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Thinking about the future of cities: practices and impacts of collective gardens

Keywords: sociology, urban study, citizen initiatives, nature, collective gardening.

Introduction

After a dominant metropolization, (Hanna & Oh, 2000), characterized by a period of liberal planning of urban space (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Pudup, 2008), nature is coming back to cities in France and more largely in Occident. At the same time, residents of cities develop a desire for nature. In the psychological field, benefits from nature on human functioning (Roszak, 2001) are proved, and the field of natural sciences informs the way that nature can counter pollution, reduce the ecological print of cities and the effect of waves heat (Clergeau, 2012). Its beauty, calm and benefits are rediscovered and so the necessity to preserve it in cities (Bailly, 2013) after a massive metropolization. Raising concerns about poor urban environmental quality, a lack of nature, food insecurity, have led to a growing interest in environmental initiatives and particularly in urban gardening. These collective forms of action aim to bring back nature in city and to contest urban planning as it was developed in the 20th century. They emerged in different countries and at different timelines.

This text aims to think about tomorrow cities through the perception of citizen initiatives on the urban context of Lyon. We define citizens' initiatives, environmental, as movement which aimed to put back nature in cities and their own neighborhood, through gardening practices. Our assumption is that these collective gardening initiatives contribute to the construction and urban development, to prepare the future of city, with a variety of collective gardening actions. We define here urban development as all action which allowed an improvement for residents' lives, through the landscape, education, and different services.

The purpose of this article is to examine and define these different forms of collective urban gardening by questioning how these gardens have the potential to participate in urban planning with

authorities? The following includes a brief history of community gardens, a review of the literature, our methodology and our findings on how these forms of urban gardening impact their neighborhood and the city.

History of urban community gardening: example from United States

Urban community gardening finds its origins in the 19th century, in the United States. In 1890, country is hit by a social and economic crises. Few municipalities react by setting up cultivation projects in vacant-lot and school gardens, to provide food support to the poorest, immigrants and newcomers in city (Lawson, 1986). These first urban gardens are often known as Labour Gardens (Moore, 2006), and will be replicated in other American cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Chicago (Hynes, 1996; Warner, 1987). Different crises during the 20th century – after the World War I, during the 1930s, after the World War II - will be moments for municipalities, residents and the Government, to develop these forms of gardening in order to give supplies the populations most touched by these events. Gardening also became an act of patriotism during the two World War (Bentley, 1998) with « Sow Seeds for Victory » and other considerations such as « Every garden a Munitions plan » (Basset, Baudalet, Roy, & Weck, 2008; Hynes, 1996; Warner, 1987). These projects tend to be stopped once crises are over.

Economic crises of the 1970s will modify urban landscape of many cities, such as New York, strongly hit by a rising of urban vacant after the closing of several factories and stores. Some residents decide to take care of these vacant transforming them into gardens, open to all, based on a motivation to develop nature and to fight abandoned space, where criminality grow up. The group Guerilla Gardening was the first to occupy a vacant, with their « seed bombs », illegally at first and will be supported by New York municipality and the Green Thumb program in 1976 (Eizenberg, 2012). Here start the community gardens: green spaces in cities' center where there are individual and collective plots, and where people gather to grow food and flowers. These community gardens will be developed in other cities until 1990s. Giuliani's administration in New York, 1995, shut down several community gardens, seen as unproductive and nonprofit spaces, to develop other urban projects (Schmelzkopf, 2002). After this contesting period (Schmelzkopf, 1995), community gardens will therefore spread to other countries.

American literature is extensive on this subject, principally between 1990 and 2003 (Irvine, Johnson & Peters, 1999). S. Moore (2006) draws a picture of the community garden's history in the United States, by showing how they are tied to the economic and social crises of the 20th century. E. Eizenberg study the « commons » produced by New York City's garden and the different conception of space (Eizenberg, 2012), according to H. Lefebvre theories. J. Welsh and R. MacRae analyze a potential « food citizenship » (Welsh & MacRae, 1998) and the emergence of citizens communities, based on production of food in these gardens, in Toronto. In extend to these considerations, R. Ghose and M. Pettygrove (2014) rely on a rich literature to think these community gardens as spaces of citizenship: where residents can structure, shape their urban environment (Amstrong, 2000 ; Baker, 2004), and where they have the possibility to contest, with their actions, urban planning and claim their « right to the city » (Lefebvre, 1968; Schmelzkopf, 2002) (Staeheli, Mitchell, & Gibson, 2002). A participation which does not trigger automatically the empowerment of these residents (Staeheli, 2008). In result, these approaches on community gardens highlight five points: Development of an identity or citizenship with the act of gardening, production of food (individual), inclusion of residents in a movement that can be global, appropriation of urban spaces and positive impact on the neighborhood by producing commons. Therefore, it appears as a consensus that community gardens contribute to city's building and planning.

We will describe collective gardens in France, to analyze if these gardens, as community ones in the United States and other countries, contribute to city planning.

Collective gardens in France

In France, urban gardens came out in a similar way, but had a different development in time. We distinguish two forms of collective urban gardening: Shared gardens and Street gardens.

First, it is important to distinguish familial gardens and shared gardens: these two forms are often mistaken. Familial gardens have emerged in 1952 and were directly inspired by working gardens (Guyon, 2008): they are defined by rural code and has to be managed by association (Dubost, 1984). These gardens offer individual lots, dedicated to families, to discover the benefits of agriculture.

Shared gardens emerged later in France, in 1997 inspired by the community gardens. Here, no plot is dedicated to an individual and all gardens are shared to a group. The food produced is shared

between participants, often cooked for events on the garden like a shared meal on a Saturday. The creation of an informal network, Jardin dans Tous ses Etats, has been a trigger for the development of shared gardens in France. From 2010, the majority of urban gardens created are shared gardens (D'Andrea & Tozzi, 2014). If the familial gardens were set up in the suburbs, shared gardens are developed in the center: with some benefits for the accessibility. Shared gardens present different spaces, for experimentation, leisure, plantations, learning, etc. As the family gardens, the shared gardens just started to be included in the urban development of Lyon. It concerns three gardens for now: one in the 8th district, one in the third and one in the 7th. In these cases, municipality request residents to manage a green space, one or several lots. An association is created, and sign a convention of occupation with municipalities. However, the majority of the shared gardens are created through a bottom-up process: residents who desire to occupy a green space to garden, built-up an association to formulate a demand with the municipality.

Street gardens (C. Scribes, 2009) are designed to decorate streets where concrete is too dominant for residents. These urban gardens can be built anywhere in the city because they don't need a green space. Street gardens can be wild herbs emerging from the concrete, flower plants on little green space, flowers on the space between a habitation and the pavement or flowers in a trail. The residents choose to cultivate their street and to take care of flowers during the year. They have to make a demand to the municipality, which can dig a hole in the pavement, or legitimate an existant trail. These street gardens are interesting because they grow on public space, without a fence, where everyone can act, even badly, on the flowers.

The table 1 presents the different characteristics of collective gardens in Quebec, Community Gardens, shared gardens and street gardens, and is based both on our observations and the literature.

Table 1: Different forms of urban and citizens gardening

Collective gardens (Quebec)	Community gardens (United States)	Shared gardens (France)	Street gardens (France)
Unique plot for the group	Multiple plots and a shared plot	Unique plot for a group	Multiple plots for a groupe
Explicit social and environmental mission	Implicit social and environmental mission	Explicit social and environmental mission	Implicit social and environmental mission

Aim to food producing	Aim to food producing and recreational	Recreational and landscape	Participation to city planing and landscape
High sociability	Low sociability	High sociability	Low sociability

Table completed from Donadieu and Fleury (2003)

Methodology

Research context

Our ethnographic research takes place on the territory of Lyon, read here through the question of the resident's participation to urban construction. This city presents several interesting features for our study. Firstly, Lyon is crossed by two rivers, Rhone and Saone, which allowed the development of blue and green lines of nature. The city – and the conurbation¹ - are strongly engaged in an energetic transition, particularly to fight its own image: Lyon is often associated with a negative urban vision, districts where industries and habitations were mixed (Saunier, 1994).

Secondly, the territory of Lyon propose at least 12 000 hectares of green space and count 14 parks, with 200km of nature paths, where a Charter for nature was adopted in 2000. The nature development in city is ruled by the Tree Charter, which summarizes the vision, principle and recommendation for a common landscape dynamic between the actors of the territory. The municipalities are engaged in a sustainable management of the green space since 2000, with alternative methods to the phyto-sanitary product: introduction of predatory insects, vegetalization with different kinds of plants or salvage of rain water. Since 2017, the conurbation has adopted the « 0 phyto » plan, consisting in an interdiction to use – for citizens and city's technicians - fertilizer product in public space. This plan is linked to a visual communication campaign showing the beauty of wild nature in city, like herbs growing in the pavement, for example. The headline is: « when vegetation came back, life is good ». This to raise awareness of citizens but also technicians of city (public roads), that “wild” nature isn't a danger in the street, and can be: accepted, beautiful and have different benefits.

Thirdly, the conurbation Grand Lyon support shared gardens by leasing them a land, and by fundings dedicated to their functioning², if gardeners formulate a demand. The land is free and an agreement is

¹ Urban conurbation of Lyon has been created 31 December 1966, by a state decree. Situated on the confluence of the Rhone and Saone, it count 59 municipalities, 1,3 million residents, 80% of the population on the Rhone department.

² Often less than 1000 euros / year.

signed between the municipality and the association in charge of the shared garden. This agreement has some obligation like: no noise and nuisance by night and taking care and clean the plots. From an economic point of view, leasing these lands is a cost for municipalities: they are in the center and most are very well situated. Some private actor, investor, want to buy these lands. So keeping it for shared gardens relied on a good will of certain political actor. In some gardens, an organizer is funded by the city to open all week and host the garden. It concerns 3 gardens in Lyon for now. The organizer allow the garden to be open for visitors, students and kids from school. The organizer animates some school classes for kids from schools in the district, around the nature, the soil, etc. The Conurbation also funds Passe-Jardins, an association created in 1998 to support shared gardens in the region. The association has few salaries and volunteers. It delivers a label coming with a chart, formations for gardeners and information. It's a support for new shared gardens that provide help on how to manage a group, how to garden without pesticide, how to adopt permaculture, how to organize an eco-responsible event. Few employees can ensure formation for all volunteers, for example. Passe-Jardins, a regional association partly funded by the conurbation, also organize events, twice a year, to gather all the volunteers and actors from Rhone-Alpes. De facto, Passe-Jardins acts either like a structure which can organize and help the shared gardens on the territory and like a network, where gardeners and new garden's organizer can meet other people, find advices and resources.

The street gardens are also supported by the municipalities: the Green Space Direction gather the demands of residents and organize the layout for the micro garden. The goal is to mobilize residents to develop this kind of initiative. For example, two streets of the 3rd district has been vegetalized and are now maintained by few residents. The person in charge gathers the demands, gives seeds twice a year to gardeners and organize events. Those events is the occasion to meet the gardeners, to give them advice on how to grow plants, which organic fertilizer to use, how to recognize the plants, how to maintain them in a good shape, etc. These kind of events finish with a shared meal with all the gardeners.

Research design

We decided to use a purely qualitative approach, to better understand the logic, the experience lived by the gardeners when they are in the garden. We use an ethnographic approach with semi-directive interviews, observations and field notes, and an immersion in each garden (Gumperz, 1989; Mehan,

1978; Spradley, 2016) and an approach of case-study on multiple gardens (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). Using a qualitative study allowed to seek new theoretical insights with the richness of the data and material collected (Cuervo-Cazurra, Andersson, Brannen, Nielsen, & Reuber, 2016). Besides, qualitative methods are much more suited to how and why questions (Yin, 2014) than quantitative methods. A qualitative approach allowed the depth and breadth necessary to truly understand the experience and the practice of each gardener with details on their past, decisions, behaviors and representations. It is important to specify that we have selected shared gardens that emerged from citizens, according to the data shared by the person in charge of the shared gardens at the municipality.

The interview guide for gardeners covers five main themes, derived from the literature: the garden / project historical, the functioning of the garden and the collective, the relation to city and public actors, the relation between gardeners, the impacts of the gardens and the perception of the city. Like Mead (1965) and Blumer (Blumer, 1986), we suppose that we can understand the behavior of the participant only with the signification that they attribute to their actions. We interviewed 57 gardeners (shared and street gardens), plus 11 elected people and actors in charge of public green spaces on the territory. Those interviews were inseparable of multiple observation on shared gardens, to see the interaction on the gardens between gardeners, events with public and how gardeners occupy the space. The analysis of these qualitative content was made through the Atlas TI software. We extracted verbatim to restore the density of the data collected.

For this text, we base our observations on the 22 visited shared gardens: two are described below in detail. For the street gardens, we focused on two neighborhoods: Guillotiere, a popular district of Lyon where there is a strong associative movement and a low income rate, and Montchat, a more recent district, with a high income rate, with more individual houses. Both presents a high number of street gardens, and strong collective of residents taking care of it.

We describe here two gardens in detail to show how a shared garden functions, how they are configured and their history, in order to better understand their diversity. Those two are quite representative of how a shared garden is created and how it evolves through the year ; even if the closure of Les Pendarts is a particular case.

Garden Ilot d'Amaranthe

The shared garden Ilot d'Amaranthe is located in the 7th district of Lyon, in the -popular- neighborhood of Guillotiere. Born in 2004 on the place Mazagran, on demand of the municipality, this garden has been part of a requalification of the place. A designer has been employed and it was decided to create two green spaces closed by a tall metal gate all around. The central place was built in concrete, with benches and space for the use of residents. In 2006, the designer called an association to manage the two green spaces and to transform them into a shared garden: Brin d'Guill, an association of 80 members, which also convert some small urban space to street gardens. In 2011, this place will be changed again, with consultation with residents and participants on the garden. Since 2013, the garden is open again and is funded by the municipality, to employ an organizer for the association Brin d'Guill. She manages the garden during weeks, opens it during the day and organizes different learning sessions for kids from the neighborhood's schools. The garden has a space for relaxation, a space for experimentation, a collective space for gardening and some specific tray for disabled people. The surface of this shared garden is 633m², and the association count 50 participants, with 10-12 regular participants. Each month, there is a meeting gathering all gardeners – and those who came not only to garden – where decisions are made, map of the culture, etc. The garden also has a composter (installed by another association called Les Compostiers) and a water butt. During the week, some young students come to chill in the relaxation space, and to talk to the organizer ; after school, parents – including some residents that are not part of the association - come with their children to take advantage of this space. During the weekend, there are more residents and participants, essentially for gardening, share a meal and discuss.

Garden Pendants

Created in the spring of 2014, the association La Ruche de Croix Rousse wanted to « *give the possibility to residents to invest a central space of the neighborhood and to develop a new space of sociability, creation and social development* » (Pauline, Pendants, April 2018). The place spotted is a wilderness of 1700m², situated on the top of Croix-Rousse, with a former villa. The association asked for an agreement to the municipality to occupy the place with a garden that it never obtained. This spot was supposed to be sold to a private investor for a parking lot: which was finally not

possible because of the soil instability. At the beginning of 2015, bored to wait for so long, the association decided to invest the space by cleaning the vacant plot and the villa, to convert the green space into a garden and to install a composter. The association rapidly counted 118 members, essentially neighborhood residents. The shared garden open illegally in spring of 2015: in addition to gardening, the association propose activities like Yoga and Do it yourself learning classes. The garden Pendarts was a « space where we can meet other people, discuss, laugh, dance, sing, share and invent » (Pauline, Pendarts, April 2018). On April 17, 2015, the municipality forbid the resident to continue their activities on the plot, and installed a fence to block the garden access. On the first of May, the association cut a part of the fence to continue its occupation. This illegal garden continued until September 2015: policemen started to guard the fence and definitely blocked the garden access to participants. This garden has disappeared today but stay an example of conflicts between authorities and residents on a collective garden. It was a particular, informal form of collective gardening, where residents didn't wait the loan agreement, where every gardener could do whatever he wants, based on a model close to "hackers" – everyone can contribute producing commons.

Those different forms of urban and collective gardening are bottom-up, started by residents and take place on the public space. How these gardens contribute to the urban planning and the development of their neighborhood?

Findings: Urban development and vegetalization by collective gardening

With or without the city?

Collective gardens take place on public spaces and therefore are directly dependent of institutions' decisions in terms of urban planning. These citizen initiatives cannot avoid consultation and links with the municipality through the occupation agreement, for example. In Lyon, three shared gardens have been created by public authorities and the sustainable development topic represents a real interest for public actors. For S. Devaux, those interests are characteristics of a competitive logic (Devaux, 2015): to grasp tourists and potential future residents. In a logic of lower financial redistribution by the central State, managing green spaces with citizens is an excellent way of doing savings.

Shared gardens have to demand and sign with the municipality an occupation agreement, in order to manage a green space. This agreement contains some rules like no tree plantation, no loud music, responsibility towards the garden, etc. They cannot occupy illegally a place, without being expelled by authorities. Some shared gardens are also funded by the municipality, mainly to buy tools, flowers or seeds.

We sign this agreement every three years. This is really a thing! It is a real engagement for us. We have relation with authorities, we often need support, funds for our little cabin. For our event to come, we will borrow few chairs from the municipality for people. (Martine, gardener, Shared garden La Mulette, June 2018).

This logic also applied to street gardens: residents must have the endorsement of city to install a trail, or to plant in the street. In this last example, work is done by companies on institutions' decision, to manage the pavement and let a hole for the plantation. For those gardens, asking authorities seems to be the only way to garden, or to keep alive a garden.

Those who are not known by the municipality see their project fail. Indeed, technicians and cleaning agent, who can't identify a converting green space, will cut the flowers or simply destroy the space by cleaning the street ». (Emeline, Project organizer, Green space Direction, May 2017).

However, few associations and groups of residents act without municipalities' support. These citizen initiatives are afraid to be assimilated to institutions and prefer to act without obligation. That is the case of the shared garden Pendarts. This association occupied the garden occasionally during more than one year, illegally. They defined their own action as hacking:

We are hackers now, because what we do is hacking the public space. We had no right to be on this place. All our activities were not declared to the authorities. This was a fight." (Pauline, gardener, Shared Garden Pendarts, April 2018).

They use the space differently as it was planned: they made a space of gardening, social, of relaxing, instead of a space of transition or a parking. This example show all the will of residents to occupy public places in their neighborhood, to grow flowers, to gather or simply to have a space to relax. This concept of hacking space is also present in associations like Brin d'Guill or Incredible Edible with their « wild tray »: tray of soil with planted flowers or aromatics, which everyone can water,

and with their micro-plantations that are installed without the municipality's agreement. Those illegal gardens are temporary. Either a bad weather erase those gardens, either the municipality's agent removing them. This is one of the characteristics of the urban collective gardens: a state of uncertainty in time. Those citizens actor don't know if the place occupied will be, in a near future, dedicated to other activities. It can be bought by a third party, a society, etc.

It has been noted to residents that this shared garden is temporary, it is not a long-term project for us. Because the neighborhood will be renewed so we don't know what this space will become. But local authorities really want to keep up these dynamics of collective gardens, so it may persist after the renewing. (Leila, Municipality of Oullins, December 2017).

It appears to be difficult for gardeners to act without local authorities, especially because they invest a public space. Therefore, the wait can be too long for gardeners and few will either quit the association before the start, or will invest a place without agreement.

The wait is sometimes quite long for a shared garden. Between the project that we have and the first realization, there was three years of meeting, files filling, things like that. For people that are interested in gardening, they rarely like this. Some leave, some stay, we decided to invest the street with another project, the street gardens, during the wait. (Luc, gardener, Shared Garden Le Secret, June 2018)

Acting without the city is a way to bypass the rules and to contest local politics and city planning. But the downside is that in conflict, gardens can't stay over time. Still, we observe on Lyon that collective garden just began to be taken into account by public authorities, and are slowly integrated in urban planning.

Integration of Gardens in urban planning

Are those collective gardens participating to urban planning? They crystallise a lot of expectations from the political actors. With their 20 years of experience in France, shared gardens are now a part of urban politics in few cities like in Lyon. Traditionally, these shared gardens are initiatives from residents, who want to develop a garden, to develop nature, to socialize and to bring to life their neighborhood (Bally, 2018). They are now few gardens created on demand of municipalities, during

the renewing of a neighborhood, for example. Coccinelles de Sans Souci is a shared garden in the 3th district of Lyon, which has emerged from the municipality. They reserved a specific place, they organized public meetings with residents, facilitate the process of creation and the co-ordination with Passe-Jardin. Few other shared gardens were also created by municipalities those last years.

This because there are strong expectations behind these projects: for institutions, collective gardens are places that create socialization between residents of the same neighborhood, that allow newcomers to participate to the neighborhood life, planning and easily meet people. The participation of citizens to city planning seems to be particularly important for some actors. Local authorities also see those collective gardens as places of nature in the city, that can bring peace and visual agreement.

The point of these gardens is to have eco-citizen's projects. For us, the mission is to promote social bonds, diversity but also to promote biodiversity, that is more developed in those gardens than in a public garden. It allows citizen participation in the urban planning, and favors the neighborhood dynamic. (Elisabeth, Green spaces project organizer, City of Lyon, December 2018).

For few political actors, these collective gardens have to be nourishing, and are part of a future urban agriculture project. The association Passe Jardin ask gardeners to weight their harvest every year – in kilograms. Therefore, as community gardens in United States, Lyon's collective gardens have an impact on their territory, direct and indirect. What kind of impacts these gardens produce?

Impact of gardens on Neighborhood

Interviews done also show that collective gardening has impacts on the neighborhood and on citizen's life. We will not underline efficiency or efficacy of these activities, but instead, based on the data collected, highlight the different activities and their potential impacts for the territory.

With their activities on collective gardens, citizens also participate actively in the neighborhood life and have few impacts. Indeed, practices on collective gardens go from basic gardening – water, trim, plant – to diverse activities like bee keeping, animation, concerts, shared meals, learning classes for the younger. Collective gardens and more particularly shared gardens are not limited to gardening activities.

First, collective garden is based on an association or a group of residents, who share certain values and activities. Collective gardening appears as a paradox, because gardening is a solitary activity (Dubost, 1984), like water and trim, that can't be shared by definition. But these gardens try to overcome this paradox by assuming individual activities paired with collective activities. Indeed, gardeners also share practices like construction, planning, meetings and decisions, for example. If individual practices are more common during the week, where every gardener comes as they have time, as they want, the weekend is more subject of collective actions. This is when gardeners plan construction, reorganisation and shared meals.

On the Saturday there are more people yes. We planned this Saturday a work, we start the morning, we shared a meal, everyone bring something to eat and we continue on the afternoon. (Anna, gardener, shared garden Ilot d'Amaranthe, May 2018).

One of the goals of these collective activities is, beyond the will to work the soil, to take care of it and to develop nature, as gardeners describe their motivations (Bally, 2018), to socialize, i.e to meet people of their neighborhood. Few gardeners interviewed were newcomers and participated in a collective garden precisely to meet other people. Being on a garden with others, shared a practice or an interest and integrate a group indeed help to connect with other people. Collective gardens gather people on common values and interest: gardening, ecology, nature, etc. It also makes gardeners visible by other residents, as actors of their neighborhood.

Being active in our street, it allows to create social bond with neighbours: we don't have other occasions to meet them, and these collective projects gather us. We are in the street, on the public space when we garden, and people can come, discuss, ask something, this is positive. Put some life in this concrete world, that is collective gardening. (Noémie, gardener, Street garden Monchat, December 2017).

The convention signed with the municipality stipulate that when a gardener is in the garden, the door has to stay open, to allow visitors. These can interact with gardeners, ask questions, visit and enjoy the garden. Gardeners also organize different kinds of events, like concerts, gathering for the Lyon famous Fête des Lumières, visiting sessions, etc. The idea is both to meet other gardeners and to open the garden to visitors, to make it more visible and active. Participation to those activities allows the residents to develop capacities in human relationship (Bergeron et al., 2002). From these activities

result interactions, which are part of a social frame « enhance the activity herself » (Duchemin, Wegmuller, & Legault, 2010). Collective gardens can impact the city by bringing spots, places of socialization, even if they can be the subject of strong criticism in terms of diversity for example (Mestdagh, 2015).

Secondly, these urban collective gardens are also places of education. Gardeners bring their children for sessions of gardening on the week end, but volunteer gardeners are also in contact with school of their district and organize some special classes on the work of soil, plantations, agriculture, etc.

We are in contact with the social center Bonnefoy, the Arche de Noé, a structure for children with behavior trouble: they come to do some activities with soil on the garden.

We also got contact with day nurseries, some schools. We mainly learn them to plant.

Sometimes we do something on ecology, discovery of insects... Educational trays are for them: they came every week. (Jane, organizer, shared garden Ilot d'Amaranthe, April 2015).

Shared garden appeared to be the ideal place for learning, because it presents in the same time « the context of educational situation, its object, a strategy and an approach » (Duchemin et al., 2010). Those times of learning lean on values of those gardens that are, according to gardeners: ecology, environmental education, accessibility for everyone and social integration.

Those educational activities on the gardens allow the citizens' initiatives to complete the learning process of schools, with a soil practice, with nature and its functioning, and in the same time reinforce their place in the district. From this point of view, the collective gardens are real actors in their neighborhood.

Thirdly, collective gardens bring nature in cities and impacts, more or less, the landscape of a neighborhood by its presence and development. One of the gardeners' motivation is to develop nature in the city at their level. In their representation, nature transform urban landscape and makes it beautiful, worth being seen. The shared garden La Réserve is a space in transition: it has been abandoned by a previous association and is now restored, renewed by another one. This garden, in construction, will let more “wild” nature.

Even if it is still a wilderness, many flowers have been planted, so it is covered by flowers in spring and very delightful to see. In the summer, it can dry quickly therefore.

But if we want to transform the landscape, we have to plant trees, to build up a wood cabin, and to grow both flowers and a vegetable garden. At start the garden was in order, we want to create something more organic, participate to the landscape. A beautiful garden will attract more people. (Cyril, gardener, Shared Garden La Réserve, April 2018).

Here, these gardens offer a rural environment (Dubost, 1984) in the city. It creates a new harmony and contribute to the development of a green thread (Calenge, 2003). According to C. Calenge, « not a single urban project can forget the landscape level » (2003): every urban planning project, including citizens ones, take into account this landscape problematic. Indeed, every urban planning project has a consequence on urban landscape and contribute changing it. Here, residents want to give meaning to the city by bringing back nature in their district. For gardeners, an artistic nature can be a way to enlighten landscape. That is why few residents keep their street gardens up.

When they are covered with flowers, trays are just beautiful, in spring and summer, very beautiful. It touches few spaces, but it contributes to landscape. Even in other seasons, everything is green, it is superb. Visually, these flowers, bushes are as many little things that contribute to the change. (Michelle, gardener, street Gardens Oullins, December 2017).

In addition to contributing to urban landscape, these gardens are spaces where residents « escape the city » (Chiesura, 2004), as well as the public park: the green, the tree, plants, sometimes the calm bring a particular atmosphere on the garden, which is radically different than the city. Interviewed gardeners have the feeling that they are outside the city, in the countryside. That is what some gardeners are looking for in a garden: a touch of countryside in city.

The garden is a pocket of nature, of greenery inside the neighborhood, mostly urbanized. When we work, when we are in the garden, we sometimes forgot that we are in Lyon. (Matthieu, gardener, Shared Garden Le Secret, November 2017).

For the gardeners, the concrete represents the gloominess of cities and can be countered by nature, park and gardens. It is also a way to reconnect to nature and its benefits (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2011). So a beautiful urban landscape has to integrate, according to them, nature.

Those few examples show the way that citizens, in groups, desire to claim urban space, to occupy the city by being an actor instead of simple consumer. With the creation of an association to manage shared garden, those participants impulse a movement of appropriation of space: by giving the possibility to residents to « intervene in the socio-spatial construction of their daily environment » (Baudry, Scapino, Aubry, & Rémy, 2014), those residents going further than a simple role of consumers to become actor of urban planning. These places can also offer a learning process of democracy (Alaimo, Reischl, & Allen, 2010). The summary of these results can be found in table 2.

Table 2. Main findings

Forms of collective gardens	-Street gardens (on the pavement) -Shared gardens (vacants lots)
Support of collective gardens by the city	-Occupation agreement (and free loan for the lot) but temporary, -Preparation of the lots for the gardens, -Potential subsidies to gardens for functioning (buying plants, tools...), -Fundings of Passe-Jardin, association helping shared gardens
Expectations from institutions	-Places of socialization, -Participation of residents to urban planning, Visual agreement for the city / neighborhood, -Production of food (local)
Main impacts identified	-Education, -Places of nature (favorize wild bees for example and ways to escape the city for residents), -Landscape, -Socialization by collective practices

Conclusion

There is a rise of collective gardens that emerged today in many cities, in France and elsewhere, which represents as many patches of nature. It comes from both residents and citizens demand, to have access to more nature and green, to breathe in the city and counterbalance the concrete, and from the institutions, which try to take into account these demands and transform cities into attractive places. These collective gardens are particular, as they transform an individual activity into a collective one, gardening, and set up diverse activities to try building a group.

From an independent movement emerging through citizens, collective gardens became close to institutions as well as their development is now dependent on a good political will, but is also well support by these public authorities. Taking place on public spaces, these collective gardens are de facto participating to urban planning, and have different impacts, even if those are minor. They favor

socialization, by gathering gardeners and passers-by around the practice of gardening, around different events like meals, construction, concert for example. It creates a place of socialization on the neighborhood with these activities, a free space where consumerism isn't the goal (Parham, 2015). Collective gardens are also places where education can take an importance, according to gardeners will and associations, with partnership between gardens and associations, schools to promote gardening and ecological practices. Finally, collective gardens also have an impact on the landscape, by creating plots of nature through the city and adding green touches in the urban landscape.

Therefore, these collective gardens have to be read through their limits. Some conflicts on participation in shared gardens can appear for example (Dumont, 2010): on a too engaged management (Bourdeau-Lepage and Vidal, 2012), about some gardeners too presents, about sharing production. A second limit is the feeling that shared gardens are just a privatization of urban space, a territory specific to gardeners and a place without diversity (Demailly, 2014; Mestdagh, 2015). Despite their desire to open the gardens to everyone, these places are often closed: to prevent from squat at night and vandalism. The accessibility for the public is dependent of the opening hours, and the presence of one gardener at least.

However, those collective gardens should be more integrated in local urban policies in two ways: a more systematic proposition to residents of a vacant lot in neighborhoods in order to create gardens, a better communication around collective gardens to minimize problems around street gardens for example.

Finally, this text shows how collective gardens are created and how they evolve through the years and should inspire residents, citizens to create shared or street gardens by learning their process and potential mistakes to avoid.

Further studies should point how the participation to a collective garden affects residents' habits, their everyday lives: does it have a real impact in terms of socialization? In terms of skills? In terms of ecological practices? This by focusing on participants in shared and street garden.

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