

# Guerrilla Gardening in the Netherlands

A successful niche or a disappearing practice?



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## A successful niche or a disappearing practice?

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## Preface

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*Gardening is the most therapeutic and defiant act you can do, especially in the inner city.*

*Plus, you get strawberries.*

*~ Ron Finley ~*

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This is a quote by Ron Finley (2013), from his ted talk “*A guerrilla gardener in South Central LA*”. That TED talk was my first encounter with guerrilla gardening. It is impossible to not get excited from his talk, as it is about positivity and possibilities. It fits with everything that my master, organic agriculture, is about. In 10 minutes Finley refers to both food deserts and food forests. When he looks at public land, he sees a piece of land that can be more than how it is used at that moment. With that he changed how I look at the land around me.

Every now and then I hear something about throwing seed bombs, or making the side of the roads bee friendly. The initiatives seemed to pop up here and there and then disappear again. It made we wonder about the Dutch “*Gangsta Gardeners*”, as Ron Finley calls it. Do we have them, here in the Netherlands?

I want to thank the rural sociology chair group and my thesis supervisor for allowing me and helping me to explore my curiosity further in my thesis. I was a bit worried about not finding these gardeners because of their somewhat illegality. Michael Hardman and Peter J. Larkham wrote a book with the subtitle “*The Secret Lives of Guerrilla Gardeners*”. In the first chapter “*Guerrilla Agriculture: Unearthing the Hidden Movement*” they talk about guerrilla gardening as an “underground, somewhat illegal movement” (Hardman & Larkham, 2014). Luckily the guerrilla gardeners were eager to share their ideas and ideals. I would like to thank the guerrilla gardeners who took the time to talk with me. Without them this research would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the municipalities for shedding light on the other side of guerrilla gardening, as those whose land gets targeted.

With my research I have tried to show what this intriguing movement looks like in the Netherlands. To take the hidden movement and place it in the light. I hope to not only give an impression of the course of guerrilla gardening until now, but also to give an idea of the potentials that are still there. Because who does not love strawberries.

## Abstract

Although guerrilla gardening has been called an upcoming movement, it seems that the guerrilla gardening activities in the Netherlands have been declining over the past years. With the use of the multilevel perspective this research will answer the question: *“How successful was guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation in the Netherlands?”* I conducted 9 interviews with guerrilla gardeners and 6 with municipality workers. As a niche guerrilla gardening does not have a clear definition nor do guerrilla gardeners have a specific reason to guerilla garden. Although, promotion of a political party is an important reason for several of the gardeners. In the landscape and regime level opportunities arise due to climate change, the financial crisis and participation. The gardeners did not really know why they stopped, it was something that had just happened. They had not experienced a lot of changes, although some did feel that guerrilla gardening was less necessary, because it could now be done with permission. Not all the interviewees of the municipalities were aware of guerrilla gardening, and none of them felt as if guerrilla gardening had changed anything. Generally municipalities are fine with residents gardening on public land, however in some cases they would like to discuss it first. In the end it seems that guerrilla gardening was not a successful niche invitation, but it was successful for the individual guerrilla gardeners.

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# 1 Introduction

Guerrilla is a form of warfare, small groups of people fighting the government, but gardening is about growing something new. These two things could not be further apart, so what is guerrilla gardening? Guerrilla gardeners are people who see a piece of land and think it needs more greenery, usually in the urban areas. They despise the concrete, the lack of plants and biodiversity in cities. They take matters into their own hands, but they do this without consulting those who own the land. Like guerrillas they fight in small groups trying to bring change, but they fight by gardening. Guerrilla gardeners are people who cultivate land that is not their own, and they do this without the landowner's permission. More about the definition of guerrilla gardening in *Chapter 1*.

Fascinated by this concept I tried to find more information about guerrilla gardening. I did find articles that seemed as excited about this as I was, but it felt as if most of those articles were in the past. In this first chapter I will explore what course the interest in guerrilla gardening took, by looking when academic research and newspaper articles about guerrilla gardening were published and when guerrilla gardening initiatives took place. This will give an idea of the position of guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands nowadays and lead me to the research question.

## 1.1 Academic research

In academics, several researchers mentioned an increase in guerrilla gardening awareness. Crane, Viswanathan, & Whitelaw (2013) state that the practices and popular media coverage had been on the rise seen over the last five years (that would be from 2008 to 2013), even though it had not received much academic attention. Hardman & Larkham (2014) talk about a rapid expansion of the movement. They give examples of guerrilla gardening products, such as seed bombs by commercial companies and magazines. They state that the interest of those commercial companies and magazines could indicate that guerrilla gardening is becoming a mainstream activity. A year later, Adams, Hardman, & Larkham (2015) argue that guerrilla gardening awareness has reached a new level, indicated by entertainment series and documentaries. Furthermore, they argue that most guerrilla gardening coverage is overwhelmingly positive. They warn for a "guerrilla trap", since they feel that guerrilla gardening is unquestionably encouraged, overlooking the possible negative effects. It seems that these academic articles assume that guerrilla gardening is growing as a movement. Some of the articles even call for more research (Adams, Hardman, & Larkham, 2015) (Hardman & Larkham, 2014) (Hardman, et al., 2018) (Mikadze, 2015). Currently a big part of the academic research on guerrilla gardening is based on Hardman's three case studies he used for his doctorate research.

Although above mentioned articles talk about an increase in guerrilla gardening, this increase does not show in the amount of articles published. I used Scopus and Web of Sciences as search engines, with the searching term "guerrilla AND garden\*" in the title, and limiting the results to articles and book chapters to get an idea of the amount of academic articles published. In *Figure 1* you can see the results of this search. (Elsevier B.V, 2018) (Web of Science, 2019). This figure shows that interest was rising at first, with a small peak in 2015. However, a real increase in interest as discussed in the articles never seems to have happened. The maximum was at seven articles, not taken into account the possible overlap of articles in both search engines.

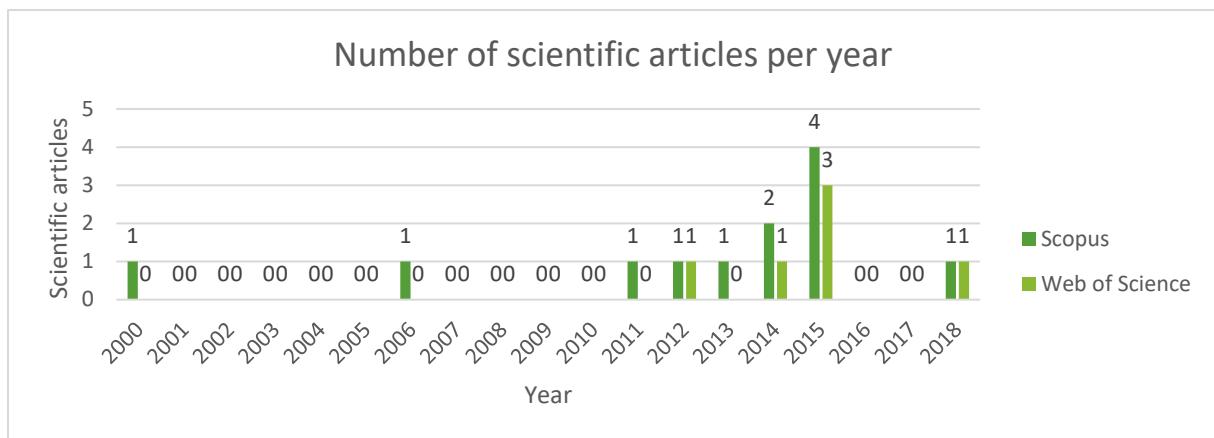


Figure 1: Scientific articles found with Scopus and Web of Science per year per search engine.

## 1.2 Newspaper articles

Secondly I looked at Dutch newspapers and their interest in guerrilla gardening. Several newspapers mention a growing interest in guerrilla gardening. City manager Sonja Olthuis, sustainability coach Martijn van Loenen and journalist Chantal Blommers (2011) call guerrilla gardening trendy (Mekking & Walraven, 2015) (AD/Rivierenland, 2011). Local newspaper de Stentor talks about a green revolution and trend (Gigengack, 2011). Another local newspaper, AD Haagsche Courant, claims that the trend is increasing (Bakker, 2013). Similar as with the academic papers, it seems that in the Dutch newspapers the media interest in guerrilla gardening did not keep increasing. Using LexisNexis as a search engine, “guerrilla gardening” as a search term, limiting the search to Dutch articles placed in Dutch newspapers and removing duplicates, gave *Figure 2*. This figure shows not only the media attention stagnating, but even declining.

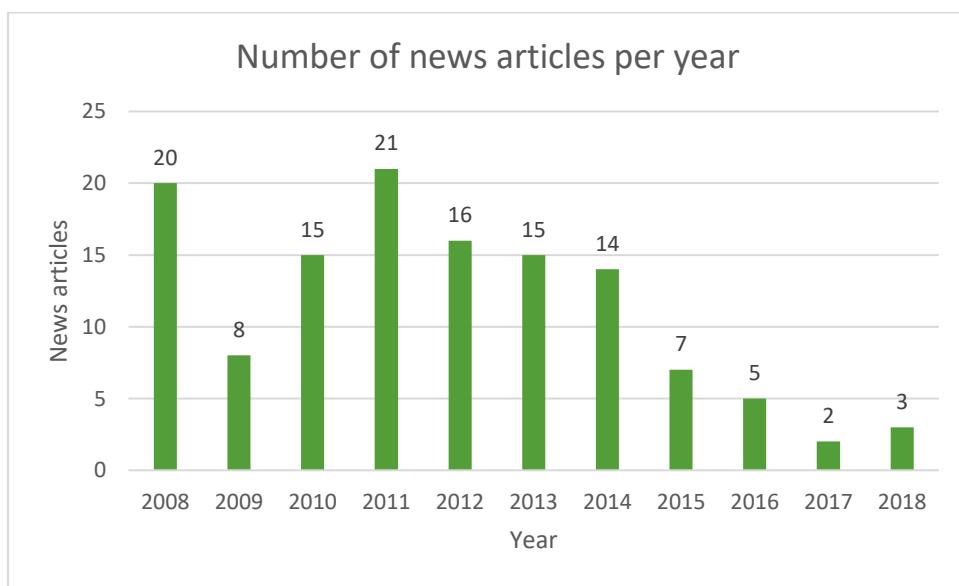


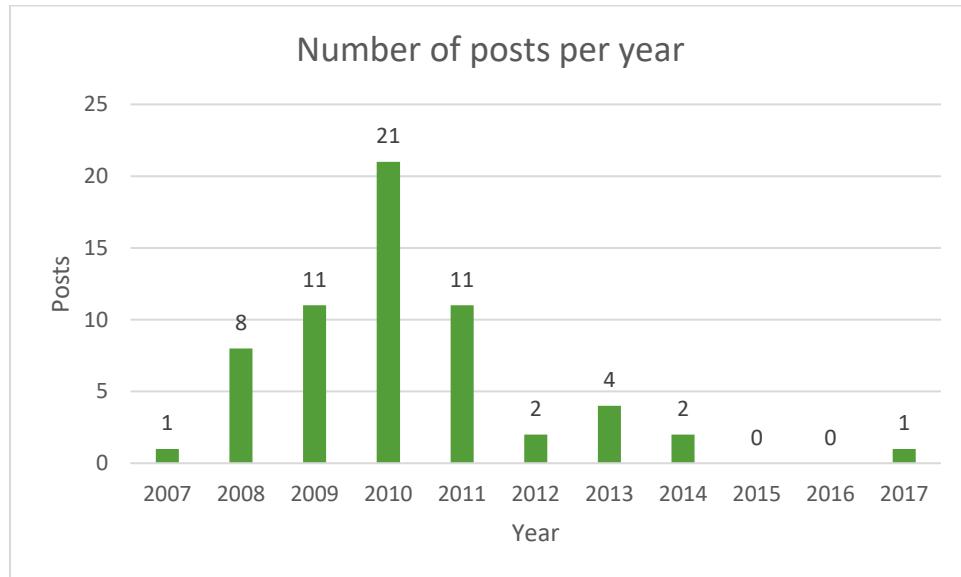
Figure 2: News articles found with LexisNexis per year in the Netherlands.

## 1.3 Guerrilla gardening projects

The decline in interest in guerrilla gardening can also be seen in the decline in guerrilla gardening projects. Guerrillagardening.org is the website of Richard Reynolds, guerrilla gardener and writer of the book ‘*On Guerrilla Gardening, a handbook for gardening without boundaries*’.



Guerrillagardening.org states on their website that they are “a growing arsenal” and to go to the forum for news on the “front line” of guerrilla gardening (Guerrillagardening.org (a), n.d.). The forum consists of different topics for different regions in the world. *Figure 3* shows how often a new topic has been placed in the regional board of the Netherlands (Guerrillagardening.org (b), n.d.).



*Figure 3: Posts on the Dutch forum board of GuerrillaGardeners.org per year.*

Another guerrilla gardening project in Amsterdam called ‘*Tuinboon je mee*’ made their last post on their website in 2012 (Tuinboon je mee, 2018). The website ‘*de groene vinger*’ talks about ‘*het Groenlegioen*’, and states that they are the guerrilla gardeners of Amersfoort. However, the website that is referred to is “no longer available” (Corlijn, 2011). These examples show again a decreasing interest in guerrilla gardening. Although there are also some projects, for example guerrillagardeners.nl, that are still active (Guerrillagardeners.nl, n.d.).

#### 1.4 This research

The rise in guerrilla gardening, that some of the articles discuss, never seemed to have happened. At least in the Netherlands it seems there was a decline instead, with some guerrilla gardening groups and projects having disappeared in the last couple of years. Information on the current state of guerrilla gardening is missing. It is unclear if guerrilla gardening projects are no longer happening or just getting less attention. Furthermore, it is uncertain if and why previous guerrilla gardening projects have disappeared, whether they have had an impact and what that impact was. The existing research focused only on current activities of guerrilla gardening groups, none of the research looked at the effect the activities may have had. There also has not been any research about guerrilla gardening specifically in the Netherlands. For my research I look at the guerrilla gardening movement specifically in the Netherlands. I use the multilevel framework to explore the guerrilla gardening movement and will answer the following research question: “*How successful was guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation in the Netherlands?*” This will show what guerrilla gardening looks like in the Netherlands and how it has developed. The next chapter gives a literature background of guerrilla gardening, followed by a chapter explaining the multilevel framework. Chapter four depicts the methods used for this research and in chapter five the results are given. The research report will finish with a discussion and conclusion.



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## 2 Literature background - Guerrilla gardening in theory

This chapter delves into what actually guerrilla gardening is, by using both academic research papers and Dutch newspaper articles. The newspaper articles allow to look at guerrilla gardening more specific to the Netherlands. This chapter will start by discussing the definition of guerrilla gardening, then its origins, who is participating, why people become guerrilla gardeners, the legality of guerrilla gardening, the role of the Dutch government and this chapter concludes with some important figures in the guerrilla gardening movement.

### 2.1 Definition

There is not one clear definition for guerrilla gardening. Crane, Viswanathan & Whitelaw (2013) argue that guerrilla gardening is conceptually fuzzy. Adams, Hardman & Larkham (2015) describe guerrilla gardeners as volunteers who target spaces of neglect and transform these without consent. Mikadze (2015) sees guerrilla gardening as a tactical practice to create temporary, low-maintenance gardens in urban spaces and in '*Informal urban agriculture*' Hardman & Larkham (2014) discuss guerrilla gardening as an umbrella term for any form of unpermitted gardening activity. They also describe guerrilla gardening as informal urban agriculture. The lack of a clear definition is also seen in the Dutch newspapers, in which the definition ranges from residents who brighten bare or overgrown municipality land without permission (Carlier, 2008) to coming together with people to make a garden as fast as you can wherever you find it necessary (De Gelderlander, 2008). Journalist Gigengack (2011) adds that guerrilla gardeners usually act at night. Journalist Leo van Marrewijk (2013) describes a more rural version of guerrilla gardening, in which hikers throw seed bombs in the roadsides. Journalist Fennema (2012) adds to the description that guerrilla gardening can be temporary.

The definition I will use in this paper for guerrilla gardening is volunteers who garden on someone else's land, without permission. The land can be privately owned or public, the gardeners can work during the day or night, the duration of the existence of the garden does not matter, and the volunteers do not have to be aware of the act of guerrilla gardening. It will be considered guerrilla gardening, as long as the gardeners did not ask consent to those responsible for the land. This definition is most used, therefore I will also use it in this research. It also helps that it is a clear description, which makes it straightforward. If the land is not yours and you did not ask permission, it is guerrilla gardening. This will help limit the confusion that otherwise could arise.

### 2.2 Origin

The Dutch newspapers mention different ideas on the origin of guerrilla gardening. Several of the articles claim that guerrilla gardening started with the Green Guerrillas in New York or more general in the United States (van den Breemer, 2010) (Carlier, 2008) (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2008). Wiersma claims that guerrilla gardening started in Detroit (Noordhollands Dagblad, 2011). In de Gelderlander they say guerrilla gardening started in London, with Richard Reynolds (De Gelderlander, 2008). Metz (2008) explains that guerrilla gardening started in New York but that the movement got revived by Richard Reynolds.

Guerrilla gardening can be viewed in two different ways: the *practice* of guerrilla gardening (any gardening activity without consent) and the *term* guerrilla gardening (projects that are called guerrilla gardening). It is very hard to determine when people started with guerrilla gardening before

it had the name guerrilla gardening. Hardman & Larkham (2014) say that guerrilla gardening may have been practiced for centuries. In the Netherlands the practice of guerrilla gardening without using the term guerrilla gardening can be seen in the 'geveltuinjes'. These are gardens made by removing a row of tiles from the sidewalk, next to the wall of a house. The garden is placed in the gap created by removing the tiles. According to van den Breemer (2010) this form of illegal gardening started in the 50s.

The Green Guerillas, in New York City, are probably the first ones to actually use the term guerrilla gardening. Liz Christy started with a group to guerrilla gardening by throwing seed bombs and putting flower boxes on window ledges in the early 70s. After that they turned a vacant lot into a community garden and started to inspire others to do the same throughout New York City (Green Guerillas, n.d.).

It is easier to explore where the term guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands started. *Figure 2* in section 1.2 *Newspaper articles* shows that before 2008 there are no newspapers in which the term guerrilla gardening is used. Guerrilla gardening took flight due to GroenLinks' (a Dutch political party) action '*Dit land kan zoveel groener*' (This country can be so much greener). This action was accompanied by the website guerrillagardeners.nl and the first '*actieweekend*' (action weekend) (Carlier, 2008). More on the role of GroenLinks for guerrilla gardening can be found in *section 2.6 Dutch government and guerrilla gardening*.

### 2.3 Who?

Hardman et al. (2018) describe guerrilla gardeners as a diverse group of people. Several articles indicate the variety of those who participate in guerrilla gardening by emphasizing that guerrilla gardeners can be organizations, people connected through social media networks or individuals (Adams, Hardman, & Larkham, 2015) (Hardman & Larkham, 2014) (Mikadze, 2015). Adams, Hardman, & Larkham (2015) add that they are volunteers. In newspaper AD, guerrilla gardener René Wagenaar talks about a guerrilla gardening event where the age ranged from 2 to 70 years old (Mentink, 2013). Journalists Van den Breemer (2010), Carlier (2008) and Bakker (2013) describe those who guerrilla garden as residents of the neighborhood where the guerrilla gardening is taking place. Mikadze (2015) gives a good reason as to why it is indistinctive: anyone with a handful of seeds and some basic instruments can be a guerrilla gardener.

### 2.4 Why?

Mikadze (2015) mentions that there is not just one single goal for guerrilla gardening. Those who guerrilla garden are very diverse and so are their reasons. However, some similar reasons are mentioned in several articles. The first one is that guerrilla gardeners would like to dispute how certain areas are seen and used (Adams, Hardman, & Larkham, 2015) (Crane, Viswanathan, & Whitelaw, 2013) (Mikadze, 2015). A second reason is to beautify the area, specifically in areas that look neglected, and to increase the biodiversity (Adams, Hardman, & Larkham, 2015). There is also the thrill of the activity. Adams, Hardman and Larkham (2015) discuss how guerrilla gardening attracts thrill seekers and gives an opportunity to break the rules and escape reality. In cases where crops are being used, guerrilla gardening can be about food security and survival (Mikadze, 2015) (Hardman & Larkham, 2014). The reason could also be more accidental. For example, Hardman et al. (2018) discuss how guerrilla gardening could be a result of confusion or not knowing how to get the necessary permissions to start a garden in certain plots.

In the Netherlands the most often given reason in newspaper articles is to simply get more green in the streets (Blommers, 2011) (De Gelderlander, 2008) (Mentink, 2013) (Stamkot, 2013) (van den Breemer, 2010). Some of the articles add that guerrilla gardeners want to increase the biodiversity (Mentink, 2013) (Gigengack, 2011) (van den Breemer, 2010). Guerrilla gardener Joan Flikweert states that people engage in guerrilla gardening because they want to contribute something themselves to improve the city (Stamkot, 2013). Journalist Van den Breemer (2010) mentions this as well, she adds that most guerrilla gardeners are people who like to garden, but do not have a garden themselves. Some articles discuss individual reasons to start guerrilla gardening. Guerrilla gardener Rodermans explains that he did ask permission to fix up a garden, but he never got a reply. When he heard of guerrilla gardening, he took that road instead (Carlier, 2008). Guerrilla gardeners Peijnenburg and Hermans state that their main reason was to get more food for bees and other insects and that they would like to inspire others to do something for the bees as well (Dorrestijn, 2016).

In conclusion, the most important reason for guerrilla gardening specifically in the Netherlands seems to be to create more green and add biodiversity.

## 2.5 Legality

Hardman et al. (2018) describe guerrilla gardening as more of an informal act than an illegal one, due to a lack of arrests and prosecutions. They say that the illegality is not obtaining planning permission and avoiding the bureaucracy of paperwork involving things as risk assessments or insurances. They add that under UK law guerrilla gardening does not constitute as criminal damage. Yet Adams, Hardman & Larkham (2015) explain that if guerrilla gardeners remove vegetation it does constitute as criminal damage or theft. They also mention that guerrilla gardeners could trespass. Crane, Viswanathan & Whitelaw (2013) put guerrilla gardening in a legal grey area, where the rules are being bend.

How illegal guerrilla gardening is in the Netherlands is hard to say. Sadelhoff (2011) describes a guerrilla gardening action in which the police ask the guerrilla gardeners to leave, due to drivers that were startled by people being too close to the road. However Carlier (2008) and Dorrestijn (2016) both mention that the police usually condones the actions. Guerrilla gardener Joan Flikweert describes their actions as “mischievous, but not criminal”<sup>1</sup>. She adds that no one has ever been arrested for planting a flower, the police would rather wave at them than arrest them (Gigengack, 2011).

On guerrillagardeners.nl Jenny, the person behind the website and who writes most of the articles on the website, says that in her ten years of guerrilla gardening she has never heard of anyone getting a fine or having trouble with the police. She thinks there are three laws important in relation to guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands. The ‘*flora- en faunawet*’ (flora and fauna law) stating that some plants are not allowed to be put in nature. The ‘*natuurbeschermingswet*’ (nature protection law) stating that you are not allowed to put unwanted species in nature areas and the ‘*algemeen plaatselijke verordening*’ (general local regulation) which explains what is and is not allowed in the city. Additionally, each municipality has its own rules, that could include not to put certain items in public space (Jenny (a), 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> Translated quote that was originally published in *Tabantia* (2011) by Gigengack.

It seems that guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands is also in a bit of a grey legal area. It is not legal, however it looks like the police/municipality does not act in relation to guerrilla gardeners.

## 2.6 Dutch government and guerrilla gardening

Guerilla gardening in the Netherlands appears to show a crucial difference to guerrilla gardening discussed in the academic literature. This important difference consists in the relationship between government and guerrilla gardening. In the Netherlands the government seems to have a close relation with guerrilla gardening, especially with the political party GroenLinks.

GroenLinks claims that they have adopted guerrilla gardening. Although everyone is welcome to participate in guerrilla gardening, no matter what your affiliation is to the party (GroenLinks, 2013). Journalist Carlier (2008) says that party members from GroenLinks went “through the streets to turn neglected gardens into flowerbeds.” Journalist Slager (2008) mentions that GroenLinks facilitates and pays for plants for guerrilla gardeners. Journalist Gigengack (2011) says GroenLinks is also behind the annual action weekend, which is a weekend to encourage people to guerrilla garden. This weekend is still being held in the third weekend of April, to coincide with Earth Day (Jenny (b), 2018). According to Carlier (2008) and Gigengack (2011) GroenLinks initiated the website guerrillagardeners.nl, although at this moment there is no mention of GroenLinks on this website. Surprisingly, on the website of GroenLinks there are only three articles about guerrilla gardening, from 2009, 2011 and 2013. These articles are about the action weekend and mention very little about the role GroenLinks played in the development of guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands (GroenLinks, n.d.). It seems they were very involved, but then stopped supporting guerrilla gardening. If this is the case it is unclear why and when they stopped their support.

It is not just GroenLinks that supports (or supported) guerrilla gardening. The regional newspaper Noordhollands Dagblad (2010) claims that the Dutch government does not just allow guerrilla gardening but helps guerrilla gardeners by providing free garden soil or subsidizing the development of ‘geveltuinjes’. Journalist Marrewijk (2013) describes a more rural version of guerrilla gardening, in which pedestrians can drop seed bombs in the sidewalks. The municipality supported this action. Newspaper Algemeen Dagblad (2010) talks about a municipality that supported a guerrilla gardening action by providing the plants.

The Dutch government seems positive about guerrilla gardening. A council member says that it is easier to give some plants to local residents, than it is for the government to take care of public greenery (Slager, 2008). In line with this hypothesis guerrilla gardener Joan Flikweert mentions that the government responds positively to her actions (Stamkot, 2013) and municipality spokesperson Ilse Pol responds to a guerrilla gardening action in Dordrecht that she thinks it is very nice that residents want to make their own city more beautiful (Blommers, 2011). Also the ‘Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten’ (Association of Dutch Municipalities) thinks that the government should stimulate guerrilla gardening (de Volkskrant, 2010).

## 2.7 Important figures in Guerrilla gardening

Some people/groups involved in guerrilla gardening seem to play an important role in the guerrilla garden movement. This section gives a broader description for a view of these.

### Green Guerillas

As discussed in section 2.2 *Origin* the Green Guerillas are often mentioned as the first ones to use the



term guerrilla gardening. The Green Guerillas are still active in New York City today. However, it seems they no longer practice guerrilla gardening. They are now a nonprofit recourse center, which supports community gardens (Green Guerillas, n.d.).

### **Richard Reynolds**

Mikadze (2015; p. 523) calls Richard Reynolds “one of the most visible activists and promoters of Guerrilla Gardening in the UK”. Adams, Hardman and Larkham (2015; p. 1232) say he is “the self-proclaimed general” of guerrilla gardening. Hardman and Larkham (2014; p. 17) mention that he is “a household name” for guerrilla gardening, and that he brought the movement into the twenty-first century. Although he is located in London, he is also mentioned in the Dutch newspapers. Van den Breemer (2010) says that Richard Reynolds is the leader of the guerrilla gardening movement. Stamkot (2013) claims that he has made guerrilla gardening big worldwide.

Richard Reynolds started a blog about his guerrilla gardening projects on the website [guerrillagardening.org](http://guerrillagardening.org). In addition to the blog the website has a guerrilla gardeners forum. He also wrote the book '*On Guerrilla Gardening, a handbook for gardening without boundaries*' in 2008. Furthermore, he gives talks on the topic of guerrilla gardening. The last blog entry was in December 2015 (Guerrillagardening.org (a), n.d.), the latest talk was in July 2017 (Guerrillagardening.org (c), n.d.). He is still active on twitter, where he has over 8000 followers (Twitter, n.d.).

### **Guerrilla Gardeners**

Adams, Hardman & Larkham (2015) talk about an Australian prime time show called the '*Guerrilla Gardeners*' to illustrate that guerrilla gardening is becoming more popular and mainstream. This tv-show originally aired on the network TEN in 2009. It was dropped with some episodes that had not been aired yet (Knox, 2009). The remaining episodes ended up being aired two years later (Knox, 2011).

### **Guerrillagardeners.nl**

There are no well-known guerrilla gardeners in the Netherlands. There is however the website [guerrillagardeners.nl](http://guerrillagardeners.nl). This website aims to inspire others to guerrilla garden, which they do by showing the work of others. They also give information about guerrilla gardening and they sell seed bombs (Jenny, n.d.).

# 3



### 3 Theoretical framework – The multilevel perspective

In this research I will be using the multilevel perspective to help explore what transition guerrilla gardening may have made to be able to answer the research question: *“How successful was guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation in the Netherlands?”* In the last section of this chapter I will elaborate on this research question. First I will look at each of the different levels of the multilevel perspective and how they relate to guerrilla gardening. After that I will explain how a transition takes place within the multilevel perspective.

The multilevel perspective provides me with a lens to look at guerrilla gardening, helping me to look at guerrilla gardening from different perspectives, and not just from the point of view of guerrilla gardeners. It will create a way to see the possibilities for guerrilla gardening to grow and develop further and to look at where the movement stands now. It will also help me to create an objective concept of whether guerrilla gardening was a successful niche or not, by looking at a successful niche as a niche that has influenced the regime. Although, the success of a niche is not limited to influencing the regime. A niche can still be successful while staying a niche. With the multilevel

#### Increasing structuration of activities in local practices

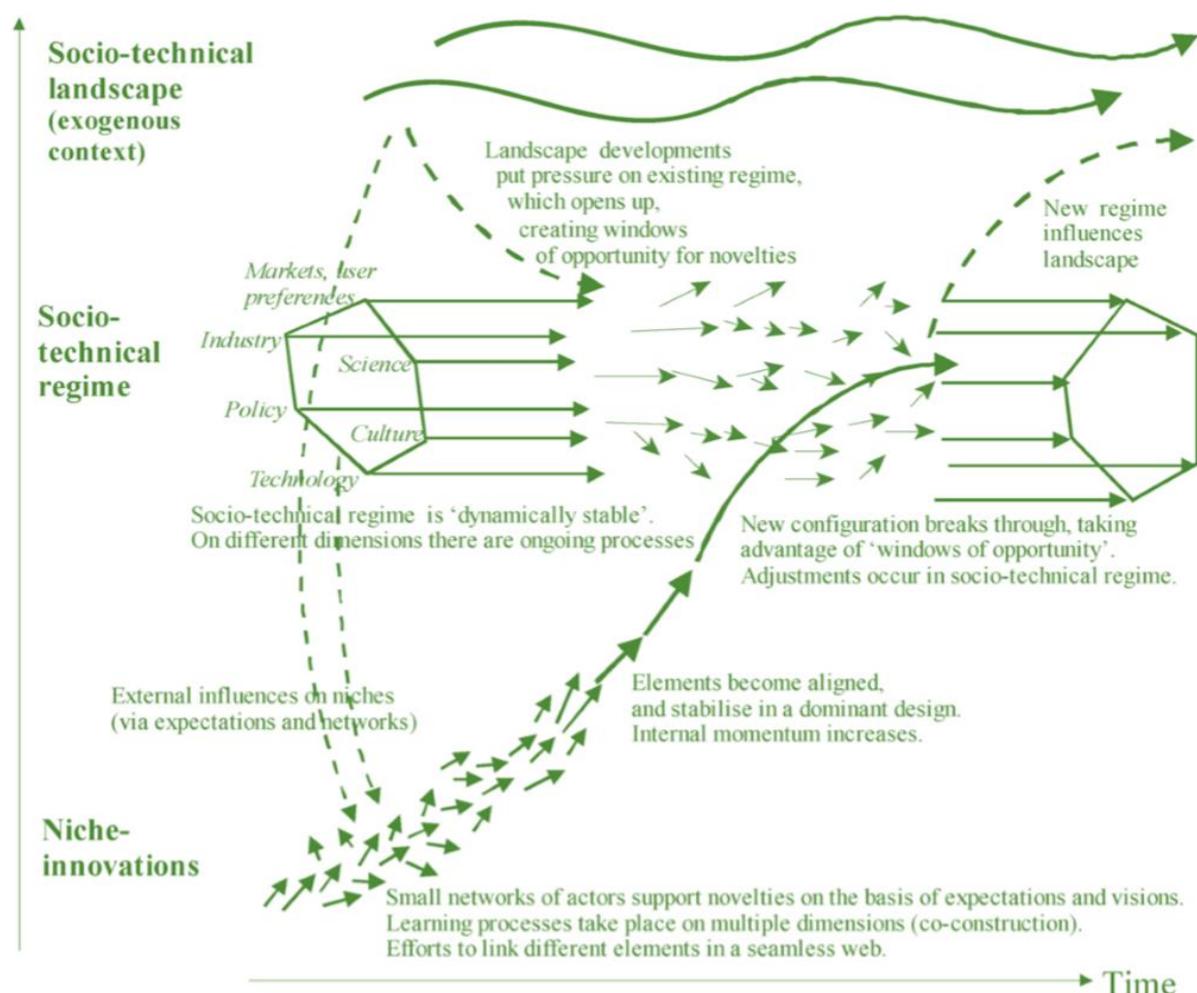


Figure 4: The multi-level perspective (Geels, 2011)

perspective the disappearance of guerrilla gardening could be explained by guerrilla gardening being taken up by the regime.

The multilevel perspective looks at transitions without a simple causality, cause or driver, but as a process with multiple dimensions and levels simultaneously (Geels, 2005). This perspective sees transitions as a nonlinear process and the result of the interactions of three different analytical levels: niches, the (socio-technical) regime, and the (socio-technical) landscape (Geels, 2011). The socio-technical levels are made up of a cluster of elements, such as technology, regulation, user practices and markets, cultural meaning, infrastructure, maintenance networks and supply networks. They are actively created, (re)produced and refined by several social groups, such as firms, universities and knowledge institutes, public authorities, public interest groups and users. Their activities reproduce the elements and linkages in the sociotechnical levels. They have their own vested interests, problem perceptions, values, preferences, strategies and resources (money, knowledge and contacts). The three levels relate to each other as a nested hierarchy. Transition is caused by interaction between processes at the different levels (Geels, 2005). *Figure 4* shows the different levels and how they can influence each other.

### 3.1 Niche

The niche, the micro-level, acts as an 'incubation room' for radical innovations. Here the innovation gets a chance to develop. The niche level consists of uncertainty and is not very stable (Geels, 2005). In the niche, actors work on alignment and development on multiple dimensions to get to a configuration that works (Geels, 2010). A successful niche is robust and shows potential to grow. It can branch out and attract wider interest from the mainstream (Smith, 2007). Niches can be adopted by the regime. Niches face an uphill battle against existing systems (the locked-in regime) (Moradi & Vagnoni, 2018). The biggest opportunity for a niche is when the niche is stable and the regime's stability is low, this increases the chances that the regime adopts the niche. When the regime stability is higher than that of the niche, niches will remain marginal. (Smith, 2007)

In this research I will look at guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation. Guerrilla gardening can be seen as a niche because it is a different way to look at public land. Instead of seeing it as the responsibility of the municipality, they see it as a place where they can garden. The first sub question will focus on guerrilla gardening as a niche. I will further explore how guerrilla gardening as a niche looks, by first exploring how the guerrilla gardeners themselves see guerrilla gardening and secondly what the guerrilla gardeners goal is.

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#### *What does guerrilla gardening look like as a niche movement?*

- *How do guerrilla gardeners define guerrilla gardening?*
- *What transition do guerrilla gardeners want to cause with their actions?*

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### 3.2 Regime and Landscape

The niche and landscape level are defined in relation to the regime (Geels, 2011): the regime level makes up the meso-level (Geels, 2005). Regimes consist of relatively stable institutions, techniques, rules, practices and networks. They help establish and fulfil socially valued functions (Smith, Stirling, & Berkhout, 2005). This stability can be created by legally binding contracts. Another factor causing stability are social relationships. Due to interdependent networks and mutual role expectations, systems could get embedded in society (Geels, 2005).

The macro-level consists of the landscape level. This level cannot be directly influenced or changed by actors (Geels, 2005). The landscape level is the wider context, influencing the niche and regime level (Geels, 2011). The regime is embedded into the landscape (Moradi & Vagnoni, 2018). Part of the landscape level are physical climate, rapid external shocks for instance wars, and long-term changes in a certain direction for instance demographical changes. Changes in the landscape level are usually slow (Geels, 2011).

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*In what ways give the regime and landscape level opportunity to guerrilla gardening to cause a transition in the regime.*

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In the second sub question I explore the effect the landscape and regime level can have in relation to guerrilla gardening. The focus is on those topics that came forward in the interviews. For the landscape level that is climate change, for the regime level those are the crisis and participation. More on this in 5.1.2 *The pressure of the landscape and the destabilization of regime*.

### 3.3 Transitions

Transitions are seen as a shift in the regime. Regime shifts do not come easy because the current regime is stabilized by a lock-in mechanism that is connected to investments, behavior, infrastructure and regulations (Geels, 2010). Transitions are long-term processes, but relatively fast breakthroughs can occur (Moradi & Vagnoni, 2018). Processes leading to transition take place at different levels, which link up and reinforce each other (Geels, 2011). The niche innovations build up momentum, the landscape level creates pressure, and a destabilization of regime can create an opportunity for transition (Moradi & Vagnoni, 2018). This can create a window of opportunity. The landscape can create pressure due to social, cultural or economic changes. The destabilization of the regime can be caused by increasing internal problems that cannot be solved (Geels, 2005).

Geels describes several phases in a transition. The first phase is the start of the innovation in the niche. There is not yet a dominant design. Actors involved with the innovation are still trying to understand what users want. Support for the innovation is small and delicate. The innovation is at this point no danger to the regime. In the second phase the innovation is being used and a dominant design is formed. Users build up experience with the innovation and may form groups to lobby. The innovation still does not form a threat for the regime. The innovation can be stuck in this phase for decades, as long as the regime is stable. The third phase consists of a breakthrough of the innovation and competition with the regime. This breakthrough does not take place at once. The innovation that was first used in small market niches, is now being used in increasingly larger market niches. More

elements are created to support the innovation, such as infrastructures, regulations, cultural enthusiasm and user practices. At this point the pressure of landscape and the destabilization become important. The innovation enters mainstream markets and begins to compete with the established regime. The fourth and last phase is the replacement of the regime. This often happens gradually. The new regime may eventually influence a wider landscape development (Geels, 2005).

What transition guerrilla gardening wants to create will become more clear by answering the second part of the first sub question: *“What transition do guerrilla gardeners want to cause with their actions?”* The third and fourth sub questions will further explore if there has been a transition and if so, did guerrilla gardening contribute to that transition.

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### *Has there been a transition in regime, in relation to the changes guerrilla gardeners want to create.*

- *Did some of the guerrilla gardeners stop with their actions and if so, why?*
- *What changes did the guerrilla gardeners experience?*

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### *If the changes they wanted to see occurred, were they caused by guerrilla gardening?*

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#### 3.4 The research question

The research question *“How successful was guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation in the Netherlands?”* cannot be directly answered, that's why I will explore different sub questions. In relation to a successful niche, Smith (2007) states that a successful niche is robust, shows potential to grow, can branch out and can attract a wider interest from the mainstream. The first part of the first sub question focusses on guerrilla gardening as a niche, and it will give us a first indication of how successful guerrilla gardening was. Secondly, I look at what successful in this context would mean. The dictionary says successful is “achieving or having achieved success” (Dictionary.com, LLC (a), 2020), and success is “the favorable outcome of something attempted” (Dictionary.com, LLC (b), 2020). The second part of the first research question explores what it is guerrilla gardeners want to achieve. The third sub question looks at whether changes were achieved and then the fourth sub question delves into if those changes were actually achieved by guerrilla gardeners and not due to other reasons. This results in the following four sub questions.

1. *What does guerrilla gardening look like as a niche movement?*
  - How do guerrilla gardeners define guerrilla gardening?*
  - What changes do guerrilla gardeners want to create with their actions?*
2. *In what ways give the regime and landscape level opportunity to guerrilla gardening to cause a change in the regime?*
3. *Has there been a transition in regime, in relation to the changes guerrilla gardeners want to create.*
  - Did some of the guerrilla gardeners stop with their actions and if so, why?*
  - What changes did the guerrilla gardeners experience?*



**4. If the transitions they wanted to see occurred, were they caused by guerrilla gardening?**

One side note should be mentioned before answering these research questions. There is an issue in regards to guerrilla gardening as a niche to become part of the regime. Assuming that rules and laws favor the regime, it would mean that guerrilla gardening gets regulated if it would be part of the regime. In chapter 2 *Literature background - Guerrilla gardening in theory* you could read that guerrilla gardening is done without permission, it is something illegal. This places guerrilla gardening in paradox. If it gets taken up by the regime, and therefore will be regulated, it would no longer be guerrilla gardening. This would mean guerrilla gardening cannot become a part of the regime. However, the ideas behind guerrilla gardening and/or the goals of guerrilla gardening could be taken up by the regime. Furthermore, it would be possible for guerrilla gardening to become more mainstream. Creating a situation where it is officially still illegal, but at the same time normal and accepted. This is something to keep in mind when looking at the research questions.

4



## 4 Method

To get an answer on the research question I made use of qualitative research. I conducted interviews with guerrilla gardeners and people who work for municipalities. In the first section of this chapter I will expand on the interviewees, followed by a section in which I will discuss the interviews.

### 4.1 Interviewees

I conducted 15 interviews in total, 9 with guerrilla gardeners and 6 with municipality workers. First I discuss the interviews with the guerrilla gardeners.

For the interviews I tried to get a range of different guerrilla gardeners. I first made an overview of guerrilla gardening actions in the Netherlands by looking at reports in the newspapers and online. Then I looked whether a name was mentioned and if I could find contact information for the person(s) behind the action. If I could find any information, I used this information to first make contact online. In the e-mail I informed the guerrilla gardener about the research and asked if they were willing to do an interview. With no response after mailing them, I would call them if a phone number was available. I tried to get as much diversity in the people I interviewed as possible. First of all I tried to get a variation in level of experience with guerrilla gardening. Secondly, I looked if parties were linked to GroenLinks. In section 2.6 *Dutch government and guerrilla gardening* one could see that GroenLinks has a strong link with guerrilla gardening. I wanted to make sure to have some, but not all the interviewees linked to GroenLinks. Thirdly, I attempted to do interviews spread over the country and finally, I aimed for a variety in the level of recent activity I tried to get some interviewees who were no longer active regarding guerrilla gardening, and some that were active guerrilla gardeners. However, this last criteria seemed a hard one to judge, since the information about the guerrilla gardeners is limited. The interviewees I found were limited by those who broadcasted their actions to the media or online, this may skew the results, however it was not possible to find guerrilla gardeners who acted completely in secret. Furthermore, there also might be guerrilla gardeners that are not even aware that they fit in the guerrilla garden definition. To find this last group of gardeners may only be possible if there is more time available. To make sure I did not miss an important, yet less visible guerrilla gardener I asked all interviewees if they thought there was someone else I needed to interview. However, this did not result in an extra interviewee. *Table 1* gives an overview of the interviewed guerrilla gardeners, as I found them. Since the information I had on beforehand was limited, some information regarding the diversity of the guerrilla gardeners turned out different after speaking with the guerrilla gardeners.

*Table 1: The guerrilla gardeners interviewed for this research*

Guerrilla gardener	Location	Found in	Activity	Related to GL	Last visible activity
Cerian van Gestel	Bunnik	<a href="https://guerrillagardeners.nl/">https://guerrillagardeners.nl/</a>	Website with information about guerrilla gardening	Yes	Active



<b>Ellen Mookhoek</b>	Amsterdam	<a href="http://tuinboonjemee.nl/">http://tuinboonjemee.nl/</a>	Two-year broad bean action	No	2012
<b>Geerte de Jong</b>	Groningen	<a href="https://fetedelanature.nl/over-fete/archief/195-guerilla-gardening-in-groningen">https://fetedelanature.nl/over-fete/archief/195-guerilla-gardening-in-groningen</a>	Call to help create a guerrilla garden	Yes*	2015
<b>Hanneke van Veen</b>	Den Haag	<a href="http://meergroenzelfdoen.nl/home/">http://meergroenzelfdoen.nl/home/</a>	Website with information about guerrilla gardening	No	Active <sup>1</sup>
<b>Hans Buitenweg</b>	Almelo	Tabantia 8 Oktober, 2011 <i>Wilde bloemen op lelijke stukjes stad</i>	Guerrilla garden group	Yes	2011
<b>Ivo Rodermans</b>	Rotterdam	NRC Handelsblad 28 July, 2008 <i>Stiekem stadse bloemen planten; Guerrilla gardening wint terrein in toenemend aantal Nederlandse steden</i> Nicole Carlier	Single guerrilla gardener	Yes	2008
<b>Joan Flikweert</b>	Zwolle	BNNVARA 25 November, 2008 <i>Vroege vogels</i>  De Stentor 23 April, 2011 <i>Met zaad en pokon tegen het beton</i>  Spits 5 November, 2013 <i>Zo groen als de nacht</i> Sigrid Stamkot	Guerrilla garden group	Yes	2013
<b>Serai Bressers</b>	Amersfoort	<a href="https://wroeten.nl/moestuin/guerrilla-gardening/">https://wroeten.nl/moestuin/guerrilla-gardening/</a>	One-time article about gg	No	2011
<b>Wim Kersten</b>	Tilburg	Brabants Dagblad 28 Februari, 2012	Guerrilla garden group	Yes	2012



		<i>Groene guerrillero's slaan toe op de Gasthuisring</i> Marten van de Wier			
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<sup>1</sup> On the website they give information about gardening without permission, however they no longer see their gardening as guerrilla gardening.

Especially the last research question, “*If the changes they wanted to see occurred, were they caused by guerrilla gardening?*” cannot be answered by the guerrilla gardeners themselves. Therefore, since a lot of guerrilla gardening is taking place on public ground, I also interviewed several municipalities about their view on guerrilla gardening. I tried to interview municipalities of different sizes and spread over the country. I started by emailing several municipalities, after which I called those who had not responded. I ended up with six municipalities willing to do an interview with me. I let the municipalities decide which person was most suited to talk with me to increase the chance to interview those most suited regarding the topic guerrilla gardening. This was especially useful, since different municipalities have different functions, and different function names within their municipality. *Table 2* displays the municipalities that I interviewed. However, results may be biased as the municipalities I spoke to may have been easier to approach than others. The municipalities interested to speak with me, could also be influenced by their interest to involve residents with the public greenery. This may influence the results. In the rest of this paper, to avoid indistinctness, I will put ‘gg’ behind the names of guerrilla gardeners and ‘mp’ behind the names of those working for the municipality.

*Table 2: The municipalities interviewed for this research*

Interviewee	Municipality	Function	Residents*	Area km <sup>2</sup> *	Residents per km <sup>2</sup> *
<b>Bart ter Steege</b>	Ede	Wijkbeheerder Ede Centraal	115 196	318,62	364
<b>Christa Hielkema</b>	Utrecht	Medewerker Beleid en Advies	350 174	99,21	3 761
<b>Jan de Jager &amp; Karen Willemsen</b>	Almelo	Team Uitvoering Fysiek	72 739	69,41	1 083
<b>Patrick van der Hart</b>	Stichtse Vecht	Adviseur Bomen en Groen	64 424	106,82	669
<b>Stan Mennen</b>	Wageningen	Productbeheerder IBOR (groen) Beheer en Advies (team Beheer en Realisatie)	38 593	32,36	1 275
<b>Tsjerk Jelsma</b>	Zwolle	Beheeradviseur groen	126 806	119,36	1 148

\* Source: (CBS, 2020)



## 4.2 Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews to talk to the interviewees. This allowed me to make sure to cover all important topics, without steering the interviews too much. I used different questions for the guerrilla gardeners and the municipalities. Before each interview I reviewed relevant information about the interviewees in relation to guerrilla gardening, consisting of news articles or webpages. If necessary, I included the new information to the interview questions. This could for example be specific projects for the guerrilla gardeners or rules in relation to residents gardening on public land for the municipalities. Before each interview I asked permission to record the interview, store the obtained data for up to two years, and use this data for the research report. I also asked if they would like to stay anonymous. This is something I thought would be important, since guerrilla gardening is technically an illegal activity. However, none of the interviewees felt this was necessary, all gave permission to use their names. Permission was asked by using an informed consent. The informed consent was emailed before the interview and signed at the beginning of the interview, where I specifically asked again if they agreed to record the interview and use the interviewee's name in the final report.

After the interviews I used the recordings to transcribe the interviews word for word. I then coded the interviews by looking at similar themes within the interviews, this was done by hand. I used the different themes to answer the research question discussed in section 3.4 *The research question*.

5



## 5 Guerrilla gardening in practice

In this chapter I discuss the results of the interviews to be able to answer the sub questions. Section 5.1 *The possibility to change* will focus on the first two research questions, and sheds light on guerrilla gardening within the multilevel perspective. Section 5.2 *The changes* will focus on the last two research questions, and the changes that have taken place in relation to guerrilla gardening.

### 5.1 The possibility to change

Change or transition in the regime level is possible if the niche innovation builds up momentum, so in this chapter I will first further explore what guerrilla gardening as a niche looks like. The second requirement for a transition is pressure from the landscape on the regime and the last condition for change is the destabilization of regime. This will be discussed in the second section.

#### 5.1.1 Guerrilla gardening; A powerful niche movement?

As discussed in chapter 3 Theoretical framework – The multilevel perspective, a niche can cause change in the regime, if it comes together and builds up momentum. To see if guerrilla gardening was a successful niche innovation, I first have to further explore what guerrilla gardening as a niche looks like. Who are using the term guerrilla gardening, and do they form one movement? I will explore how guerrilla gardeners define guerrilla gardening. What do they want to achieve. Is the main focus creating more greenery and biodiversity in urban areas or do they just want to be allowed to take care of the greenery in their own neighborhood? Or maybe was the focus something else? This leads us to the first sub question: “What does guerrilla gardening look like as a niche movement?” This sub question is separated into two parts: “How do guerrilla gardeners define guerrilla gardening?” and “What transitions do guerrilla gardeners want to cause with their actions?” The following sections will further explore these questions.

#### *What turns gardening into guerrilla gardening?*

As discussed in chapter 2.2 *Origin* there were guerrilla gardening initiatives even before it was called guerrilla gardening. These niche innovations were able to come together by starting to use the same name. In his book Richard Reynolds mentions that at first, he thought it was him who had invented the term guerrilla gardening. He did not discover other guerrilla garden projects until weeks after he started with his blog “*guerrillagardening.org*” (Reynolds, 2008). Through the forum of *guerrillagardening.org* guerrilla gardeners could come together. In his book he gave a clear definition of guerrilla gardening: “*The illicit cultivations of someone else’s land*” (Reynolds, 2008). It seems that different guerrilla gardening projects were coming together to form one niche movement. But how do the Dutch guerrilla gardeners define guerrilla gardening and did they also come together?

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*One is during the night hours, with a group of people, with a certain tension. The other is during the day, with neighbors that say: gosh, nice, what are you doing? That is different.*

~ Hans Buitenweg ~

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I talked with the interviewees about what their definition and meaning is of guerrilla gardening. What specifically makes something guerrilla gardening. Although gardening on someone else’s land, without permission was a good starting point, it seems to not quite cover the full meaning of guerrilla gardening. In the quote<sup>2</sup> Hans (gg) refers to a certain tension that is

<sup>2</sup> None of the quotes are direct quotes, since they have been translated from Dutch.

necessary to make something guerrilla gardening. This excitement is also mentioned by other interviewees as an added necessity for the definition of guerrilla gardening. He also explained guerrilla gardening as: *"at once, an attack in the green"*. Joan (gg) had a similar comment: *"the surprise effect seems the best"*. This argues that next to a certain tension, this surprise effect could be a second part to add to the definition. However, Cerian (gg) disagrees. She argues that these so-called 'hit and run' actions are not guerrilla gardening for her. She feels that if you create a garden, you also have to maintain it. This variety in opinions show that the guerrilla gardeners do not all have the same idea of what exactly entails guerrilla gardening.

Guerrilla gardening out of an ideology is a third important component that was brought up by some of the interviewees. This is illustrated by a quote by Serai (gg). This might actually be an important part of guerrilla gardening. Stan (mp) explains that without the ideology it becomes *"landjepik"*, stealing land. When citizens are

appropriating public land, for example public land that is located next to their garden and adding that to their own garden one can speak of *'landjepik'*. This *'landjepik'* concept is also mentioned by other municipalities in relation to guerrilla gardening. By adding ideology to the definition, confusion about *'landjepik'* and guerrilla gardening could be avoided. Whether maintenance of public greenery also falls under guerrilla gardening is something Patrick (mp) wondered. He had not heard of guerrilla gardening yet, but he raised an interesting question. He struggles with citizens pruning or even cutting trees without having the knowledge to do so. It is a form of gardening, without permission on someone else's ground, but is this guerrilla gardening? This issue could be prevented by adding the term ideology to the definition.

The aspect of guerrilla gardening being something illegal and done without permission is also not that straightforward. Hanneke (gg) says the term guerrilla gardening is outdated, due to the fact that it is no longer something illegal. Everyone is happy, everyone likes it, everyone thinks it is a good thing. So, because it is allowed, without explicit permission, it is no longer guerrilla gardening. Cerian (gg) argues that the definition is: gardening in public space, it could be either legal or illegal. She believes that even when you have permission to garden on public land, it is still guerrilla gardening. This shows two opposite views: On the one hand, it has to be illegal, otherwise one cannot talk about guerrilla gardening. On the other hand it does not matter if it is illegal or not. Guerrilla gardening can be done with permission, as long as it is still on public land. Ivo (gg) and Geerte (gg) fall in the first category, in spite of this they have both inquired before an action whether or not it would be a violation for them to guerrilla garden at a certain place. Then again, they did not see this as asking for permission, they just wanted to be sure not to get in any trouble with the law. This places them in a third somewhat grey category. The quote by Serai (gg) shows once more the uncertainty of whether guerrilla gardening is only guerrilla gardening if it is without permission.

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*I think it is gardening in public space without consulting, but with the ideal that you want to make it better.*

~ Serai Breeser ~

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*Putting something in a tree circle, without consultation, it is allowed by the municipality, but ...*

*So it would fall under the term guerrilla gardening?*

*No, yes, I do not think so, but maybe a little bit.*

~ Serai Breeser ~

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We started this section with the sub question: *How do guerrilla gardeners define guerrilla gardening.* There were some important aspects mentioned in relation to the definition of guerrilla gardening: excitement, surprise effect and ideology. It was clear that the definition of guerrilla gardening was formed while we were talking, and they were not quite sure what that definition exactly was. Although people have come together under the name of guerrilla gardening, making it seem a growing movement, they have different ideas about when you can call something guerrilla gardening. As a niche movement we can conclude that guerrilla gardening is not very well defined. Different people involved with guerrilla gardening, have different ideas about what guerrilla gardening entails. Joan puts it like this: "*Guerrilla gardening is not a protected title, so everyone can use it.*"

#### *What did the guerrilla gardeners want to change?*

Although it seems that the guerrilla gardeners have different ideas about what makes something guerrilla gardening, they may still be one movement in the change they would like to bring. In this section I will look at what changes the guerrilla gardeners want to accomplish: why are they involved in guerrilla gardening? Section 2.4 *Why?* explains that there is not one reason to guerrilla garden. The interviews I conducted show this is the same for the Dutch guerrilla gardeners.

The ideology of guerrilla gardening has already been discussed in the previous section. Ideology is however not only part of what makes something guerrilla gardening, but also a reason to guerrilla garden. Another reason to guerrilla garden is wanting to increase the amount of greenery and biodiversity. This is given as a reason to guerrilla garden by several of the interviewees. The quote by Cerian (gg) is a clear example of this.

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*We thought we can generate publicity with guerrilla gardening in our city.*

~ Hans Buitenweg ~

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*To ensure that we get more green and better green.*

~ Cerian van Gestel ~

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guerrilla gardeners, that used guerrilla gardening to promote GroenLinks, were aware that GroenLinks on a national scale was involved with guerrilla gardening. More than half of the interviewees used guerrilla gardening in this way, which shows that publicity is an important reason to guerrilla garden.

Besides publicity more reasons were mentioned in the interviews. For example, a "*ludieke actie*" was mentioned as a reason to guerrilla garden by both Ivo (gg) and Serai (gg). The Dutch dictionary describes "*ludieke acties*" as protest actions in which attention is drawn to a certain topic in a playful way (Van Dale Uitgevers, 2020). Other interviewees also gave making a statement as a reason to guerrilla garden.



Also the duration of how long it takes to get permission, can be reason to guerrilla gardening as seen in the quote by Hans (gg). The quote by Cerians (gg) illustrates that taking responsibility for public space and your surroundings is reason to guerrilla garden as well, this idea was shared by Ivo (gg).

Showing people how their food grows and where it comes from is a whole different reason to guerrilla garden, mentioned by Serai (gg) and Ellen (gg). Ellen was behind tuinboonjemee, a guerrilla gardening action to plant broad beans. In the quote below you can read that her reason was to educate people about their food. It should be noted that food was not discussed at all by the other interviewees. Since the topic of food is less related to the other topics that came up in the interviews and because it lead to a completely different discussion then gardening on public land, the research will not focus on guerrilla gardening for food education.

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*We just wanted to make people more aware that you can get food from everywhere, and that it will grow in the city.*

~ Ellen Mookhoek ~

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*municipalities, or lack thereof we do see some negative effects of gardening without permission.*

In this section we explored the answers to the sub question: *What transitions do guerrilla gardeners want to cause with their actions?* Similar as in the literature background, the interviews did not show just one single reason to guerrilla garden. As discussed in the chapter framework, I explored what changes guerrilla gardeners want to achieve. However, this assumes that the guerrilla gardeners want to create change, this section shows this is true in most cases, but not in all of them. The following reasons are not done to create change: The first one being to draw attention to a political party. A second one is seeing no reason not to guerrilla garden. The third reason is to make a statement. However, it is not fully clear what message it is the respondents want to convey, and whether they just wanted to put attention on something, or if wanted to make a statement to change something. Other reasons in line with wanting to achieve a change is wanting to achieve more/ better greenery and more awareness of how and where food comes from. In case of the reason to guerrilla garden because the legal way is taking too long, the reason was not to change anything, but the reason was convenience.

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*If you are going to arrange a garden legally, then three years will pass before anything is realized.*

~ Hans Buitenweg ~

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*The point is that you feel ownership for your environment and find the motivation in yourself to do something about it*

~ Cerian de Gestel ~

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A statement that was pointed out by several of the interviewees was that it is not just about why you would guerrilla garden, but why not. They see no reasons *not* to guerrilla garden and feel that there are only positive effects to guerrilla gardening. This is illustrated by a quote by Geerte below. However, in section 5.2.2 *The conversation between guerrilla gardeners and*

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*Planting plants, people can only like that.*

~ Geerte de Jong ~

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### *In conclusion*

With the two sections about the definition of guerilla gardening and the reasons to guerilla garden we wanted to answer the first sub question: *“What does guerrilla gardening looks like as a niche movement?”* In case of the definition most guerrilla gardeners did not have a clear definition about what constitutes guerrilla gardening. When they thought about it, the different guerrilla gardeners came up with different ideas of what makes something guerrilla gardening. It was not uncommon that their own actions no longer fitted the definition of guerrilla gardening that they gave. Their reasons to guerrilla garden also differed. There was not one reason mentioned by all guerrilla gardeners, there is no clear goal or change the guerrilla gardeners want to accomplish. Therefor we can conclude that as a niche movement guerrilla gardening is not a well-defined movement, nor do they have a straightforward reason to guerrilla garden.

### 5.1.2 The pressure of the landscape and the destabilization of regime

Changes in the landscape can create pressure on the regime level to change. This in turn can create an opportunity for niche innovations to influence the regime level. The regime level can also destabilize from within. In this chapter I will look at changes in the landscape- and regime level that could have created, or are creating now, opportunities for guerrilla gardening to influence the regime level. This will answer the second sub question: *“In what ways give the regime and landscape level opportunity to guerrilla gardening to cause a transition in the regime.”* The following themes that will be discussed came forward during the interviews.

#### *Climate*

Even though I did not ask about climate change, the influence of climate change is something that was mentioned by several of the interviewees. An example is the quote by Cerian (gg). Climate change is a big ongoing change in the landscape. Specifically of interest for guerrilla gardening are the increasing temperatures within urban areas. Urban areas are on average warmer than rural areas. This is called the ‘urban heat island effect’. Those urban areas are growing, getting closer to each other, and getting denser. This will increase the effect of the urban heat island. Climate projections expect more intense and a larger number of heatwaves. Urban greenery can provide some cooling (Heusinkveld, Hove, & Jacobs, 2011). Since guerrilla gardeners are mostly active in urban areas this could create an opportunity for them: guerrilla gardening could be a way to provide greenery in urban areas and with that provide more cooling. This might create an opportunity to make guerrilla gardening more mainstream and get footing within the regime.

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*The last couple of years the municipality is more active with the greenery, they have to be, because of flooding in the city.*

*~ Geerte de Jong ~*

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*What you see recently is more and more the realization that we have to counteract the soil sealing. That more green means less heat stress.*

*~ Cerian van Gestel ~*

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The pressure on regime is not only caused by the increase in temperature due to climate change. Geerte (gg) also mentions the increase of flooding in cities as a problem.

However it is not only climate change itself that is putting pressure on the current regime, but also the increase in attention for climate change. Several of the interviewees have noticed that as illustrated by the quote of Serai (gg). The fact that interviewees came up with the factor climate change themselves also shows the increase in attention. The interviewees have the feeling that the awareness of climate change is growing. Both climate change and the realization of climate change are putting pressure on the regime to transition.

#### *Financial crisis*

Another factor that might cause destabilization of the regime is the financial crisis. The financial crisis might cause municipalities to cut the money they spend on greenery. This effect was mentioned in several of the articles on guerrilla gardening. Grünewald (2011) writes in his news article that financial cuts were reason for a group of guerrilla gardeners to start planting seeds. Guerrilla gardener Martijn van Loenen says in the newspaper the AD, that he thinks that guerrilla gardening became popular again due to the crisis. He argues that people needed something cheerful, and since the municipality did not have the money for planting seeds, people started planting them themselves (Blommers, 2011). Guerrilla gardeners Rob van Eeden and Hanneke van Veen state in an interview in the paper that the municipality is happy with the guerrilla gardeners, because they save the city money by taking over part of the upkeep of the greenery (Bakker, 2013). It should be noted that this did not come up in my interview with Hanneke (gg). The destabilization caused by municipalities trying to save money on upkeep of greenery gave a chance for guerrilla gardening to step in. They could take over some of the maintenance and garden on public land. This was an opportunity to not only make guerrilla gardening more mainstream, but in addition to have influence on the greenery in the city. This influence could have allowed them to incorporate more and better greenery in cities within the regime.

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*Since two, three years ago the tree circles are not being maintained by the municipality. That was a savings measure.*

*~ Bart ter Steege ~*

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circles. However, he thinks that 99% of the people want the municipality to start maintaining the tree circle again, since they feel they are paying tax money for it. Tsjerk (mp) had a similar experience in Zwolle. They ended up reversing the measure. The opportunity created by the financial crisis appears to be in the past. Christa (mp), as seen in the quote, talks about her experience with saving measures in relation to the

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*It has to do with the climate, the necessity is higher than ten years ago, or people know it better.*

*~ Serai Breeser ~*

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The impression that the financial crisis caused a destabilization in the regime, was also noticed by the municipality interviewees. As seen in the quote, Bart (mp) explains that the tree circles are no longer maintained as a result of saving measure. This could give the opportunity to residents to start guerrilla gardening in the tree

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*The idea was that it would generate money, so if we let residents manage parts of our public space, it would save us maintenance budget, but that is not the case. That became clear pretty quickly, it is not even cost neutral. If you want to take the residents seriously and support them with the self-management, you have to spend money on it. So the idea of saving money was quickly put aside.*

*~ Christa Hielkema ~*

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greenery. The feeling that allowing residents to garden on public land costs money, instead that it saves money is shared by other municipality interviewees. This demonstrates that the opportunity of the destabilization caused by the financial crisis was not utilized by the guerrilla gardening movement and therefore the opportunity has passed.

### *Participation*

A second destabilization of the regime is the increased pressure on municipalities to incorporate participation in their policies. Christa (mp) explains this by saying that nowadays municipalities have to involve the residents in everything. She adds: the time that the municipality could say what is, and what is not allowed, is over. Stans (mp) quote illustrates the importance of participation.

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*We also hope that this way it becomes visible and it will stimulate it even more. When everyone in the street sees the pole and it looks nice and neat, with the flowers, that they will ask: how do you do that?*

~ *Tsjaerk Jelsma* ~

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*I do not think there is a municipality in the Netherlands that does not consider resident participation important.*

~ *Stan Mennen* ~

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In addition, municipalities are not only aiming for participation, they also want to stimulate the participation. Tsjaerk (mp) quote illustrates this in relation to guerrilla gardening. Participation is a destabilization within the regime, pressuring to create a regime in which residents are more involved with their city. This creates an opportunity for guerrilla gardening to use this change to include gardening without permission within the regime, as a way to participate with the municipality.

### *In conclusion*

In this chapter we shed light on the following question: *In what ways give the regime and landscape level opportunity to guerrilla gardening to cause a transition in the regime?* The regime was destabilizing as a result of a financial crisis, however the opportunity for guerrilla gardening to create a transition at that time has passed. In relation to the financial destabilization municipalities no longer see residents gardening on public land without permission as a good alternative to the current regime. The landscape level is putting pressure on the regime due to climate change and the increased attention for climate change. In addition, the regime has been changing towards more participation of residents within the municipalities. The pressure caused by climate change, and the aim to increase participation gave, and still gives, opportunity for guerrilla gardening to have an influence on the regime.

## 5.2 The changes

In the previous chapter I examined whether there was an opportunity for guerrilla gardening to change something in the regime, answering the first two sub questions. In this chapter I will examine the last two sub questions. First I will explore if a transition in regime has taken place. Secondly, I will discuss whether those changes were caused by guerrilla gardening. I will do this by examining the communication between the guerrilla gardeners in the niche and the municipalities in the regime.

### 5.2.1 What changed?

In this section I will discuss the fourth sub question: *“Has there been a transition in regime, in relation to the changes guerrilla gardeners want to create.”* I will do this by separating the question in two parts: *“Did some of the guerrilla gardeners stop with their actions and if so, why?”* and *“What changes did the guerrilla gardeners experience?”*

#### *Why did you stop with guerrilla gardening?*

In chapter 1 *Introduction* you could see that both the publicity and the guerrilla gardening action declined. However, it is not clear if guerrilla gardeners stopped with their actions, or if guerrilla gardening started to get less attention. If the guerrilla gardeners stopped, it could be because they felt it was not working, suggesting that it was not a successful niche innovation. However, it could also be they no longer felt the need to guerrilla garden, suggesting their goals had been met. If they stopped because their goals have been met, this could indicate that they have been successful. All of the guerrilla gardeners I interviewed had stopped with guerrilla gardening. In this section I discuss why the interviewees stopped with their actions.

In the section *What did the guerrilla gardeners want to change?* you can read that one of the reasons for Dutch guerrilla gardeners to guerrilla garden is to create positive attention for their political party. Consequently, this also played a big part in the decline of guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands. In section 2.6 *Dutch government and guerrilla gardening* it was mentioned that GroenLinks in specific played an important role in guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands. However, in the literature background it was difficult to understand exactly what that role was. Lucky, it turned out that one of the interviewees was able to clarify that. I contacted Cerian (gg) because she is the person behind the guerrillagardeners.nl website. It turned out this website was originally setup on behalf of GroenLinks. This as part of the campaign called *‘Dit land kan zoveel groener’* (This country can be so much greener). Promoting guerrilla gardening was a part of that campaign. In 2014 the campaign was stopped, this coincides with the decline in news articles seen in *Figure 2* in section 1.2 *Newspaper articles*. This could explain the decreased attention guerrilla gardening got, since using guerrilla gardening for promotion means consequently promoting guerrilla gardening itself. The reason to stop with guerrilla gardening, as a result of using other ways to promote the political party was mentioned by several interviewees. Showing that it was most likely not only a decrease in visibility of guerrilla gardening, but also a decrease in guerrilla gardening itself.

Ivo (gg) and Serai (gg) stopped with their guerrilla gardening actions, because they did not feel their actions caused a lasting effect. This is explained by Ivo in the quote.

There were also some practical reasons why the guerrilla gardeners stopped. For Ellen (gg) the amount of space in the city (Amsterdam) was a problem to guerrilla garden. Both Geerte (gg) and Cerian (gg) mention that they simply no longer had enough time.

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*You want it to last, that your labor, your commitment changes something or inspires others to do the same. Which would cause a snowball effect that makes an impact. But I have to say, I did not experience that.*

*~ Ivo Rodermans ~*

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*I still sometimes do guerrilla gardening with red orach, because it is not invasive and very nice and you can see if you had success.*

~ Ellen Mookhoek ~

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Interestingly, several of the interviewees stopped with guerrilla gardening but continued in other related activities. As mentioned in the section *What did the guerrilla gardeners want to change?* some feel guerrilla gardening is only guerrilla gardening when done without permission. Some of the guerrilla gardeners now work together with the municipality, and therefore feel they stopped guerrilla gardening. Ivo (gg) talks in the quote about a completely different, yet related activity in which he still takes responsibility of the public space. Ellen (gg) has a similar story, however she is now active with wild foraging.

To conclude all interviewees stopped with guerrilla gardening, although some are still active with urban space and/or greenery in other ways and others have started to guerrilla garden again. An important reason to stop was the promotional nature of some of the actions. Other reasons were not experiencing any lasting results and a lack of space or time. When asked why the guerrilla gardeners stopped with their actions they were not sure, and did not have a straightforward answer. It seems that none of the guerrilla gardeners stopped with their actions as a conscious choice, it was something that had just happened.

#### *Did the guerrilla gardeners experience any changes?*

During the interviews I asked the guerrilla gardeners which changes, if any, they experienced and whether they thought those changes were caused by guerrilla gardening. This will not only answer the third research question, but also gives a first glimpse in the fourth research question: *"If the changes they wanted to see occurred, were they caused by guerrilla gardening?"* This research question will be further explored in the next section.

Although all guerrilla gardeners I spoke to indicated they had stopped with their guerrilla gardening actions, several also started again. In the quote Ellen (gg) talks about seeds she sometimes spreads. Cerian (gg) took over the guerrillagardeners.nl website from GroenLinks, and after a break of a couple of years, the website is recently becoming more and more active.

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*I am still involved with public space, I founded "Zwerfie Rotterdam" a couple of years ago. Zwerfie Rotterdam has to do with litter, the public space really has my interest, but also taking responsibility of public space.*

~ Ivo Rodermans ~

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In this section we see once more the influence of political parties on guerilla gardening. Several of the guerrilla gardeners felt that in the end the efforts of the political parties resulted in more change than that what the guerrilla gardeners could accomplish, as shown by Wim's (mp) quote. The feeling that political parties had more influence than guerrilla gardening was shared by several of the interviewees of the municipalities, as also stated by Jan (mp) (see quote).

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*GroenLinks has been promoting it for years, so Guerrilla gardening is not really necessary anymore, because people can come and discuss it.*

~ Jan de Jager ~

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*I do not think that it is as necessary anymore. The municipality agrees to it all.*

~ Joan Flikweert ~

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*Maybe guerrilla gardening contributed to change, but I do not think I as a person did.*

*Perhaps all the guerrilla gardeners together got through to policymakers.*

~ Geerte de Jong ~

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*The alderman has more influence and gets more done.*

~ Wim Kerster ~

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Some of the guerrilla gardeners do feel as if something has changed in relation to guerrilla gardening. They believe that guerrilla gardening is no longer as necessary, Joan (gg) is one of these guerrilla gardeners. This change is related to the idea that you can now garden on public land with the municipalities' permission. Not all the guerrilla gardeners feel as if they were part of the reason that guerrilla gardening is not as necessary anymore. However, they feel they may have played a small part in it, Geerte (gg) explains this in her quote. Joan thinks the contribution of their guerrilla garden group may have speeded up the process. Cereian (gg) believes that guerrilla gardening helped municipalities realize that citizens want to and are able to play a role in the green management of the city.

To sum up it appears that the biggest changes

would be the municipalities' attitudes towards citizens gardening on public land. Some of the guerrilla gardeners feel politics may have had more influence on that change, than that guerilla gardening did. Although, the guerrilla gardeners may have helped during the process.

### *In conclusion*

All guerrilla gardeners I interviewed stopped with guerrilla gardening. An important political reason to stop guerilla gardening was because they started using different ways to promote their political party. There were also several guerrilla gardeners who did not appear to be sure of why they stopped with their actions. The biggest changes experienced by the guerrilla gardeners was the municipalities' attitudes towards citizens gardening on public land. Therefore, it is possible there may have been a small change in the regime, in how municipalities regard residents gardening on public land.

**5.2.2 The conversation between guerrilla gardeners and municipalities, or lack thereof**  
In this section the focus will be on the municipalities. The guerrilla gardeners mostly gardened on public land, making the municipalities the main target of their actions. In this section I further explore the fourth sub question: *“If a transition occurred, was it caused by guerrilla gardening?”* To call

guerrilla gardening a successful niche it is important that a shift in the regime is caused by the actions of the guerrilla gardeners, which is not necessarily the case. In the previous section we saw that the biggest change is the municipalities' attitudes towards residents gardening on public land and that the guerrilla gardeners are not sure how much guerrilla gardening contributed to that change.

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*I had to look it up, guerrilla gardening, because it is not something that is used as a concept within the municipality. You know it exists, but not that it had a specific name.*

*If you know you can put it in a certain "box", you can make policies around it, look at it more specifically and just really focus your attention on it.*

~ Patrick van der Hart ~

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*Someone had planted firethorns, he thought they were beautiful bushes. However, they were too close to a parking lot and those thorns, they scratched the cars, so the local residents were not happy with them and they went to the municipality. When you do talk to each other, you can make an agreement. The bushes can stay, but make sure they are kept short. You can arrange many things in consultation.*

~ Christa Hielkema ~

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he was not able to find the guerrilla gardener behind the action. This resulted in him having to remove the plants, in this case broad beans. Had the guerrilla gardener talked to the municipality the removal of the plants could have been avoided.

Of course communication goes two ways. Not only do the municipalities have difficulties to find out who to speak to, the guerrilla gardeners have had hard times figuring out who to talk to from the municipality. This is acknowledged by several of the municipality interviewees, Stans (mp) quote is one example. On the other hand, two of the interviewees argue that if you ask someone at the municipality, they will be able to direct you to the right person. In the interviews with the guerrilla gardeners the struggle to communicate with the municipality also came forward, as can be seen in Ellens

The first question asked in the interviews with the municipalities was if they knew what guerrilla gardening was. Two of the interviewees did not know the concept of guerrilla gardening, one of them was Patrick (mp). In the quote he explains why it can be useful for the municipalities to know about guerrilla gardening. Furthermore, it can help the guerrilla gardening movement if they can openly discuss with the municipalities what they want to accomplish. One thing that stood out in the interviews with both the municipalities and the guerrilla gardeners was the lack of conversation between the two. As a result municipalities who wanted to start the conversation had trouble finding out who to talk to. Christa (mp) shows in the quote why it can be useful to communicate with each other. A similar problem occurred for Stan (mp), however,

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*I have to say, and this goes for almost every municipality, the findability of information is fairly flawed.*

~ Stan Mennen ~

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*Working together is somehow insanely difficult.*

~ Ellen Mookhoek ~

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quote. However, most of the interviewed guerrilla gardeners admitted they did not try to communicate with the municipality, which is in line with the municipality having trouble getting in contact with guerrilla gardeners.

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*It is only a square meter, and the tree will not be bothered by it. So if people plant plants in it, it is fine for us.*

~ Jan de Jager ~

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municipality interviewees as well. The attitude does not seem to be related to specific actions, or experiences of the municipalities with guerrilla gardening. Small actions, for example with seeds or small plants were already allowed before guerrilla gardening started in the Netherlands.

However, sometimes it is useful to communicate about planting small plants or seeds on public land. For example, it can be useful for guerrilla gardeners and municipality to communicate to avoid that the plants will accidentally be removed. Karen (mp) emphasizes this in her quote, in relation to flower bulbs. Removal by the municipality has also been reported in relation to weeding plants in tree circles. Having plants removed was a frustration of the guerrilla gardeners that came forward in several of the interviews. Communicating with the municipality about where on public land you would like to garden could prevent these accidental removals from happening.

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*It cannot be that you live here, and you want something here and your neighbor knows nothing about it and says afterwards, I do not like it.*

~ Tsjerk Jelsma ~

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gardening on public land. Tsjerks (mp) quote highlights this. The municipality interviewees discussed the problem of people having different ideas of what is a nice garden and what is not. Karen (mp) and Jan (mp) added that it is their job as municipality to create a public space that all residents find acceptable. If someone wants to garden on public land they have to take over that responsibility.

The fourth reason municipalities want to discuss gardening on public land is due to continuity. When a guerrilla gardening project falls apart, the municipality has to start maintaining it again. To be able to take over the maintenance again they first need to bring it back to a state that they can maintain. This costs money they do not have. Therefore, they want to talk to people about gardening on public land beforehand to try and ensure the continuity and success of the project.

A reason for this lack of communication could be that municipalities do not care much about whether people are gardening on public land. In the quote, Jan (mp) debates the need for residents to ask permission to make a tree circle garden. This indifference in certain guerrilla gardening situations is expressed by other

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*The only thing is if you do not want it to be mown then you have to report it*

~ Karen Willemsen ~

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A second reason when discussing gardening on public land is useful is in regard to sidewalk gardens. The interviewees from the municipalities explained that is important for the sidewalks to have a minimum width so it can be used safely. Thirdly it is important for the municipalities that the neighborhood is aware and in agreement before someone starts

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*It is not yours, it is the municipalities and we manage it in a certain way, we think about it, we invest money in it. You would also not just garden in your neighbors garden.*

~ Patrick van der Hart ~

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The municipalities do sometimes allow people to garden on public land, simply because they do not feel it matters. Where it does matter, they still might allow it, but would like residents to discuss it with them to insure the neighbors are in agreement, and that continuity and safety is guaranteed. Crista (mp) informed me that gardening on public land with permission goes back to the late 90s, which is long before the guerrilla gardeners became active in the Netherlands.

#### *In conclusion*

In this chapter we discussed the following questions: *Has there been a transition in regime, in relation to the changes guerrilla gardeners want to create and If the transitions they wanted to see occurred, were they caused by guerrilla gardening?* The guerrilla gardeners did not experience a lot of change. The change they did experience, they did not contribute directly or solely to guerrilla gardening. Furthermore, none of the guerrilla gardeners stopped with guerrilla gardening because of goals that were fulfilled. Although some did feel guerrilla gardening was not as necessary anymore, indicating there was some change to a certain extent. The conclusion that guerrilla gardeners did not notice a lot of change is in line with the experiences of the municipalities. Most of the interviewees of the municipalities were not aware of guerrilla gardening action in their city. The communication between municipalities and guerrilla gardeners is minimal. Guerrilla gardeners do not seem to have influenced municipalities view on gardening on public land. It seems that in consultation with the municipality gardening on public land was allowed even before guerrilla gardening was a movement.

In addition, in the following quote Patrick (mp) expresses his frustration about the lack of respect and understanding for the work the municipality does with public greenery. Adding that they are responsible for the care of trees and the safety of those around the tree.

To sum up, not all municipalities were aware of guerrilla gardening, and when they were they struggled to get in touch with the gardeners.

# 6



## 6 Discussion

In this section I will reflect on my research. First I look at guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands in relation to the multilevel perspective. Then I will make the link with other literature about guerrilla gardening followed by a suggestion for research that came forward due to this research. I will finish with the meaning of this research for the guerrilla gardening movement in general.

### 6.1 Guerrilla gardening and the multilevel perspective

A positive side to using this framework is that the multilevel perspective is very good to take into account the many different actors that are involved in influencing the different levels and transitions. However, due to limited time and resources I was not able to look at many different actors. I only took the guerrilla gardeners themselves and municipality workers into account. Therefore I was not able to get everything out of the framework as might be possible with more time and resources available. Another obstacle with using the multilevel perspective is that the framework is originally developed to look at technical innovations and not at a social movement such as guerrilla gardening.

A problem with looking at guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation in the multilevel perspective is that a part of the reason to guerrilla garden was simply for fun. This does not fit in the idea of guerrilla gardening trying to change something. Also the goal of generating attention for a political party has very little to do with guerrilla gardening as a niche, as a niche has the goal to become part of regime or change regime. It was unexpected that promotional reasons played such a big role in the reason to guerrilla garden.

### 6.2 Relation to literature

Interesting in relation to the literature is the role of thrill for guerrilla gardening. Hardman & Larkham (2014) states thrill as a reason to guerrilla garden. In this report it came forward as an essential part of guerrilla gardening. In the interviews the guerrilla gardeners mentioned thrill as part of the difference of what is and is not guerrilla gardening, instead of guerrilla gardening being something they do for the thrill.

There seems to be a strong connection between politics and guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands. Especially the role of GroenLinks, as seen in section 2.6 *Dutch government and guerrilla gardening* and later throughout the results. No other literature mentions this link, this could indicate this is specific for the Netherlands. This link had a big influence on the reasons to guerrilla garden and the reasons that guerrilla gardeners stopped. This could have influenced the course of guerrilla gardening. A more elaborated comparison of guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands and guerrilla gardening in other countries could for this reason be interesting.

Christa (mp) called self-management (residents gardening on land from the municipality) the more organized form of guerrilla gardening. In all interviews with the municipalities the conversation shifted to self-management of land by residents. All the municipalities have in one way or another the possibility for residents to be involved in gardening public land. Furthermore, the municipalities were not able to tell a lot about the illegal guerrilla gardening actions. I chose to focus this research on the exploration of gardening on someone else's land, and less on the illegality of guerrilla gardening. The literature background seems to be more focused on the illegal part. However, I felt that looking at gardening on public land fits better with both the activities of the guerrilla gardeners and the municipalities. Due to the lack of exploration of the more legal and tolerated form of



guerrilla gardening in other research it is hard to say whether self-management is typical for the Dutch guerrilla gardening movement, or if this is also happening in other countries where guerrilla gardening is not a necessity to survive.

### 6.3 Suggestions for further research

In future research more actors could be included in the research, giving a more complete and possible different view of guerrilla gardening. For example, people living near guerrilla gardening projects could have given a less positive view of guerrilla gardening. Based on the fact that several of the municipalities talked about the importance of talking with neighbors to make sure no complaints were filed. Organizations active with gardening on public land is something that came up within the literature and some of the interviews, both with the guerrilla gardeners and the municipalities. Examples of these organizations are “*Stichting Steenbreek*” and the “*bijenlint*” (bee strip) from the “*Bijenstichting*”.

Although I mention in *section 1.2 Newspaper articles* that there is less media attention for guerrilla gardening, I did not talk with the media as to why this may be. It would have been hard to get a clear picture. None of the reporters wrote more than one piece on guerrilla gardening. So, it is likely that no one made a conscious decision to give guerrilla gardening less attention. Having said that, it could be interesting to discuss why none of the actions reported on got a follow up, since the results of planting would take time to show. It is in the media not clear whether or not actions were successful or not.

It seemed that most of the guerrilla gardening in the Netherlands was taking place on public land. This is not something discussed in the literature, so it is not clear whether this is specific a Dutch phenomenon. It would be interesting if this was further explored, to get a better idea of who the ‘victims’ of guerrilla gardening are.

This research may have given a skewed perspective of the municipalities’ enthusiasm to get in contact with people to garden on public land. The municipalities spoken to, were relatively easy to get in contact with. Seeing how even with these municipalities there was difficulty for gardeners and municipality to get in contact, it may be harder in other municipalities. Several of the municipalities that were interviewed were also looking for ways to increase the involvement of residents with public greenery. Municipalities not currently working on that may also have been less interested to participated in the research and therefore less likely to respond to participate in the research.

Both Geerte (gg) and Cerian (gg) mentioned that people active in the political parties are used to involving the media and doing their actions visibly. This possibly has increased the number of people involved in politics in this report as opposed to the reality. However, it would be hard to find less visible guerrilla gardeners, especially those who do not call their actions guerrilla gardening. These could also be interesting actors to involve in future research.

### 6.4 In the end

This research is only a snapshot of the guerrilla gardening movement. The developments are going fast. Since I have written chapter 1 *Introduction* new initiatives have started. The website [guerrillagardeners.nl](http://guerrillagardeners.nl) has become active again and they even made it to place 62 in the sustainable top 100 of 2019, by the Dutch newspaper Trouw (Trouw, n.d.). Guerrilla gardening has been evolving since I started this research. This research could contribute to the development of guerrilla

gardening. They could become a stronger niche if they define guerrilla gardening better, and especially the legality of guerrilla gardening. It could also help if they have a better idea of what they want to accomplish. Most importantly this research showed that guerrilla gardeners and municipalities should start communicating, since they may want some of the same things.

Guerilla gardening could end here, as a disappearing practice, that is no longer necessary, since gardening on public land can be done with permission, or it can continue with a different meaning. This is what guerillagardeners.nl is doing. Not only are they restarting their website and their initiatives, but they are restarting the whole guerrilla gardening movement and giving guerrilla gardening a new future by seeing guerrilla gardening as something you can do with permission, in conversation with the municipalities. This report has been written at the tipping point of the movement. Guerilla gardening was something that should be done in the shadows, now it can be done in collaboration with the land owners.

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## 7 Conclusion

Guerrilla gardening has not reached any set goals, or caused any changes within the regime, making guerrilla gardening as a niche not

very successful when it comes to trying to influence or become part of the regime. However, guerrilla gardening was successful for most of the individual gardeners. They were all still very enthusiastic about guerrilla gardening, and several of them continued in other related activities. For those who guerrilla gardened to create positive attention for their political party, it was also successful in getting attention, as seen in the newspaper articles.

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*How successful was guerrilla gardening as a niche innovation in the Netherlands?*

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## Pictures

Evelyne Regterschot

