my understanding and interpretation of the lived experience of foreign-born community gardeners. As the author and researcher of this study, I acknowledged that the meanings of community gardening are as varied as there are people who make use of the gardens, i.e. my study participants in this context. Their motivations as to why they participated in gardening, their perceptions of the garden, of their fellow gardeners, and of the communities they lived in, are inherently different from one to another. All of these were shaped by their personal experience, resulted from social, cultural, and historical interactions they engaged in. My task as a researcher, therefore, was to understand these motivations, perceptions, experiences through a use of an appropriate research design. In many ways, the method and tools I took for this study were informed by my standpoint.

3.2. A Study in the Qualitative Research Tradition

The constructivist nature of my study provided a justification for using a qualitative research design. The use of the latter is consistent with the former, which posits that knowledge is constructed rather than produced. This implies that knowledge is neither universal nor objective as people construct and interpret meanings differently. Consequently, it calls for a research design accommodating such a paradigm. A qualitative research design is essentially "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p.4). Its aim is to explore and understand people's experience, feelings, and beliefs--aspects of human life that cannot be measured quantitatively. It includes any research type that does not produce findings via statistical procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Creswell (2009) further indicates that research problem for a qualitative research is formulated inductively, as opposed to deductively; data are collected in their natural settings; and interpretation of the researcher forms a qualitative study analysis. It is, collectively, a study that puts "a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation" (Creswell, 2007 cited in Creswell, 2009, p.4).

Within the qualitative research design itself, there are five approaches of gathering, analyzing, and presenting data--which case study and grounded theory are parts of (Creswell, 2009). I deliberately combined the two qualitative approaches as I believed that the two complement each other and lead to a better-informed practice in conducting research. Case study, on the one hand, refers to the form of a qualitative study (Merriam, 1998). It implies that the undertaken study is bounded by time and place, as well as the case itself. It set the boundary on the phenomenon or research problem that I wished to study. On the other hand, grounded theory refers to the function of a qualitative study, that is to generate a theory "that was faithful to and illuminated the area under study" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.24). It informed the selection of my research problem for this study, as well as the analysis of the data.

Grounded theory was developed from the work of Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Despite its naming, grounded theory is not so much a theory as an approach, or "a strategy of inquiry", to borrow Creswell's term (2009, p.11). Different varieties of it abound; from the original work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) to Kathy Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory. In spite of all the differing approaches and principles each scholar ascribed to his or her version, a grounded theory is inherently described as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.2). Furthermore, grounded theory demonstrates the importance of inductive reasoning, as opposed to deductive, in social research.

What was the rationale behind my selecting grounded theory for this study? All too often I felt that a theory (or multiple theories, for that matter) is forced to fit the data. Referring to my own experience, I entered the fieldwork stage of my study with a preconceived notion, or framework of what community gardening and garden spaces entailed for foreign-born gardeners. This framework turned out to be ill-suited to account for the subtleties and complexities of meanings my study participants attached to their experience. One of grounded theory's strength, as Glaser and Strauss (1967), and later Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out, is its use of in-vivo codes. In-vivo codes refer to a set of codes that are borrowed directly from the data, which in this context came from my study participants' own words and terms. By utilizing in-vivo coding, I was able to focus my analysis of

what the research problem could entail. Rather than relying on existing studies, I listened to what my study participants had to say and how they felt about the gardens they tended. I inquired what could be their motives for participating in the gardens, and what significances the gardens held for them. Thus, by using grounded theory, I had identified a research problem, or a phenomenon that was firmly grounded on my study participants' accounts. This phenomenon, figuratively speaking, emerged from empirical first-hand accounts, rather than from preconceived assumptions. Subsequently, by grounding my study in their personal experience and perspectives, I could elicit analysis and interpretation of findings that were appropriate and relevant.

An implication of using grounded theory was deciding when data collection should stop. How many interviews suffice? How many participants are enough? Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that data should be collected until theoretical saturation of data is achieved. Data saturation occurs when no more new or relevant information emerges from the data. While in theory this may sound feasible, in practice, however, theoretical saturation of data remains an ideal rather than an attainable goal (Willig, 2008). Even Glaser and Strauss (1967) contend that the process of generating a theory is always provisional--one can never be entirely sure when such saturation occurs as changes and emergent perspectives will always occur. Constrained by money and time, as well as the number of foreign-gardeners willing to participate in this study, I had to arrange for a data collection that was not only appropriate but also feasible, both financially and technically. This was how case study approach came into play in this study.

A case study entails "an exploration of a 'bounded system,' or a case (or multiple cases) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998). It is a form of qualitative research that is used to look at a program, event, activity, process, individuals or groups, or in another word, a phenomenon. It is somewhat impossible to look at, let alone analyze and explain a phenomenon in its entirety. For this reason, Merriam (1998) argues that for a phenomenon to qualify as a case, it has to be "intrinsically bounded" (p.27). To bound a phenomenon implies putting boundaries or limits around it. This can take form in various ways; for instance, limiting the number of participants for the study, and deciding the duration of the fieldwork. The most significant way in which bounding a case differs from data saturation is that the former is and can be implemented in advance of the fieldwork, as opposed to the latter which occurs simultaneously as the fieldwork. Both, however, are means to achieve similar ends, i.e. to develop an understanding of what community gardens means to foreign-born gardeners.

The phenomenon being studied was the experience of community gardening among foreign-born individuals. It invited the questions: what are the meanings of and motivations for community gardens and gardening for the foreign-born individuals? When considered in its entirety, such a phenomenon could not be easily contained within a few participants as was the case with this study. However, a case, as Merriam (1998) and Creswell (2009) emphasize, should be bounded by time, place, and activity. Therefore, I defined the case, or rather cases, for this study as foreign-born gardeners of Carver community garden and the East 117th Street community garden in East Harlem in New York City, and of Transvaalbuurt community garden and Tugela 85 Binnentuin in Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam. The cases, consisting of nine individuals in total, could be grouped into two distinct clusters: the East Harlem case study, and the Transvaalbuurt case study. I conducted the fieldwork in two phases: the former case study took place between September and October of 2012, and the latter from May to July of 2013.

3.3. Finding and Recruiting Study Participants

A total of nine foreign-born gardeners were willing to participate in this study. They were selected through a purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, Creswell (2009) notes, is aligned with the intent of qualitative study, which is to seek an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon rather than to generalize to a general population. To ensure that the purposive sampling method I took was consistent with the information needed, I had identified and came up with three attributes that my potential study participants should embody: being foreign-born; having had participation of any sort in community gardening; and residing in cities in developed countries, in this context, New York City in the United States, and Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

The first step I took was determining the localities in which I could locate and access potential study participants. As the scope of this study was focused on gardening in developed countries, my thesis supervisor--Prof. Dr. Arnold van der Valk of the Land Use Planning Group at Wageningen University--and I deemed it best to select two geographic entities in which I could find and recruit potential study participants. By having more than one group of community gardeners, the study could collect thorough details of each individual or group, and identify common patterns and differences that may arise. Having consulted both academic and general literature, my selection of localities fell to two jurisdictions: New York City in the United States, and Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

New York City was an obvious choice for several reasons. First, the number of community gardens found in New York is on the rise. Estimates vary, ranging from 500 (Urban Design Lab, 2012) to 700 community gardens (Cohen, Reynolds, and Sanghvi, 2012). This entailed having a higher probability of finding community gardens with some levels of participation from foreign-born population. My second reason was of a practical nature. Through my thesis supervisor, I was referred to two experts on urban agriculture based in New York, namely Annie Hauck-Lawson and Nevin Cohen. The third reason concerned my degree of familiarity with the city. Having visited the city for several times in 2007 and 2008, I am somewhat acquainted with the city and its environs.

Similarly, the City of Amsterdam was purposively selected for several reasons. Like New York City, Amsterdam has a sizable foreign-born population. It has scores of urban agricultural sites which includes community gardens, found inside the city, ranging from 20 to 50 in number (Lange, 2011). The proximity of Amsterdam and Wageningen, where I was based at the time of this study, also factored in when considering Amsterdam for my case study site. I have had some degree of familiarity with the city, enabling me to know where to look for community garden sites.

Finding and recruiting potential study participants for my study, however, was not a straightforward process. This was especially true in New York City. Despite the abundance of New York City's community gardens with some migrant participation, I could not obtain participants for my study right away. At the onset of my stay in the city, my best judgment was to reach out to organizations or government agencies dealing with community-initiated projects. I made several email requests and phone calls to two organizations: one assists refugees and asylum-seekers from war-torn countries, and the other manages community greening efforts inside New York City. My efforts at reaching the two organizations, however, were unfruitful. One of the two organizations indicated their inability to provide me with some assistance due to lack of staff.

I opted for a more overt approach by conducting preliminary site visits with some hopes of encountering potential foreign-born community gardeners along the way. I consulted an interactive map provided by GrowNYC—a non-profit organization based in New York that ran the city's farmer's markets—and GreenThumb—a division of New York City Department of Parks and Recreation dedicated to supporting community gardens. The map provides information pertaining to the names, addresses, types of foods grown, and languages spoken in each community garden that were listed on the map. The last type of information was useful in indicating plausible presence of foreign-born community gardeners. These site visits, however, turned out to be rather impractical for two reasons: more often than not, the community gardens I visited were locked and only accessible during certain hours. And when they were indeed open to the public, it did not necessarily guarantee the presence of their foreign-born participants.

My last effort was more pragmatic. I scanned online articles and websites related to community gardening programs in New York City found on the internet. My search yielded several results showing some names of community gardens along with the contacts of their caretakers. From this strategy I employed, I successfully gained contact to one of my study participants at Carver community garden in East Harlem. She was the founder as well as the director of a non-profit organization, Unidos Si Se Puede. She acted as "a gatekeeper" in the fieldwork, as she provided initial contact and referred me to other potential study participants who were involved at Carver community garden and East 117th Street community garden (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 cited in Creswell, 1998, p.117).

As for the Amsterdam phase of my fieldwork, I experienced much ease at getting access to the four study participants. I was introduced to Martin ten Brinke, one of the founding members of Transvaalbuurt community garden at Afrikanerplein in Amsterdam, by my thesis supervisor. From ten Brinke, I was informed of an open house day of the community garden which was open to the public. By attending the open house day, I met with four community gardeners of foreign background and made myself known to them. I then informed them of my research and inquired if they would be willing to participate as my study participants.

3.4. Collecting Data

Data collected for this study came from nine foreign-born community gardeners in East Harlem in New York City and Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam. The data included demographic information of each study participants, such as age, country of origin, and the length of their stay in the respective adopted country, but first and foremost, the study participants' accounts of their experiences and perceptions of community gardening provided the primary qualitative data for this study. Creswell (2009) identifies four types of data collection methods by which qualitative data could be acquired: observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual material. In this study, the four aforementioned instruments were used in varying degree depending on their availability or on whether the circumstances permitted such uses. I could not enforce their practical application consistently throughout the fieldwork as different conditions existed among the cases. My prolonged contact with the New York City study participants, for instance, allowed me to establish better rapport with them as opposed to the one-time interviews yielded from the Amsterdam study participants. Nevertheless, I strove to ensure that the data collection procedures I chose for each of the cases remained appropriate, and consistent whenever possible.

The fieldwork for the East Harlem case study occurred between September and October of 2012. Taking place in a classroom setting, I was able to maintain prolonged contacts with the five study participants throughout my four-week stay with them. The classroom was located at the Taino Tower Complex, lying two blocks south of Carver Community garden in East Harlem. In this classroom, four out of the five study participants learned English as a Second Language (ESL), while the last participant provided instruction to them. The class was offered by a non-profit organization, Unidos Si Se Puede, as part of its outreach efforts for foreign-born communities in New York City. It was held four times a week--from Tuesday to Friday from 11:00 to 13:00. The attendance varied from as few as seven to as many as sixteen. When I first initially reached it on the 26th of September of 2012, I counted seven students in attendance. Not all of them had participated in community gardening, however.

As I introduced myself in front of the class on that very first day, I explained the purpose of my visit briefly. I clearly mentioned my intent of studying foreign-born participation in community gardens without being too specific and technical lest I might deter potential participants from contributing to my study. As most, if not all of the students in attendance were not proficient in English, I had one of the two instructors--who would also become my study participant--interpret what I had to say into Spanish, the language most spoken by the ESL students. Having introduced myself and explained the purpose of my visit, I established myself as one of the students. I attended the ESL class three times a week for two hours each session. I took a seat among the rest of the students and participated in the learning experience just as I would in any other class.

While not directly instrumental in gaining insights of community gardening, being an observer as well as a participant allowed me to spend enough time interacting and conversing with the students. A few of them, I would found out later on during the fieldwork, had participated in community gardening and were willing to contribute to my study. However, the social circumstance I initially found myself in dictated that I could not delve straight into interviewing the potential study participants and leave at my convenience. Rather, by participating in the ESL class, I slowly learned to know the students in the class and made my presence known. To inspire their trust and acceptance on my part as a researcher was crucial in order for me to proceed with the fieldwork and gain the much needed data. At the same time, by spending some time with the potential study participants and other non-participants, I was able to observe interactions and acquire information pertaining to community gardening which would otherwise had been impossible. In a way, participant observation helped to reestablished the topic for this study. These were carefully written down in a notebook. I also noted my general impressions regarding the study participants' actions and behaviors.

Out of a total of eighteen or so individuals involved in the ESL program of Unidos Si Se Puede, I had identified five potential study participants and asked for their willingness to participate in my study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants, allowing flexibility on my part as an interviewer and freedom in responses on their part as interviewees (Creswell, 1998; 2009). The open-nature of the questions encouraged in-depth information on the participants' beliefs, insights, and knowledge regarding community gardening. On average, the interviews lasted between thirty minutes to an hour. Due to the need of a interpret, I conducted two of the interviews in a group format, whereas the remaining three were carried out individually. Four out of the five interviews were conducted in the same classroom where the ESL class was held, while one occurred in the vicinity of the East 117th Street Community garden. All of the interviews were conducted in English. In the

cases of the three interviewees who lacked communication skills in English, an interpreter helped me in interpreting the questions and answers from English to Spanish and vice versa. I began the interviews by stating the intent verbally and ascertained their rights to withdraw from the interviews at any time. I also asked for their consents to audio record the conversations.

Lastly, a video material and published online website accompanied the overall data collection procedures I conducted for the East Harlem case study. In 2011 a group of New York University students led by Jesse Rosenberg (2011) produced a short documentary film on Unidos Si Se Puede, specifically on its community gardening efforts. The film, lasting for five minutes in total, "demonstrates how the garden serves as a connection between the organization and the [foreign-born] families" (Rosenberg, 2011). The film provided additional insights about the foreign-born gardeners' experience and perception of community gardening, and at the same time, it reconfirmed previous findings I had gathered from the interviews and observations. Additionally, a published website of Unidos Si Se Puede provided some background information on the organization and the projects it carried.

The data collection procedures for the Transvaalbuurt case study were much more straightforward, yet limited in variety. The fieldwork for this case study took place between May and July of 2013, although initial contacts were made a month previously with the four study participants. I met with all four participants during Transvaalbuurt community garden open day in April of 2013. I briefly introduced myself and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. Due to the nature of occupations of the study participants, I could only meet them on a one-time basis. I then arranged for individual interviews with each of the study participants at their convenience.

A similar procedure was applied for the semi-structured interviews I conducted with the Transvaalbuurt case study participants. Such as the cases with the New York City study participants, the duration of the interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour in length. One of the interviews took place in the house of the respective study participants; two in Tugela 85, a building housing several community initiatives of Transvaalbuurt; and the last one in a corner snack bar on Afrikanerplein. I conducted two out of the four interviews directly in English, one in Indonesian, and the last one was initiated with a help of a friend acting as a interpreter, from English to Dutch and vice versa. I restated the purpose of my study before obtaining their consents for audio recording.

3.5. Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Analyzing data from the fieldwork involved taking a closer look at, examining, and interpreting the data gathered. Data from the interviews and the video material were transcribed word-for-word in English and Indonesian. As for the interviews that were conducted in Spanish and Dutch, I asked for help from friends who speak the languages in translating and transcribing them. The use of a coding procedure as prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) seeks to break down, organize, and classify the data into common phrases, concepts, or themes. It functioned as a "fundamental analytic process" (p.12), from which I could construct descriptions and interpretations of what community gardening and garden spaces entailed for the study participants.

When analyzing the contents of the transcribed materials, I specifically looked for words, phrases, or sentences that "strikes the analyst as being significant and analytically interesting" (Strauss and

Corbin, 1998, p.93). I labeled and color-coded them, and organized them according to the research questions I had for this study. The notes from the observations provided a comparison, which allowed me to observe things in the data that otherwise would have been overlooked. These data were laid out in a Word document and divided into three tables: one contained the original transcript, another contained the labels for the coding, using words and phrases from the original transcript, and the last contained my own note which corresponded to the analysis.

Chapter 4

SETTINGS AND PROFILES



This chapter introduces the settings and the study participants involved in this study. These settings refer to the four community gardens in which the nine foreign-born individuals planted, grew, and tended plants. In describing the settings, they are not necessarily limited to the physical descriptions of the community gardens my study participants were involved in and with, but also encompass larger geographic and demographic contexts in which the gardens and the gardeners are embedded. By providing the general contexts in which my study participants experienced and lived their everyday lives, this chapter seeks to establish familiarity with the phenomenon of this study.

Following the descriptions of the gardens are the short profiles of the study participants. These serve as a glimpse into each of the nine foreign-born individuals who agreed to participate in this study. Their age, country of origin, as well as personal background are presented. Each of these short descriptions intends to portray the participants as real, living persons rather than just some subjects of this study. Although all nine participants consented to have their interviews documented and published for this study, I have decided to use pseudonym in lieu of their first names to better protect their privacy.

4.1. States of Immigration in The United States and The Netherlands

According to the 2010 American Community Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau, foreign-born population makes up of almost 40 millions of the country's population (Grieco, et al., 2012). They represent 13 percent of the entire United States population. A majority of them come from Latin America and the Caribbean, with migrants from Mexico constituting the most number of migrants. The rest come from Asia at 28 percent, Europe at 12 percent, Africa at 4 percent, North America at 2 percent, and Oceania at 1 percent. Reportedly, new migrations—both legal and illegal—along with births by foreign-born mothers contributed to an addition of 22.5 million residents to the United States over a decade from 2000 to 2010. While these figures may seem high, the US share of foreign-born population remains relatively comparable to those of other high-income countries, such as Austria, Sweden, and Germany (OECD, 2010).

A similar situation can be found in the Netherlands, the other country of interest for this study. Roughly 1.8 million of the Dutch population can be classified as first-generation foreign-born, or what is known as first-generation “allochtonen” in the Dutch language (CBS, 2013). They accounted for more than 11 percent of the entire population as of 2012. The countries where they most come from are Turkey at 11 percent, Suriname at 10, Morocco at 9 percent, Indonesia at 8 percent, Germany at 7 percent, and the rest at 55 percent come from various countries inside and outside European Union (Vasileva, 2011).

At the regional level, the distribution of foreign-born migrants shows a pattern of spatial polarization between rural and urban areas. In contrast to the earlier European immigrations to the United States, immigration to the United States from mid-19th century onward has been characterized by its urban orientation. Data indicates that most foreign-born migrants enter and settle in so-called “gateway cities,” such as New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Chicago (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996 cited in Massey, 2008, p.6). A similar trend can be observed nowadays as migrant populations enter the United States through major urban centers.

In the Netherlands, the biggest migration flow occurs in its four biggest cities, namely Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht (Bontje and Latten, 2005). Two reasons could be attributed for foreign-born migrants' preference for settling in urban regions as opposed to rural areas, according to Massey (2008). First, foreign-born migrants tend to come and live in cities where there is already community of migrants of the same origin. Social support tends to be more readily offered by people of the same origin to their compatriots, as well as economic support. Bontje and Latten (2005) also pointed out that young migrants developed a strong penchant for settling in major cities due to their compensating for the loss of native family households. Second, bigger population and number of businesses in cities often translate to “a high demand for informal-sector service jobs,” attracting newly-arrived migrants to settle and work there (Sassen, 1991 cited in Massey, 2008, p.9).

New York City is no exception to this trend. With an estimated population of 8.2 million inhabitants in 2011, the city reported a net increase of 1 percent population growth between 2010 and 2011 (US Census Bureau, 2011). While natural increase contributes the most to this net population growth, international migration by foreign-born migrants to the city brought almost 60 thousands new inhabitants to the city in 2010. In total, more than three millions of the city's eight million residents were reportedly foreign-born in 2010. Seven out of the top ten source countries are located in Latin

America and the Caribbean: Dominican Republic (346,000), Mexico (167,000), Jamaica (170,000), Guyana (137,000), Ecuador (133,000), Haiti (93,000), and Trinidad and Tobago (92,000). The three other top ten countries are China, which includes Hong Kong and Taiwan (301,000), India (74,000), and Russia (77,000). Together, these ten countries contributed more than 55 percent of New York City's foreign-born population as of 2010. The rest 45 percent came from various parts of the world.

The level of ethnic and national diversity of New York City—or Nieuw Amsterdam, as it was called during the 17th century—is also observed in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The total number of foreign-born population, i.e. first-generation allocthonon living in the city in 2012 was estimated at 226,530 inhabitants (CBS, 2013). In a city of roughly 800,000 inhabitants, Amsterdam's foreign-born population accounts for 29 percent of the total population. This figure is almost triple the national average at 11 percent. Most of the foreign-born population is composed of non-Western migrants from Morocco (34,000), the former Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (7,000), Suriname (39,000), and Turkey (22,000). While Western migrants—those coming from European, North American, Oceanic countries, as well as Indonesia and Japan, number around 67,000.

4.2. The East Harlem Case Study

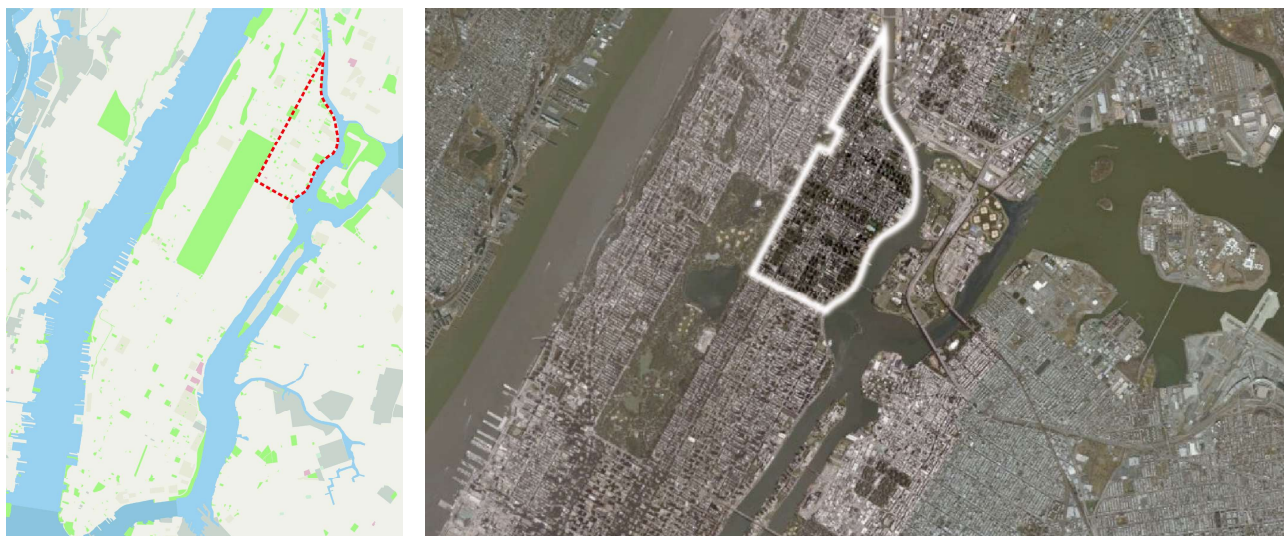
4.2.1. The Neighborhood of East Harlem

East Harlem lies in the northeastern part of New York City's borough of Manhattan (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). It extends west of the East River, between East 96th Street and East 148th Street, occupying an area of roughly 4.8 square kilometers (Rosen and Greenfeld, 2006). The origin of the neighborhood can be dated back to the founding of Nieuw Amsterdam in the 17th century. It was built by Dutch settlers who decided to name it 'Nieuw Haarlem,' after the City of Haarlem in the Netherlands; the spelling was later anglicized to its present-day form, 'Harlem.' The name's foreign origin serves as a reminder of the diversity of its population. Harlem has been characterized by its working-class, immigrant roots throughout its four centuries of existence; from European immigrants who came to the area in the 19th century, to African-American and Latino groups, Harlem has always been home for ethnically diverse communities (East Harlem Studio Group, 2011, p.12).

The neighborhood is predominantly Latino and African-American in regards to ethnic and racial identity. As of 2010, the US Census Bureau estimates the population of East Harlem at 110,000 inhabitants--as many as 51.2 percent of the population sampled describe themselves as Hispanic, or Latino (US Census Bureau, 2011). This percentage is almost double the city's average of 27.5 percent. The majority of the Hispanic or Latino population--which includes both first- and second-generation Americans--is of Puerto Rican descent, followed by Mexican, Dominican, Cuban, and other Central and South American origins. Owing to the abundance of Spanish-speaking residents in the neighborhood, East Harlem has aptly earned its nickname, 'Spanish Harlem,' or 'El Barrio' since the 1940s (East Harlem Studio Group, 2011). African-American constitutes the second largest demographic group. The US Census Bureau (2011) estimated their number at 38,705 inhabitants, making up 35 percent of East Harlem's population.

Along the line of country-of-origin, East Harlem's share of foreign-born population is made up of

almost 30,000 inhabitants, constituting roughly 26 percent of the neighborhood's population in 2011. More than two-thirds of them came from Central and South American countries (US Census Bureau, 2011). The rest came from other parts of the world: Asia (20 percent), Europe (8 percent), Africa (4 percent), and Oceania (less than 1 percent).



Figures 4.1. and 4.2. Location of East Harlem in New York City (left) and satellite view of the neighborhood (right) (Carto, 2015 and Google Maps, 2014)

4.2.2. Settings of the Community Gardens

As definitions and uses of community gardens vary widely, it remains rather difficult to establish the total amount of such places that exist in East Harlem. An undercounting, or even an overcounting, could easily arise from incorporating too broad or too limited conceptualization of what constitutes a community garden. For the purpose of this chapter, I have turned to relying on the data provided by New Yorkers for Parks' (2012) Open Space Index, a set of measures aiming to assess and count the quantity and quality of open spaces in New York City. As of 2012, the index estimated a total of 39 community gardens found in East Harlem alone. Two of these, Carver and East 117th Street community gardens, are the gardens my study participants tend and become part of. The following general description of the two gardens is intended to provide some insight into the settings where the phenomenon of community gardening take place among the foreign-born gardeners.

Carver community garden. Carver community garden is located along East 124th Street, between Second and Third Avenues in Manhattan. It lies a block away from the Taino Towers complex, a federally-funded, low-income apartments where my interviews with the foreign-born community gardeners took place. The garden has been previously called 'El Jardín de Cuatro Mujeres,' which translates to 'the Garden for Four Women' (Deptula, 2011). While it has been present since the early 1970s, its existence was threatened two decades later. In 1999, it became one of the 114 community gardens scheduled to be auctioned off by the city during Mayor Giuliani's administration. The decision, however, sparked a lot of protests and legal actions. The plan to sell Carver community garden along with 113 other gardens was canceled following the purchase of the gardens by two non-profit organizations, the Trust for Public Land, or TPL, and New York Restoration Project, or NYRP (Eizenberg, 2012). The ownership and management of 62 gardens, including Carver, were taken over by

TPL in a deal that cost 3 million US dollars. In June 2011, TPL decided to transfer the deeds of ownership of its 32 gardens, 18 of which are located in the Bronx and 14 in Manhattan, to two recently established, borough-based non-profit organizations, the Manhattan and Bronx Land Trusts. These trusts, which were formed in 2004, had been conceived to save and preserve community garden spaces in the two boroughs (Metrogardening, 2011). Carver community garden has ever since been owned and maintained by the Manhattan Land Trust.

Tucked between several buildings, the garden occupies a plot of roughly 1,200 square meters. Upon entering, one is greeted with a large mural painting on the left wall of the garden, depicting a scene of a rather idealized vision of a community garden located in the middle of what seems to be New York City, with the sun rising over the horizon. Four rows of small raised beds flank the right side of the garden, while to the left can be found three series of long and large raised beds, each filled with vegetables like tomatoes, chili peppers, green peas, cucumbers and varying assortments of gourds, as well as several leafy greens. Not every square meter of the garden is dedicated to growing produce, though. Some flowers and perennial bushes are grown inside several pots and planters located around the garden. A wooden gazebo stands under deciduous trees at the back of the garden. Surrounding it are several wooden picnic tables and barbeque grills that seem to have not been used for quite some time. The garden's communal space is shared by several individuals and community groups (The Trust for Public Land, 2011). One of these groups is Unidos Si Se Puede, a non-profit organization led by Ysabel, one of the study participants, and whose significance I shall describe later.

The East 117th Street community garden. I could not find much information pertaining to the East 117th Street community garden. Information I obtained were, at best, anecdotal and sparse. The garden occupies two small-sized lots in a residential block located on a street by the same name between Third and Lexington Avenues in East Harlem. The lots had been previously vacant and were converted into a community garden space in 1997 by GreenThumb. A metal chain-link fence guards the frontage of the garden and runs through its middle, dividing the garden into two equal parts. The national flag of Puerto Rico was hoisted above one of the two 'casitas' I encountered, one was located toward the front more than the other.

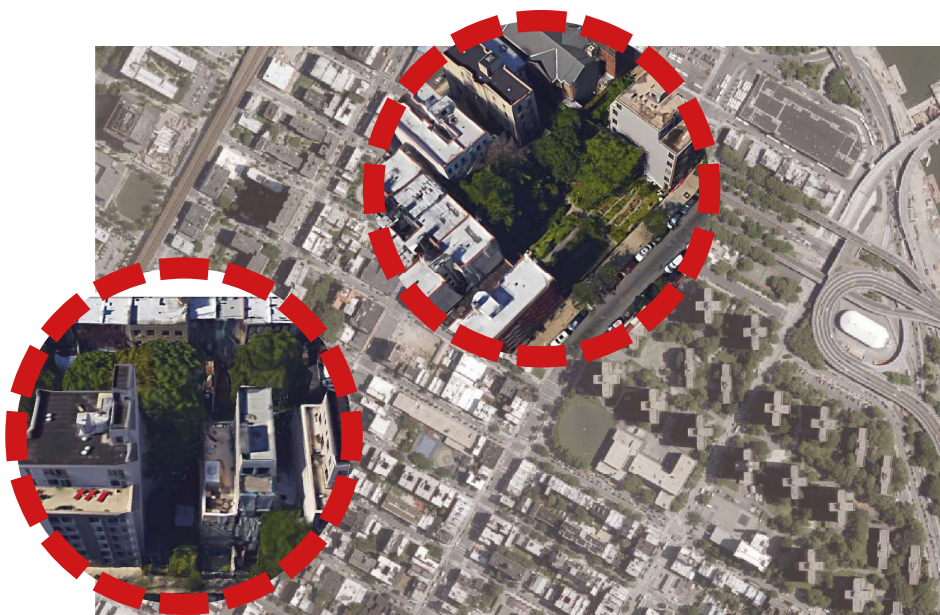


Figure 4.3. Locations of Carver (upper right hand corner) and the East 117th Street (lower left hand corner) community gardens in East Harlem (Google Maps, 2014)

4.2.3. Profiles of the Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Country of Origin	No of Year in US	Date of Interview
Angelica	30	Mexico	8	18-10-2012
Irene	25	Mexico	5	25-10-2012
Naomi	60	Puerto Rico (US)	30	(multiple times)
Xenia	28	Mexico	6	18-10-2012
Ysabel	41	Guatemala	25	(multiple times)

Table 2. Demographic information of the East Harlem case study participants

Angelica. Angelica came from Mexico with her husband eight years ago. They have two children and reside on Amsterdam Avenue in West Harlem. Her decision to go to live in the United States was motivated by her desire to find an employment.

Irene. Irene is a mother of five children and originally hails from Mexico. Throughout my encounter with her, she was always seen with her youngest son, a boy of three year old, whom she always took with her to the ESL class at Unidos Si Se Puede. She, her husband, and their five children live on Amsterdam Avenue in West Harlem. They moved to the United States some five years ago in order to get what she terms, "*a better economy*." Her participation on the ESL class extends one year before the others. However, unlike Angelica and Xenia--both of whom originated from the same country as her--Irene does not speak Spanish as a first language. Rather, she speaks the Mixtec language, an indigenous Mesoamerican language native to her hometown. Accordingly, my interview with her proved to be most challenging as our language barrier prevented us from expressing ourselves clearly.

Naomi. Naomi is a 60-year old Puerto Rican who has been living the longest in the United States compared to my other study participants. She lives in East Harlem with her two dogs. "*Two Chihuahuas*," she proudly said to me. Naomi moved to the United States from Puerto Rico some 30 years ago. She moved to New York City with her now-deceased husband in order to seek treatment for a disease she has had. Two of her three adult children, both males in their 40s, live in different parts of the city. Naomi's another child, a daughter, lives back in Puerto Rico. Clearly, Naomi never considers New York City as home. She expressed her wish to return to Puerto Rico the following year to visit her daughter.

Having stayed the longest in the United States, Naomi possesses a good command of English. She showed up regularly to the ESL class held by Unidos Si Se Puede in the fall of 2012. Despite of that, a misunderstanding ensued between me and her. I did not discover her engagement as a caretaker of a community garden, namely the East 117th Street community garden, until much later in my field-work. In a somewhat funny yet endearing manner, she calls her garden, 'GreenThumb,' mistaking the name of the citywide organization as the name for the garden.

Ysabel. Ysabel is a 41-year old woman, a mother to nine children and a grandmother to one. She originated from Guatemala, a country where she lived until her teens. She identifies herself as a Maya. She speaks Spanish as her first language. She lives in the Taino Towers complex, the same location where she held her English language class for non-native speakers. She is also the director of a non-profit organization, Unidos Si Se Puede, which she founded with the help of a friend and family members in June of 2010. She is married to her husband and resides with him and their nine children until recently; two of their oldest children have "*become independent*," to quote her words.

Her story coming to the United States was a sad one. "*Well, my reason was kinda sad because I was running away from my father.*" She confided to me that her father was abusive to both her mother and her. In 1987, after several stopovers in various places, she found herself in New York City, where she has been living ever since. Having little things of her own, she "*worked on street selling many things.*" Later on she would work waiting tables and becoming a singing performer, before she finally found her true calling. She, in my opinion, stands out as a strong and independent woman, perhaps owing to her background. She has been more determined than ever to help assist people coming from different countries in adjusting their lives in New York City.

Xenia. Like Angelica and Irene, Xenia originally hails from Mexico. She is a 28-year-old woman living with her three children and her husband in East Harlem. They have been living in the United States for the last six years. Back in Mexico, she used to make thread bracelets for sale. At the end of my stay in New York City, Xenia presented me with a bracelet with my name of it.

4.3. The Transvaalbuurt Case Study

4.3.1. The Neighborhood of Transvaalbuurt

Transvaalbuurt is one of the several neighborhoods--as indicated by the Dutch word, 'buurt,' meaning 'neighborhood'--that make up the recently formed Amsterdam-Oost district. The district, which means 'Amsterdam East,' was formed in 2010 following a merger between the two former districts of Zeeburg and Watergraafsmeer (Stadsdeel Oost, 2010). The relatively tiny Transvaalbuurt--in comparison to the much larger East Harlem--lies in the northwestern part of the district and measures roughly 0.38 square kilometers in area (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5). It is bounded on its north and west sides by a railroad track that stretches between Amstel and Muiderpoort stations, Linnaeustraat on the east, and Transvaalkade on the south. The origin of the neighborhood can be traced back to the turn of the 20th century when the prominent Dutch architect, Hendrik Petrus Berlage, conceived a street and building plan for a new urban development in the area which is now Transvaalbuurt (Heijdra, 1997). Streets and squares in the neighborhood have been named after public figures and geographical features of the former Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State in present-day South Africa, in a bid to pay homage to the Boers (Metz, 2012).

Transvaalbuurt is primarily a residential neighborhood. As of 2010, the population of Transvaalbuurt was estimated at 9,301 inhabitants, showing a decrease of 700 inhabitant decrease from the previous decade (Stadsdeel Oost, 2010). Despite its relatively small size, the neighborhood is densely populated, having the third highest amount of inhabitants in Amsterdam-Oost. It is a relatively



young neighborhood: in 2010, the municipal (Stadsdeel Oost, 2010) reported that 61 percent of Transvaalbuurt's populations were younger than 39 years of age; thirty two percent were between the ages of 40 and 64, and only 7 percent were 64 or older. At 52 percent, more than half of its residents can be categorized as non-western 'allochtonen.' People of Moroccan descent make up the majority of the non-western allochtonen at 19 percent, followed by Suriname (10 percent), and Turkey (8 percent). Western allochtonen, on the other hand, make up 13 percent of the neighborhood's share of foreign-born (including both first- and second-generation) population. By contrast, Amsterdam as a whole has about 35 percent and 15 percent of non-western and western allochtonen respectively.

Figures 4.4. and 4.5. Location of Transvaalbuurt in Amsterdam (above) and satellite view of the neighborhood (Carto, 2015 and Google Maps, 2014)

4.3.2. Settings of the Community Gardens

Different ways of defining the concept 'community garden' also pose a challenge in determining the exact number of such establishments in Transvaalbuurt. The specific connotation and nuance of the term might also be lost when translated into another language. The website Buurtmoestuinen in Nederland.nl (n.d.) lists as many as 9 'neighborhood gardens,' or buurttuinen in Dutch, that can be found in the neighborhood of Transvaal. It cautiously notes, however, that not all of these gardens are 'moestuinen,' or vegetable gardens. They range from a big garden, such as on Afrikanerplein, to a couple of flower pots put together. Based on my own observation and interview with Martin ten Brinke (2013), I can safely conclude that there are at least four gardens that could be labeled as community gardens in the vicinity. Two of these gardens are of special importance to this study.

Transvaalbuurt community garden. Transvaalbuurtmoestuinen, which roughly translates into 'Transvaal neighborhood vegetable gardens,' is located on the southwestern part of Transvaal, occupying a center of a triangle-shaped square called Afrikanerplein. The garden and the square is surrounded predominantly by four-to-five story high residential buildings on all sides. It is located at a busy intersection marking the entrance to the neighborhood for pedestrian, bike, and vehicular traffics coming from Amsterdam Amstel.

Prior to its use as a communal gardening space, the square was an ordinary neighborhood park (Brinke, 2013). It was largely unused for most of the time, with dogs and their walkers frequenting the space occasionally. The impetus for a community garden project came from five Transvaal residents, of which Brinke was one. It started in August of 2010 at a neighborhood meeting in light of the funding provided by the former Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, or VROM. In adopting a plan and design for the garden, the five residents--all of whom became the first board members for the newly-conceived garden--were inspired by the revival of community gardening movement taking place in many a North American city. The design for the garden qualified for the funding, also known as 'Stimuleringsfonds Volkstuinen,' or 'Allotment Garden Incentive Fund.' It opened its door to the public on the 26th of March 2011.

The garden sits on a 1,300 square meter plot (Tzu, 2012). As one proceeds from the main entrance, one notices a bulletin board listing information related to the garden. A meandering pathway, rather than a straight one, takes one around and divides one space from the others. There are as many as twenty five plots for individual gardeners, one plot dedicated for a 'pluktuin,' another for growing flowers, one reserved for children education, and a raised concrete planting bed for people with disabilities preventing them from kneeling or stooping. Two long benches provide opportunities to sit and relax, or socialize with fellow gardeners and visitors alike. An insect hotel made of bamboos, wooden logs, and bricks acts as a shelter for various kind of pollinators.

Binnentuin at Tugela 85 community garden. The literal translation of the Dutch name for this garden is 'indoor garden of Tugela 85.' It is one of the smaller gardening spaces in the whole neighborhood, if not the smallest. Its hidden location, i.e. inside a former school building on Tugelaweg 85--hence the name--exudes an impression of inaccessibility and exclusiveness. Despite of that, the garden is accessible to any resident who wish to visit and tend it. A plastic greenhouse stands in the center of the garden. It houses tropical plants that are otherwise too fragile to grow outdoor in the temperate climate of Amsterdam.

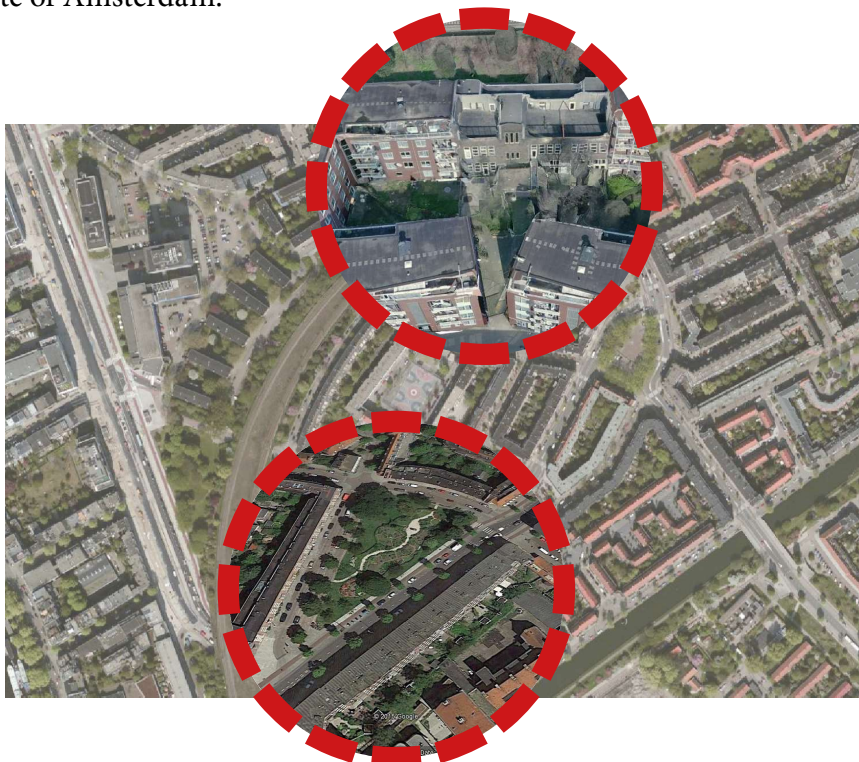


Figure 4.6. Locations of Transvaalbuurt (lower) and Binnentuin (upper) community gardens in Transvaalbuurt (Google Maps, 2014)

4.3.3. Profiles of the Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Country of Origin	No of Year in NL	Date of Interview
Ajda	39	Turkey	22	07-07-2013
Emma	55	United States	13	02-05-2013
Fitri	69	Indonesia	32	03-06-2013
Lizette	51	France-Portugal	24	21-06-2013

Table 3. Demographic information of the Transvaalbuurt case study participants

Ajda. Ajda comes from Turkey and has been residing in the Netherlands since 22 years ago. She is married and has 3 children. Her youngest son, who accompanied her the day we met for the interview, also participates in the garden every Saturday. Ajda tends her own individual plot at Transvaalbuurt community garden. She quickly expressed her eagerness the very first day I approached her, asking for her participation in this study. As she does not speak English, my interview with her was conducted in Dutch with the aid of a friend acting as an interpreter.

Emma. Emma is a 55-year old artist from New York City. Together with Lizette and three other members, she laid the foundation and groundwork for what was to become Transvaalbuurt community garden. She was also the creative force behind the design of the garden, drawing up a plan for what the garden should look like. Her other physical contribution to the garden includes a water installation for the garden, encased in brickwork. Her office, where I conducted my interview with her, occupies a spacious room in the back side of Tugela 85 building, overlooking the Binnentuin community garden.

Fitri. Fitri was born in Indonesia but has been living away from her home country for most of her life. An Indonesian native originally, Fitri found herself stateless during Indonesia's tumultuous era in the 1960s. Before finally settling in the Netherlands in the 1990s, Fitri and her family spent considerable amount of time residing in Vietnam. She is my only study participant in Amsterdam who tends the Binnentuin Tugela 85 community garden. Her involvement with the garden and the gardening community comes from her daughter who was active in several community projects for the neighborhood. She introduced Fitri to several people who were active and involved in the community garden projects in Transvaalbuurt. From that moment on, Fitri has been involved in the projects, one of which involves Binnentuin community garden.

Lizete. Lizete was born in Portugal but grew up and spent a considerable time of her life in Paris in France before she finally moved to the Netherlands. As I have previously mentioned, Lizete along with Emma and three other residents of Transvaalbuurt were the ones behind the impetus for Transvaalbuurt community garden project. Lizete's love for gardening could be traced back to her early years living in an apartment in Paris. She puts her green fingers to work not only at Transvaalbuurt community garden, but also in the backyard garden of the apartment building she occupies.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS



The time I spent with the nine study participants yielded a plethora of information concerning their motives for participation in community gardening and the significance they attach to the garden they tend and plant in. These findings were derived from the data I collected from interviews with the study participants, and observations of the garden sites, as well as from field notes and audio material I collected (see Chapter 3.4. Collecting the Data). These findings provide a basis for answering the two research questions I laid out at the onset of this study, i.e., finding out motivations for and meanings of community gardening among foreign-born individuals. In line with the constructivist epistemology I embrace for this study, the use of verbatim quotations reflects the diverse beliefs, experiences, and understandings that the study participant have toward the phenomenon.

5.1. The East Harlem Case Study

The backgrounds and motives of the study participant in the East Harlem case study are closely linked to Unidos Si Se Puede, a non-profit organization to which they belong. All study participants, with the exception of Naomi--who tends her own community garden plot at East 117th Street community garden--indicated that their participation at Carver community garden could be attributed to their involvement at the organization. Exploring motives and meanings they have for community gardening therefore, requires a general introduction to the organization Unidos Si Se Puede and its activities. This subchapter begins by exploring what the organization entails, followed by the findings pertinent to this study.

5.1.1. On Unidos Si Se Puede and Its Significance

Unidos Si Se Puede is a non-profit organization that Ysabel founded back in 2010. The name of the organization can be translated as 'united yes we can.' The name pays homage to the 2008 United States presidential election in which the then Senator Obama introduced his slogan for the presidential campaign, "Yes We Can." At the same time, the slogan was originally derived from the work of Cesar Chavez, an American labor leader and civil right activist who coined the term "Si Se Puede" back in 1972 as a motto for the United Farm Workers, a labor union in the United States (Brody, 2013). The official website of Unidos Si Se Puede listed its mission as the following:

"offering services and programs that enhances education, health, and economics to adults, youth, and children. Provide training for new employment opportunities, thus helping the development, cultivation, welfare, and unity of family and residents of the community."

unidossisepuede.org, 2010



Figure 5.1. Logo of the organization
Unidos Si Se Puede
(unidossisepuede.org, 2010)

Occupying half of the top floor of the Taino Towers complex annex building, Unidos Si Se Puede is run and managed by Ysabel. She performs multiple tasks in the organization, ranging from serving as the director to teaching language classes. She receives some assistance from her own family members, including her children and a niece, who taught ESL (English as a Second Language) class during my fieldwork in New York City. In addition to ESL class, Unidos Si Se Puede offers an array of service and programs that includes: Spanish language course, dancing and fitness classes, personal finance course, support and counseling groups, as well as food and clothes donation program. Two fully-loaded cardboard boxes lay at one of the corner of the room, filled with gently-used clothes and shoes meant to be donated to local churches and charities in Mexico, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic--the three countries where most of Unidos Si Se Puede's members come from.

Unidos Si Se Puede caters toward low-income individuals and families coming from Latin American countries who reside in East Harlem and surrounding neighborhoods. Many of its clientele are

foreign-born nationals who have entered and lived in the United States illegally. The organization's focus on Latin America is not surprising given Ysabel's own background and affinity to the geographically and culturally vast region. She moved to the United States from Guatemala in 1987. In 2003, she gained her United States citizenship. Equipped with this experience and training in volunteer coordination and management, Ysabel feels compelled to assist, help, and connect with Latino foreign-born community in East Harlem and its vicinity.

Although the organization's main target group is Spanish-speaking population in the neighborhood, in practice, Ysabel does not bar anyone from joining and receiving help and service. *"We want to provide to people regardless of their race, skin color, sex, and religion,"* Ysabel spoke to me on one occasion. A woman of Yemen origin had been attending the ESL class during the fall of 2012 when my fieldwork took place. While language and cultural differences between Ysabel and the Yemeni woman often proved a barrier in understanding each other, it did not stop Ysabel from taking in students who do not share the same mother tongue as her. In fact, the organization took pride in its commitment to help *"to integrate indigenas by teaching them English and Spanish"* (Guevara, 2012).

The Spanish word 'indigenas,' or indigenous in English, refers to a certain part of Latin American population who identify with pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas (Semple, 2014). They are often contrasted with those of mixed-race ancestry, in the way that the former often speak variants of indigenous languages instead of Spanish. They form one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged groups in the region. More than half of the total number of students enrolled in Unidos Si Se Puede's ESL class that semester identify as indigenous people. Isolated linguistically from the rest of Latino populations who speak Spanish, and the majority of New Yorkers who speak English, the indigenous people often find themselves struggling with a multitude of everyday life practices. It was against this backdrop of alienation that Unidos Si Se Puede came into existence. One of its concerted efforts to bridge this gap of alienation is through community gardening.

5.1.2. On Motives for Participation

As part of the activities conducted by Unidos Si Se Puede, Ysabel occasionally takes members of the organization to Carver community garden, lying two blocks north of the Taino Tower complex (see Figure 5.2). The garden itself dates back to the 1970s. However, it was not until the Trust for Public Land saved the lot from being auctioned off in 1997 that it became more accessible for local people and organizations, such as Unidos Si Se Puede (see Chapter 4.2.2. Settings of the Community Gardens). Amid the enclosure of the garden, Ysabel and other members of Unidos Si Se Puede, most of whom are female, perform several tasks, ranging from picking up debris and raking up leaves on the ground, to digging up holes and planting fruits and mostly vegetable seeds in the raised garden beds that are reserved for the organization's use.

Prior to founding Unidos Si Se Puede, Ysabel worked as a volunteer coordinator at a woman and child care organization. There she often found herself dealing with situations involving recently-arrived migrants lacking the communication skills to make themselves understood.

"I was sad because I hear many cases where they said that sometimes they really needed to have services outside, like the clinics, or weekend [mentoring] for the

children. And they were frustrated because they did not understand. People did not understand what they were talking about, because they spoke another language that is [neither] Spanish [nor] English. They speak other dialects."

Being a former migrant herself, this is an experience that resonates with Ysabel. The absence of communication and understanding is quite rampant among newly-arrived migrants in New York City. Among newcomers from Central and South American countries, the share of people who understand neither English nor Spanish--the two most spoken languages in the city--is higher among indigenas populations.

Angelica, Irene, and Xenia--all of whom came from Mexico and have been participating at Carver community garden for quite some period--identify as having indigenous background. In coming to the United States, the three acknowledged their purposes of getting a better life, better job prospects, and better future for their spouses and children. None of them speak English as their first language; Angelica's and Xenia's speak and understand Spanish, whereas Irene grew up speaking Mixteco, the language spoken by people of Mixtec ethnicity.

When I asked Angelica on what challenges she perceived upon settling in New York City, she responded that she often felt lost and left behind by *"not understanding English."* Conducting everyday chores, such as caring for the children became problematic as she experienced language barrier with healthcare givers and other service providers. Similarly, Xenia remarked of her difficulties in adjusting to life in New York City, and expressed her fear to speak English in public. But the city's environment poses more difficulties for Irene, being unable to speak and understand either English or Spanish. While Angelica and Xenia could find caregivers and service providers who provide Spanish translation--not a difficult task in a city with more than a quarter of its population identifying with being of Hispanic or Latino descent--the same could not be said of Irene. Finding professionals who could provide assistance with the Mixtec language, let alone speak and understand it, is a difficult, if not impossible task.

After founding Unidos Si Se Puede in the middle of 2010, Ysabel found it difficult to attract people, foreign-born individuals in particular, to enroll and partake in the activities and programs the organization had to offer. The level of attendance and participation in classes and at events was low. Ysabel attributed this to the lack of trust many individuals have toward institutions. They feared that such a contact with any institution, such as Unidos Si Se Puede, could result in law enforcement consequences. This did not come as surprising given that many of the individuals Unidos Si Se Puede aims to serve arrived in the country illegally and are therefore without proper documentation.

"Like I told you, people, especially in these days, are very scared about immigration. So they don't really wanna get out of the house. Especially the women, they don't wanna get out of the house... Because at the first time when they see you, they don't trust you. They [are] always scared of the immigration situation. They believe if they come to any kind of school, the immigration is gonna come and take them away."

Ysabel pondered a way in which she could attract more foreign-born individuals, such as Angelica, Irene, and Xenia to join her organization--a situation which called for an action and not just words. She had to attract people's interest and draw their attention in the hope that they could witness firsthand what the organization has to offer. Ysabel strived to show that the organization is there to assist

and help instead of turning them in to the authorities. As a response to the initial lack of interest and lukewarm response from potential members, Ysabel decided to take on a community gardening project. The idea came through her as she often walked by Carver community garden. Through her contact with Catherine, a community organizer for the Bronx and Manhattan Land Trust, Ysabel managed to secure several vegetable and flower beds at Carver community garden for the use of her organization. As of 2011, Ysabel started on community gardening for members of the organization, most of whom were foreign-born women along with their respective children.



Figures 5.2 and 5.3. Sign of Carver community garden (left) and a mural painted on the wall of the garden (right)
(Theosabrata, 2012)

In the garden they plant different kind of vegetables, fruits, and herbs on the planting beds reserved for Unidos Si Se Puede's use. On my visit there, I noticed a variety of plants of varying sizes and shapes. Squashes and cucumbers, different varieties of hot peppers, tomatoes, basil and parsley among others adorned the ground in which they were grown. I asked Ysabel specifically on what they usually did together in the garden, and how she managed to bring in more people to the garden and eventually to her class.

"So what we do is that when we have events in the garden, they [would] invite friends. I always tell them to invite a friend, tell them that we have something new [at the organization] for them [and] they can start seeing for themselves... They [would] bring friends and they start to see what we have. They bring [friends] to the class and then, little by little, they [are] convinced that they [can] trust [me] to be here."

"Little by little," Ysabel managed to convince people to come to the garden. Summarizing her thoughts and feelings on what made her decide to take upon a community garden project at Carver, Ysabel said, *"we are really happy because hmm...you can see that you can do something. You know that you don't only stand up for yourself, but also for many people."*

Seeing that the activities in the garden were attracting much interest, Ysabel began to ask people to attend the classes and events offered by the organization. Angelica, Irene, and Xenia were just three of a handful of foreign-born individuals whom Ysabel convinced to come to the garden and participate in the class afterward. Accordingly, I expected their responses on what compelled them to community gardening in the first place would correspond to what Ysabel had expressed. However, when asked about her reason for participating in community gardening, Angelica was not sure as to how

to answer my question. Smilingly, she said: *"I like to harvest and plant crops."* Coming from an agrarian background, Angelica told me of how she was used to gardening from early age on and *"know how to grow stuffs."* Additionally, Ysabel had asked her to join her in the garden, a request to which Angelica agreed. Xenia told a similar story of her upbringing in Mexico. Her mother owned a plot of land where her family grew and planted vegetables and fruits. Corn, beans, cilantro, and radishes were just some of the food crops her family produced. *"My whole family used to grow corns, beans. But I especially like to grow cucumber."* With her brothers and mother, Xenia tended the family's garden in the village where they lived back in Mexico. Similarly, Xenia has been asked by Ysabel to join in tending the garden, which accounts for her decision to participate in community gardening.

Like both Angelica and Xenia, Irene came from an agricultural background. She learned to know the organization Unidos Si Se Puede from a friend who had been joining the organization early on. As she speaks neither English nor Spanish but Mixteco as her first language, it was difficult for Ysabel at first to communicate with her. Fortunately, there were several students who spoke Mixteco already, and through their help, Ysabel managed to help Irene learn Spanish and English. On a separate interview I asked Irene on her motivation for participating in the garden. Similarly, Irene did not know how to respond to my open-ended question. After I rephrased my question, she said that she enjoyed gardening and was drawn to it for *"self consumption, to eat."*



Naomi is the only study participant who has not participated at Carver community garden. Rather, she tends her own garden plot at East 117th Street community garden (see Figure 5.4). Her decision to engage in the garden was due to her motivation to help an ailing neighbor who was previously responsible for it. *"He just asked [me] to help around,"* said Naomi of her neighbor's request. She agreed to this request and has been helping his neighbor in taking care of the garden ever since. This occurred some twenty years ago. From that moment on, Naomi has been responsible for maintaining the garden space, a responsibility which she shared with her husband.

Figure 5.4. A sign showing the East 117th Street community garden where Naomi tends her garden plot (Theosabrata, 2012)

Having grown up in a mountainous region in Puerto Rico, Naomi was no stranger to gardening. As she led me to the community garden, she recalled how her house yard in Puerto Rico was grown with fruit trees, like mangoes and bananas. She expressed how much she missed it. When I asked what particularly drew her to gardening, she said that she *"likes the green. The plant, I like it."* Unlike Carver community garden, the East 117th Street community garden was sparsely planted. No bushes of flowers or low-lying vegetables were to be seen. The ground, however, appeared meticulously kept and cleaned. Naomi later told me that she spent a great deal amount of time sweeping in the garden. As soon as we reached the place, Naomi proudly pointed at different kind of fruit plants that grew in the garden: a pear tree stood toward the front, a plum tree in the middle, and a trailing pumpkin plant crept along the fence at the back of the garden.

5.1.3. On Meanings of Community Garden and Gardening

Speaking on a short documentary film produced by Jesse Rosenberg (2011), Ysabel could not express more clearly the meaning of Carver community garden for her and the organization she leads.

"This community garden represents for us, a miracle. It's a connection between our cultures in the United States... mostly you know, the garden helps us to have a connection, for they can trust in us first. If we don't have this garden, you know, there is no way that we can make a connection with them. When they feel that they are feeling comfortable, they are feeling 'housed,' this [becomes] their house for them. And this [marks] the beginning of our connection and that they can trust somebody and they can start from there."

While Ysabel's motivation for gardening did not stem directly from a desire to cultivate food, Ysabel said of her reason for the garden, *"the idea is to have the connection with the women, and they [would] trust me because of the connection we have with the garden."*

Ysabel is very much aware of the agricultural knowledge and practice possessed by many of the foreign-born individuals, in particular those coming from Latin American countries. She uses this awareness to her advantage. By asking these foreign-born individuals to partake in activities they would normally do in their home countries, Ysabel believes that gardening could cement a tie between her and the foreign-born women Unidos Si Se Puede aims to serve. *"We bring our culture over here because they know what to do here. We share what we know about how to plant the seeds, how to clean the places, how to renew the earth."* Through the act of gardening and other encounters at Carver community garden, Ysabel brings them *"to learn to trust, to believe that they can do something in [the United States]."*

The theme of building connection also runs in other gardeners' narratives--connection not only to other people, but also to the place they live in now. Take Irene's story for example. Interviewed on the same short documentary, she said that she enjoyed going to the garden for "it reminds us of our origins in our countries. Irene, and her fellow community gardeners, *"imagine ourselves to be in Mexico,"* as they work the soil for sowing and harvesting. The practice of tending the garden among other gardeners who speak the same languages remind them of their past. Both Angelica and Xenia expressed a more or less similar view when I asked them personally, with Angelica saying that she felt as if she were *"in my own country."* I asked specifically what quality that brought about similarity between an urban community garden tucked in East Harlem in New York City with the more rural landscape where they originate from. To this, Xenia referred to her past time habit of planting and growing her own food.

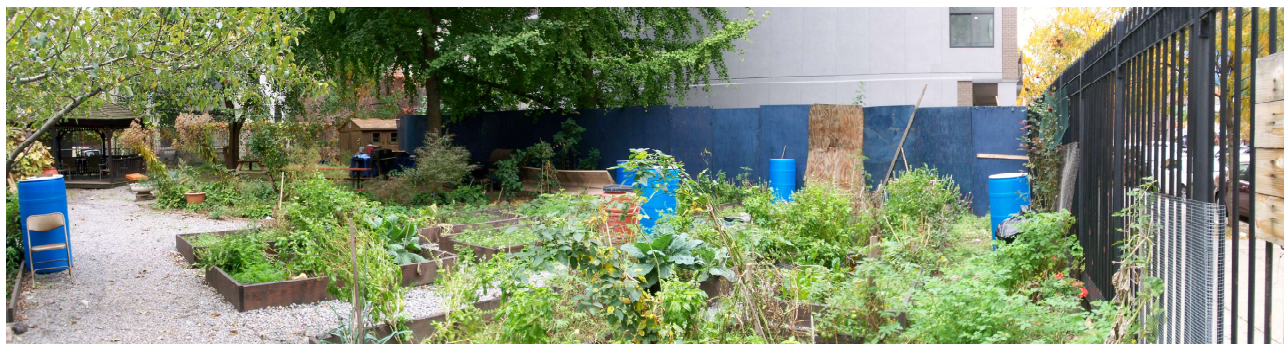


Figure 5.5. The inside of Carver community garden in East Harlem
(Theosabrata, 2012)

Like many of the female individuals who are joined in the organization Unidos Si Se Puede, Angelica, Irene, and Xenia have small children who often accompany their mothers' daily routine. This includes going to the ESL class and gardening at Carver community garden. Irene, for one, feels grateful of the presence of the garden and the impact it brings to her family member. *"My son is learning how to take care of the plants, how to plant the seeds and how to cultivate and harvest them. He likes to cut the vegetables. At home he wants us to cook him anything with the fresh vegetables."* Xenia expressed a similar view when it comes to her children, stating, *"I find them beneficial for my children. They learn to eat healthier and learn [about] the living things of the soil."* Ysabel provided a concluding remark regarding children's learning experience at Carver community garden:

"They learn a lot, the children learn how to take care of the plants, and how not to be aggressive. They know how to stand in the garden beds. Most of all, we teach them why nature is important. And they learn a lot. They enjoy it better in the garden by doing activities that are productive for them."

Ysabel further added that the children enjoyed to be in the garden where they could *"have a party."* The garden gives them a chance to learn while at the same time play amid the city's lack of greenery. *"They like to play, water the plants. They like to cook the vegetables... They like to run, they like to sit down, and have a picnic.... It's a totally different way to have fun in the garden. It's like freedom."*

It became apparent that in addition to building connection with others, a process of learning also takes place in the garden. However, this process is not necessarily confined to the younger ones. Prior to conducting the gardening effort, Ysabel admitted that she did not know how to grow plants from seeds and cuttings. She learned her basic gardening skill from Irene among others.

"...when you bring people from my country, or Mexico, or wherever... they know what to do, they teach us. For example, I didn't know nothing about plants. I just make a hole and put seeds there. Sometimes they die. But the first time I plant, I say, 'what happened? They never grow.' So then somebody explains it to me that I put it too deep inside, or too tight... Then they come and teach me, and teach [other] groups... Puerto Ricans, or even blacks... or Americans... So they come, when they come, they teach everyone... Teach us how to do [gardening]."

Through learning, interaction with other users of the garden occurs. Not every interaction in the garden, however, has been positive. In the past the group has encountered unpleasant situation with the longer-established African-American gardeners who tend their own plots at Carver community garden. When asked about which problem in the garden she was mostly concerned with, Angelica expressed her disapproval of them. *"[They] are very racist. They act as if they want nothing to do with us, and as if we were not here."* Ysabel elaborated on a particular incidence which involved the group and an elderly male gardener. He saw them as intruding on his private space and often threatened to call the cops on them. *"So, sometimes, I have to go and tell him, 'Leave them alone! Stop talking about calling the police, or stop talking about calling the immigration,'"* Ysabel said. She retorted to the person that *"this is a community garden already. So you better leave them alone."* Eventually, Ysabel said that the man came to a realization and stopped disrupting them.

Interaction with outsiders, whether undesirable or not, does not only occur at Carver. At East 117th Street community garden, Naomi has had her share of troubling encounters with other garden users, especially non-gardeners. Despite the rule from GreenThumb that stipulates that the garden remain accessible to the general public, Naomi often has to lock up the gate to the garden. When I asked her

reason, she said, *"A lot of drunk people get in there. That's why I don't open it all the time."* Not few people have loitered in the garden. Many happen to be adolescent and young adult males who use the space to drink and smoke. *"That, and [the fact that] I go to class [at Unidos Si Se Puede] almost every day,"* Nancy explained further her reason in locking up the garden. Yet, not every visitor to the garden is undesirable. She would host parties from time to time for both local children and adults. Just as my interview happened to be near Halloween, Naomi expressed her wish to invite children and young adults to celebrate the festivity. *"My husband does [the preparation] and he already prepares for Halloween. He puts candies in the garden,"* said Naomi.

While all of the study participants claimed that they found gardening beneficial in terms of the fresh, healthy produce they grow and the knowledge they derive, they were also quick to point out that the garden only produce so little amount of fruits and vegetables as to be significant. Ysabel herself admitted that she did not do the gardening for the sake of producing fruits and vegetables alone. *"No, it's too little to [eat] and sell. So, we actually share [the produce] and bring them home... So we have very few."* She further added that they could easily obtain them at the local supermarket or farmer's market in the neighborhood.

"We have, it's a farmers market. That is a few around the area. Pathmark too. So we get it from different places. Also we have a lot of people who serve vegetables and fruits around the area in the trucks. So we find a lot of vegetables and fruits in the area."

"In this area, specifically in Harlem, you find everything. So you can cook the same way you cook in your country, you can cook it here too because you find what you need."

5.2. *The Transvaalbuurt Case Study*

The narratives provided by the four community gardeners I interviewed in Amsterdam present an interesting juxtaposition to the meanings and motives of community gardening. Unlike their East Harlem case study counterparts, the study participants at the two community gardens in Transvaalbuurt have resided for a much longer period in their adopted country, i.e., the Netherlands. Consequently, there was less talk of feeling of alienation. At the same time, their narratives suggest some shared understanding of what community gardening entails and what it means to be a foreign-born community gardener. A brief introduction of MoTuin, a greening initiative founded by some of the tenants at Tugela 85, is presented first, given that two of the study participants, namely Emma and Fitri are actively involved in it. Both dedicate their time, commitment, and knowledge to MoTuin and Binnentuin and Transvaalbuurt community garden.

5.2.1. *On MoTuin and Its Significance*

The word 'MoTuin' is an acronym that stands for 'mobiele tuin,' or 'mobile garden' in English. For Emma, one of the four community gardeners interviewed in the Transvaalbuurt case study, however, 'mo' stands for much more than simply mobile. It also refers to the Dutch word, 'mogelijkheid,' which means possibility. Appearance-wise, MoTuin does not resemble any conventional community garden. Function-wise, however, MoTuin offers an advantage over a conventional, physical garden in that it is not bound to a geographical space. What it basically is, is a modified bike, or a cart that houses several elements including a counter space for food preparation, a cold frame and a mini greenhouse, a garden station and work space, as well as several shelves and drawers for storage purpose (see Figure 5.6). Having incorporated a motorized machine allows MoTuin to freely go from one location to another within Transvaalbuurt, the neighborhood it operates in. The idea behind MoTuin is to connect and advocate greening and planting activities for the benefit of the residents of neighborhood (Emma, 2013; Fitri, 2013).



Figure 5.6. MoTuin, or 'mobiele tuin' in action
(Janssen and Johan, 2013)

Given the physical limitation of a motorized cart, the actual gardening and planting are carried out on an actual plot of land, i.e., the Binnentuin Tugela 85. For this reason, there exists a close relation between MoTuin, the garden, and the people who partake in the initiative. Noud Verhave and Janine Toussaint, two of Tugela 85's several tenants, were credited as the persons behind the initiative. In total, a group of seven people made up the core of MoTuin as of May of 2013. Emma and Fitri were two of these people. Each of the core member is responsible for coming up and executing programs

and workshops associated with greening and the environment. Fitri, for example, offers a workshop in medicinal herbs. She also contributes her cooking skills by helping out in MoTuin's soup kitchen. Other programs are less pragmatic and more creative. Oral storytelling involving people's memories, food preparation, and planting is one of such a program offered by another core member. Emma herself came up with a seed bank project in which people can trade seeds and bulbs in exchange for other seeds, or if they are willing, for some voluntary work. In 2012, Emma successfully conducted a guerilla-gardening kind of project with MoTuin. She distributed more than 2,000 spring flower bulbs for free for local residents in exchange for their willingness to plant them in public spaces, along tree-lined streets and railroad tracks, and other such places.

5.2.2. On Motives for Participation

"Well, I've always been involved in community garden. I've been involved with community garden also in New York City from very young age, even when I was a student."

The statement above opened up my conversation with Emma, one of the four study participants in Transvaarbuurt case study. Originally a New York native, Emma has lived in three different countries, which include her home country the United States, Brazil, and now, the Netherlands where she has been residing for the last thirteen years or so. She mentioned the name of the 6th Street and Avenue B Community Garden, which I happened to visit during the New York phase of my fieldwork, as one of the several community gardens where she had participated. *"It's still there. It's been there for a really long time,"* she remarked as I told her of my visit there the previous year. *"I did a bunch of [community gardening], in the States, and then also in Brazil."*

Emma's interest in community gardening can be traced back to her childhood. Both her close and extended family members fostered her interest in nature; all but her father shared a passion in gardening. *"Since I was a child, I mean, I just saw everything that grows as sort of my friends. I would know that little flower will bloom back next year."* This same interest that Emma shared translates well into her adulthood. *"And I always build things out of nature, even as a child, and of course, I made my career [on that], building things out of little sticks and petals, and wanting to, just always be there with my nose on the flowers, picking things from the wood."* In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Emma created a series of art installation which she was known for, taking her cue from nature. The Times Square Nest, for example, was a human-sized nest art installation built out of materials that she found on the street. When I asked her what significance a nest has, she said, *"It's when you look up and you see a nest, it's a miracle, and you don't really see them."* A nest brings a relief from the rigidity of straight lines and corners that are ubiquitous in many cities, especially New York City.

In the Netherlands, and in particular in Amsterdam, Emma could not produce the same kind of installation, at least not from materials taken from street. She pointed out that as a city, Amsterdam is *"immaculately clean,"* to the point that she could not find *"a stick on the street."* She pointed out that Americans in general tended to be more wasteful than their Dutch counterparts. *"... the Americans, I suppose, are more wasteful, that you find, well you can find things that you could really build with. Something that might be broken but fairly decent."* On the contrary, such waste is almost non-

existent on the streets of Amsterdam. *"But here, you don't wanna touch them. When it's garbage, it's really garbage,"* she chuckled and shuddered at the thought of her last art commission she had to do for a metro station in Amsterdam. *"But that's how it is, you moved to different place, it influences you differently,"* Emma concluded her story.

It may be the same sort of influence that led Emma to community gardening, particularly in Transvaalbuurt. The character of the neighborhood, which she described as *"ethnically-mixed... and low-income,"* influenced her decision to partake in the opportunity made by the then Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment. Having been known for her previous community gardening work in Utrecht and in a different part of Amsterdam, Emma was approached by several *"people from the local government,"* who informed her of a funding, i.e., stimuleringsfond volkstuinen, for an initiative seeking to support gardening-related local community development activities. As the deadline was fast approaching, she decided to bike around the neighborhood and came upon the square, and she thought to herself, *"... [Afrikanerplein] has a lot of potentials. It's huge!"* The square's relative state of abandonment and the potentials she saw in it quickly cemented her decision to participate in the project made possible by the funding.

At one of the early meetings discussing what was to become of the funds, several suggestions were made: a man representing a housing corporation suggested that they install vertical gardens on the steps of the corporation's housing property. Other proposed different ideas that Emma found not fitting the purpose of the funding, and inadequate *"as far as being a community garden"* (see Figure 5.7). Emma firmly believes that *"any [garden] which doesn't have public access is not a community garden."* She then explained to me her rationale in proposing Afrikanerplein as a site for a community garden:

"I thought, if I was gonna put work [on the project], and I knew it was gonna be a lot of time, it had to be something really worth it. I didn't wanna do it on some little, you know, something that's the size of this table or whatever."

The idea was not uniquely Emma's. It was shared by other residents of Transvaalbuurt, namely Ton and Jitske. The former had been the brain behind Op de Valreep, a squatter-based community center located near Amsterdam Muiderpoort train station. Ton referred Emma to Jitske, whom soon would introduce two other like-minded fellow residents, Lizette and Martin. Together, they formed what was to become the board responsible for the creation and upkeep of Transvaalbuurt community



Figure 5.7. Transvaalbuurt community garden at Afrikanerplein (Buurttuinen Transvaal, 2015)

garden.

It is only natural that the trajectory of this subchapter shifts to Lizette who, besides being one of the board members of Transvaalbuurt community garden, has also agreed to participate in this study. Lizette's involvement in Transvaal community garden ever since its conception back in 2010. She received me in the backyard garden of her apartment, located at one of the corners of Afrikanerplein. I began the interview, asking what led her to participate in Transvaalbuurt community garden. She responded that she was approached by Jitske, who happens to be her next-door neighbor, to participate in the same initiative Emma was involved with.

The idea appealed to Lizette, who expressed to me how she had felt about the square:

"And when I came to live here, I had to, uhmm, there's something else has to happen. Because there [Afrikanerplein] is a big place but there was nothing. There were only dogs. And dogs were spoiling it. But nothing happened. It's a pity."

Prior to Afrikanerplein's repurposed use into a community garden, the square contained a neighborhood park one would normally encounter throughout Amsterdam. Trees, bushes, and some flowers adorned the park, but something was amiss, Lizette asserted. She identified it to be the lack of ongoing activities in the park. *"There's a big place for a playground, or for to learn to know other people in this neighborhood,"* Lizette talked of the potential she saw in Afrikanerplein.

Lizette's commentaries on the lack of ongoing activities perhaps could be attributed to her personal experience. Lizette had recently relocated to the neighborhood as of November of 2010. Before she lived in the Amsterdam's neighborhood of Oosterse Eilanden, or 'Eastern Island.' She acknowledged that she did not know anyone at the time. Hence, when an opportunity to get acquainted with her fellow neighbors arose, she was quickly taken by the idea.

"It was good to begin with because I like to learn more about people. Because I didn't know everybody at the beginning... It felt a nice way to meet people, also. And I met a lot of people. That was very nice."

As Lizette showed me around her neatly-arranged garden, how gardening has been a passion of hers ever since she was very little. Her recollection of her earlier life, in this regard, mirrors that of Emma in the fact that both have shown aptitude and interest for gardening ever since of young age. Having been born on a farm in Portugal, Lizette said that she *"from very small age, [she] already liked to do anything with flowers. Watering, seeing them grow nicely, [flower buds] opening. That's something [I have had] from very small age, I think."* During adulthood, she moved to the inner city neighborhood of Marais in Paris, France, where lack of space did not deter her from continuing to garden. She resorted to growing in pots and hanging baskets on the balcony until one day, the caretaker of the apartment building she resided in warned her the risk of them falling down on passerby's head walking below. It was not until she relocated to the Netherlands in 1989 that *"gardening became possible"* again.

There is a resemblance between what Lizette perceived as missing and what Fitri deemed as significant for the livelihood of the neighborhood. As in the case of Lizette, Fitri saw the need for an action, *"an activity"* to take place in Transvaalbuurt. Interviewed on a separate occasion, Fitri ex-

pressed what she saw as a "a huge diversity here in Transvaalbuurt." She likened the neighborhood to Indonesia, where she originated from. Fitri's reflection on the cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity that can be found in the neighborhood led her to partake in a community gardening effort housed inside the building Tugela 85 (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9).

"Back in Indonesia, we have the concept 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' [an old Javanese expression serving as the country's motto, meaning 'unity in diversity.'] I see that we need the same here. There ought to be an activity where residents of different backgrounds and cultures can meet and work together."

Fitri attributed the beginning of her engagement with Binnentuin Tugela 85 community garden to her daughter. Her daughter had previously lived in the neighborhood and served as a member in the organization MoTuin, which mission is to promote connection among and between residents through greening and sustainability projects. Through her daughter, Fitri learned of the presence of the small communal garden tucked inside Tugela 85, a former school building housing a variety of arts and cultural activities and programs. When I asked her on why she specifically picked community gardening, she said right away that gardening has always been her hobby. Prior to her engagement as a community gardener, Fitri has always shown interest and aptitude for it. Ever since of young age, she had discovered her passion by experimenting first-hand how to plant, grow, and care different varieties of flowers, herbs, and vegetables.

"I do this out of hobby. It's a hobby I've had since long time ago. My father had wanted me to attend an agricultural university in another town... Apparently he was aware of this hobby I have. A hobby for gardening. I would, for instance, put seeds in the ground, watch them grow, and create a sort of a plant collection. He clearly saw a potential in me, seeing that I would thrive in this study field. In the end though, I did not have the heart to burden my parents. So I ended up studying at a different university in the city where we lived ."



Figures 5.8 and 5.9. A view of the Binnentuin community garden (left) inside Tugela 85 building (right)
(Janssen and Johan, 2013)

While in the end Fitri chose a different track of study than that of agriculture, she found gardening to be of great use. Her hobby for gardening turned out to be beneficial when she lived and studied abroad in Vietnam from the year 1964 onward. As a part of her undergraduate study, Fitri went on a study abroad program to Vietnam. The plan was for her to stay there momentarily. However, conflicts between the communist North Vietnam and the US-backed South Vietnam quickly escalated into a war known as the Vietnam War. At the same time, the political situation in her home coun-

try of Indonesia deteriorated. Soon, Fitri found herself neither able to escape war-torn Vietnam nor return to Indonesia. Amid the chaos, Fitri found solace in gardening. *"The war forced me to grow my own vegetables,"* explained Fitri. Everyday living in a war torn country posed a considerable hardship in many aspects of life, including that of procuring daily food. Not everything could be obtained from the market, she remarked. Therefore Fitri had to resort to gardening to augment her food supply. While it did not yield much in term of quantity, gardening provided some fresh produce that were otherwise scarce during wartime.

It was not until her arrival in the Netherlands in 1981 that she became an avid gardener. *"Most of the gardening, I did after coming here to the Netherlands,"* said Fitri. After spending nearly 18 years in Vietnam and some other transit countries in between, Fitri and her family relocated to the Netherlands where she gained, years later, a citizenship. In The Netherlands, *"I grew this and that to my heart's content. And seeing that I had no backyard of my own, I ended up gardening on the balcony,"* Fitri spoke to me of her experience. Nowadays, Fitri rides her bike from Diemen where she lives to Tugela 85 where she tends her collection of tropical medicinal plants, in addition to participating in MoTuin. She described her activities in the garden:

"I come every Wednesday... I come more often when necessary, if there's a meeting. Every time I always take the time to check on the garden...I take the time to water the plant if necessary, look for any ripe fruit. If there are some insects feeding on the plants, I make sure to dispose of them. Basically a lot of plant maintenance. I especially enjoy watering the plants and looking at the fruits. Other heavy, difficult tasks, like repotting and digging, they are for the younger ones."

Ajda was the last study participant I interviewed for this study. She has been an active gardener at Transvaalbuurt community garden for nearly as long as Emma and Lizette. I learned to know her through her youngest son, Kerim, who has been coming to the garden every Saturday to participate in a children's gardening activity run by Jitske. As in the case of Lizette, Ajda was also informed of the garden by Jitske. Ajda is certainly no stranger to gardening. In Turkey where she originates from, her parents and relatives own a piece of agricultural land that they tend together. Her response to my question regarding her past gardening experience evoked a sense of sharing and unity:

"I used to help my parents in the garden. I know everything about gardening."

"[The garden plots] were marked with stones. There is water flowing in the middle. Everyone shares with each other. Everyone may borrow anything from each other. There is no fight. No one gets mad at each other."

Arguably, it was the sense of community at the garden that drew Ajda to it in the first place. Comparing her present-day life with that of her past, Ajda expressed the difficulty she perceives and experiences in the Netherlands. *"There is a big cultural difference between Turkey and the Netherlands. [Here] I have to make appointments when I want to visit someone, even if that someone is a family member... In Turkish culture, [it's] more us, more together."* Ajda expressed to me that she still finds it hard to adjust to life in the Netherlands, despite her staying in the country for more than twenty two years. Furthermore with her parents-in-laws' departure to Turkey, Ajda felt ever more estranged. Therefore when the opportunity to join the garden presented itself, she was quick to seize it. In the beginning, she would go to the garden every Saturday with Jitske. Nowadays, she would go *"sometimes three days a week, sometimes not for a week... But if it's nice weather, I would be there every day. With bad weather, you don't really have to water the plants, you know."*

5.2.3. On Meanings of Community Garden and Gardening

On her plot of garden at Transvaalbuurt community garden, Emma grows different kinds of plants, from zucchini to fennel, lettuce to tomatoes and kale, as well as plants of blooming sorts, which include but are not limited to nasturtium, 'Oost-Indische kers' (*Tropaeolum majus*), and marigold. People are welcome to come and pluck any vegetable or flower they wish, with the exception of *"the purple flowers. They are for show,"* she exclaimed. In addition to the flowers and vegetables, Emma has been in charge of the herb garden. *"I took care of the herb garden for the first couple of years, and I have also some herbs in my garden that were not in the main raised herb garden,"* she explained. Emma spoke further of the purpose she assigns her small plot of community gardening space:

"I didn't do carrots, things like that. I want more things that are sort of robust and that you could share. And that people could see, cause really, I am not gonna live off this little triangle. And I wanted to be really an example for people to see and say, wow, I have never seen how fennel grows, and taste it. And share it."

"I don't need to be out there, you know. I want to grow things which people don't really have access to... [so that people] can taste it and see what the plants look like."

Emma made it clear that she does not do gardening for the purpose of food production or consumption although she admitted that she enjoys *"cooking and eating raw things."* However, most of the vegetables she grows, such as artichokes (which, she added, *"ended up being stolen,"*) sunflowers, Belgian and curly endives, and bok choy, are given away to fellow gardeners and passers-by who are interested. That is not to say that Emma does not enjoy community gardening for the sake of growing things. *"[A community garden] should definitely have flowers, cause they'll make it look pretty,"* she said. However, Emma further noted, *"that wasn't my principal concern. My main concern is that it is accessible to everybody."*

One of Emma's efforts in allowing the garden to be accessible for everyone was by proposing a welcome sign to Transvaalbuurt community garden written not only in Dutch, but also in other languages. Her proposal, however, was turned down by the majority vote of the members.

"I think it should have been [written] in other languages, cause I think it's interesting. People who are visiting from another country, who are just gonna come and see the garden, and they are curious to start one, and want to see how we do it. Don't you think it's a helpful thing?"

The rejection did not stop Emma to ensure that the garden remains accessible. She wanted to make sure that people with disability had access to the garden by making sure that the entrance is step-free and has a level surface from the very beginning. Additionally, a raised herb garden was constructed in the middle of the garden. Such a construction allow people--whom, Emma described as *"couldn't bend for whatever reasons, could be young and have a bad back, or walk with a cane, or are on a wheelchair"--*to still be able to participate in the garden. Although at the beginning the proposal was met with skepticism and disapproval from other members of the association, Emma succeeded in convincing them of the necessity of the garden's being welcoming and accommodating for everyone.

The urge to share with others the knowledge and fresh produce one gains from community gar-

dening seem to be prevailing. A similar sentiment is shared by Fitri, who in addition to serving at MoTuin, also tends her collection of tropical medicinal plants in Tugela 85 Binnentuin. When asked the meaning of the garden and community gardening, she said:

"I seek to introduce native Indonesian plants. Why, because I came from Indonesia. Besides, I would like to introduce tropical plants. Especially those having healing properties, or those which are taken for granted. I just showed some people what coffee plants look like. Later I am going to find some tea plants. So many people have never seen the actual plants. I feel that children, adults, need to know what they look like."

Fitri proceeded to show me some of the traditional Indonesian plants that she grew inside a plastic-covered green house at Tugela 85 Binnentuin community garden. She pointed at some, named them, and described the alleged healing properties they have.

"[While pointing at a tamarind plant] So I would like to tell people what a tamarind plant looks like. What are its properties? People can find them out on the internet. There are many information out there. If they cannot find any, I can find them from any English- or Vietnamese-language websites... Or this is ginger. It's different for sure from tamarind, and also in the way we use them. There is also a plant for sore throat remedy. It grows here, in Veluwe. And I can introduce people about these plants. That's the meaning I see in gardening. And people like the fact that I do this."



Figure 5.10. *Tamarindus indica* L.
(Payer and Payer, 2016)

Medicinal plants are not the only plants grown at Tugela 85 Binnentuin community garden. Tomatoes and salad greens, figs, gooseberries and raspberries, as well as blackberries grow in the garden. According to Fitri, some of the vegetables goes toward MoTuin and its array of activities, which include a soup kitchen, for example. *"Just yesterday I made soup for an event. Unfortunately there*

hasn't been much vegetable this time of the year. So most of the vegetables we had to buy." I asked Fitri what her fellow gardeners did with any vegetable surplus should they have any. To this, she replied, *"the vegetables we grow are not enough to sell. Rather, they are for self-consumption."* Even then, many other community gardeners are reluctant to bring home the produce they have grown. Fitri said:

"There are many who don't want to... the Dutch, in particular. When they see some worms or other insects, they don't want to bring home the produce they have grown. Even though [a presence of such animals] mean that the produce is organic. Me, I just wash off the animals of the plants. But with [the Dutch], it's different. I often have carry home stuffs that they don't want. Lettuce, for example."

Both Emma and Fitri expressed the challenges they experienced in their attempt to introduce greening efforts, namely community gardening to the residents of Transvaalbuurt. Emma recalled one of her very first encounters with other residents of the neighborhood. *"I remember at the beginning we had to talk people into helping us. Because nobody believed in it,"* said Emma. Lack of trust seemed to underlie many people's initial reception to the community gardening project at Afrikanerplein. When I asked her what could possibly be the reasons, Emma said, *"And they're so sick of going to meetings that bring only promises, and in the end there was nothing, or you just had to do a lot of work."* This lukewarm reception had also characterized the situation that Fitri experienced at MoTuin: *"Many were indifferent at the beginning. Owing to the fact that you can buy almost everything everywhere. Why bother growing plants?"*

It was not until the opening day of Transvaalbuurt community garden that, *"people were signing up like crazy,"* expressed Emma. As a consequence of the influx of request for being a member gardener, the board had to enforce a waiting list for those who were interested in gardening at Transvaalbuurt community garden. By seeing how the garden was beautifully designed and planted, the local residents' interest for the garden was sparked. At MoTuin, a more or less situation prevailed after Fitri successfully demonstrated her knowledge of the tropical medicinal plant. Additionally, Fitri enticed the interest of people by preparing meal that incorporated produce taken from Tugela 85 Binnentuin community garden.

"But after we have these kinds of activities, many children and their parents got interested. And I see that this interest keeps growing. First, people are drawn to nature, then to using natural, organic products, and at last, children are attracted to education in nature disciplines."

While Emma and Fitri construct meanings that are demonstrably educational to their community gardening activities and experiences, the same cannot be said for Lizette. *"This is just for pleasure."* Lizette's remark at the end of my interview with her summed up the meaning she attributes to community garden and gardening. For her, her small plot at Transvaalbuurt community garden provides her with the opportunity to wind down after a busy day at work. *"For myself, gardening is good because stress just goes out of my body,"* she said. She equated pleasure with stress reliever, which she derives from tending the garden.

"In general, if you're stressed, all stress go away. [Gardening] is very relaxing, 'ontspannen', calming, because you just don't think anymore. You're busy with the soil, the plants, and everything, you forget about everything else. That's what I like about gardening."

A riot of colors and scents, textures and shapes fills up her meticulously-arranged backyard apartment garden where we were seated. Lizette has grown a variety of flowers, including poppies and lavender, burning love and forget-me-nots, among others. When I asked whether she grew any vegetable, she replied:

"... almost nothing. I have rhubarbs. I put some tomatoes, but [they are] so small... No sun. Lettuce is gone because of the snails, slugs. I don't really know anymore. Not a lot, because nothing comes up. Just tomatoes and string beans, but I don't think they'll get very good outside."

When it comes to cultivating vegetables, Lizette's predicament comes in the forms of weather, pests, and negligent garden visitors. The summer of 2013, she noted, was remarkably cooler than in previous years, causing *"the vegetables not growing."* By the same token, the cool damp summer boosted the population of pests such as slugs and snails, ever keen on feeding on the leafy greens. Additionally, Lizette expressed slight annoyance at what she described as inadvertently mischievous garden visitor. The plenitude of visitors who frequents and uses the garden space includes children who might be well-meaning but do not conform to the rules and specifications required for the garden. From time to time, they would pick and pluck up vegetables such as zucchini and leek grown by the community gardeners. To this, Lizette could only remark that the sort of behavior *"is not OK, but they are children. They have to be with parents. If there are no parents, they do what they want to do. And that's the problem."*

When I asked her further what meanings she attributed to her gardening experience, she said:

"... I think also, it's good to have a lot of flowers for the bees, because we need [them] to live. There's a lot of poison nowadays. Many plants are sprayed with herbicides and the bees die because of it. I would like to keep the bees alive. I know my garden is very small, but I can do [something] to help the nature."

"... and also, what is very important is to have a lot of different kind of plants, not always the same. For the soil, it's good for the soil to have different nutrients. Don't grow the same plant in the same place."

At the very end of my interview with Lizette, I casually asked her what she thought of how her fellow gardeners see upon community gardening. While Lizette's responses so far have been markedly different from those of other study participants, she nevertheless acknowledged that other people may not perceive the garden in the same light as she does. To this question she responded:

"For neighbors, other people, I think they just do it because they want to get some vegetables. They like to have vegetables, but I don't think [they do it] for stress. But maybe they don't think about it. I just don't do it for the vegetables because vegetables, I can buy [although] I think what I get [from the garden] is better and natural and the taste is better, but it's so little, not enough to eat."

For Ajda, community gardening at Transvaalbuurt provides her with an outlet for relaxation after her daily work. *"It kept me occupied and I like it,"* said Ajda of her experience tending her garden plot. Working part time from 7 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. five days a week leaves her a substantial amount of *"spare time"* that she could use to work in the garden. Most of the time she gardens by herself, although from time to time her youngest son, Kerim, would accompany his mom to the garden. I asked her if her husband helped her in tending the plot, to which she laughingly replied, *"he does, but he doesn't understand much about gardening."* Ajda does most of the gardening, from planting out

seeds to harvesting the produce. *"I do everything myself... I work with the seeds, when they're ready, I pick them out and I put other seeds in,"* explained her. When asked on what aspect of the garden and gardening that specifically attracts her, Ajda replied: *"It's nice and 'gezellig,' I get to know many people and I can chat with them."*

That summer Ajda had decided to grow some green beans, tomatoes, bell peppers, and some strawberries. She lamented that the weather has not been cooperative. Last year, she harvested nearly five kilograms of potatoes. *"Last year, I had a good harvest, almost five kilograms of potatoes. Really, I filled up Albert Heijn bags... This year, the harvest does not yield that many. I'm not sure why... Maybe because of the slugs and the bad weather."* This year's harvest, however, has not been promising. Two weeks prior to my interview with her, Ajda claimed to have picked up more than a hundred slugs in her garden, *"with a short stick and a small scoop."* Ajda's remark of her community gardening experience sets her apart from the other study participants both in the East Harlem and the Transvaalbuurt case studies; she turns out to be to the only foreign-born community gardener who have managed to grow and harvest a significant amount of fresh produce.

I would like to conclude this chapter by pointing out a statement that I believe eloquently summarizes the meanings of community garden and gardening for all the foreign-born community gardeners involved in this study. While each of the study participants has varying beliefs and practices when it comes to community gardening, a common thread can be found linking one to the other. In attempting to point out what she believed to be the essence of community gardening, Emma contemplatively said of her experience and inspiration tending her garden:

"I certainly learn a lot about growing, but I also learn about working together. And you know, socially, and everything. I mean, I believe in garden. It makes you grow. You think you're growing things, [but] it is you who are growing."

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION



The purpose of this study was twofold: to identify motives that underlie participation for community gardening among foreign-born individuals, and to explore meanings they attach to the gardens and the activities. By focusing on first-hand accounts of nine foreign-born community gardeners from four community garden sites in New York City and Amsterdam, this study sought to contribute to a better understanding of what community gardens and gardening entail. It began with my questioning of what at first seemed to be straightforward of a concept, i.e., community garden. Laden with overly formal accounts of what it should be, much of the present-day definitions project a rather idealistic and normative view of community gardens. Guided by data derived from the narratives of each study participant and Lynne Manzo's (2005) call for a broader conceptualization of the concept, this study sought to provide a more fluid and nuanced understanding of community gardens and gardening.

This chapter is devoted to discussing the findings presented in the preceding chapter. In the first part of the chapter, I present a comparison of the two case studies. The findings are discussed in light of the framework I formulated in Chapter 2, focusing on motivations for gardening across the study participants and attempting to explain why they do so; the significance the gardens and gardening have; and lastly, feelings associated with the experience of community gardening. These result in a dialogue--figuratively speaking--between theories and the findings of this study. Bearing in mind that no study is so original as to bear little or no relation to other published literature, the findings of this study cannot be considered in complete isolation from other findings and reports. It is then followed by a brief discussion on the limitations brought forward by this study.

6.1. Discussion

Nothing seems more appropriate to justify the need for this study than the argument made by Francis (2009, see Chapter 1.3. Locating Foreign-Born Gardeners in Literature). Firstly, as more studies are added to the growing body of literature surrounding community gardening, the number of studies that look into foreign-born community gardening remains small. Secondly, many of the existing studies do not bring forward the voices and perspectives of those who perceive and experience community gardening firsthand. Rather, they rely on normative and scholarly body of sources who perceive and experience community gardening significantly different from the former. Lastly, as a consequence of the aforementioned points, published research and other publications have heretofore tended toward a homogenization of motives and meanings associated with the phenomenon (L'Annunziata, 2010; Campbell, 2014). Taken together, they do little to alleviate our understanding of the practice of community gardening among foreign-born individuals. Filling in the gap left by the shortcoming in the literature, the findings of this study add to the small inventory of studies that focus on foreign-born gardeners.

The application of Manzo's (2005) broader conceptualization of meaningful places, together with works of others (e.g., Baker, 2004; Lawson, 2004; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004; Kindscher, 2009; L'Annunziata, 2010; Minkoff-Zern, 2011; and Agustina and Beilin, 2012) allowed me to see the manner in which community gardens are seen, used, and understood by foreign-born individual gardeners. The nine study participants I collaborated with yield nine different yet intertwining stories of what community garden signifies and of their involvements and motivations in gardening. Rather than seeing these stories as conflicting or disjointed, they should be treated as pieces of a larger puzzle in which each individual story contributes to a coherent understanding of community gardening as practiced by foreign-born individuals.

6.1.1. A Comparison to Be Made

What become immediately apparent when comparing the two case studies are differences in demographic, socio-cultural backgrounds, and experiences of the study participants. Differences in age and duration of residence, for instance, demarcate the two quite distinctly. Three out of the five study participants from East Harlem were under thirty years of age as of the time of interview, i.e., Angelica (30 y.o.), Irene (25 y.o.), and Xenia (28 y.o.). Whereas the remaining two--Ysabel and Naomi--were aged 41 and 60 respectively. Conversely, the study participants in Transvaalbuurt are older. Three out of the four study participants self-reported to be older than 50 years of age at the time of the interview. The fourth participant was the youngest at 39 years of age.

While age in itself is not a decisive factor for participation in community gardening, it correlates to the participants' duration of residence in their adopted country. I found that the older the participant is, the longer she has resided in her present country. In this regard, the share of study participants who has resided for more than 10 years in their present country is considerably higher in Amsterdam than in New York. All four study participants in the Transvaalbuurt case study have resided in the Netherlands for more than a decade, ranging from Emma at the shortest at 13 years to Fitri at 32 years. By the same token, more than half of the study participants in the East Harlem case

study can be considered as relative newcomers to the United States. Being the younger members of the group, Angelica, Irene, and Xenia had lived in the country for less than ten years as of 2012.

The size and composition of household is another instance in which differences between the two case studies can be observed. Whereas three out of the four study participants in Transvaalbuurt lived in a one- or two-person household, the opposite can be said about the participants in the East Harlem case study. All but one belonged to a household consisting of more than or equal to four household members. Furthermore, a large proportion of the household members were made up of younger-aged and preadolescent children, many of whom were still dependent on their parents for physical support and supervision. In a country such as the United States where access to affordable childcare is pretty much out of reach for many, this often entails parents taking their children along wherever they go. All four community gardeners in East Harlem, i.e., Angelica, Irene, Ysabel, and Xenia occasionally took their children to Carver community garden out of necessity. The significance of this finding is that the presence of young children affects the meanings my study participants constructed for the gardens and gardening. As my findings reveal--a topic which I shall discuss later--gardeners with children perceived and experienced the gardens in a different light than others would experience.

Ferris, Norman, and Sempik (2001, p.560) point out that "ownership, access, and degree of democratic control" distinguish a community garden from a private one. Yet, even among community gardens themselves, varying degree of access and democratic control could be observed as my findings reveal. The semi-public nature of Carver and East 117th Street community gardens--and to a certain extent Tugela 85's Binnentuin--meant that the gardens were not necessarily accessible around the clock particularly to non-member visitors of the gardens. This is a circumstance which is not unique to the three gardens I mentioned above but is rather enforced in other community gardens, as Lawson (2004) notes. The Transvaalbuurt community garden, on the other hand, provides nearly unlimited access for both its members and non-members.

Perhaps there is no other aspect of community gardening that signifies the difference between the two case studies as much as gardening practice itself. This refers to the degree of democratic control (Ferris, Norman, and Sempik, 2001) that prevailed in all four gardens. On the one hand, Transvaalbuurt community garden--and Tugela 85 Binnentuin to a certain extent--were organized in such a way that let individual member gardeners exert more control and freedom over their actions, i.e. what they grow, how they grow, and the types of tools and techniques they use. Transvaalbuurt community garden housed as many as twenty five small plots, each reserved for member gardeners. On the other hand, there appeared to be less amount of individual control and more of shared collective actions and decision-making at Carver community garden. Instead of small individual plots, the foreign-born gardeners grew and tended plants in long, large raised beds. Decisions when and what to garden, therefore, were made collectively; albeit the tasks often fell to Ysabel, considered as the leader by many.

6.1.2. Community Gardening as a Means Versus an End

The body of literature on foreign-born community gardeners has identified many motives associated with participation in community gardening (see Chapter 2.3. Through the Foreign-Born Perspectives). Motives such as the need to grow one's own food (Baker, 2004; Kindscher, 2009); the need for cultural expression and preservation (Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004); or the need to be with others (Agustina and Beilin, 2012) are just several of numerous motives scholars often allude to when describing what motivated them as gardeners. Paralleling this body of literature are the findings I have detailed in the preceding chapter. Together, both contribute to a better understanding of motives behind foreign-born gardeners' participation in community gardening.

Lawson (2004) establishes that community activists use community gardens and gardening as an impetus for other social activism and community engagement, a view that is shared by other scholars, among them Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny (2004), L'Annunziata (2010), and Minkoff-Zern (2011). In accordance with this view, I encountered corresponding evidence in the narratives of my study participants. In their decision to partake in community gardening activities, four out of the nine participants expressed motives that are not directly related to "growing food or animal husbandry," or the act of gardening per se (Holland, 2004, p.290). Ysabel from the East Harlem case study, and Emma, Fitri, and Lizette from the Transvaalbuurt case study acknowledged motives that can be construed as such; each of them were driven by desires for what Lawson described as "larger community goals" (2004, p.169). In this respect, community gardening serves as a tool rather than a goal in itself. To put it in the words of Campbell (2014): "In many cases, the growing of plants and crops was more of a means than an end."

This is most evident, in my opinion, in the case of Ysabel at Carver community garden. The forms of social action manifest themselves in the programs and services offered by her organization, Unidos Si Se Puede. Motivated by her desire to help and reach out to newly-arrived migrant population in Harlem, Ysabel offered services and programs that specially catered to them. Yet, her effort was not without its challenge. She explained the fear and lack of trust among the said population as resulting from what she termed "*immigration situation*." Ysabel then turned to community gardening to attract attention from people who otherwise would not have participated, given their fear and lack of mistrust to authority.

This particular motivation for gardening perhaps could be explained in light of the "multiple far-reaching benefits" one often associates with community gardens and gardening (Lawson, 2004, p.169). By resorting to the use of Carver community garden as a way to help achieve her goal, Ysabel made use of the bridging quality community gardens engender. Minkoff-Zern (2011) made an interesting case for this in her study, linking gardening process to nurturing bonds and commonalities between two different Mexican ethnic groups in California. The reference to establishing commonality in a community garden setting was reinforced by Angelica, Irene, and Xenia who, speaking on what community garden means to them, implied that gardening at Carver community garden reminded them of home and had brought them together.

Furthermore, this finding reflects the result of Agustina and Beilin's (2012) study, in which they find community gardeners of foreign-origin construct and experience cultural adaptation process and a sense of belonging through gardening in Melbourne, Australia. In gardening side by side with other

people they had not met before, let alone worked together, I found that the East Harlem study participants learned to navigate their foreign new surrounding, and embrace more active roles outside their home. The same study argues that community gardens "make the unfamiliar familiar" (Agustina and Beilin, 2012, p.64). It is the very same quality that Ysabel referred to in describing her reason for engaging people through community gardening. By exposing people to the activities and events Ysabel had in the garden, she could "*little by little*" gain the trust of the community she sought to help, and cultivate social interactions among them.

In Transvaalbuurt, three community gardeners' motivation was rooted in their commitment to community development. For Emma and Lizette, the goal was not to help foreign-born individuals adjust and cope with life in the Netherlands, but rather to take on the urban disinvestment challenges facing the neighborhood they lived in. Lizette articulated this reality in the following statement: "*because there [Afrikanerplein] is a big place but there was nothing...There's a big place for a playground, or for to learn to know other people in the neighborhood.*" The realization that something was amiss from the neighborhood, and in particular, from the square at Afrikanerplein directed them to an action. This entailed starting and organizing--along with three other neighboring residents--what was to become Transvaalbuurt community garden at Afrikanerplein.

As for Fitri, the motivation stemmed after realizing the diversity that existed in Transvaalbuurt and a lack of unifying element that could bring the people together. To this end, she realized that "*there ought to be an activity where residents of different backgrounds and cultures can meet and work together.*" At the same time, she realized many people's considerable lack of awareness when it came to the environment. Aided by her experience as an instructor and expertise in environmental education, Fitri decided to use Tugela 85 Binnentuin community garden as a platform for her activism. Thus her motivation to garden was, in part, shaped by the need to bring to highlight issues that were of greater concern to many and not just to foreign-born individuals. Lawson (2004, p.165) provides a clarifying statement explaining this type of behavior by saying, "This enjoyment [of the opportunity to garden] often extends outward to encourage others through demonstration areas and educational programs that teach about gardening, ecology, and cultural traditions."

The evidence that community gardens serve as a means rather than an end did not stop just there. I found that three of the aforementioned participants employed different means of achieving their goals even after the community gardens were well established. These findings substantiated Lawson's (2004) assertion that gardening serves as a first step in highlighting issues pertaining to community development. Through Carver community garden, Ysabel succeeded in bringing foreign-born individuals into positive contact with Unidos Si Se Puede. At the classrooms in the organization, Ysabel taught them basic English and Spanish language skills, as well as offering other services and counseling. Emma and Fitri did not just stop at Transvaalbuurt and Tugela 85 Binnentuin community gardens respectively. Together, they joined a urban greening collective effort, i.e., MoTuin, and continued embarking on strategies to revitalize Transvaalbuurt and its surrounding neighborhoods.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of gardening motivation are gardeners to whom "a community garden remains simply a place to grow food, to meet neighbors, or to recreate" (Lawson, 2004, 170). Community gardening, in this light, comes to be associated with an end in itself. Indeed, eight out of the nine study participants made references to their past agricultural activities and backgrounds as motives behind their participation. With the exception of Ysabel, who claimed that she "*didn't know*

nothing about plants," the rest of the study participants acknowledged that they had prior experience in gardening. These include those who practiced subsistence farming (i.e., Ajda, Angelica, Irene, and Xenia), and those who professed delight in casual gardening (i.e., Naomi, Emma, Fitri, and Lizette) in their native countries.

This specific assessment on the backgrounds of the study participants reveals what previous studies on foreign-born gardeners have reported. Baker (2004), for instance, found that the majority of the gardeners at three Toronto's community gardens had previous agricultural experiences. Agustina and Beilin (2012) voiced a similar finding in their study taking place in Melbourne, Australia. Their findings raise a question as to what extent an event from one's past leads to another in the future. In other words, how did my study participants' past agricultural experiences inform their present experiences and motivations for partaking in community gardening?

Although Angelica, Irene, and Xenia's ulterior motive had more to do with getting help and assistance from a nonprofit organization such as Unidos Si Se Puede, they were originally introduced to the organization by way of the activities and events Ysabel held at Carver community garden. Along the course, they decided to become a permanent mainstay at the garden. Citing their life experience as an important factor in their decision, perhaps this came as no surprise. *"I know how to grow stuff,"* and *"My whole family used to grow corns, beans. In the village where I come from, we're used to gardening,"* were the responses I got from Angelica and Xenia respectively when I asked them on what motivated them. Correspondingly, Ajda at Transvaalbuurt community garden expressed a reason that resonated with her upbringing in Turkey. In the words of Ajda, *"I used to help my parents in the garden. I know everything about gardening."*

Comparatively, there were Naomi, Fitri, and Lizette who also possessed prior knowledge of gardening, albeit with different underlying backgrounds. When asked what her primary motivation was, Naomi mentioned that she was originally asked to help a neighbor taking care of the garden. In the process, she came to appreciate the nature--or "the green," as she would call it--the garden afforded her. At the same time, being in the garden allowed her to meet and socialize with her neighbors. Fitri had always enjoying gardening for *"it's my hobby... My father clearly knew of this interest of mine. Interest for plants. I would put some seeds in the ground, and watch them grow, add them to my existing collection of plants."* Similarly, Lizette expressed her fond feelings for gardening. She commented, *"I have always liked flowers. From very small age, I already like to do anything with flowers. Watering, seeing them grow nicely, [flower buds] opening. That's something from very small age, I think."*

Contrary to what some scholars have found, e.g., Baker (2004), and Kindscher (2009), I did not find evidence supporting the claim that community gardens provide culturally-specific food to their participants. Instead, the plants my study participants grew, with the exception of Fitri, were plants that were common to both their home and adopted countries, and could be easily grown. In this regard, the findings of my study mirror that of Agustina and Beilin (2012) who observe that when it comes to choosing which plants to grow, only few of the foreign-born gardeners they interviewed "linked their practice back to their gardens in their home countries" (p.61). Additionally, despite my participants' desire for growing food, they were also quick to point out that the produce they grew barely sufficed for consumption, let alone for selling. A more or less similar situation could be observed in the Transvaalbuurt case study. All participants save for Ajda were of the same opinion that the

produce they grew in the garden were of insubstantial quantity as to contribute to their dietary requirement. Additionally, my further inquiry revealed that they did not see the gardens as a potential site for obtaining food, preferring instead the convenience and practicality of farmers' markets and modern supermarkets--both of which were abundant in both New York City and Amsterdam.

Thus, it would be a step too far to claim that any of the four community gardens I surveyed played a significant role in providing foreign-born gardeners a significant source of food. There are two plausible reasons as to why this is so. One explanation to this could be perhaps attributed to the size of most plots in each of the garden surveyed; that the size was insignificant as to support producing a substantial amount of fruits and vegetables. Another explanation is that both New York City and Amsterdam, being two ethnically-diverse cities, offer ease of access to exotic produce from my participants' home countries. I found this reality of growing best summarized by Emma, saying, *"I didn't do carrots, things like that. I want more things that are sort of robust and that you could share. And that people could see, cause really, I am not gonna live off this little triangle."*

6.1.3. Meanings and How They Came to Be

Thinking of community gardens as meaningful places in the everyday lives of the study participants requires a consideration of how people construct and attach meanings to places. Manzo (2005) provides a framework to understand how people do so and for what reasons. In this last part of the discussion section, I seek to juxtapose my findings on meanings of the four community gardens against the backcloth that is Manzo's (2005) multiple dimensions of place meaning. In light of the purpose of this study, her work provides a relevant and critical guideline in which the findings of this study can be assessed. Given the limitations of this study--which is presented later--I do not intend by any means to refute or to confirm what the scholar has laid down. On the contrary, this juxtaposition serves to highlight the return to a broader conceptualization of community gardens for foreign-born gardeners.

Findings from this study reveal a plethora of meanings and their implications for the gardeners who tended the gardens. It was evident that for the all nine study participants, community gardens were not simply a matter of growing their own fruits and vegetables--a finding that corroborates L'Annunziata (2010), Caputo (2012), and Tornaghi (2014). Discussions of what community gardens and gardening entailed for the foreign-born gardeners range from the very mundane to the sublime, and from inward-looking to outward-serving. From my study participants' narratives, I gathered the following themes of meanings associated with community gardens and gardening: 1) a connection with others and to the past, 2) an outlet for learning and exploration, 3) a place for relaxation and recreation, and last but not least, 4) nature conservation.

Garden as a connection. As Minkoff-Zern (2010) notes in her study, "[people] are finding commonalities through the gardening process in which they associate as a cohesive group". These commonalities, as evidenced in the findings of this study, manifest themselves in several different ways. For Angelica, Irene, and Xenia at Carver community garden, for instance, a commonality could be traced to the country where they came from. The three participants also shared a commonality in their upbringing; all three indicated that they grew up in agricultural communities. Consequently,

all had considerable knowledge and understanding when it came to gardening and planting. It was not surprising, therefore, that Irene likened being in the garden to *"being in Mexico."* The experience and sensation of being in the garden *"reminds us of our origins in our countries."*

Finding such commonalities would, however, have been a challenge if it had not been for the garden. Through the activities at Carver community garden, the study participants discovered commonalities they may or may not share (Minkoff-Zern, 2010). As they gardened, they interacted and communicated with each other, thereby reducing the fear and suspicion they might have toward one another. This helped pave the way for Ysabel to gain their trust and for them to form a common bond either among themselves or with the organization. Seen from the perspective of the foreign-born participants, therefore, it is not far-fetched to say that community garden can be seen as a connection--a connection that links the study participants to their past, to one another, and to the country they live in.

Garden as an outlet for learning and exploration. This study demonstrates that both acquisition and distribution of knowledge occur in community gardens (Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004). Seven out of the nine study participants made it clear that for them knowledge of gardening is something they have acquired at a very young age. In a way, this particular finding reflects earlier work by Minkoff-Zern (2010), who discovers that community gardeners of Hmong descent perceived the knowledge as something integral to their lives. But knowledge acquisition does not stop at an early age. The findings also show that even at a later age, learning process occurs in the gardens. Before partaking in community gardening, Ysabel *"didn't know nothing about plants."* Yet, through her interaction with other foreign-born gardeners and exposure to the garden, she came to learn *"how to do gardening."*

The community gardeners proved not to be the only agents of action who utilized and imparted knowledge. Children--in this case the children of the study participants--also learned a great deal in the garden. Adja's son, for instance, participated on community garden project on his own initiative. From time to time, he helped his mother tending their family's plot at Transvaalbuurt community garden. Other children were taken along to the garden, as was the case with Angelica's, Irene's, and Xenia's children. As Xenia commented: *"My son is learning how to take care of the plants, how to plant the seeds, and how to cultivate and harvest them."* The gardens provided a space for children to observe and learn from their parents and other fellow gardeners. Kindscher (2009) notices a similar pattern in her study of Southeast Asian refugees in Missouri. Children, she points out, are "important to the garden project" (Kindscher, 2009, p.4). Additionally, adult gardeners may learn from their foreign-born counterparts as evidenced in the case of Fitri.

The learning process in the garden is not limited to giving and sharing information with others. It also concerns one's own self-development. Emma could not have made this notion clearer. She said, *"I certainly learn a lot about gardening, but I also learn about working together. And you know, socially, and everything... [The garden] makes you grow."* Throughout her engagement as both a garden participant and a board member, Emma experienced aspects of community gardening that induce her to learn not only hard technical knowledge of gardening, but also soft, more implicit knowledge when it comes to working alongside other people. An account of her handling of a conflict over an issue of accessibility in the garden demonstrates just that. Through her determination and patience, she successfully convinced others of the necessity to make Transvaalbuurt community garden more

accessible for people with physical disabilities. Hence, learning in the gardens is not restricted to learning practical, tangible matters but also involves learning about oneself and others.

Garden as a place for relaxation and recreation. Community gardens and gardening provide an alternative to traditional recreational facilities such as zoos, public playgrounds, and parks (Francis et al., 1984; Harnik, 2000 cited in Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004). I discovered that the majority of my study participants viewed and experienced the gardens as sites for recreation--not only for them but also for their children. For the study participants at Carver community garden, this entailed not only doing regular gardening activities with their children--as Angelica, Irene, and Xenia did from time to time--but also having parties and holding picnics, a fact that was confirmed by Ysabel. Naomi also invited both children and adults from the neighborhood to her garden and held parties now and then. Amid the bustle of New York City, the two community gardens in the East Harlem case study provide accessible and alternative options for recreation for the foreign-born gardeners and their family members.

Transvaalbuurt community garden bore more or less a similar meaning. On the day I first met the study participants, a festivity was held alike in light of the garden's two-year anniversary. Both members and non-members of the community garden mingled and chatted with one another, while several stands hosted different kinds of activities and performances. Additionally, the garden afforded one of its participants, namely Lizette, the opportunity to relax and take a step back after a busy day at work. *"In general, if you're stressed, all stress go away,"* claimed her. She also commented that the garden provided her with a sense of calmness through planting and toiling in the soil. This particular finding corresponds to Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny's (2004) observation of Latino community gardens in New York. They observed that in addition to serving as sites for gathering and recreation, the gardens also act as places for relaxation.

Garden as nature conservation. Nowhere were reverence for nature and respect for the environment more apparent than at Transvaalbuurt and Binnentuin community gardens in Amsterdam. Three participants from the case study, namely Emma, Fitri, and Lizette, made use of the gardens in ways that contributed to their meaning as sites for nature conservation. The presence of bee- and insect hotels at the premise of Transvaalbuurt community garden gave a testimony to that effect. The idea behind it was to attract the increasingly under-threat wildlife to the gardens, as Emma pointed out. Furthermore, Lizette commented on the importance of plant and crop rotation in the garden by saying, *"it's good for the soil to have different nutrients. Don't grow the same plant in the same place."* This was clearly reflected in her plant selection that varied from one year to another. *"I know my garden is very small, but I can do [something] to help the nature,"* expressed Lizette.

It is worth noting that the abovementioned meanings are not mutually exclusive. Rather, as my study findings suggest, some shared common instances across participants and geography. So, for instance, while Carver community garden represents a connection for Ysabel and the foreign-born community gardeners who tended it, it also signifies a place where one recuperates from the hectic life in New York City. The very same view of community garden as an outlet for relaxation and enjoyment was held by Naomi at East 117th Street community garden, and Ajda and Lizette at Transvaalbuurt community garden. Furthermore, a meaning can be interpreted in more than one way. Both Emma and Fitri constructed meaning of community garden as a place for learning and exploration. Yet, the difference lay in the fact that the former put emphasis on self-learning and exploration, while the

latter on educating others.

A place--a meaningful one at that--cannot be thought of separately from the event or experience that occurs in it (Manzo, 2005). In describing the meanings they attributed to community garden, the study participants more often than not focused on the events and process that occurred rather than on the physicality of the gardens--e.g., the layout of the gardens, the paths and borders, and the types of plants grown. These instances substantiate the notion of "'experience-in-place' that creates meaning" as claimed by Manzo (2005, p.74). Indeed, it was rather impossible for all of the study participants to talk about what meanings they constructed for the gardens, i.e., the place, without consideration for gardening, or the activity itself. This was reflected, for instance, in my conversation with Fitri at Binnentuin community garden. While she began by pointing at several medicinal plants grown in the garden, she ended up expressing the garden's meaning through claiming what she would do with the plants. What this particular finding suggests is an evidence of an inextricable link between place and experience. The very same argument has been made by Lawson (2004, p.152) in her study, in which she points at the "conflation of the garden as both place and action." Activities and processes that happen in gardens were as significant as the physicality of the gardens itself, if not more.

A question that subsequently arises is: if action gives shapes to meaning, how are motivation--i.e., the drive that compels people to action--relate to the meaning a community garden has? This brings us to the point where motives for gardening collide with the meanings my study participants imbued to the gardens and gardening. I could not find much scholarly references from the body of literature pertaining to how motives relate to meaning-making. Based on the findings outlined in the previous section, I could only conjecture that motivations my study participants had for participating in the gardens serve as a lens through which meanings of place are constructed. A brief review of the motive Ysabel had for gardening helps illustrate my point. Ysabel had the motive of attracting people to the organization Unidos Si Se Puede. When asked what meaning she attached to the garden space and her gardening experience, her response consequently revolved around the notion of community garden as a connection.

It would be erroneous, however, to assume that meanings depend solely on motives; neither are the former static. Motive, after all, is one of the many lenses through which meaning is constructed. Some of my participants' discussion about motives and meanings provide a testimony to this. Upon joining Ysabel at Carver community garden, Angelica, Irene, and Xenia possessed a motive that reflected their interest to grow their own produce. The meanings they constructed for the garden, however, had less to do with the garden as a site for urban food production than with it as a site of learning, a place of retreat, and a connection with one another. What could be an explanation for this shift in meaning?

An explanation to this could be attributed to what is called "steady accretion of experiences," as hypothesized by Tuan (1974 cited in Manzo, 2005, p.81). As place-meaning develops over time and over repeated use, so did the meanings the three participants had. As the three gardeners made use of the garden space, they experienced new dimensions of the place they had not foreseen before. The limitation of garden space forced them to rethink their motives and reconsider their actions, hence leading to their conceptualizing different meanings of the garden and gardening. Thus, new meanings emerged--meaning that were no longer shaped by their motivations but by their new perception and

understanding emerging from their interaction with the physical environment and activities.

6.1.4. On Feeling and Being in the Garden

Many of the findings I described above have been discussed by different scholars. Yet, there remains an aspect of community gardens and gardening that has not so far received as much attention as others. That aspect pertains to feelings, or more specifically, the feelings and emotions elicited by being and experiencing the gardens. As is an array of other meaningful places (Manzo, 2005), community gardens incite a range of emotions, ranging from the positive to the negative. My study participants' narrative reflect a multiplicity of emotions and feelings associated with their experience in the garden. At one level, there are expressions of contentment and joy. Ysabel, who spoke for the community gardeners at Carver community garden, described the garden as "*comfortable*," saying that it became a "*house for them*." Lizette indicated that her garden plot at Transvaalbuurt community garden brought her calmness and relaxation amid her everyday life. Ajda expressed her satisfaction by saying that the garden is "*nice and gezellig*."

Obviously, their feeling this way is not without precedence; there are good reasons behind their association of the gardens with 'home.' Home, as many scholars have suggested, stands for "a fixed place" every individual can return to (Norberg-Shultz, 1985 cited in Manzo, 2005, p.68). Along with the permanency it affords, home provides a sense of protection, comfort, and familiarity to the individual it harbors. The same could be said of the community gardens tended by my study participants. Behind the enclosure surrounding the East 117th Street community garden, Naomi held gatherings for friends and neighbors alike. Angelica, Irene, and Xenia were constantly reminded of their own lives and past experiences in Mexico as they tended their shared garden plot. Lizette found solace in the garden space after a busy day at work. These findings explain the reason behind my study participants' likening their experiences and time in the gardens to being at home.

Yet, a home can be unwelcoming at times. Experiences and feelings that occur at home may also be of ambivalent nature, or even menacing (Manzo, 2005). Indeed, Relph (1985 cited in Manzo, 2005, p.70) states that "relationships to places need not be strong and positive; sometimes there is strong affection... but there may be an aversion." Naomi, for instance, revealed her displeasure toward people who loitered, forcing her to lock the gate to the East 117th Street community garden whenever she was not around. Emma expressed her dissatisfaction as to how the issues of accessibility at Transvaalbuurt community garden was handled by the board and members. Community gardens, in her opinion, should be open and easily accessible for everyone and not only for those who are physically-abled. In practice, however, ease of access to community gardens proved to be an issue many for those with physical limitations. These narratives give nuances and details to the phenomenon, which I argue, continues to be associated with ideal, positive images of gardening rather than with ones that acknowledge its multifaceted reality.

There is no other example, perhaps, that illustrates this multi-facetiousness of community gardening as well as the case of Carver community garden. The garden proved to elicit negative and unpleasant experiences to the same participants who had likened it to 'home,' in an incident which involved two different groups of gardeners. The presence of the foreign-born participants at the garden, in

a neighborhood that was predominantly African-American, was deemed with suspicion by one of the long-time African-American gardeners. The person began hurling abusive words toward the foreign-born gardeners, which made them feel distraught and threatened. The tension only began to cease when Ysabel, acting as a leader for the foreign-born gardeners, approached the person and firmly reproached him. This particular finding suggests that even in a place where one feels at home, negative emotions and experiences may occur. In the end of her article Manzo (2005, p.84) mentions that "people's emotional relationships to places embrace an array of places, feelings, and experiences."

6.2. *Limitations of the Study*

As is the case with many qualitative studies, the study participants involved in this study do not represent the entire population of foreign-born community gardeners in New York City and Amsterdam. For this reason, this study is and has never meant to be generalizable and representative of the said population. The findings this study generates came from a small number of study participants, i.e., nine in total, and were made up of the participants' personal narratives. Given the participants' various backgrounds and experiences, coupled with their differing practices and perceptions regarding community gardens and gardening, it remained difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a unified picture of community gardening that transcends personal narration and individual experience. The findings and information produced by this study, therefore, are not applicable to the full breadth of foreign-born community gardener population in New York City and Amsterdam.

Apart from lack of generalization, there are further limitations in this study owing to the nature of the questions I posed to the study participants. By their own nature, the questions raised in this study pertained to the personal experience and meaning-making of the participants. Although there were no right or wrong responses to these questions, I often had to take the study participants' words at their face value. I could not verify whether the respondents were telling accounts of an event or experience as it actually occurred or as the respondents thought it ought to be. Responses that I got might not necessarily reflect the actual beliefs and behaviors of the study participants. In other words, the way they interpret and portray their accounts of the phenomenon may or may not contradict the way the community gardens were actually used. Bearing this limitation in mind, extra measures were taken to ensure that the data I gathered could be verified. Where possible, interview data were corroborated against other sources of evidence, including websites, written document, and audiovisual records. This strategy was especially applicable to the cases of Emma in the Transvaalbuurt case study, and Irene and Ysabel in the East Harlem case study.

Uncovering meanings and motives that lay behind my study participants' participation in community gardening required building rapport and trust with the participants on my part as the researcher. However, constraints on time and resources put limits on the number of study participants involved in this study, the frequency and duration of site visits, as well as on the quantity of interviews and observations. In the case of East Harlem community gardens, on the one hand, I could only allocate two months to finding and recruiting study participants, as well as conducting interviews and observations with them. At the same time, my selection and recruitment of study participants were limited to the members of Unidos Si Se Puede who frequented its ESL classes during the months of September and October of 2012. Furthermore, as I arrived in the middle of the fall season--a time

where outdoor activities and events cease to exist--I could not directly observe the study participants in their "natural environment," i.e., community gardens.

On the other hand, the Transvaalbuurt case study also posed its own challenges to the research method I employed. Whereas circumstances found in the East Harlem case study made participant observation possible, the same could not be said of the Transvaalbuurt case study. No such prolonged contact occurred between me and the study participants, as all of them were occupied with their everyday jobs and other activities. The 'classroom' situation that allowed me to get closer to my study participants in East Harlem simply did not exist and could not be applied to the latter case. I was, therefore, limited to conducting interviews rather than participant observations over an extended period of time.

Aside from the limitations imposed by the methodology I had chosen for this study, there were also considerable limitations brought about on my part as the researcher. Factors such as time and resource constraints, language and cultural barriers, as well as personal beliefs and values undoubtedly steered and shaped the course and result of this study. For one, my inability to communicate directly--and adequately--with some of the study participants came to mind. Five out of the nine interviews I had were conducted through the help of interpreters who may or may not convey the questions and responses in the most effective way. In two particular cases, I could not obtain interpreter who speaks the same language as the participants, resulting in the interviews being conducted in the participants' second language. As a result, the participants had not been as expressive as they would have been speaking in their first language.

The significance of open-ended questions allowed me to tap into the details and nuances of responses that would have been otherwise overlooked. At the same time, the use of open-ended interviews requires aptitude and skill in communicating and observing on the part of the researcher. While some study participants were noticeably better at expressing themselves, I encountered moments where my open-ended questions were met with simply yes-or-no responses by some of the interviewees. My probing attempts were more often than not resulted in the participants' loss of interests and further lack of response. This led to partial insights that would otherwise have been nuanced and detailed. I could only speculate on what caused some participants' lack of responses and inability to express their own thoughts and feelings. At the same time, I acknowledged my own shortcoming as the interviewer for this study.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION



At the end of her novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Smith (1943) has her character, Francie, remark the state of the tree *Ailanthus altissima* that grew in the tenement yard. It had been cut down, leaving a stump that once was a large shady tree with green pointed leaves. "But the tree hadn't died...it hadn't died," Francie noted. "A new tree had grown from the stump and its trunk had grown along the ground until it reached a place where there was no wash lines above it. Then it had started to grow towards the sky again...It lived! And nothing could destroy it."

This passage hits me for the parallel it draws between the survival of the tree and that of community gardens. There was a moment in the history of New York City when their very existence hinged upon the outcome of a political lawsuit against the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Yet survive they did and many continue to flourish up to present time. Much of the same quality can be said of the nine foreign-born community gardeners who partook in this study. Through their determination to settle in a foreign land and consequent actions to adjust themselves in their new surrounding, the study participants endured whatever hardships they had encountered and kept carrying on their everyday lives. Their participation in community gardening reflect just this sort of insight and attitude.

7.1. *Conclusion*

The last chapter of this study is devoted to some concluding remarks, which bring together the research questions I posed at the onset of this study and the corresponding findings. The conclusion is then followed by some practical implications this study supposedly puts forward, and directions for further research.

I embarked upon this study with the hope to deepen understanding of the nature and dynamics of community gardening as practiced by foreign-born individuals. In its current state, much of the existing literature and studies on the phenomenon focus on urban agriculture and local food systems. Part of the problem in defining community garden and gardening in this way is that it homogenizes the phenomenon by constituting its meanings and practices as one of urban food production (L'Annunziata, 2010; and Campbell, 2014). While I do not intend to discredit the importance and necessity for the discourse of sustainability in the bigger dialogue, lack of first-hand perspectives on the part of these literature and studies could only result in a selective and often limited understanding of the interplay between foreign-born individuals and community gardens (Francis, 2009).

Paramount to understanding the nature and nuances of community gardening is understanding the motivations of the participants. Looking across the participants' narration, I found that their motives for gardening could be categorized into two domains as prescribed by Lawson (2004). For some, motives for gardening arise from the realization of community gardens as a means of social activism and community engagement. Through the gardens and gardening activities, the foreign-born individuals were engaged and involved in ongoing efforts to connect with newcomers and long-time residents, to educate community on the importance of nature conservation, and to adapt to the neighborhood they lived in. And yet for others, the will to produce their own food, to spend some time outdoor, and to relax could be accounted for in the factors that compelled foreign-born individuals to partake in community gardening.

The motivations study participants had affected the meanings and understandings they attached to the gardens and gardening. Yet, motives alone did not explain for the full range of meanings associated with community gardens. The findings of this study reinforced the notion of "experience-in-place" suggested by Manzo (2005). It was evident that for its participants, Carver community garden stood for more than a site of cultivation. It represented their connection with the past and with each other. Through the participants' initial willingness to partake in community gardening and the trust they developed toward each other, Carver community garden came to embody a sense of connection and interaction. Additionally, it signified a place for learning and exploration, as well as relaxation and recreation. Correspondingly, the three other community gardens played similar roles in the lives of their participants. Transvaalbuurt and Binnentuin community gardens, additionally, developed a meaning that included conservation and environmental issues. All of these findings contribute to understanding how foreign-born individuals experience and perceive their surrounding and in return, the roles the surrounding play in the lives of foreign-born individuals.

Notwithstanding some of the study participants' motive to grow their own food, I found little evidence supporting the notion of the gardens as sites for urban food production. The idea was not reflected in the cases of the foreign-born community gardeners I interviewed and observed. Limitations brought about by the availability of space, the lack of time and resource, as well as competition

from other means of obtaining food accounted for this specific assessment. However, as the study participants I picked for this study are not representative of the foreign-born community gardeners in New York City and Amsterdam, I could not generalize this particular finding to all community garden sites in both cities. Perhaps what is more important to note is that the phenomenon of community gardening seen from the lens of urban agriculture represents an ideal rather than an actuality.

7.2. Implications for Practice

As more and more foreign-born individuals and groups are drawn toward community gardens and gardening not only in New York City and Amsterdam but also elsewhere around the world, the need to incorporate strategies acknowledging diversity and accommodating differences into community garden initiatives only ever becomes more pressing. In light of the findings and discussion presented in this study, local activists and organizations, city planners and other officials, as well as long-term residents and users of community gardens can understand more the nature and nuances of gardening among foreign-born individuals, and in turn, lead to helping shape knowledge, decisions, and interventions that promote foreign-born population inclusion to the society they live in.

There are a variety of measures, both programmatic and policy-related, that land use planners, practitioners, and politicians can take. From the latter point of view, urban planners can introduce a series of planning and regulatory mechanisms that promote the presence of community gardens especially in lower-income and minority neighborhoods. One way to achieve this is through introducing zoning ordinances promoting the use of community gardens in urban environment. Rather than letting community gardens to operate on temporary, interim uses on vacant urban land, the introduction of zoning ordinances could preserve and secure the existence of community gardens throughout an urban area. At the same time, the introduction of such measures may remove any barrier and ease the process that community garden activists face in setting up community gardens. Learning from the case of Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani's administration, in which several hundreds of community gardens were under threat of removal, it becomes more pressing than ever to adopt stricter measures guaranteeing the tenure and continuity of community gardens and gardening.

From a more programmatic perspective, the American Planning Association (2008) has come up with several strategies that I find of greatest significance. One of the measures call for close coordination between planners, politicians, local practitioners and citizens. While land use planners definitely do not possess all the skills and knowledge pertaining to running and establishing community gardens, their positions and roles could "help citizens group navigate a complex political system" (APA, p.53). Planners, in other words, could perform as a liaison between different local organizations and practitioners, as well as policy-makers in a municipality. My findings of the Amsterdam case study revealed a degree of such role that land use planners and officials in Amsterdam assume.

Community garden organizers, planners, and city officials could use community gardens as an opportunity to welcome and integrate newly-arrived foreign-born individuals. The findings of this study revealed that foreign-born participants shared a sense of connection--not only toward each other, but also to the community they lived in--through the activities they did in the gardens. To ensure

that foreign-born individuals feel welcome and included, events like open houses or neighborhood tours could be held at community garden spaces. The goal is to inform the foreign-born population of the presence and services offered by a community garden space. Such an event also facilitates meetings with residents and other users of the garden. It might also help recruit new member gardeners.

Community gardens also need to be accessible and are of ease of use. At the same time, they need to be safe. Signage and instructions in multiple languages, for instance, could be posted at the gardens. Ramps and railings could be installed to enhance safety while entering and walking in the gardens. One particular finding from the Transvaalbuurt community garden provides a practical solution for gardeners with physical difficulty, i.e., an introduction of raised beds for planting. Rather than having to stoop and kneel, people of mature age or those with physical disabilities can now join in the gardens; they are no longer barred from participating. An incident at Carver community garden demonstrates the importance of a mediator should a conflict or misunderstanding arise among the different users of the gardens. Rather than leaving foreign-born community gardeners to their own devices, community garden organizers need to ensure that assistance and supervision is available for most of the time. Appointing a more established gardener or an organizer as someone-in-charge could help alleviate problems that may occur.

In coming up with the design and layout of a community garden space, organizers, planners, and designers need to work closely with the gardeners to identify the needs they have for gardening spaces. They also need to acknowledge the varying motives and knowledge foreign-born community gardeners may have brought with them rather than impose their own views on what community garden spaces ought to have. By asking what purposes the gardeners intend for the garden spaces and listening to what they want to contribute with, community garden organizers, planners, and city officials could initiate community garden spaces that are not only engaging for those who use them, but also meaningful.

7.3. Directions for Further Research

One of the particularly striking aspects I identified at the initial stage of my fieldworks in both East Harlem and Transvaalbuurt was the sex ratio of the foreign-born gardeners. All nine study participants who volunteered for the study were female. The majority, if not all of the foreign-born community gardeners I came across--including those who did not participate in this study--were female. My exclusion of male participants in this study was by no means deliberate. Whereas I witnessed a more mixed participation of both sexes among native-born gardeners in Amsterdam in particular, the same could not be said of their foreign-born counterparts. Such an observation raises several questions: why are foreign-born women more likely than foreign-born men to participate in a community garden? What could be the factors contributing to the sex disparity in the participation of foreign-born individuals in community garden and gardening? How would male foreign-born gardeners view, use, and navigate the garden? And would their experiences and perceptions differ from those of the female's? These questions warrant further investigation as to the dynamics between male and female foreign-born individuals both inside and outside of home, and take a look at how these dynamics are played out in public spaces, such as community gardens.

One assumption of mine is that foreign-born men are, more often than not the sole breadwinner in their families. While they work during daytime, the responsibility of domestic chores is assumed by the women. Community gardening, which can be viewed as an extension of this 'domesticity' outside the home, thus becomes female-dominated. Yet, this simplistic way of assessing does not account for the more male-female balance observed among the native-born members of the gardens I observed in Transvaalbuurt community garden. To this end, a qualitative study comparing experiences and perceptions of community garden and gardening between foreign- and native-born individuals would reveal new insights into the diverse nature of community garden and gardening. Future research could be conducted to identify differences and similarities underlying their experiences, motivations, and perceptions, which findings could be used toward enriching the definition and nuances of community garden and gardening.

As I noted in the discussion section, little could be found in the existing studies and reports regarding meanings of a place, i.e., community garden, and the motives people have for visiting and spending their time in one. Further exploration on this topic, therefore, would be useful and would contribute to the small but increasing body of literature on community garden and its significance. One way to achieve this would be through conducting a qualitative study in the tradition of phenomenology. Additionally, a follow-up study involving the same participants would provide greater insights to the phenomenon, namely in understanding how the meanings they constructed for community gardens and gardening may or may not change over time.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF QUESTIONS

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Race/ethnicity/country of origin:

Occupation:

Family size, composition of household:

Years lived in adopted country:

Age when emigrated to adopted country:

1. What were the reasons for leaving your home country?
2. What was it like adjusting to life in the adopted country? What were the challenges? Did you have certain expectations upon coming here?
3. What do you think of the culture in your adoptive country?
4. Do you feel certain pressure to adapt to your adoptive country?
5. Do you feel like you belong here?
6. How did you get involved with community gardening?
7. Have you had previous gardening experience in your home country?
8. How often do you tend your garden?
9. What do you do in your garden?
10. What types of plants do you grow in your garden? For what purpose?
11. What do you feel like about your garden, about working in your garden?
12. What are the challenges you encounter in the garden?
13. Do you know your fellow gardeners? Did you know each other before? Did you interact with them?
14. How has gardening benefited you, your family?
15. What do you learn from gardening?