

**„Rebuilt Rubble - Community Gardens in the South Bronx from 1970s to  
the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Common land use in the inner city from a socio-  
economic open space planning perspective“**

**Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades  
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**”Rebuilt Rubble - Community Gardens in the South Bronx from 1970s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Common land use in the inner city from a socio-economic open space planning perspective“ Dissertation by Carolin Mees, Berlin University of Arts**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Method

### 1.1 Introduction

There are a variety of open spaces in New York City 's inner city neighborhoods ranging from streetscapes, parkland, public spaces and public plazas to private gardens next to private homes. In addition the open space is made up by un-built lots, mainly situated next to apartment buildings in densely built up residential areas or in low-income districts. Some of these lots are filled with trash, rubble and broken cars, others are used commonly as gardens by a group of residents. These gardens are called "community gardens" because of the collective, common use of the land. Community gardens often feature rows of individual garden beds, in many cases a small wooden garden hut as well as a collectively used open space equipped with tables and chairs, a barbecue area or a stage. The character of the land use "community garden" depends on the individual gardening group's preferences, their cultural background and the decisions made by the group of residents managing the garden – i.e. it depends on the neighborhood.

Community gardens were started by residents in New York City' slow income neighborhoods such as the South Bronx, as well as in other cities of the United States, in the late 1970s and have since then continued - despite conflicting land use interests, changing residents groups and contradictory city planning within the last 40 years - as a specific urban open space land use form until today. For my research I will focus on community gardens situated on public land started by residents in the South Bronx without the support of an institution like for example a church or school. My thesis is focused on the assumption that people are longing for and are committed to a common urban open space land use form in the inner city — a hypothesis that I will check at the analysis of the development of community gardens in the study area South Bronx from the 1970s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 1.1.2 Setting

#### 1.1.2.1 Theoretical context: Urbanization

With the research of the development of the land use form community garden I look at the relation of homes and gardens in the city in regard to the development of community gardens on public land. Consequently my research is set in the context of urban research analyzing urbanization, i.e. the densification and the shrinkage of urban built up space in the city with the correlating influence on urban open space. In short, the urbanization started with the beginning of the industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century, when landless rural residents moved to the cities, the centers of trade and commerce, in search for a better quality of life. In the urban centers, density increased especially in low-income districts. To house the masses land was built up to a maximum, leaving little access to light, air and open space. Residents with more income left inner city districts to move to the urban periphery, ideally to a private house with a private garden.

With the increase in population, the urban area overall was expanded while at the same time the land in the inner city was built up more densely with the consequence that open space in general and privately usable open space in specific. In the 1970s, urban residents, who could afford it moved to rural areas, due to a lack of inner city quality of life because of the effects of the global economic crisis as well as top down social and economic restructuring programs running since the post-war years: While suburban spaces were promoted and developed with low density housing, inner city districts were struck by social, economic, political and urban planning shifts. Consequently in the urban centers, especially in low-income neighborhoods such as the South Bronx, the number of population, the occupancy and density of buildings decreased. Crime, arson, unemployment and lack of accessible open spaces brought down the quality of life. Following the changed city-planning directives and due to the determination of the residents to help themselves in the late 1980s, with the rebound of the global economy, urbanization was restarted and the inner city was increasingly populated once again. The United Nations announced in 2009 that the majority of people worldwide lives in urban centers.<sup>1</sup> This is a trend that will move forward according to the United Nations-Habitat, so

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations 2009, [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/urbanization/urban-rural.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/urbanization/urban-rural.shtml)

that "(...) by 2050, over 70% of the world will be urban dwellers. By then, only 14% of people in rich countries will live outside cities (...)"<sup>2</sup>.

The community gardening movement started in the 1970s and has been ongoing until today. Since the beginning of the urbanization research has analyzed urban land use to develop city and open space planning for the improvement of social conditions in cities, thus in anticipation of an increasing number of urban residents my research is set in the continuation of this existing research to follow up on the assumption that people are longing for and are committed to a common urban open space land use form in the inner city. I will check this, a hypothesis at the analysis of the development of community gardens in the study area South Bronx from the 1970s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Figure 1: Map of New York City. Google Maps, [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

Figure 2: Map of the South Bronx. Google Maps, [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

Figure 3: Map of the Melrose. Google Maps, [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

#### **1.1.2.2 General study area: New York City**

The general study area for my research is the inner city of New York City, a harbor city situated on the Northern part of the East coast of the United States of America. New York City is a densely populated area that is mainly built up with apartment buildings. In the affluent areas, suburbs and outer boroughs there are also districts with private houses with gardens. The distribution of urban built-up and open spaces within New York City has been influenced since the beginning of its urbanization<sup>3</sup> by the demand of housing for the incoming immigrants: arriving low income residents have been pushed since this time by the real estate market to specific areas that were densely built up leaving little or now open spaces and even less privately usable open spaces. The community gardens movement started in the 1970s in the inner city as a response to this development. In 2012 there were 581 community gardens in the city area of New York.<sup>4</sup> Today New York City remains to be not only one of the world financial centers, but also one of the most populous cities of the United States and the world, with a population of about 8 million in 2010<sup>5</sup> – a number that is expected to rise to 10 million by 2030.<sup>6</sup> The consequent land use pressure on urban open space and the land use form community garden is part of the analysis of this common land use form in the inner city from a socio-economic open space planning perspective at the example of the development of community gardens in the study area South Bronx from the 1970s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **1.1.2.3 Study “South Bronx” and Case Study “Casita”**

The study area for my thesis is the South Bronx, an inner city district of New York City, situated in the Southern part of the borough of the Bronx, North to the Manhattan Island on the other side of the Harlem River. During its urbanization in the last 40 years, the South Bronx underwent major changes in regard to its population number as well as in the density of its built-up and open space.

For my thesis I define the study area South Bronx as the area at the southern part of the Bronx borough framed by four highways, the Cross Bronx Expressway, the Major Deegan Expressway, the Bruckner Expressway and the Sheridan Expressway. Since the area I call the South Bronx in this research is part of New York’s 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and not all of Community Board 1, 2, 3 the numbers presented in regard to a specific aspect in a specific area will depend on what each reference calls the South Bronx. The South Bronx has had the poorest Congressional District of the United States since the 1970s. In July 2013, according

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<sup>2</sup> Vidal 2010, [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/22/un-cities-mega-region](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/22/un-cities-mega-region).

<sup>3</sup> New York City has been a port of immigration since the founding of the city in 1626 under the name New Amsterdam.

<sup>4</sup> See more on the number of gardens in Chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> United States Census 2010. [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

<sup>6</sup> PlaNYC 2030. [www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml).

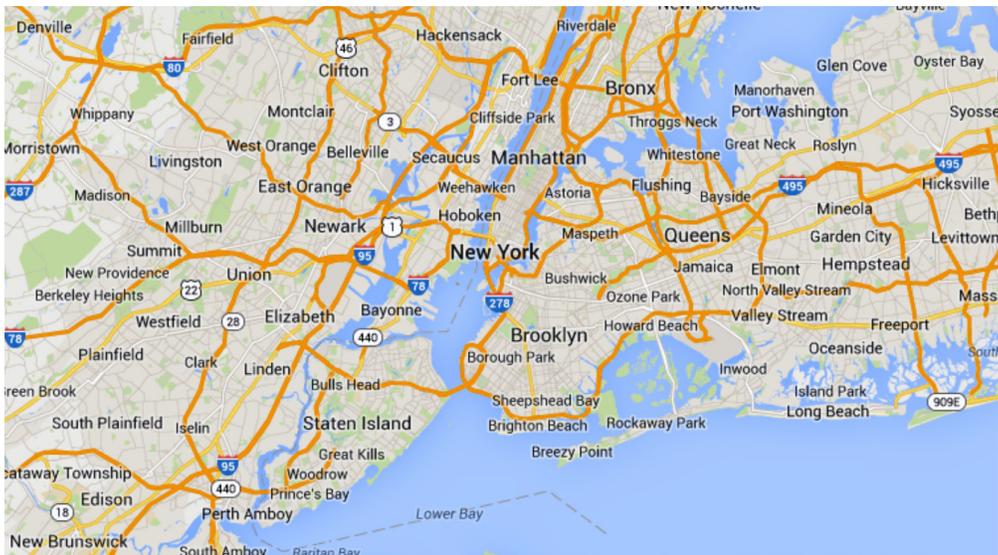


Figure 1: Map of New York City, 2014. Google Maps, [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

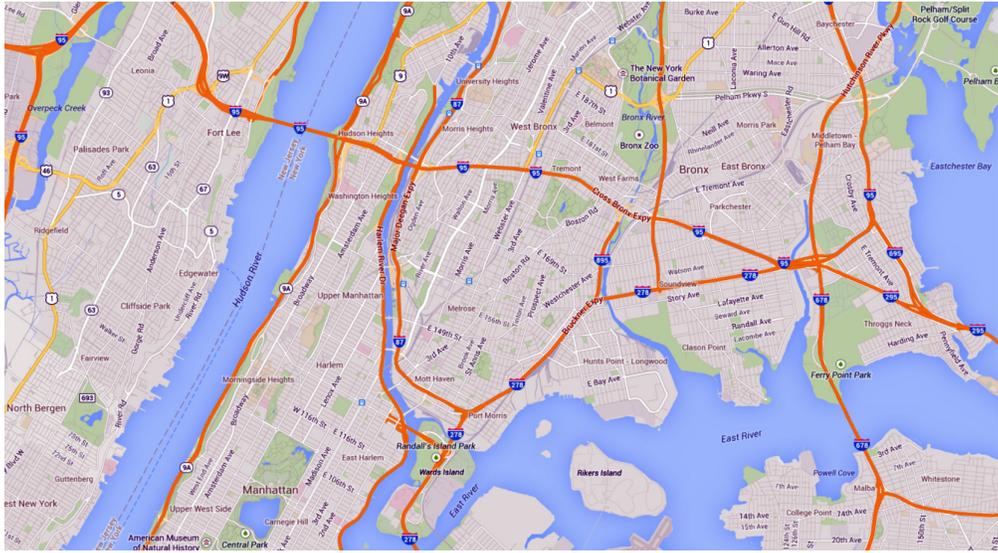


Figure 2: Map of the South Bronx, 2014. Google Maps, [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

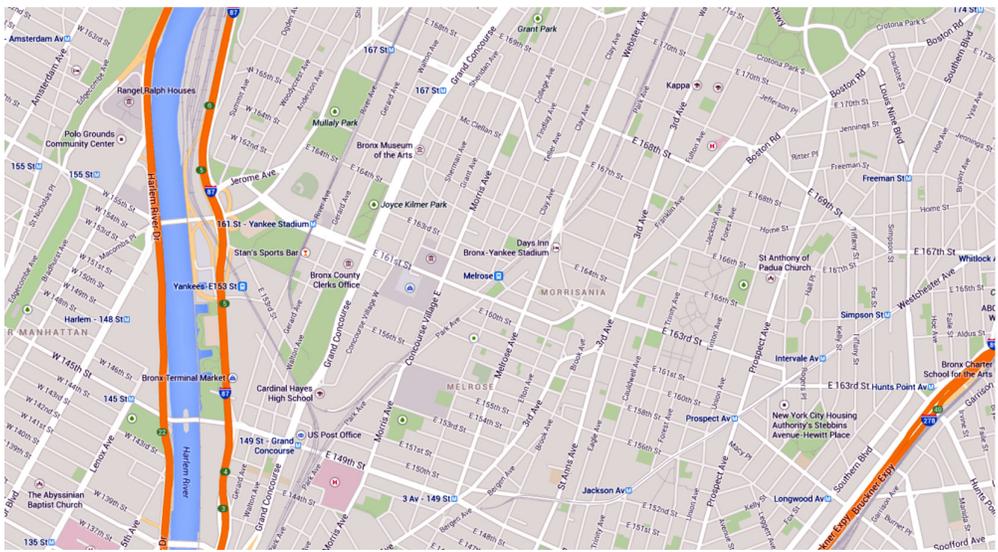


Figure 3: Map of the Melrose, 2014. Google Maps, [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]



to the database of GreenThumb, there were 44 community gardens in the area called by me “South Bronx” in this thesis.<sup>7</sup> Within the South Bronx, I focus on the neighborhood of Melrose located in the center of the area. Melrose is the first subway stop in the Bronx. In the 1920s it was the point of arrival for immigrants who moved to the Bronx. Then wealthier residents had vacated this area for the North Bronx. In the 1970s, Melrose is the most devastated neighborhood of the borough in terms of housing but also the area where most of the community gardens were started. The boundaries of Melrose today are East 163rd Street to the North, Prospect Avenue to the East, East 143rd Street to the South, and Park Avenue to the West. Melrose is primarily a residential area with a population of over 30,000 in 2010. To analyze the community gardening development in the last 40 years I will look at examples from the Melrose neighborhood, one of the central neighborhoods of the South Bronx that underwent dramatic changes from a socio-economic open space planning perspective, which had a drastic influence on its common open space use.

The case study for my research is the analysis of community gardening at the example of the “casita”, a self-built community garden structure, common among the Latin American and Caribbean gardeners of the South Bronx. This wooden structure is built out of recycled or affordable material, often in following techniques traditional to the gardeners’ cultural background. The commonly used casita is often surrounded by a patio, called “el Batey”, and is situated next to the garden beds of the individual gardeners. In my thesis, I look at the casita exemplarily to analyze community gardening as a social, economic and city planning and specific land use activity.

#### **1.1.2.4 Thesis structure**

My thesis is structured in six chapters to analyze common land use in the inner city from a socio-economic open space planning perspective at the example of the development of community gardens in the South Bronx in regard to social, economic, city planning and specific land use aspects.

Following this introduction in the first chapter, I am analyzing secondary research in the second chapter, to identify the research gap in which my thesis is intended to fill. Therefore, in the first part I will introduce the social, economic, city planning and specific land use changes in context with the urbanization and common land use in the inner city from a socio-economic open space planning perspective like the development of private land ownership, the social question, the influence of interest groups on land use, regulation of urban land use and the specific aspects of privately used public gardens.

In the third chapter, I am examining the urban development of the South Bronx before the 1970s to find out, what caused the development that led to common land use form community gardens in the inner city. This part of my thesis is intended to discuss the economic, social, city planning and specific land use conditions that created the foundation for the initiation of community gardens in the 1970s. Therefore I am analyzing the study area and the land use type community garden in regard to the historic development of the influences of population, the interest groups active, the organization of land use and of specific aspects of privately used open public space.

The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of the development of land used for community gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s. In this part of my thesis I am looking at the development of common land use for in the inner city in the 1970s while looking again at the economic, social, city planning and specific land use aspects in order to clarify the reasons for the creation of community gardens and for the continuation of this specific land use form in the inner city. Therefore I am analyzing changes in the number of gardens, population, land ownership, organization and that are specific for the land use form community garden.

In chapter five I am analyzing the activity of community gardening by focusing my research on the case study of the casita. I am looking here at the economic, social, city planning and specific land use context of community gardening in the South Bronx by discussing the influences of the city as well as of the gardeners themselves on community garden

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<sup>7</sup> See more on the number of gardens in Chapter 4.

development. The intention is to find out what makes community gardens, i.e. privately used public urban gardens, a specific land use form and to clarify the definition of this land use form through that discussion.

These five chapters are followed by an conclusion in the sixth chapter to summarize the results of the before discussed chapters and conclude whether the assumption that the people are longing for and are committed to a common urban open space land use form in the inner city. The conclusion of my thesis is meant to critically put the thesis into a perspective for future urban development.

### **1.2 Method, research problem and considerations of validity**

My interest in studying the situation of New York City's public urban open space land use started when I moved to New York in 1999 and began to observe the quality of life in this city. I conducted the specific research for my thesis between 2005 and 2014. It is influenced by my education at the Alanus Academy of Arts in Bonn-Alfter, the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg and the Berlin University of Arts, and work in architectural offices in Germany and New York City as well as an Assistant Professor at the Graz Technical University's Institute for Architecture and Landscape and a Research Associate at the Institute for Social Sciences of Agriculture, Faculty of Gender and Nutrition of the University Hohenheim. Due to my work from 2007 to 2012 as an architectural consultant for the construction of the GreenThumb Gardenhaus and as a project and architectural design coordinator at GreenThumb from 2012 to 2014 I had access to specific resources, participated at community gardening events and met with gardeners regularly throughout the main part of the research for my thesis.

I placed my research in the field of urban social research and am employing combined techniques including the discussion of secondary literature, newspaper articles, GreenThumb data, census data, spatial analysis, observing conversations, open interviews, case study, participant observations, participatory structured research and the interpretation of persons active in the field of research.

My thesis is addressing a research problem that is focused on social aspects of urban planning and that is thus in its nature situated in the field of social open planning and architecture. I am addressing with my research fellow architects and city planners as well as municipalities and urban residents. To be able to address the most persons internationally, my research is written in English.

It has to be taken into consideration that while writing this thesis I worked as a consultant for GreenThumb since 2007 plus coordinated the Mayor's Obesity Task force initiative for GreenThumb since 2012, and thus had the opportunity to gain access to specific municipal information, to collect personal experience and to participate in the field of community gardening. This meant though at the same time that I possibly was treated by gardeners not as part of the community gardening movement in New York City, but rather as a native European, white staff person of GreenThumb, which might have influenced their reaction to me as well as my perspective on their community gardening activities.

### **1.3 Acknowledgement**

I thank everyone who has supported my research over the years. Especially, I am thankful to the community gardeners, who invited me into their gardens and shared their stories and produce. I thank the community gardens program GreenThumb of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and her former director, Edie Stone, as well as non-profit community gardening organizations like CENYC / GrowNYC, Green Guerillas and Moregardens! for granting access and advice for my research over the years. In addition, I thank Professor Dr. Dr. Gert Gröning as well as Professor Dr. Anne C. Bellows for their continued professional guidance and co-supervising of my thesis. Finally, I thank my friends and my parents for their extended support.

## **Chapter 2: Context of thesis with written research**

### **2.1 Urban land use and economy**

In the following I will look at the context of urban land use and economy by analyzing the urbanization of cities in the United States of America with special focus on the example of the urbanization of Los Angeles.

#### **2.1.1 Urbanization**

The industrial revolution and concomitant urban development started the restructuring of social, political and economical conditions and the movement of the rural population to the cities provoking a shift in land use. The invention of mechanical means of production changed the nature of labor effecting life in the city as well as in the countryside. In rural areas agricultural farms professionalized to serve the increasing number of urban population as well as regional, national and global markets. In urban areas manufacturing businesses developed into factories operating for mass production creating new jobs. When the use of machines rationalized labor in rural areas, less rural workers were needed and many of them moved to the expanding cities in search of work. They found work in new factories at the periphery of the city, but also in new jobs in the infrastructural sectors, in administration and trade called for by the increase in the number of urban population.

Beginning with the middle of the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>, new land use laws were enacted in European countries and the United States of America introducing the "land reform" that transformed agricultural into industrial nations.<sup>2</sup> This change in the land use laws triggered the privatization of commonly used open spaces called the "commons", which were used by especially by the impoverished rural population to sustain themselves. Consequently these landless, low-income rural residents were forced themselves forced to move to the urban centers in search for work in the new industrial businesses. Due to the new demands of trade, railroads were constructed, canals built and streets extended to improve transport of supplies to the new urban centers. The urban centers evolved to financial and administrative centers, while the urban population increased in number triggering an increase in housing construction and decrease in urban open space.

##### **2.1.1.1 Urbanization of cities in the United States of America**

The North-American colonies declared their independence from England in 1776 and urbanization in the United States of America started around the year 1820 with the population of the great cities doubling in the beginning every ten years.<sup>3</sup> The increasing number of population in the industrialized world at the end of the nineteenth century demanded also an increased agricultural food production to feed the masses. The United States of America became during this time for example the main export country of corn due to expansive crop cultivation in the Mid-West of the country. Consequently smaller farms and agricultural businesses of other nations had to compete with the United States as a low-cost food supplier, so that many had to close down and more people migrated into the urban centers.

New concepts of housing the low-income class were developed parallel to the urbanization from the beginning on and followed the direction of migration between rural and urban areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The urbanization began in the United States of America around 1820, in France and the Netherlands in 1850 and in Germany around 1870, with the exception of some provinces that started to urbanize earlier like Saxony. (Pfeil 1950, p. 119) The greatest growth of the population in the cities of Europe and the United States was at the end of the nineteenth century. (Pfeil 1950, p. 126) London was in 1865 the city with the greatest number of population worldwide. Later in the last quarter of the nineteenth century Berlin and New York were equal in the number of their population. (Pfeil 1950, p. 126) At the second place followed until 1900 the City of Paris and then around 1910 New York City became with 4.5 million inhabitants the city with the greatest number of population worldwide at the time. (Pfeil 1950, p. 116)

<sup>2</sup> The landscape architect and author Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), responsible together with the architect Calvert Vaux for the design of Central Park in 1857, reported at the end of the nineteenth century after travelling from the United States of America to Europe, that cities in Europe were growing at an enormous rate, with "(...) all building out into the countryside at a rate never before known, while many agricultural districts are actually losing population". (Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 56)

<sup>3</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 119.

That means urbanization in the United States started from the rural areas to the inner city with the transformation from agricultural to industrial production at the end of the nineteenth century, when landless rural residents migrated to the booming cities, in search of jobs, housing and a better quality of life. Then workers moved out of the city to live close to new industrial centers while the city increased in size. In the postwar years, with the slow-down of the industrialization in the postwar years this migration was reversed – back to the “countryside” or rather to the suburb, enticed by subsidies of the government. In the 1970s the inner city was depopulated and the low-income residents that remained living there had to improve their own quality of life – for example by creating community gardens. Then the migration changed again in the late 1980s, early 1990s when the inner city became attractive again because of an increasing quality of life such as improved access to public open spaces such as community gardens.

### **2.1.1.2 The example of the urbanization of Los Angeles**

The urban area of Los Angeles for example was regarded as the “first modern, widely decentralized industrial city in America”.<sup>4</sup> Charles Benjamin Purdom (1883 –1965) reported in his book “Building of Satellite Towns” of 1925 that its “(...) population increased 212 per cent in the decade from 1900 to 1920, and a large portion of this increase was due to the absorption of adjoining areas containing populous centers”.<sup>5</sup> During the Second World War, Los Angeles was the center of aircraft and other defense or war industry in the United States. The mass of new residents that came into the city to work in these industries was soon in desperate need of housing. In response to the housing misery large-scale housing projects, publicly financed as well as privately financed, were rapidly constructed. Greg Hise states in his book “Magnetic Los Angeles” of 1997 that during the 1930s, “(...) home builders, developers, and government officials recognized that turning wage-earning renters into homeowners would require innovation in housing production”.<sup>6</sup> In the urban periphery of Los Angeles new towns were laid out next to each other and the city spread out further and further. The typology of Los Angeles became that of a town with multiple centers or as Greg Hise describes it: “(...) the multicentered, dispersed Los Angeles (...) the prototype for a distinctively twentieth century metropolis”.<sup>7</sup> The later postwar urbanism in the United States included phenomena like the automobile, highways, economic prosperity, single-family housing, white flight, inner city decline which are all an expression of this American urban expansion that needs according to Greg Hise be looked at “inclusively” – i.e. in relation to itself.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently the industrialization and urbanization started the restructuring of social, political and economical conditions provoking an increase in urban population and changes in urban land use. The “land reform” turned agricultural into industrial nations followed by the introduction of the global market and further alteration in economic structures. In addition the land reform allowed the privatization of commonly used open spaces called the “commons” that had been used by the community according to the needs of the residents. The landless, low-income population were not needed any longer as rural workers due to the change in production and having no longer access to commons to sustain themselves moved to the urban centers in search for work in the new industrial businesses. There the new low-income urban residents lived in densely occupied apartment buildings under unsanitary conditions with lack of access to open space. The municipalities responded to the industrialization by construction in infrastructure elements such as streets, canals or the railroad, and to the demands of the new urban residents by developing public parks. Still the urban low-income population lacked access to private usable open spaces for gardens next to housing. Due to the neglect of the municipalities to provide the urban low income population with adequate access to open spaces next to housing these low-income residents improved their own quality of life by making private use of public open space such as in the case of residents’ groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

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<sup>4</sup> McWilliams in: Hise 1997, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Hise 1997, pp. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> Hise 1997, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Hise 1997, p. 12.

## 2.2 Urban land use and population

In the following I will study the context of urban land use and population by looking at aspects of cultural background and social conflict. In addition I will investigate the role of social control and reform movements and then analyze the example of the Kleingarten movement in Germany.

### 2.2.1 Cultural background and social conflict

In the early industrial era, masses of landless rural residents migrated into the cities. In the later years when the cities had developed into specific types of cities, like cities of administration, trade or industry, more specialized workers were attracted as well. Together with the changes in the industrial sector of a city the demands for workers' skills altered over the years.<sup>9</sup> That means with the change in methods of production, the global economy and the job market changed: Farm workers became industrial workers and moved into the cities where commercial businesses were located at the time. Because specific groups and types of people were migrating from rural areas to the city, migration was selective. The city not only was attractive because of jobs in the industry but also because it was a place of the unknown, the adventure. One group of the new urban residents were single men working in heavy metal and steel industry, since this was heavy work, another group were single woman working in the textile industry, since they had been trained in sowing in their rural homes.<sup>10</sup>

The urban centers expanded with urban development and increasing urban population while industrial businesses moved out to rural settings in search of affordable land. New industrial settlements attracted low-income residents to leave the inner city with offering improved quality of life with housing and gardens. The urban development continued and even when in the 1930s, the rapid increase in the number of population in the industrious nations slowed down, in many countries the concentration of population in the cities continued with urban centers spreading into rural areas. While after the Second World War with its booming industry attracted residents back to the inner city.<sup>11</sup> Then in the 1970s, those urban residents who could afford it left the inner city in order to move to the periphery and the suburbs. In the urban centers mainly the low-income population remained.

In the 1970s, the increase of urban population slowed down and at the same time the expansion of the urban area. Still, as already Elisabeth Pfeil states in 1950 in her book "Großstadtforschung" of 1950, the urban development continued to increase in area and population, because coordinated conglomerates of cities were established by concentrating functions of administration, distribution and culture.<sup>12</sup> The industrialization and urbanization changed the way in which labor. The society was subdivided into new social groups, called social classes, among them the new working class. Political conflicts became to be rooted in the antagonism of the new social classes. The new workers came slowly to an understanding of their situation and of themselves as belonging to the working class. This class was missing a tradition that they could refer to, but created soon a consciousness of themselves and a group feeling that distinguished them from other groups. Next to the working class a new middle class was formed by the social group of employees, small self-employed businessmen and clerks, which was similar to the working class in regard to its dependences, manner of consume and lack of possessions. This new middle-class of intellectuals and economists was to be found between the two poles of the wealthy industrialist class and the working class.

The rather radical changes caused by the industrialization and urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century raised the "social question" for the society: The difficulty was for society how to deal with the new social classes, with the expansion of the cities and with the necessity to house the new working class. The consequence of mass migration was a housing crisis in the city and a reduction of urban open space.

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<sup>9</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Pfeil 1950, pp. 148-149.

<sup>11</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 304.

<sup>12</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 127.

## 2.2.2 Social control and reform movements

At the turn of the nineteenth century the intellectual middle class was skeptical about the survival of civilization after a period of major inventions of industry and global trade as well as because of a rapid development of economic interest and economy. The intellectual discussion and analysis of the great number of social problems and threats created an atmosphere of eagerness for action and reform. The objective of the majority of the reform movements was in general to create organizations or institutions to improve the quality of life of the each part of society. The earliest reformist ideas are concerned with medicinal and hygienic aspects of urban life like the naturopathy, vegetarianism, naked body culture and the reform of the fashion.<sup>13</sup> Other reform movements were demanding social and political changes. This was pushed forward by organization to reform the distribution and subdivision of land by women clubs, organization enforcing the protection of nature, the garden city movement and through the foundation of garden colonies.

The editors Krebs and Reulecke discuss in their book "Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen: 1880 - 1933" of 1998 the reform movements concentration on the reorganization of the way an individual was living in the new urban and rural social environment of the twentieth century. In the book "Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen" the analysis the political reform movements of the time is not included, but it focuses on movements concerning the reformation of the environment and the homeland, the way of living, the community and society, economy and housing, education, art and culture as well as spirituality. The definition of a movement is according to this book a group that is oriented not only towards restructuring and initiation, but this group is to a certain degree organized and does not make use of the "(...) possibly spectacular but isolated appearance of single person (...)".<sup>14</sup> Reform movements developed as a reaction to the challenges of a rapid industrialization and technization, of urbanization and entertainment industry as well as mass civilization.<sup>15</sup> The various reform movements at the beginning of the twentieth century were often ambivalent and contradictory. But some were able to create and maintain in society the capability to take on a different viewpoint of a situation, to rethink a topic and even to change behavior and opinion.<sup>16</sup> Krebs and Reulecke publish the statement that it is necessary that "(...) everyone joining these movements needs to ask himself or herself again and again the question of the humane quality and the generalization of his or her picture of the human being which stand behind the specific reform goals and endeavors".<sup>17</sup> The book predicts, "(...) the basic question of the relation of reform and revolution will remain an epochal task of great historic depth and utopian brisance".<sup>18</sup>

Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn analyze in Krebs and Reulecke's book, the "Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen" of 1998, reform movements concerned with the preservation of landscape and nature.<sup>19</sup> Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn are convinced that, in the second half of the nineteenth century in the previously agricultural Germany, "the developing industrial society was (...) creating new perspectives of nature, landscape and homeland".<sup>20</sup> One of the aspects that Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn mention is that workers were encouraged to visit urban parks or to garden themselves by members of the middle class, in order to prevent them from going on getaway trips into the urban periphery, where the members of the middle class wanted to enjoy nature among themselves. In addition, the concept of the preservation of the homeland, nature and landscape became a very important to the society. For example in 1872 in the United States the Yellowstone Park was introduced as a national park to be preserved for the public.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 11. [translation C.M.]

<sup>15</sup> Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 18. [translation C.M.]

<sup>18</sup> Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 18. [translation C.M.]

<sup>19</sup> Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn in: Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, pp. 23-35.

<sup>20</sup> Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn in: Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 23. [translation C.M.]

<sup>21</sup> Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn in: Krebs and Reulecke (eds.) 1998, p. 27.

Since 1900 and even in previous decades there had been a movement to protect the environment. This movement occurred concomitantly to the youth movement. During the 1950s and 1960s there has been an effort by environmentalists to create urban parks, which has been described as being pushed forward by ideas of the German youth movement.<sup>22</sup> In regard to the relation of inner city open space and social aspects Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn states in his 1990 book "Auf der Suche nach Arkadien. Zu Landschaftsidealen und Formen der Naturaneignung in der Jugendbewegung und ihrer Bedeutung für die Landespflege" that "(...) planning of the spatial environment in disciplines like architecture, city and open space planning is influenced by cultural, class and other specific concepts and ideologies".<sup>23</sup> Wolschke-Bulmahn stresses that "(...) diverse concepts of the ideal form of humane existence and consequently of the ideal form of the relation of the human beings or the society to nature (...)" are based on concrete planning concepts, ideals and laws".<sup>24</sup>

### **2.2.3 The example of the Kleingarten movement in Germany**

Parallel to the urbanization and industrialization, open space in inner city was reduced so that for example Kleingarten colonies and wild settlement sprung up in the periphery of German cities. The motivation to garden was hunger and the longing for improved nutrition, for the rural way of living, for being outside and recreation in nature.<sup>25</sup> An additional motivation to garden were the living conditions in the great cities with low standard accommodations in the new inner city buildings that effected the health of the residents and the education of the children and youth.<sup>26</sup> Intellectuals, doctors, teachers, politicians as well as factory owners were concerned to change the living conditions of the working class.

The Kleingarten movement was influenced by various, diverse ideas that occurred concomitant to one another and had an influence on each other as well. The first influence is said to come from Dr. Moritz Schreber, a doctor based in Leipzig, who demanded to create playgrounds. This idea was later followed up by the teacher Dr. Ernst Innocenz Hauschild living in the same city when forming the first "Schrebergartenverein" in 1864. To these educatory organizations gardens were added only later.<sup>27</sup> The Kleingarten aspect became more and more important over the years while still keeping up educatory aspects. Therefore the gardening aspect was not important for the founding of the Schrebergarten, but was only occurring later on. This is also true in the case of the gardens of the German Red Cross and the gardens for the urban low-income residents.<sup>28</sup>

The Schrebergarten movement has been called a consequence of the industrialization and urbanization.<sup>29</sup> In Leipzig Dr. Ernst Innocenz Hauschild called for the creation of a playground close to the school for the children of low-income families living in the inner city that would provide them with more quality of life than the small wet courtyards, the dangerous streets and the small house gardens.<sup>30</sup> He proposed to call this new organization the "Schrebergartenverein" in memory of Dr. Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber whom he considered to be an excellent doctor and pedagogue. The idea was to encourage physical exercise of the children but soon the first enthusiasm faded away. The parents were soon taking over the gardening. For reasons of protection the gardeners soon erected fences and small huts. In 1870 there were already 100 garden lots in Leipzig's "Johannistal", which is said to be the oldest Kleingarten colony still in existence today.

Consequently at the turn of the century a variety of reform movements developed as a reaction to the challenges of a rapid industrialization and technization, of urbanization and entertainment industry as well as mass civilization. These movements were started by social groups to create organizations or institutions with the objective to improve the quality of life of the each part of society. Reform movements ranged from landscape, open space and nature

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<sup>22</sup> Wolschke-Bulmahn 1990, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Wolschke-Bulmahn 1990, p. 4. [translation C.M.]

<sup>24</sup> Wolschke-Bulmahn 1990, p. 4. [translation C.M.]

<sup>25</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 18.

preservation movement to the Kleingarten movement aiming to reform the way of living in cities resulting in the garden city movement. The Kleingarten movement started by urban low-income residents to improve their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens is reflected in the community gardens movement about 100 years later, which residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s were a part of.

### **2.3 Urban land use and interest groups**

In the following I will analyze the context of urban land use and interest groups by looking at the topic of lively or un-lively neighborhoods before I look at the impact of actions of various stakeholders such as the federal and local government, the low-income population at example of Kleingartenern in Germany, the impact of actions of banks, landlords and tenants, private businessmen and real estate market as well as at the impact of actions of organizations.

#### **2.3.1 Lively or un-lively neighborhoods**

In the twentieth century in England the social relations within a city as well as relations within a neighborhood, among relatives and friends, between old-established and new residents as well as with questions of status and adaptation were analyzed by intellectuals.<sup>31</sup> Thus English writers discovered the existence of local societies, of the systems among relatives, of matriarchies and sub-neighborhoods.<sup>32</sup> They introduced the aspects of role behavior and the expectation of role behavior, of privacy and sociability, of norms and role models as well as aspects of the linkage to a certain district of the city and mobility. The irony was at the same time, when the old residential quarters of many urban centers were demolished, the high degree of social integration and social linkage of especially these areas of the city was discovered.<sup>33</sup> The new settlements, constructed on the basis of measures of construction and hygiene, were disappointing to residents in regard to the functioning and provision of social interconnection – possibly because they had not been adjusted by residents to their needs over time and possibly because they lacked access to collectively and privately used open space. That means with the destruction of old residential quarters in line with urban renewal projects a once lively neighborhood with social networks was turned into an un-lively residential location.

In the preface to Herbert Gans book "The Levittowners" of 1967, Lucius Burckhardt describes life in a Levittown suburb<sup>34</sup> and explains that social structures are formed anywhere where there are people. Consequently the term "masses" is, according to him, incorrectly applied in the context with an agglomeration of human beings. "These structures are different than what the ideologist of the thirties had had in mind. Amongst these (structures) is the neighborly – it is not the most important, but also not the least important; this (structure) is superimposed in a criss-crossed way by other organizations, by formalized and merely effective ones, by clubs and groups purely based on friendship, by groups of people of the same conviction, political affiliation, cultural background and interests, by school associations, parishes of churches, sports clubs, by get-togethers to dance or to drink tea. Of course there are also groupings which exceed the hometown: there remain to be the old friendships, the relatives and the circle of colleagues".<sup>35</sup> Burckhard goes even further, describing that the physical settlement is less important to a resident than the social relations it creates. He explains that the interest of the residents in a specific city district was focused on neighborhoods suitability for one's family because of the neighbors living there, the community context, because of the commute to work, the school and quality of life. "The settlement (...) is not visible as such to the resident; it manifests itself in conditions, rights and obligations, relationships and aspirations. It is not the home of one's own, the garden, the neighbor's building, the street, the school's building that are in the focus of attention of the buyer, but his/ her own family, the neighbor's

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<sup>31</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 98.

<sup>32</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> There were suburbs called Levittown in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Jersey as well as in Long Island, Nassau County, NY.

<sup>35</sup> Burckhardt, Lucius in: Gans 1967, p. 8.

family, denominated community, the way to work, the system of the school in relation to his/her own children and his/her hope".<sup>36</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the lively or un-lively neighborhood context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that with the destruction of old residential quarters for urban renewal projects a once lively neighborhood with social networks was turned into an un-lively residential location. New settlements constructed on the basis of measures of construction and hygiene, were disappointing to residents in regard to the functioning and provision of social interconnection. This indicates that the physical settlement is less important to residents than the social relations it creates and that the interest of the residents in a specific city district is focused on neighborhoods suitability for one's family because of the neighbors living there, the community context, because of the commute to work, the school and quality of life in general. Therefore low-income residents at the time improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as about one hundred years later residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

### **2.3.2 Action of federal government**

The development of the context urban land use and interest groups in regard to action of the federal government of the United States starts with the first presidents of the United States, who were part-time farmers when in office, i.e. very much connected to land use. They were interested in setting up the new country in contrast to Europe with politics made by the people for the people. For specific urban and rural district representatives were sent to Congress - based on the data of those specific districts - to make local needs and demands heard in the federal government. Thus, "the first U.S. population census was taken in 1790 to establish a basis for representation in Congress".<sup>37</sup> It was to be an "enumeration of people, houses, firms, or other important items in a country or region at a particular time".<sup>38</sup> That means the integration of interests of the local population was part of the American politics from the beginning of the country. The approach of the first U.S. presidents to politics that centered on the needs of the people, i.e. that supported self-government was based on the decision-making process of small units as well as individual independence. Thus for example George Washington, the first president of the United States of America (1789–1797), announced after the years of Revolution and in expectation of new immigrants from Europe, "Let the poor, the needy and oppressed of the Earth, and those who want land, resort to the fertile plains of our western country".<sup>39 40</sup> This cultural "directive" was carried on and became part of the American culture and way of living.

Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States of America (1801–1809) and co-author of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, commented on the situation in Europe with disrespect for the poverty and oppression of body and mind of the masses as well as the superstition of the rich. To him Americans were the only people ready to govern themselves. Jefferson explains, "The exciting thing about the independence of the United States (...) was not the creation of a new nation but the opportunity it offered to carry the independence of the individual beyond what the world had hitherto known".<sup>41</sup> He added, "in the small units the individual could make his needs and wishes felt directly, and they could accordingly be trusted with more authority than should be allowed to the larger units of government, in which

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<sup>36</sup> Burckhardt, Lucius in: Gans 1967, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Merriam-Webster online, [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com).

<sup>38</sup> Merriam-Webster online, [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com).

<sup>39</sup> Washington in: Morgan 1976, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> This was a statement of the eighteenth century, when the strength of a country was dependent on its people and when the United States federal government was interested that the country's population increased as quick as possible and when there was wide tracts of open spaces, so-called public open spaces, available for new settlements. To George Washington it was important that the new immigrants would not settle as a group and retain their habits, language and principles, but that they became "Americans" as a group. Washington was interested to tie the country together by producing common interest, i.e. by for example connecting the West to the East Coast through the construction of canals for example, which would allow trade more easily.

<sup>41</sup> Morgan 1976, p. 71.

men could have to delegate powers to representatives”.<sup>42</sup> Later President Abraham Lincoln, (1861-1865) became famous for his statement at the Gettysburg Address, “Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth”.

Consequently the analysis of the action of federal government in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that the integration of interests of the local population was part of the American politics from the beginning of the United States of America with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. At the time, the strength of a country was dependent on its people and when the United States wanted that its population would quickly increase and when there was wide tracts of open spaces, so-called public open spaces, available for new settlements. The first presidents of the United States were part-time farmers when in office and were interested in setting up the new country in contrast to Europe with politics made by the people for the people. That means they were interested in supporting self-government with a decision-making process based on small units and individual independence. The approach of the first U.S. presidents to politics carried on and became part of the American culture and way of living. In line with this understanding of independent decision-making and self-government is the creation of community gardens by low-income in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s to improve their quality of life.

### **2.3.3 Action of local government**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century with the change in the nature of labor it became clear to local governments that recreative opportunities had to be provided in the urban environment in order to cope with the new concept of “leisure time”, i.e. with the formerly unknown concept of not being productive after working for a specific length of time each day only. Thus during the Progressive era, which extended through the early twentieth century, efforts to improve the urban environment emerged from recognition of the need for recreation of the urban population. At the time, work in the urban factories was more monotonous than that on the countryside since the worker was involved in a single task of a work process instead of the whole production. In addition the working hours increased considerably over time while wages reduced with the increase in population, i.e. the increase in workers available to work at a cheaper rate. Not only men, but also women and children were working in the factories in order for the family to make a living of the low wages. Leisure time and time spent with the family became less and less under these conditions. But by the end of the nineteenth century the process of mechanization of production had intensified, so that working hours, as well as the need for women and children to work, were reduced even though the workday remained still long. Renting out open spaces to low-income workers for gardening purposes became a common practice among industrial businessmen, who had moved their industrial businesses or installed new factories in the urban periphery and had established workers’ housing with gardens in the vicinity of these factories. These workers’ gardens were to be used for the purpose of food production that would allow the industrial businessmen to continue paying low-income wages, but not for spending leisure time.

In answer to urban low-income population’s lack of access to open space and quality of life to their densely occupied housing and unhealthy working situation, the City of New York as well as other local governments developed public parks to provide places for recreation and spending of leisure time. Small open spaces with playgrounds for children were introduced in densely built up urban areas, while facilities for games and sports were established in public parks not only for children but also for adults, whose workdays gradually shortened. Supporters of the public parks movement believed that the opportunity for outdoor recreation would have a civilizing effect on the low-income class. Situated in the center of New York City for example, Central Park was developed in the 1850s with the vision to create a public park that would be used by all social classes for leisure purposes. The concept and design Central Park as a urban public park with separated pedestrian and vehicular traffic that provided the image of rural landscape, i.e., the creation of a “rural” landscape within the center of the city, became a widely imitated by other municipalities – not only because of social consideration,

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<sup>42</sup> Morgan 1976, p. 77.

but also because Central Park as well as other actively used parks increased the real-estate value of the surrounding private properties and consequently the City's tax base.<sup>43</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the action of local government in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that at the beginning of the nineteenth century local governments realized that recreative opportunities had for the urban low-income population to cope with the new concept of leisure time, with long working hours as well as the unsanitary living conditions in densely occupied tenements buildings with lack of open space access that impaired the quality of life of the urban low-income population. Even though by the end of the nineteenth century the process of mechanization of production had intensified, so that working hours, as well as the need for women and children to work, were reduced there was still no leisure time. Renting out open spaces to low-income workers for gardening purposes. These workers' gardens were to be used for the purpose of food production that would allow the industrial businessmen to continue paying low-income wages, but not for spending leisure time. Thus in answer to the urban low-income population's lack of access to open space and quality of life, the City of New York as well as other local governments developed public parks to provide places for recreation and spending of leisure time. New public parks were introduced not only because of social consideration, but also because public parks increased the real-estate value of the surrounding properties and consequently the City's tax base. Since there were not enough public parks in low-income districts and since the private use of those open spaces, low-income residents improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as the low-income residents of the South Bronx created community gardens starting in the 1970s.

#### **2.3.4 Action of low-income population at the example of Kleingartens in Germany**

In the following I will analyze the example of the development of Kleingartens in Germany to look at the action of the low-income population in context with urban land use and interest groups. Outside of the urban centers in Germany, in order to create a contrast to the monotonous work in the factories and to provide for an additional supply of food in times of scarcity – and to improve the physical and psychological condition of their workers –, parcels of land were rented out by the industrialists to the workers at an affordable price.

In the periphery of the urban centers, low-income residents of the inner city started cultivating land outside of the city, often starting illegally, with garden parcels in 1864 in Leipzig, in order to act against the desolate social situation that had arisen due to the industrialization and urbanization, the scarcity housing, foods and jobs.<sup>44</sup> The users of these in Germany so-called Kleingartens started to organize themselves to preserve their gardening land against the interests of other groups, when the law that restricted the over-regional organization of clubs was abolished in 1899. Due to the interest in the cultivation of land for small gardens in the vicinity of the city and ongoing urban expansion with the consequent pressure on land in the inner city, in 1909, the central association of German workers and Kleingarteners, "Zentralverband Deutscher Arbeiter und Schrebergärtner", was established forming a new interest group for a specific form of land use thus gaining more power than gardeners separately gardening on land outside of the city. Leaders of the various garden associations in the country established this central association of German workers and Kleingarteners. The establishment of this central association was supported by governmental organizations interested in a unified organization of the Kleingarteners since this would help to control the movement easier from the governmental perspective, while at the same time support by governmental institutions for the Kleingarten movement would become easier.

The global economic crisis concomitant to the First World War increased the importance of the Kleingartens' existence in the inner cities of Germany in regard to the political aspects of providing quality of life for the people. During and after the First World War the economic situation of the world and especially of the residents in the defeated Germany was disastrous,

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<sup>43</sup> The value of the properties surrounding Central Park advanced "(...) in one year from 100 to 300 per cent in some localities, and one instance is recorded of an advance in a single plot of 1,300 per cent, within five years". (Mullaly 1882, p. 25)

<sup>44</sup> Katsch and Walz, p. 6.

so that the gardens parcels became essential to the survival of impoverished urban residents. There was a great shortage in supplies so that the allotment gardens with the possibility of self-help became interesting to the public and governmental institutions. Legislation was changed to adjust to this emergency situation of the wartime in order to reduce leasing costs of gardening land in the city and to provide vacant public land for the growing of edible green products. In many cases, allotment garden huts were used as permanent housing after tenement houses were destroyed in air attacks. With the acceptance of the constitution of Weimar in 1919, the "Kleingarten- und Kleinpachtlandordnung", i.e. the allotment garden and small land leasing regulation, was set up. This ordinance provided the organized allotment gardeners with certainty of the law when dealing with landowners and administration. In addition the commercial general lease was forbidden and the costs of leasing set at a fixed rate. It became allowed by law to force the allotment of urban land for gardening. There were also provisions included about the cancellation of leasing contracts and the establishment of institutions helping the agreement between gardeners and landlords.<sup>45</sup>

The more the government and the municipalities neglected the situation of the impoverished urban residents during the time of national crisis; the more the garden became a necessary institution for the survival of low-income urban residents. That means in other words, that due to the economic and social structure of the time, more and more garden parcels were cultivated and more and more small garden huts inhabited. During the 1920s, there were about 20 million gardeners in the Kleingarten colonies in Germany and in 1921 the "Reichsverband der Kleingärtnervereine Deutschlands", the Reich's Kleingarten association of Germany, was set up. During the global economic depression of the late 1920s, garden colonies multiplied, when many urban residents had lost their jobs and consequently their apartment, so that more and more families moved out to live on their garden. Since much of the housing in German cities had been demolished through the warfare, gardeners erected small huts on their parcels at the outskirts. There they lived until municipalities and investors had become interested again in housing development.

When the National Socialist concepts came to power in the beginning of the 1930s, the Kleingarten associations in Germany were influenced by the ideology of blood and soil, the "Blut- und Bodenideologie, and the struggle for food production and feeding, the "Erzeugungs- und Ernährungsschlacht". That means the Kleingartens were a means to express the connection to the German heritage and land as the foundation for the state and people. The Kleingartens in Germany were to be supported according to the concepts of the common good prevailing over the welfare of the individual. The self-government of the allotment gardens was to be held up and the idealistic and material protection of the Kleingarteners to be guaranteed. From the very beginning the National Socialists considered the allotment gardens important in regard to politics of land and soil. In addition the gardens were considered a useful preparatory measurement for the economy of the wartime and the contribution of the allotment gardeners, especially of the women, to the food supply of the country was considered very useful. The leadership of the Kleingarten association was taken over by National Socialists, who infiltrated the allotment garden concept and used it for their propaganda.

In 1933 the National Socialists politically synchronized in a procedure enforced by the Nazis called "Gleichschaltung" the national Kleingarten association of Germany. Consequently the democratic structure of the allotment garden system was eliminated and replaced by political administrative units according to the National Socialist regime.<sup>46</sup> There are several incidents by local allotment gardeners known that prove that the political synchronization was not easily accepted. This is understandable based on the strong social democratic and communist orientation as well the high degree of working class members among the German Kleingarteners. Nevertheless there is still a lack of research in regard to the Kleingarten association in Germany during the National Socialist government.<sup>47</sup> From 1933 to 1938 the German Kleingarten system was not sufficiently protected by law and the municipalities did not support the provision of land for the creation of Kleingartens, so that the number of

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<sup>45</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 36.

<sup>46</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 46.

gardens reduced considerably. Finally in 1939, with the start of the Second World War the lawful protection of German Kleingartens improved again and gardens were more and more protected against unwarranted notice to leave the land.<sup>48</sup> The Kleingartens in Germany provided a supplement to the food supply of the country during the wartime and had therefore become an important factor in the struggle for the existence of the state. In addition the small garden huts, the "Lauben", of the Kleingarteners were giving temporary shelter to the residents of the bombed cities and became a necessity in their struggle for survival. Jewish German residents were from 1937 on not allowed any longer to lease a Kleingarten. Other politically and racially nonconformist gardeners were also segregated from the Kleingarten and deported to concentration camps. Even though gardeners of Jewish heritage as well as political opponents of the National Socialism party had to give up their garden, in a few incidents the garden huts were used as a hideout for the persecuted.<sup>49</sup> To live permanently in the garden colonies had been illegal, but after 1942, with the increase in bomb attacks on German cities that destroyed more and more housing, it became not only a necessity to move into a Kleingarten, but also a luxury to have a plot. The total capitulation of Germany in 1945 as well as the destruction through the years of war made any regular way of life in German cities impossible, so that the small gardens with cabins became the most desired possessions as the own land was more worth than anything else. Even the formerly orderly kept colonies were hit temporarily by anarchy.<sup>50</sup>

During and after Second World War the economic situation of low-income residents in German cities was desperate once again, so that the Kleingarten parcels became again essential to their survival. Food production in the Kleingartens helped to supplement the food supply of Germany during the war. In the Kleingarten colonies model settlement forms with standardized houses with garden that targeted the question of controlled urban growth were established. Since the municipalities were not able to provide much support in the years after the Second World War, the gardeners depended mainly on themselves. The officials had to allow that small garden huts in the Kleingartens remained to be used as permanent accommodation for many families. "This situation provided the chance and the necessity to redevelop the entire Kleingarten system on a democratic basis".<sup>51</sup> The numerous Kleingarten associations throughout Germany continued to exist and reelected their leaders. Some of these elections needed the agreement of the officials of the occupation troops or were even determined by them. Today, there are in Germany, about 1,300,000 Kleingartens, which occupy about 113.670 acres of land.<sup>52</sup> About five million citizens of all ages as well as social and economic background spend their leisure time in these gardens. Garden colonies are included in urban planning and their legal protection is based on its social function. In Germany, Kleingarteners ask for stipulation sums for garden improvements like for example the construction of a garden hut, when handing their parcel over to the next user. These standard of the amenities of the garden huts and consequently the stipulation sums are sometimes too high in order to be affordable for low-income classes, so that there are unused parcels in some Kleingarten colonies, even when there is a waiting list for other garden sites.<sup>53</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the action of low-income population and government at the example of Kleingarten development in Germany in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that low-income residents have cultivated land outside of the city to garden since the late middle of the nineteenth century. These gardens have continued to exist despite various influences by different interest groups until today and are still situated on urban public land

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<sup>48</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Personal interview with Jürgen Hurt, former president of the Deutscher Kleingartenverband and Landesverband Berlin-Brandenburg, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Under rule of the National Socialist Party in Germany, from 1933 to 1945, the Kleingarten garden movement was used for propaganda purposes and the association' title was changed to "Reichsbund Deutscher Kleingärtner e.V.", the Reich's association of German Kleingarteners. When the National Socialist party was defeated in 1945, this national Kleingarten association of Germany, the "Reichsbund deutscher Kleingärtner" was broken up as well.

<sup>51</sup> Katsch and Walz 1996, p. 50. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>52</sup> Gartenfreunde, [www.gartenfreunde.de](http://www.gartenfreunde.de).

<sup>53</sup> Personal experience 2013.

used by low-income population. This shows that there is a will of the people to garden in the urban environment.

### **2.3.5 Action of banks**

Banks in the United States of America do not allow everyone to open a bank account nor do they give out mortgages or credit to anyone, but only to those, who can prove that they have an address<sup>54</sup>, have established a history of wages paid to their account and have proved that they are able to pay off their bills by spending only that what goes over the minimum funds needed for survival. The banks' handling of credit makes it difficult for low-income residents to obtain mortgages and even to rent apartments or deposit a paycheck<sup>55</sup>. In addition banks support the real estate market in pushing the land value of specific urban districts or putting down the value of land in others and consequently play an active part in the development of housing and open spaces as for example with "redlining"<sup>56</sup> the South Bronx in the 1970s. In New York City for example banks kept maps of urban low-income neighborhoods "(...)" in which there had been large number of foreclosures during the Great Depression, and which hence were presumably poor risks for future loans".<sup>57</sup> Thus members of low-income population were not able to improve their quality of life with the help of banks – through credits or indirectly through investments by landlords or businesses made in their neighborhoods.

Consequently the analysis of urban land use and interest groups in regard to action of banks in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that the urban low-income population' quality of life is reduced through the action of denying them bank accounts, credit or mortgages while banks are influencing the real estate market in their neighborhoods by pushing the land value of low income districts up or down and thus by playing an active role in the development of housing and open spaces. Therefore low-income residents of urban centers need to improve their own quality of life for example by privately using available public open space for gardens as in the case of the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

### **2.3.6 Action of landlords and tenants**

Low-income immigrants moving into the densely built-up and densely populated inner city often had to pay high rents for small apartments without access to open space. The access to open space for the low-income residents living in urban districts was far more restricted than that of wealthier urban residents, who lived more spacious homes with privately usable open spaces and accessible public open spaces nearby. In addition the more wealthy residents had the financial means to spend their weekends in the countryside for recreation, while the low-income residents remained in the inner city's density in lack of money and time to leave their neighborhoods. Still in urban low-income districts the demand for small apartments was increased so that public land was privatized. While the land value of private land in these districts increased public land became rare. The landowners' profit was extreme high and had to be paid by the tenants, so that tenants lived in minimum size apartments to reduce their rent. Land values and mortgages were rising with the increasing land speculation efforts. But since most of the stock market and building societies had just been founded to speculate, much of the urban open spaces remained un-built.<sup>58</sup> According to Martin Baumann in his book "Freiraumplanung in den Siedlungen der zwanziger Jahre am Beispiel der Planungen des Gartenarchitekten Leberecht Migge" of 2002, "that was made possible by the balance of political power, respectively an electoral system, which was biased and favored landowners".<sup>59</sup> To the urban low-income population this imbalance between the rent of an apartment and the ability of the tenants to make enough money to pay this rent created a great housing misery among the working class in the inner city. Municipalities as well as landlords did not consider providing affordable housing to low-income residents, i.e. social housing, in the inner city their responsibility nor was it in their interest to generally provide a

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<sup>54</sup> Personal experience 1999.

<sup>55</sup> Personal experience 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Linn 2007, p. 159.

<sup>57</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 300.

<sup>58</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 24. [translation C.M]

quality of life for low-income residents. Instead municipalities proposed in reaction to the misery in the tenement buildings the movement of urban low-income residents back to the countryside.

Consequently the analysis of the action of landlords and tenants in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that at the turn of the century urban low-income residents lived in small overpriced, unsanitary and densely populated apartments without access to open space while neither municipalities nor landlords did consider it their responsibility to provide affordable and adequate low-income housing in urban centers nor was it in their interest to provide quality of life to low-income residents. Thus urban low-income residents began to improve their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as about one hundred years later residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

### **2.3.7 Action of private businessmen and real estate market**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the expansion of urban centers progressed with the ongoing urbanization and industrialization without following any development plans, but wealthier urban residents as well as municipalities began to realize that they needed to deal with the increasing social conflict and with the low-income housing misery in the inner city. The reform of urban land usage was discussed during this time not only among intellectuals but also by private businessmen, who had become aware that it would be to their advantage when the housing situation of their workers that were part of the urban low-income class improved. Since also the land prices in the urban centers increased rapidly private businessmen and industrial entrepreneurs considered to move their industries to the countryside and to establish colonies of houses with gardens for their workers in the vicinity of the new location. Thus private businessmen and industrial entrepreneurs became involved at the end of the nineteenth in providing housing for the low-income population like for example in the realization of the garden city concept, because they were interested to improve the morale and health of their workers to increase their working power as well as to keep the wages low. With the establishment of regular work hours, the way leisure time after work in their gardens was spent became a main topic for private businessmen and for the low-income class it was an asset and a way to improve their quality of life to have access to a privately usable garden for recreation – even though private businessmen profited from the garden as a welfare measure. But with the ongoing urbanization and industrialization, urban centers expanded further and industries moved to location further away from the city, while urban low-income residents remained living in apartments without access to open space.

Consequently the analysis of the action of private businessmen and real estate market in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that private businessmen at the end of the nineteenth provided low-income housing with gardens next to their factories outside of the urban centers to improve with gardening the mental and physical health and provide welfare measurements to keep the welfare down. For the low-income resident living close to the factories outside of the city access to a private garden was an asset as recreation after work and a means to improve their quality of life, while low-income residents living urban centers still lacked access to privately usable open space.

### **2.3.8 Action of organizations**

At the turn of the nineteenth century the miserable housing conditions of the low-income inner city residents disturbed the social stability for the established, wealthier urban residents. Charity and professional organizations became aware of housing misery of the urban low-income population and became active to improve the quality of life for low-income residents in urban centers while maintain their own status quo. That means in context with the social restructuring non-profit and for-profit organizations were founded in order to protect interests of specific social groups and to pressure the economic and social politics in line with the interests of their members. The working class organized to push forward their interest as a group with the introduction of unions. In addition, political parties became involved in changing the way urban land was use to answer to social conflict. The Social Democratic Party was for example interested in changing the general economic and political situation as

well as the overall structure of the system. The working class movement, the Social Democratic Party as well as the unions helped workers to integrate. The Social Democratic Party introduced, for example, the consciousness to belong to the working class as well as for example in 1940 clubhouses<sup>60</sup> in the South Bronx became social centers in low-income neighborhoods while supporting the political interests of the party. That means a variety of organizations has become active to improve the quality of life of the working class since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the low-income housing continued to lack access to privately usable open space until the South Bronx residents began to start community gardens in the 1970s.

Consequently the analysis of the action of organizations in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that charity and professional organizations as well as unions and the social political party became active at the beginning of the nineteenth century to improve the housing and the quality of life of the urban low-income class. But since urban low-income housing continued to lack access to privately usable open space residents in the South Bronx started to create community gardens in the 1970s to improve their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens.

#### **2.4 Urban land use and land use organization**

In the following I will look at the context of urban land use and organizations by analyzing the aspects of urbanization as well as buildings and zoning. Then I will investigate the topic of location of open space at the hand of the garden city concept, with focus on examples in Germany and the United States of America, as well as the concept of "Das Neue Bauen". Subsequently I will elaborate on the aspect of change in location of open space and the context of neighborhood and location of open space.

##### **2.4.1 Urbanization and land use**

Due to the increase in population, the rapid expansion of the great cities, and at the same due to the time slow development of housing construction, there was a great housing crisis at the beginning of the industrial revolution. Still starting around 1840 the urban fabric became denser and denser in an uncontrolled process of construction. New parts were added to existing buildings and new dwellings were built on former gardens.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, since the 1840s, urban land became more and more scarce and open space more and more reduced. This process was often accelerated artificially by speculation. Little consideration was given by governments to how the large numbers of low-income residents should live and be housed. Consequently urban low-income housing developed arbitrarily and unsatisfactorily to the inhabitants. Since traditional architecture had no experience with the housing of masses of low-income residents in a highly dense situation and expanding urban environment, architects were unable to cope with the rapid urban evolution in an adequate amount of time. That means architects and builders at the time were not trained in designing new housing types in the existing urban context for people or in designing new settlements. While the needs of the new immigrants, of the urban residents of lower income, the workers and employees, in regard to satisfactory housing under financial and spatial restrictions were new and unknown, it became obvious to municipalities and builders that the re-organization of urban space was one of the most urgent problems during the urbanization.<sup>62</sup>

While urban apartments and suburban houses of the upper class remained at a high standard throughout the process of urbanization, the housing of the working class was of low standard from the beginning.<sup>63</sup> The inability to deal with the housing misery of the working class depended, and to a certain extent still depends, on the class system itself. Housing for the working class was designed and constructed by architects and builders most of the time as inexpensive as possible in regard to construction material while maxing out floor plans so that the landlord was able to rent out a maximum number of apartments. Consequently urban low-income residents lived in tenement buildings without access to privately usable open spaces

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<sup>60</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 45.

<sup>61</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 205.

<sup>62</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 206.

<sup>63</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 206.

and in apartments without light, air and ventilation. These desolate housing conditions for the low-income population came up, because construction was left to commercial investors, i.e. unregulated by official institutions. Consequently it was due to the economic-liberalistic attitude of the time that the housing crisis at the end of the nineteenth century became so pressing.

With the ongoing urbanization, the city was more and more overcrowding due to the incoming mass of immigrants, while life in the countryside had to become economically more compatible in order to stop the migration into the city. But the center of trade remained in the city, so that the working class population continued to move and concentrate in the inner city. The suburbs evolved to the enclaves of the wealthier middle class<sup>64</sup>, since it was attractive to live close to the city center, protected from its noise and hectic atmosphere, in affordable homes with appropriate standard of equipment as well as accessible and privately usable open space. At the same time the inner city became more seclusive with the ongoing suburban sprawl, since the long commute to work from the apartment at the periphery of the city and to cultural entertainment in the city in the evening was inconvenient to many residents. In general the miserable housing situation for the low-income population and working class was the most serious deficiency of the urban environment at the time.

As Thomas Logan states in his PhD thesis "The Invention of Zoning in Germany" of 1972 in regard to the working class housing, "All indications are that it was quantitatively inadequate, poorly designed, badly distributed, and that it violated any sense of continuity with family-life patterns of the recent past".<sup>65</sup> Sanitary conditions were miserable, but at least the cities in the "New World" had learned from successfully fighting the pest in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century, so that new immigrants had to undergo quarantine before they could enter the country. Thus mortality in the city was reduced and population increased like never before. In consequence of this development the question of the adequate food supply for the new masses arose.

In which way the masses of new immigrants should be housed was discussed contrary in the process of the urbanization and especially before and during the First World War. The housing situation in the urban centers was desolate and housing had to become more socially adequate, providing more accessible green open space and more spacious apartments. Especially the new class of urban low-income residents, the working class made up of former rural workers who were now working for the new industries, was hit by the housing shortage. Different interest groups like industrialists, reformists and charity groups came up with various ideas on how to alleviate the situation. Most of the concepts were concerned with moving the new class back out of the city for reasons like land prices, land use and sociability. The city was looked at as an inhumane and unnatural environment. The traditional way of living of agricultural produce and in nature was regarded as more healthy and adequate. New settlements were proposed and built in the periphery of the urban centers. There detached or attached one-family buildings with gardens were erected in an effort to provide a counterbalance to the overcrowded inner city tenements. In the urban centers many impoverished residents had begun to help themselves in their struggle of survival by creating Kleingartens at the periphery of the city. Some intellectuals conceived of this self-help effort as a concept and as a solution to the social crisis in the city. When at the end of the nineteenth century rural workers were migrating from the countryside to the great cities in search for work, various cities were competing in attracting the immigrants, since increased demand for living in an urban environment triggered an increase in the value of a city's land. The way urban land was used became consequently increasingly a major issue to politicians looking to increase tax revenue.

Consequently the analysis of the urbanization in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that at the turn of the nineteenth century new urban low-income population lived in tenement buildings without access to privately usable open spaces and in apartments without light, air and ventilation, because urban centers developed arbitrarily without regulation by

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<sup>64</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 381.

<sup>65</sup> Logan 1972, p. 41.

governments in regard to the quality of life of the low-income population, but urban development was left to the interests of private investors. Therefore low-income residents improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens, as it was the case also in the 1970s in the South Bronx, when residents' groups began to create community gardens in the South Bronx.

#### **2.4.2 Buildings and zoning**

Due to the new working class moving in the cities, new housing was needed immediately. But since it took time to build more housing, the first consequence was a great housing shortage and great crowdedness in the existing dwellings. The living conditions in the new cities were not only expensive, but also characterized by high mortality, epidemics as well as mental and physical degeneration. In England around 1830 and two decades later in France and Germany, the industrial revolution evoked structural and social changes that created an erratic expansion of the industrial cities and therewith the specific problematic of city planning. Even though new types of dwellings were developed, in the middle of the nineteenth century the five-story tenement house with a maximum of built-up space and a minimum of open space on the property lot was and a lot of time still is the typical urban residence.

In many cities the building block and not the individual house became the building time that determines the urban landscape. But in England, the urban workers remained to live in one-family row houses, which were built in the so-called "back-to-back" way that got rid off the backyard with garden and therefore left the buildings with rooms without windows in the rear and residents without access to privately usable open space. At the same time in the periphery of the city industrial suburbs were created. For example in 1840 workers erected houses for themselves in the English industrial suburb Hyde, which were more spacious and substantial than the houses the developers had constructed and had garden spaces.<sup>66</sup> For example in Edinburgh since 1763 the city government was determined to regulate the housing situation, so that the worst mistakes of other English industrial cities could be avoided.<sup>67</sup> Even though out of this effort was little conclusion drawn to find a standard for the working class dwelling, it proves that the speculation of developers in the following years was not the only way to avoid the creation of desolate tenement housing districts.

The movement to reform housing in the expanding cities started in the 1840s with the implementation of regulations by the government. Philanthropic societies and private entrepreneurs were also interested to redesign the dwellings of the working class including aspects of enclosed spaces and open spaces. The interests in solving the housing misery were of humane, economic and political nature. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a debate going on about the regulation of urban sprawl and the housing of the masses of immigrants coming into the cities. Scientific research about the situation of the city increased and for example specific demands in regard to the sanitary and hygienic standards of apartments were formulated. These efforts terminated later in the establishment of new laws and regulations regarding the social situation in the cities, which increased leisure time and the health of the population considerably. In addition new building laws were established and the city district were divided in zones of different uses in order to control the living together of the great mass of people.

A variety of authors reflect on aspects of the earlier mentioned discussions, which stands context with community garden development in the South Bronx. Martin Baumann states for example in his book "Freiraumplanung in den Siedlungen der zwanziger Jahre am Beispiel der Planungen des Gartenarchitekten Leberecht Migge" of 2002 that the difficulties of city planning and housing development can be clearly presented at the situation of the densely constructed tenement buildings of the city. In the process of industrialization, economy and society changes structurally and agricultural nations were transformed into industrial nation.<sup>68</sup> The precondition as well as the consequence of the industrial revolution was technical development as well as a rapid rise in population, which made on the one hand cheap laborers available for the industry and at the same time difficulties in the provision food supply

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<sup>66</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 209.

<sup>67</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 210.

<sup>68</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 21.

came up.<sup>69</sup> In addition the demand for affordable housing in the city centers increased; "(...)" an emergency situation, which was intensified by the context with speculation, exorbitant rents and a profiting social and economical system.<sup>70</sup> The demand for small apartments was increased. Municipally owned land was rare. The landowners' profit was extreme high and had to be paid for by the great number of tenants. Land values and mortgages were rising with speculation increasing. Since most of the stock and building societies had merely been founded to speculate, most of the land remained vacant.<sup>71</sup>

In Germany for example during Republic of Weimar, this was made possible according to Baumann "(...)" by the balance of political power, respectively an electoral system, which was biased and favored landowners".<sup>72</sup> The undesirable development in city planning and housing development during the nineteenth century resulted in new settlement concepts and the development of open space planning for settlements during the Republic of Weimar.<sup>73</sup> In Berlin, according to Baumann, for example the master plan by James Hobrecht of 1863 had especially drastic effects on Berlin, because the plan only "(...)" specified the layout of the public space, i.e. the areas that were to be kept free from construction, and (said) nothing about land use, the scale and the form of construction".<sup>74</sup> That means the plan of Hobrecht did not restrict private economy, but fostered uninhibited speculation, without taking public welfare into consideration.<sup>75</sup> Thus the low-income working class families had the option to live in tenement houses or alternatively in company dwellings under paternalistic circumstances.<sup>76</sup> At about the same time, private businessmen started socially oriented initiatives, like the construction of company buildings, in order to counter the looming revolution created by the social problems and to appease the labor movement. These company towns were laid out with houses with gardens, according to Baumann, in order to paternalistically discipline and educate the workers and their families to a moralistic and healthy lifestyle. But the primary interest of the industry in company housing was to attract workers and to house them in the first case. In addition for example the German industrialist Alfred Krupp "(...)" regarded the garden and the interrelated self-sufficiency of the workers as a justification and a reason at the same time to economize on the wages".<sup>77</sup>

The brothers Kampffmeyer, co-founders of the German garden city movement, were as Baumann explains - even though they were members of the middle class - interested to go against the social misery. He states, "(...)" Especially the followers of the garden city were typical for the ambivalent attitude in the reformistic oriented bourgeoisie, which on the one hand wanted to reach the improvement living conditions, also for members of the low-income class, on the other hand did not want to do without their privileges in favor of the other classes".<sup>78</sup> He continues, "(...)" Members of the bourgeoisie were the beneficiaries of the reforms by the garden city movement".<sup>79</sup> Baumann argues, "In the last third of the nineteenth century, based on the reformistic concepts, city planning was constituted as an independent discipline".<sup>80</sup> To illustrate this development, he discusses several of the intellectual approaches of the turn of the nineteenth century towards dealing with the socio-economic and urban development changes of their time. Baumann explains that "while Reinhard Baumeister, Camillo Sitte, CorneliusGurlitt and Josef Stübben regarded city planning as a sanitary problem, Sittes 'City planning according to its artistic principles; was ground-breaking for a new artistic model of city planning, developed leading architects, hygienists, municipal clerks and engineers, like for example duchess Dohna-Poninski [Arminius], Werner Hegemann and Ebenezer Howard, concepts for the reorganization of cities and therefore for

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<sup>69</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 21.

<sup>70</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 22. [translation C.M.]

<sup>71</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 24.

<sup>73</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 25. [translation C.M.]

<sup>75</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 25.

<sup>76</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 27.

<sup>77</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 36. [translation C.M.]

<sup>79</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 36

<sup>80</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 36

the elimination of defects in urban planning”.<sup>81</sup> He concludes, “To the city planners who regarded modern urban development only as a technical problem, social motivation was only secondary. In reality their reformistic efforts were aimed on the middle and not the low-income class, because the profitability of housing development was to remain guaranteed”.<sup>82</sup>

Reinhard Baumeister in his function as a council in city planning and a professor at the Technical University in Karlsruhe, Germany, was also involved in the ongoing debate in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century about the establishment of a building ordinance and the housing question in general. In his seminars at the Technical University of Berlin he analyzed the historic development of the housing question, the building ordinance in general, aspects of density and land value, possibilities of establishing zones of different densities and of ways to plan the expansion of the cities. In the book “Städtebauliche Vorträge” of 1911 Reinhard Baumeister discusses the contemporary housing situation in Germany in regard to the necessity to plan the expansion of the cities in order to accommodate the increasing number of urban residents. The lack of small and affordable apartments, increasing rents, the unhealthiness of overcrowding, lack of air, sun and light are in his opinion caused by the densification of the inner city’s districts. The decline in moral and social tensions occurring in the low-income tenement houses is for Baumeister an additional reason for action. He is concerned about “the impossibility of a one-family building, the insecurity and continued change of accommodation that does not create a stable basis for family life, that does not provide for joyful interest in maintenance and decoration of the apartment, nor for space to play and recreate outside, that leaves the flight on the street and in the bar”.<sup>83</sup> Baumeister is convinced that as a consequence of these circumstances, “happiness at home, the love of the homeland and national pride will die out”.<sup>84</sup> Thus to him the improvement of the housing situation is “the most important external basis for all social and moral reforms”.<sup>85</sup>

Baumeister points out that at the turn of the nineteenth century urbanization called for the new demand of city planning, created by the new industries, transportation systems, the separation of home and work, the alteration of urban centers to commercial rather than residential districts superimposed to him a new situation on all levels of society. There was a lack of experience in regard to how the government and administrative officials should handle the new phenomenon of the mass occurring in every aspect of the urban environment. Until the 1870s the prevailing economical perspective was, according to Baumeister, the main reason for the deterioration of the housing situation.<sup>86</sup> The common belief was that the real estate market would stabilize itself according to the self-fulfilling capitalist principle of supply and demand that would only be interfered by actions of public authorities. The lack of housing would consequently be regulated by more building activity and in case too much housing would lay vacant, apartments would be adapted to the tenants’ needs and preferences without police force.

The laissez-faire attitude of the federal government as well as the municipalities permitted private interests to thrive without taking the welfare of the future residents into consideration. Speculation with buildings needs more knowledge and is more risky than the speculation with land, so that the later was favored. Baumeister explains that in contrast to this liberal attitude city planning needs to be concerned to curb private interests by law in order to be able to protect the public interest. He demands that the land around an urban center should in this context be used for affordable and healthy apartments accessible to all members of society. This would prevent in his opinion that land would be extensively used and speculated with, so that a few would increase their profit on the costs of society in general.<sup>87</sup> Even though charity and professional organizations became active at the beginning of the twentieth century to alleviate the housing misery of the working class, the previous laissez faire method prevented in Baumeister’s opinion that needs could be met completely and directly.

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<sup>81</sup> Baumann 2002, pp. 36-37.

<sup>82</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 37.

<sup>83</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 6. [translation C.M.]

<sup>84</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 6. [translation C.M.]

<sup>85</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 6. [translation C.M.]

<sup>86</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 7. [translation C.M.]

<sup>87</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 8. [translation C.M.]

Baumeister is convinced that the building ordinance deals with providing for the livability of the population, so that its main directive should be in his opinion to provide in regard to housing the same right for every member of society.<sup>88</sup> He states that the "(...) value of life and property is to be valued the same for all classes"<sup>89</sup>, so that it would be wrong to decrease housing standards in order to make apartments more affordable. He demands that housing for low-income residents should instead follow building standards more rigidly, because of the greater intensity of usage by a greater number of inhabitants. The building ordinance can according to Baumeister not make a difference between multi-family housing and one-family housing laws. Instead it needs to provide a system of regulation that in which all building types are addressed appropriately, so that "small apartments will receive directly those alleviations that correspond to their nature".<sup>90</sup> This should apply to enclosed as well as open privately used spaces and leads to the conclusion of including privately accessible garden spaces in building ordinances. In addition Baumeister demands that the accessibility of light and ventilation is not connected to the income of the residents but needs to be realized according to simple rigid numbers. He is convinced that differences in the treatment of rural and urban environments as well as between commercial and residential districts are especially favored by differences in land values.

Based on the building ordinance of Baumeister, in 1916 New York City enacted the first zoning ordinance of the United States. Baumeister was, according to Baumann, a conservative reformer, who "(...) demanded that the city became more involved in providing green open spaces, because 'the favorable influence of such facilities has been proven long ago, (...) Therefore the purposeful design of spaces for recreation has to be acknowledged for urban development as a need of body and mind, barely following the housing question'.<sup>91</sup> He proposed to simply place the green and open spaces, which were lacking in the center of city, in the periphery, to keep suitable land there free of construction. "His proposal, to completely eliminate rivers in the urban environment in order to gain 'profitable land for construction', makes clear how little Baumeister has been interested to improve the open space situation of the inner city".<sup>92</sup> Baumeister was in addition more interested in maximizing income return through securing potential rent income than to look after the needs of the tenants – even the demand for sanitary and health improvements was a result of his economic calculation.<sup>93</sup>

Leonardo Benevolo discusses in his book "Die sozialen Ursprünge des modernen Städtebaus. Lehren von gestern - Forderungen für morgen" of 1971, the thesis that city planning is reacting to developments that it supposed to be regulating. His focus is to define the connection of city planning and politics, the planning of urban space and socio-economic conditions by analyzing the changes in politics occurring from 1830 to 1850 while especially looking at the crisis of 1848 in Europe. To him it is necessary to analyze the beginning of city planning in the industrial environment in order to understand its delay that existed from the beginning on.<sup>94</sup> To find a control system effective to restructure the expanding urban environment, one had according to Benevolo to deal with the difficulty was determined by the task to get a picture of how severe the situation was in all aspects as well how it affected society. Benevolo explains that the economic and social changes in the first half of the nineteenth century had caused tensions that were due to the changes in the political theory and public opinion taken as a challenge.<sup>95</sup> In reaction to the defects of the new industrial city there was to him on the one side the utopians proposing concepts to start a new urban environment with humane conditions of living. On the other side there was the effort of professionals and administrative officials to solve each of the problems occurring in the industrial city singularly. This last approach overlooked the interconnection of the occurrences and did not propose a general conception for a new city. Benevolo agrees that the efforts of

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<sup>88</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 9. [translation C.M.]

<sup>89</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 9. [translation C.M.]

<sup>90</sup> Baumeister 1911, p. 9. [translation C.M.]

<sup>91</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 38.

<sup>92</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 39.

<sup>93</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 62.

<sup>94</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 9.

<sup>95</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 9.

improving hygiene and creating new institutions established the basis for the modern building law.

At the same time these initiatives dealing with the new urban environment created by the industrial revolution took place, the beginning of the modern socialism happened. Therefore, Benevolo concludes, many of these are ideologically motivated and based. But this connection between socialism and experiments in city planning terminates in 1848, when the working class organized itself consciously in contrast to the middle class.<sup>96</sup> Benevolo was looking at Marx and Engels, who according to him had influence on the working class movement, but the Marxist socialism interrupted according to Benevolo the connection between city planning and political demands abruptly in the effort to explain the revolution of 1848 and its breakdown only in political terms. Nevertheless Marx was able according to Benevolo to explain the contradictions in the previous movements.<sup>97</sup> Political theory after Marx and Engels underestimated in Benevolo's opinion city-planning concepts, because it longed to integrate partial reforms into a general reform of society.<sup>98</sup> City planning was according to him replaced by the political discussion and becomes more and more "(...) a mere technique in the service of the dominant class".<sup>99</sup> Consequently city planning did not become politically neutral but influenced by new conservative ideologies that express themselves in the urban concepts after 1848.

It is Benevolo's conviction that "the demands of the modern science of city planning can only be realized, if it stands again in contact with those political powers, which are directed to the corresponding transformation of society as a whole".<sup>100</sup> That means that city planning needs according to Benevolo to be included into a political program right away. Benevolo states in regard to the relation of city planning and politics that, "in order to achieve a better distribution of human activities in a certain area, their economic and social preconditions need to be reformed. But the alteration of economic and social relations does not automatically produce useful types of settlement".<sup>101</sup> He is convinced that the planning of settlements is interconnected with " (...) a complex of measures, which helps to create the general balance that the political action is directed towards".<sup>102</sup> Benevolo agrees to be congruent with the English industrialist Robert Owen's<sup>103</sup> opinion that city planning needs to be set "in context with a system, which does not interfere with progress, to find for every worker a useful activity/ occupation".<sup>104</sup> Benevolo states that while new infrastructures such as railroads and canals became speculative objects, land prices increased and the former uses became threatened in their existence. At the same time political science and the economy of the country were more interested in the decay of traditional structures than with the question of how to deal with the new situation. According to Benevolo, it was up to political reformers to argue against the social hierarchy and the way economy was directed. While they were examining means to protect citizens from attacks by the authorities, they did not consider a reorganization of the state. Their theories were concerned with general political and constitutional problems, neglecting the question of organization as a problem of its own.<sup>105</sup> Benevolo states, "All difficulties connected with the survival of traditional structures were supported by theories, which restricted public interference in this area".<sup>106</sup>

The unorganized urban development is in Benevolo opinion due to the liberalism in England and the United States at the end of the eighteenth century that got rid of laws and many restrictions based on common law in regard to the expansion of the cities. Consequently, he argues, there was no regard to planning aspects in order to control the development of the urban and rural environment. Governments and public opinion were influenced by the opinion

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<sup>96</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 10.

<sup>99</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 10. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>100</sup> Benevolo 1971, pp. 10-11. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>101</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 11. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>102</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 11. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>103</sup> Robert Owen (1771 - 1858)

<sup>104</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 11. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>105</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 22.

<sup>106</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 22. [translation, C.M.]

of these political reformers during this time so that they did not intervene or even think about what was going on. City planning was to be done with a "laissez faire" attitude. Benevolo states, for example, "(...) Adam Smith advises the governments to get rid of the public domain in order to pay their debts".<sup>107</sup>

The organization of urban sprawl during the beginning of the eighteenth century was in Benevolo's opinion more advanced. He states, "Some of the new settlements of the baroque time, especially a few of the residential cities at the beginning of the eighteenth century, anticipated convincingly the spaciousness of modern cities".<sup>108</sup> Benevolo continues later in the text, "(...) Baroque cities were not affected by the changes, which in later years determined the appearance of the new urban environments significantly".<sup>109</sup> Benevolo explains that before the industrialization, cities altered as slowly as the social and political structures, so that they could be regarded as unchanging at any time. "With the layout of a new public place, the construction of a new district or of an entire new city, every time an exact architectural concept was realized, which included enough space for the predicted future development without the necessity to introduce alterations".<sup>110</sup> But the cities' development changed rapidly after the industrial revolution and the prediction of their future development became more and more difficult. In addition liberalism undermined the trust in the authorities power that is necessary for a quick realization of city planning aspects.<sup>111</sup> Only when the housing situation of the working class in the great new cities became more and more severe and the hygienic situation of their living districts threatened the entire city, it became according to Benevolo clear that a new form of city planning had become necessary that "(...) stood in no context to the way it was done previously".<sup>112</sup>

Since the expansion of the urban environments was lacking control, nuisances in regard to the housing situation were created. The masses of immigrants were crowded into the existing structures or in new tenement buildings erected in new districts surrounding the former urban centers. Speculators were the ones interested in speeding up the urban development. The competition between investors was negatively affecting the standards of the apartments, as well the amount of the wages.<sup>113</sup> Rents were set at the maximum a working class family could afford and still barely survive. Consequently a profit could only be made when the costs of construction were at a minimum. That means the standard of the newly built apartments was very low. Since most of the residents of the tenement buildings came from a rural background they were used to minor living standards in regard to building materials or lack of sanitary equipment. The crowdedness of the small apartments and the great density of the buildings in the low-income working class family districts of the new industrial cities imposed new conflicts. The masses were forced to live in a new environment that - because of the great mass of buildings - left very little open space for individual adaptation. Consequently the attitude of the tenants living in the city's apartment buildings towards their environment was new as well.<sup>114</sup>

Consequently the analysis of buildings and zoning in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that the low-income housing situation was discussed by various writers at a variety of topics ranging from the discussion of rural-urban conflict to the discussion of sociology with the objective to develop adequate housing in regard to enclosed and open spaces for the low-income population. Municipalities were accused of merely reacting instead of regulating the urban development. Thus in 1911 the German writer Reinhard Baumeister for example proposed the enactment of building ordinance to ensure adequate housing of all of the urban population, i.e. including the low-income population which had been creating privately used grouped gardens called Kleingartens at the time already in the periphery of German city centers. Since this discussion did not lead to the provision of privately open spaces next to

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<sup>107</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 22. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>108</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 22. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>109</sup> Benevolo 1971, pp. 23-24. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>110</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 24. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>111</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 24.

<sup>112</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 25. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>113</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 34. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>114</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 35. [translation, C.M.]

low-income housing in the inner city, low-income residents improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

### 2.4.3 Location of open space

Due to the industrialization and improvement in science and sanitary, the global population was increasing rapidly during the nineteenth century. At the same time the population was re-distributed between rural and urban environments and the relation between countryside and city became imbalanced when many rural workers moved to the expanding urban centers. While for example in England at the turn of the eighteenth century villages were surrounded by open space that was usable by everybody, the so-called "common"<sup>115</sup>, with the ongoing urbanization and privatization of the commons, the provision of access to open space for low-income residents became more and more a topic of concern to intellectuals and municipalities.

Several authors at the turn of the nineteenth century regarded the housing situation as the most pressing crisis of the cities, but did not go so far as to consider enclosed and open spaces of settlements and apartments at the same time. The common denominator of intellectuals, even though problems of the working class were discussed contradictory, was to improve social housing conditions in the inner city. One group of intellectuals demanded the creation of new settlements with houses and gardens outside of the existing urban center, i.e. they were advocating the satellite and garden city. These garden city advocates wanted to provide each individual family with a house and garden of their own, which could be used and designed according to their own preferences. On the other hand another group of intellectuals and social housing planners wanted to create common accessible open space, used by all residents of a new tenement building or the community according to the functions laid out.

The countess Adelheid Dohna-Poninski wrote for example in 1874 under the pseudonym Arminius the book „Die Großstädte in ihrer Wohnungsnoth und die Grundlage einer durchgreifenden Abhilfe“. She was one of the first of the more moderate reform liberal and a classic economic liberalist of the 1880s and 1890s. "The duchess Dohna-Poninski presented one of the first basic papers about public open spaces in a great city and defined, out of a Christian, social self-conception, the sufficient provision with public green open space as a basic need of human beings".<sup>116</sup> In her book she conceptualizes the model of a wide greenbelt, which encompassed the city, which restricted the expansion of the city and which at the same time compensated the miserable housing conditions by providing an optimum of green open spaces.<sup>117</sup> She adds that these green open areas were to be used by all social classes for recreation – a social aspect that that was rather new to city planning at this time.<sup>118</sup> Dohna-Poninski is more interested in improving the existing urban lifestyle by adding regulations and more accessible green open space, while Migge envisioned the return to the rural lifestyle in a new urban settlement. Consequently to Dohna-Poninski the lack of accessible green open space and the overcrowding of the tenement houses in the inner city made new settlements necessary. She wants to improve the inner city by reducing its population, by introducing regulations and by providing improved housing with gardens next to a new factory outside of the city. She is concerned about providing what was missing in her opinion in the inner city housing situation of the working class by adding a garden to the apartments in the existing tenement buildings.

Dohna-Poninski is generally reflecting on the housing situation of the working class in the 1870s. She discusses the fact that the masses are stuck in the housing of the rapidly expanding great cities of the time, describing the desolate housing situation of the masses while objecting to the small, overcrowded accommodations of the working class of the time. In this regard she reflected on Berlin's Hobrecht plan of 1862, which did not regulate land use, scale or form of buildings thus not restricting private real estate endeavors and called for

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<sup>115</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 14. [translation, C.M.]

<sup>116</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 37.

<sup>117</sup> Baumann 2002, pp. 37-38.

<sup>118</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 38.

courtyards that allowed minimal space for fire fighters to do their work.<sup>119</sup> The building ordinance of Berlin was mainly concerned with fire safety issues, but neglected aspects of hygiene and culture. When in 1887 the required area of open space on a parcel of land was increased, property owners and the press, which was closely watching their interests, rejected the new ordinance as an attack against property rights that would slow down development and increase building costs.

A development plan for the rapidly expanding city of Berlin was proposed at the turn of the century, in order to plan the future urban development according to artistic and technical aspects as well as to protect large areas of land as open space, i.e. from development.<sup>120</sup> The State was asked to establish a department for urban expansion in Berlin, in order to act against the private economics of land-use monopolies. It was also proposed to control rents and speculation. The Hobrecht Plan, in contrast to the plan of Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann<sup>121</sup> for Paris (1853-1870) did not change existing street layouts nor got it rid of existing villages. It laid out the streets for future urban development, included about equally sized building, distributor roads connecting to main radial roads and regular open spaces and public squares.<sup>122</sup>

What is lacking in the new urban development the most, according to Dohna-Poninski, is the provision of apartments for all workers as well as an accessible green open space for recreation for all urban residents. She makes the observation that, at the time of her writing, "(...) in the inner city one garden after the other disappears and the ocean made of stones become more compact".<sup>123</sup> She suggests restricting the expansion of the urban environment, since it was, according to her, necessary for the municipality to reserve and to exclude land for green open space for gardens and public places from construction. Dohna-Poninski explains that open spaces needed to be preserved within the inner city, in order to not only provide for light and air, but also to provide necessary green accessible areas. She was convinced that every resident needed to be able to access an open space from his or her apartment within half an hour walking distance, which is according to her equal to the distance of a quarter of a mile. But, as she explains, especially the great cities had expanded too far, so that not every urban resident was able to resident to reach the green periphery within the reasonable amount of time.<sup>124</sup>

Dohna-Poninski is of the opinion that it is equally important for the middle-class to have access to recreational green space after work as for the working class, but assumed that the classes prefer to remain separated. She explains that it was more difficult for the working class to access open space than for the upper class, whose member can afford a second dwelling outside of the city. The public parks and promenades need according to Dohna-Pohninski to be accessible to all urban residents, but were usually situated adjacent to housing of the middle class, since apartments next to parks were in high demand, so that rents for these apartments would be raised by landlords so that the working class would be priced out.

Next to these public green spaces in the inner city, families of the middle class living in the urban centers could afford to take a ride out of the city and spend their leisure time in gardens, fields and forests at the periphery of the city. There they had access not only to public, but also, in the same way as the upper class, to private green open space when going in their private house gardens or by renting land and a garden hut in the utilitarian garden

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<sup>119</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 102.

<sup>121</sup> The French Revolution emancipated the middle class, but the urban society continued to be organized in the class system. Baron Hausmann, in his anti-revolutionary politic after the suppression of the revolution of 1848, completely re-designed the city of Paris by pushing the impoverished and working-class out of the inner city to the periphery. The working class was relocated to the middle class of Paris and to the edge of society through Baron Hausmann's re-structuring efforts for the middle class. This principle of segregation and of an ideological fragmentation of the city's center changed also the way the employer looked at their new workers colonies outside of the city.

<sup>122</sup> Strohmeyer 2000.

<sup>123</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 86. [translation C.M.]

<sup>124</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 40.

establishments. Lacking was equal opportunities for the more affluent working class families. Dohna-Poninski is convinced that it was especially necessary for industrial workers to spend their leisure time outside in nature, in order to recuperate the strength of mind and body. Thus she calls for the creation of additional small, rentable as well as private gardens for more affluent working class families in a green belt at the fringe of the city. She proposes that these small, rentable as well as private gardens that would be grouped in a way so that little land would be needed to access a single garden lot and less funds would be needed for fencing material for each garden. In order to allow quicker access for the working class to the periphery and therefore a quicker connection of the home, the work place and also of a place to spend their leisure time, Dohna-Poninski demands to improve the provision of horse-drawn rail wagons. With the help of a rail system, the location of gardens in a green belt around the city would be made accessible to the working class as well.

The initiation for improving the housing of the working class needed in Dohna-Poninski's opinion to come from charitable societies or of charitable cooperatives. She mentioned in this regard the responsible work of charities which helped the, in her opinion, helpless workers - because as a countess Dohna-Poninski belonged probably to a charity group herself. Since, as Dohna-Poninski points out, the improvement of the housing of the working class was a fundamental prerequisite for the development of a great city and in her opinion the apartments of the working class were not adequate in standard, location and grouping to the needs of the inhabitants, she demands the regulation of the construction standards of housing for the working class by law. But not only basic standards of design need in her opinion to be established by law, but in addition the city has to be planned and re-organized thoroughly. Consequently Dohna-Poninski calls for the establishment of urban development plans by the municipalities, which would deal with the housing needs of the masses. Since these urban development plans would have to be followed by landlords and developers of extensive areas of urban land, they offered the possibility of controlling and restricting speculation. Based on the new urban development plans the arrangement of working class dwellings could, according to Dohna-Poninski, be organized and the missing great number of small size accommodations of adequate standard could be provided. Dohna-Poninski rejects the isolation of the urban working class in apartments in certain districts of the inner city. Instead she demands the creation of new settlements at the periphery. These new company towns were again to be connected to the existing urban center by the horse carriages in order to provide for accessibility.<sup>125</sup> The creation of new peripheral settlements would in her opinion set off the improvement of the housing situation in the inner city, because the overcrowding in the inner city would become less severe when the residents moved out. At the same time the availability of apartments in the urban center would increase, rents would decrease and the landlords would be forced to enhance the standards of their buildings. Dohna-Poninski understands that a great part of the working class would remain settled in the inner city, since there was such a great mass of workers and only a small part of them would be able to move in a new company town. Therefore, even though new settlements would be built in the periphery, the urban centers would need to be improved.

Dohna-Poninski is convinced that it would be efficient for entrepreneurs to establish new factories outside of the city where land values were lower than in the inner city. There the industrialists would have the possibility to bind workers more tightly to their factories. In addition she proposed the creation company towns with small dwellings and gardens, since settlements in the vicinity of the new factories would allow working class families to live outside of the inner city in accordance with their jobs and with access to recreation. She recommends that the houses and gardens should be rented to the workers in the beginning, but to give them the opportunity to eventually buy the enclosed and open spaces they used. Even though this is a proposition that would most likely only be affordable to only a few affluent workers, she sees it as a possibility that more workers could take advantage of over time. According to her, the new settlement outside of the cities, equipped with housing, garden parcels and utilitarian gardening areas, would allow the workers to form groups and make it easier for them to receive support through charitable clubs as well as by one another.

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<sup>125</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 51.

In addition Dohna-Poninski is of the opinion that the needs of the workers and the industrialists were interconnected and thus responsible for the location of the new settlements as well as the expression of the layout of buildings within the new company towns. The location of the new settlements in the urban periphery depends according to Dohna-Poninski on the adjacent city as well as on the affordability of its peripheral land. The ability of the workers to pay for the land they intended to live on within a new company town are subject to the income of the new residents and thus also on the wages the owner of the factory was willing to pay. In general the location of a company town outside of the city would make land already less expensive land for construction, so that more working class families could be provided with houses and garden lots of their own.<sup>126</sup> An additional benefit of locating the housing the working class in company towns outside of the inner city is according to Dohna-Poninski not only the possibility to freely group dwellings and the provision of houses with garden, but also the chance to distribute the rooms inside of the more spacious dwellings according to the individual needs of the families.

Dohna-Poninski understands it as a natural right of human beings to live in a natural surrounding and therefore to be able to recreate in an open green space after work. Consequently she demands to establish gardens not only adjacent to the housing of urban residents, who owned their home, but also to create garden parcels for tenants of apartment buildings.<sup>127</sup> If a location allows it, the design of new tenement buildings with small apartment need in the opinion of Dohna-Poninski, to include garden parcels that were cultivated by the tenants of the building.<sup>128</sup> She proposes that the minimum area gardening land linked to an apartment should be 12 acres<sup>129</sup>. In addition garden huts in utilitarian gardening corporations should to be made accessible to inner city tenants, in the case that there was no accessible open space for gardens available next to tenement buildings.<sup>130</sup> If there is no open space available next to the tenement building, gardens should in her opinion be made available in the urban periphery within a green belt of gardens, fields and forests and some dispersed commonly used public buildings surrounding the compact inner city district. These gardens should be made accessible to all urban residents by horse-carriage in a reasonable amount of time. Dohna-Poninski is interested to introduce a public after-work garden with garden parcels for the collective use of families. She regards it as a necessity that each urban district was provided with such a public after-work garden, since every worker living in a tenement building in the inner city needed to be able to access a garden within an half an hour walking distance from his or her apartment. She envisions that this public after-work garden to be laid out with seating places with tables shaded by trees, for lawns, playgrounds and covered walkways.

Another example of an author involved in the urban and open space planning discussion at the end of the nineteenth is the American writer Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903) century who proposed in his writings on “Civilizing American Cities” that it was necessary to provide access to natural open space and sunlight in order to cope with the urban density. He states, “Opportunity and inducement to escape at frequent intervals from the confined and vitiated air of the commercial quarter, and to supply the lungs with air screened and purified by trees, and recently acted upon by sunlight, together with opportunity and inducement to escape from conditions requiring vigilance, wariness, and activity toward other men, - if these could be supplied economically, our problem would be solved”.<sup>131</sup> In other words, Olmsted wants to provide recreation and fresh air for the masses and not only for the few, who owned land and who were most of the time acting only out of individual interest. Consequently he saw it as a necessity to deal with the social question.

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<sup>126</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 53.

<sup>127</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 53.

<sup>128</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 29.

<sup>129</sup> Dohna-Poninski linked the garden lot not to the number of persons cultivating it, but to the apartment they lived in, since she saw the need that the garden was a part of the tenement building. According to her the minimum area of a garden parcel was 12.4 acres (5 hectare) per apartment. (Arminius 1874, p. 29)

<sup>130</sup> Arminius 1874, p. 151.

<sup>131</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 70.

It is Olmsted's objective to provide the urban residents with a space for recreation in a green surrounding. He defined the term "recreation" as an activity by dividing it into two categories: One type of recreation was according to Olmsted the "exertive recreation" that stimulates and exercised any part of the body. The other type of recreation he called the "receptive recreation" that involves music and the fine arts on the other. According to Olmsted, in order to provide for these two types of recreation different designed spaces are needed to accommodate the various uses. For receptive recreation spaces, Olmsted calls for the provision of small open spaces in the expanding city that are reachable by a short walk from every house throughout the city are more desirable than one large area. He proposes to interconnect these small local spaces by boulevards or trunk roads to create a network of open space throughout the city.<sup>132</sup> To Olmsted the creation of small open spaces for recreation allows small number of people to come together in convenient circumstances, so that communication happens and eventually personal friendships can happen. Olmsted defines "neighborly receptive recreation" as recreation in small open places that are connected into a network throughout the city.<sup>133</sup> The opponent to this neighborly recreation is, according to Olmsted, recreation in form of large assemblies which is filled with less intellectual satisfaction, but based on a common purpose. This type of recreation Olmsted calls "gregarious recreation" or "sociable recreation". Thus Olmsted's objective is the publication of small open places for neighborly, receptive recreation for the expanding city of his time. Olmsted describes the conditions predominant in the city of his time as counteractive to neighborly, receptive recreational behavior, so that according to him, degeneration and demoralization will prevail in the urban environment.

Camillo Sitte was for example one of the intellectual proponents of providing open spaces for the masses of new low-income residents. In the fourth edition of Camillo Sitte's book "City planning after its artistic principles" of 1889 Sitte demands according to Baumann "(...) out of health considerations, but also for a fantastic improvement of morale through the refreshment of disperse natural images (...) wide open vented spaces".<sup>134</sup> Sitte calls for the organization of the open spaces according to their usability, location and size. As Baumann explains, "Sitte introduced new categories for urban green spaces: He differentiated according to aspects like usability, location and size of a green open space, 'sanitary' and 'decorative' green and anticipated thereby the main features for the evaluation of green spaces (...)".<sup>135</sup> In addition Sitte is concerned with the design and functional concept the inner courtyards of tenement buildings.<sup>136</sup> To Sitte "(...) sanitary green does not belong in between the dust and noise of the streets, but in the protected interior of large block encircled by buildings".<sup>137</sup> For the interior of building blocks, Sitte proposes the placement of public gardens and playgrounds, playing fields and bicycle tracks, ice-skating rings and commercial usages with marketplaces or conveyance agencies.<sup>138</sup>

#### **2.4.3.1 The garden city concept**

The garden city concept was another example for working class housing. The green belt concept that Arminius had put out encouraged only a few years later Theodor Fritsch and then Ebenezer Howard to publish the concept of the Garden City. "In 1896, Theodor Fritsch and two years later Ebenezer Howard seized Arminius' concept of a city with encompassing green belts".<sup>139</sup> That means Theodor Fritsch developed the garden city concept in Germany in 1896 with his book "Die Stadt der Zukunft" that subtitled "Gartenstadt" in the second edition of 1912. Two years after Fritsch in 1898 Ebenezer Howard published in England the book "Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform", reprinted 1902 under the title "Garden Cities of Tomorrow".

Throughout Europe as well as in the United States several authors discussed the garden city model and developed some variations. The garden city idea was adapted throughout Europe

<sup>132</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 74.

<sup>133</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 76.

<sup>134</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 45. [translation C.M.]

<sup>135</sup> Baumann 2002, pp. 45-46. [translation C.M.]

<sup>136</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 64. [translation C.M.]

<sup>137</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 64. [translation C.M.]

<sup>138</sup> Sitte 1889, p. 64. [translation C.M.]

<sup>139</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 39.

and Russia. Ebenezer Howard remained interested in America and the town planning at Radburn, New Jersey, right across the Hudson River from New York City. The garden city usually was laid out with one-family houses, builds in a detached or attached manner, of low height, inhabited by one family and provided with a garden adjacent to the building. The creation of community among the residents had a high priority and was supported through uniform design standards, the grouping of the buildings and the introduction of clubs. When the garden city concept was realized, most of the time architects were hired in order to build the new settlement, the new community and culture. The garden city movement triggered the discussion of new urban and city planning solutions. Many new urban developments were created after the year 1898, in which the German author Thomas Fritsch as well as the English author Ebenezer Howard published their books on the garden city concept, i.e. the year when the garden city idea was first published in Europe. That means city planning became attractive as well as the greening of industrial urban landscapes and more humane housing conditions. The garden city movement was the first nationwide organization, which realized hygienic, technical and organizational difficulties of city planning as well as its social political relation.<sup>140</sup>

Due to the mass immigration of rural workers to the city, the value of urban land had been rising considerably, so that the industrialists relocated their expanding businesses to the periphery of the cities, in order to make a profit. New factories were established in the periphery of the cities and working class colonies erected close to the new factories. According to Hartmann, these company towns were labeled - in many cases incorrectly - as "garden cities" because of their rural character.<sup>141</sup> The concept of the garden city and that of the workers colony had comparable features. The formal layouts of both stood in contrast to the "organically" grown city. Both provided for dwellings with a low number of floors, for open spaces and an overall artistic design of the settlement.<sup>142</sup>

The construction of garden cities in the periphery of the expanding urban centers improved city planning, since the regional context was put into perspective. As Baumann explains, "The merit of the garden city concept is in this context, that a comprehensive general conception, which goes beyond individual projects and is of regional significance had been developed, and that the city planning qualities of settlements in the periphery had been acknowledged".<sup>143</sup> In addition, according to Baumann, the garden city movement helped that "the necessity of urban open space per se was accepted. That also was expressed in the urban expansion models that were developed out of the reformistic efforts".<sup>144</sup> In the nineteenth century the large cities throughout the industrialized world expanded uncontrolled and unplanned. Unhealthy conditions were created in the overcrowded and overbuilt urban district. The concept of the garden city came up in Europe and Germany at the turn of the century and turned into a new reformist movement. This garden city movement was determined to reform the living situation in the expanding cities at the time of the ongoing industrial revolution. It was meant as an answer to the pressing needs of the inner city housing and social conditions of the time as well as a means to colonize the countryside and to stop the expansion of the city. The garden city was not to be established only to improve the housing situation of the masses, but to reform the politics of settlement, the economic, hygienic and cultural aspects.

The garden city was designed as a contrast to the unplanned city, which expanded without structure to all sides. It was intended to come up with a new way of land-use and a new way of human beings living together. Therefore the garden city movement was meant to be a reform as well as a critic of society and the city. The concepts came up most likely in England and Germany independent from each other as a garden city with its own production, industry and administration.<sup>145</sup> The garden city, which was autarkic and existed independent from the great city, that Ebenezer Howard had envisioned was at first less attractive to residents than the satellite town build in the vicinity of the great city. The independent garden cities of

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<sup>140</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 127.

<sup>141</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 24.

<sup>142</sup> Hartmann 1976, pp. 24-26.

<sup>143</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 42. [translation C.M.]

<sup>144</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 39. [translation C.M.]

<sup>145</sup> Pfeil 1950, pp. 320-321.

Letchworth and Welwyn situated in the countryside around London developed more slowly than the satellite town of Wythenshawe close to Manchester, which included also its own industry. The later the garden city was built the more its original concept was missing and it became the sleeping city in the green countryside. These suburbs, like Bruno Taut's Onkel-Toms-Hütte in Berlin-Zehlendorf, have no longer an independent administration, but were connected to the city as a dispersed, green and structured area.<sup>146</sup> They can have a demographic imbalance and there is the chance that they are less lively than the inner city and that disintegrative forces destroy the comfortableness of living there.

Advocates of the garden city movement were interested in the reformist theory of a class conflict and of the aristocracy of the laborer. At the same time the philosophy of the anti-social life of Nietzsche was of concern to the garden city movement and the concept of Petr Kropotkin<sup>147</sup> about the synthesis of industry and agriculture as well as the intellectual and physical work.<sup>148</sup> The garden city advocates in their tendency to liberal socialism or anarchism as published by Kropotkin were convinced that different political systems create different human relations.<sup>149</sup> The garden city concept attracted various supporters interested in the distribution of land, in cultural and social aspects as well as in life in general. A garden city movement was established. Industrialists supported the garden city concept, because they were interested to provide the workers of their factories with more orderly, secure and healthy living conditions as well as with access to green open space. The garden city concept was also attractive to conservative and nationalistic authors, like the German author Theodor Fritsch, who were interested in re-connecting the urban population to the homeland. The reformists conceived the garden city as a way to provide an escape to life in the city and the in their opinion irrational urban society. The garden city concept was intended to alleviate the conflicting interests of industry and agriculture and as a way to stop the decrease in the number of the rural population. It was introduced with the intention to harmonize the urban residents physically and mentally. Due to the social-economic changes with their resulting problems in the large cities in the second part of the nineteenth century, every family of the middle class dreamed to own a home of their own.

The garden city was intended to provide an urban settlement that included the advantages of urban and rural life. The idea was to create a newly planned and independent city, in contrast to the organically grown towns, which could as a synthesis of countryside and city go beyond the conflict of urban and rural landscape. The new community of the garden city was seen as a healthy in contrast to the sick urban society. The garden city movement supported the planning of the urban environment and at the same time helped to foster the animosity against the city in general. Consequently it backed the ideology of the one-family home with garden as well as the transformation of the city into a large village.<sup>150</sup> The garden city was also intended to be an autonomous new settlement with the physical and the social qualities of a village or small town. The advocates of the garden city were united in their animosity against the city. They believed in their own modernity and wanted to establish an avant-garde concept of living, but were actually not modern at all and instead idealized medieval conditions of agriculture and craftsmanship. Another misconception of the garden city concept was the ignorance, negligence and rejection of certain important functions of the urban environment. The urbanism aimed at was therefore not comparable to that existent in the inner city, but was more the provincial or medieval and small town situation.<sup>151</sup> Consequently urban anonymity and diversity were replaced in the garden city environment by small town neighborliness and conformity. The new concept was also deficient in regard to urban aspects of entertainment and individualism.

The advocates of the garden city hoped for the creation of the ideal citizenry, for a community of people living in harmony with work, nature and the arts, instead of fighting for economic and social equality. The garden city movement intended to get rid off constitutional restrictions and difficulties of the urbanization through the reform of environmental conditions

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<sup>146</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 321.

<sup>147</sup> Kropotkin 1899.

<sup>148</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 15.

<sup>149</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 128.

<sup>150</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 163.

<sup>151</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 162.

and therefore in the way the utopian socialist had proposed. The objective of the garden city movement was to help the development of a democratic, social and cultural state, but the existing constitution and economy proved too established to be affected. The new settlements organization was in regard to commercial and industrial aspects to follow standardized production standards. The idea was to supply the goods produced to a market limited to the self-contained community. The garden city concept favored the ideas of cooperative and community, but the garden city settlements were generally paternalistic and authoritarian in their administration. Inhabitants of a garden city were encouraged to socialize by working together for common economic and cultural goals<sup>43</sup>, but community life was strictly regimented. It was mainly taking place in the community buildings, which existed in many colonies, but where, for example, the distribution of alcoholic beverages was rarely permitted. In times of drastic housing and temporary workers shortage, the purpose of the garden city was to tie the workers to a business, in order to restrict the fluctuation and migration of workers as well as to neutralize the political power of the working class. The co-operative concept of the garden city was attractive to the population, since it was a possibility to undermine the capitalistic system. Based on the co-operative model, the garden city was according to Bergmann to be provided with an integrated political economy. The garden city was meant to exist independently with a locally functioning market and the parallel development of industry and agriculture.<sup>152</sup>

In the time before the First World War, land was made available for the foundation of the new towns, so that the main activity of the garden city movement happened according to Hartmann in this period.<sup>153</sup> "(...) The price of land, like that of all other commodities is settled by demand".<sup>154</sup> Generally, the land of the garden city was to be either in public ownership or it was to be owned by a trust, which administered it for the community. Thus it was ensured that the community would make a profit from the increase in land value that would occur the more people would live in the new settlement. Development plans for the new garden city did not only take the needs of the residents into account, but also the economic aspects, the food supply and the reduction of resources were taken into consideration when planning the garden city concept. The idea behind the garden city concept was to reduce the area that could be built on a lot and to create continuous green spaces throughout the town and to establish commonly used buildings.

At the center of the garden city concept was the provision of decent housing to provide a high quality of life. Aspects of the psychology of the design were contemplated and expressed in development plans. The inhabitants of the garden city were to be physically and psychically influenced through the dimension and size of the architecture. The residents were encouraged to participate actively in the construction and planning process of the new garden cities. But even though the garden city was originally intended to be the ideal of the socialist and class-less society, the ideas for the concept and the participation in the design process came mainly from advocates like employees, clerks and self-employed. The workers were rarely included and could therefore not represent their needs and requirements. The garden city movement was meant to provide adequate housing for the middle class rather than to create housing for the working class. The demand to develop the garden city with low-rise and flat roofed buildings in contrast to the urban tenement buildings anticipated the architectural movement of the 1920s.

The one-family dwellings with gardens were the dominating building type and usually rented out instead of owned by their inhabitants. It was important in the garden city concept, that each tenant or family had an individual entrance to the living environment. The one-family dwelling with gardens was proposed by garden city advocates because it allowed isolating the family<sup>46</sup> and to create community at the same time. That means the creation of community and solidarity among the families was encouraged. The creation of community under a paternalistic system failed in many garden cities, because the residents were not able to act emancipated in a community and to be controlled at the same time. The establishment of one-family dwelling with gardens for all social classes can be understood as a declaration

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<sup>152</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 159.

<sup>153</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 127.

<sup>154</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 280.

against the solidarity among the working class in tenement buildings, against the density of and overcrowding in these dwellings as well as a measurement to provide more accessible open green space. Garden city architects at the beginning of the twentieth century envisioned the introduction of a commonly used building as the adequate answer and symbol for the solidarity among the working class. The buildings were grouped in an expression of uniformity in order to convey the community idea in the outer arrangement and to promote it in everyday life.

The reform of the land-use remained to be the main goal of the garden city movement. A reform of the living conditions was not successful because it was expected, that the changes of the living environment alone would bring an improvement. But with the beginning of the First World War it became obvious that the social reform and democratization had not been working out. While discussed by developers and advocates, the garden city concept lost its idealism and radicalism, when it was made real. Many garden cities lost the intended appearance and use over time. The garden city movement increased the decentralization of the industry and the movement of the population. Still the garden city concept influenced later schemes and plans of urban developments, improved standards of homebuilding and can be found in many industrialized countries of the world. Today, living in the garden city is in high demand and their common institutions are greatly advertised.

When looking at the beginning of garden city development and the contrast between the different approaches, the garden city was designed by Fritsch as an urban landscape with green open spaces built into nature, but organized in an authoritarian way and according to the class system. In order to establish unity among the inhabitants Fritsch wanted to establish the city on land, which was co-operatively used and maintained. In the same way as other advocates of the garden city idea, he regarded the question of land ownership in the contemporary cities the main obstacle. Consequently Fritsch intended to get rid off land speculation by leasing the new urban land of the co-operative to the individuals' constitution the cooperative conglomeration. The profit made and the increase in the value of the land was meant to then diminish the communal taxes.<sup>155</sup> Ebenezer Howard's garden city idea is in Fritsch's opinion an imitation of his own and indeed the basic concept of both was very similar. Fritsch criticizes the contemporary cities as being purposeless, irrational and uneconomic settlements, which had developed by chance rather than through planning. But he understands at the same time the necessity of their existence as magnets of life, culture, administration and jurisdiction. Fritsch develops the plan of a garden city that was based on a semi-circular form with concentric zones around an open space in the center. This city was strictly laid out with concentric streets lined by broad green belts that were divided by radial streets into seven zones. Different functions were assigned to the separate zones, so that, when looking from the center to the outside, buildings with administration and cultural entertainment were surrounded by a belt of monumental mansions, bordered by an area of spacious dwellings. The working class was housed in the fifth zone, directly next to the industrial and commercial district. This industrial and commercial area was surrounded by rental gardens and gardening businesses, that were therefore situated at the periphery of the town.

Through the location of the gardens at the city's fringe, a soft border was provided between the agricultural surrounding and the urban center. To Theodor Fritsch physical health and moral strength provided by an agriculture lifestyle were the prerequisite for the cultural development of a nation. This shows to some degree his anti-Semitist feelings and the nationalistic influences prevailing in his later ideologies. In his opinion, the planning of the urban environment would help to develop a new mental attitude of the residents as well as to establish a rationally organized nation. In Fritsch's garden city idea, the regiment through an authoritarian government contradicted the concept of a liberal society of equal members. This contradiction is in his view to be expressed also in the architecture of the new urban environment. Fritsch never realized his concept. He intended to create an urban environment that supported social segregation. He wanted to maintain the existing social conditions. Howard in contrast was interested in changes in the society and land politics.

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<sup>155</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 148.

The English author Ebenezer Howard<sup>156</sup> wrote in 1898 the book “Garden Cities of To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform”. In reaction to the expansion of the cities and to the enormous housing misery in England, Ebenezer Howard proposes the creation of new cities in the country, without that the new residents would have to give up the amenities of great city live. This brought a wide public interest to the idea of the garden city. According to Baumann’s statement in his thesis “Freiraumplanung in den Siedlungen der zwanziger Jahre” of 2002 “in Germany, Howard’s ideas were quickly adapted – in 1902 already the German garden city society was founded”.<sup>157</sup> Ebenezer Howard’s general interest was city planning and therefore he gives a lot of details for the regulation of bulk, zoning, regional planning and the relationship of the scale of houses and gardens. Even though Howard was not an architect and new to the topic of planning urban environment, but he wanted to solve “the major social problems of the day – land reform, housing, city government, agricultural revival and rail transport rates, the care of women, children and the elderly”.<sup>158</sup> In order to realize his garden city utopia, “he appealed beyond Parliament and the electoral process to “the people of this and other lands”, urging them to turn away from “any government however friendly and any group of individuals however wealthy “but rather to unite in a movement “which may lead to a glorious and peaceful revolution at the close of the nineteenth century”.<sup>159</sup>

Some say that a lecture of Edward Bellamy’s satiric book “Looking Backwards” has incited his idea of the garden city. But it is more likely that Ebenezer Howard adopted the garden city concept during his five years in America, where he stayed also in Chicago, Illinois, which was, because of its situation at the Lake Michigan and its public park known as the garden city that gave his future city the name. Based on his experiences there and in New York City and on the books he read, Ebenezer Howard developed the vision of a planned city with associated social and economic reforms.<sup>160</sup> Walter L. Creese states in this regard that “the layouts of the American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and the attention focused on land values by American economic critics like Henry George seem to have played a role in Howard’s education which was to be supplemented by his early years of residence in the United States”.<sup>161</sup> Ebenezer Howard’s concept is not implemented in full, but only partially. Baumann states, “(...) Howard’s model had neither in Germany nor somewhere else been adopted with all of its complexity, but individual aspects were picked merely and modified at will. The concept was not reflected in the practical realization, but reduced to its technical content and economic and social aspects ignored completely”.<sup>162</sup> Baumann continues, “(...) There was for example in none of the built garden cities (suburbs) the serious effort, to provide food supplies for the city by an agriculturally used green belt”.<sup>163</sup> In addition Baumann points out that the called garden cities in Germany did not function as the independent urban settlements that the garden city concept called for. He states, “(...) the German ‘garden cities’ were not planned and built as independent satellites, but as self-contained suburban settlements in the vicinity of great cities. Therefore they constituted a form of urban expansion that had already been practiced before the publication of Howard’s book in the diverse colonies for workers and mansions”.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, as Baumann agrees, “the merit of the garden city concept is in this context, that a comprehensive general conception that goes beyond individual projects and that is of regional significance had been developed and that the city planning qualities of settlements in the periphery had been acknowledged”.<sup>165</sup> But, as Baumann puts it, the garden city concept pushed forward other new forms of settlement intended to improve life in the city. Thus, “while the original garden cities were to be developed as self-contained settlements, separated from the cities, there were other efforts to realize the new settlement as an improved form of urban extension in direct connection to the city”.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928)

<sup>157</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 42. [translation C.M.]

<sup>158</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 42.

<sup>159</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 43.

<sup>160</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 10.

<sup>161</sup> Creese 1966, p. 2.

<sup>162</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 42. [translation C.M.]

<sup>163</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 42. [translation C.M.]

<sup>164</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 42. [translation C.M.]

<sup>165</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 42. [translation C.M.]

<sup>166</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 43. [translation C.M.]

Ebenezer Howard wanted to redirect the urban population to the countryside. It is his vision to un-politicize the urban population by re-connecting the residents of the city to nature and the agricultural lifestyle. The garden cities were to provide the benefits of the urban and the rural settlement at the same time. That means that the stimulation and entertainment as well as the social and economic opportunities associated with urban centers were to be combined with the healthier and more orderly rural life Howard envisions the garden city to be of a character in-between that of a town and the countryside, so that the workers would be assured the advantages of fresh air and recreation as well as the vicinity to their work. The garden city of Howard is based on the basic principles of town and countryside, agriculture and industry. In his opinion industry more than agriculture offered a potential of increased productivity that was necessary to solve the major social problems, as it was Ebenezer's main objective. Thus the manufacturing industry is to be installed to employ the residents of garden city.

Next to employment, gardens and green open space were to be provided in order to create accessible areas for recreation in the new settlement. In Ebenezer Howard's concept, the land on which the new urban developments would be built needs to be cooperatively owned, so that the community rather than developers and speculators receive the benefits that go along with the development of the land. According to his concept, the new garden cities are to be linked to one another as well as to the existing cities by a mass transit system: He had the vision of a cluster of new towns held together by a belt of green, agricultural land that would set a fringe to the size and preserve farmland and open space. Consequently a new garden city would be attached to an existing city and culturally, socially and economically stimulated by it while it was meant to stimulate in return the social and economic situation in existing urban centers. Howard envisions attracting residents from the overcrowded urban centers, like his hometown London, to the newly created garden cities, so that the population would be redistributed and the urban centers would be vacated for redevelopment, envisioned the garden city. Nevertheless each garden city would according to Ebenezer Howard's theoretical treatise be site specific and economically, politically and socially self-sufficient.

Within the garden city districts for industry, agriculture and residences were to be separated. Residences and industry were meant to compose a sixth of its site of the "garden city". The rest of the land is to be used for agriculture. The periphery of the city was to be surrounded by a band of farms that were to be dependent from the same company. Ebenezer Howard's garden city is laid out in a circular shape with concentric streets as well as axial streets between them, starting from an open space in the center. The optimum size of the garden city is according to Howard restricted to 30 000 residents. That means, Howard understands the planning of the garden city as closed and definite. The garden city was planned to anticipate future changes, i.e. to leave no flexibility for unforeseen future development. Therefore he introduced a paternalistic authority. The land of this proposed new garden city was to be owned by a cooperative and consequently the entire community and the dwellings and farms were to be rented out to the tenants. Thus when there was an increase in productivity, "the readiness of a tenant to pay a higher rent rises in some certain proportion to that increase".<sup>167</sup> Consequently the landlord of the garden city made a profit from an increase in productivity.

Howard proposed that farmers in the agricultural green belt at the periphery would only remain to be tenants as long as they were willing to pay an equivalent to what might be offered by a new tenant. That means rent for manufacturing businesses as in agriculture would be determined by competition among tenants and possible tenants. He wants to eliminate rent in the traditional sense, i.e. the errant money that had to be paid to a landlord, and instead would make the residents responsible of paying a certain percentage of their income to the cooperative that increased with the productivity and the wages paid by the factory. Thus Howard demands that profits and wages in his new garden city would be raised concomitantly and in dependence. Because of the elimination of the rent, prices of manufactured goods would be substantially lower in the garden city of Ebenezer Howard than anywhere in the rest of the country.

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<sup>167</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 45.

Howard presents in one of his diagrams town and countryside as magnets forcing man towards one or the other by counter attractions, two fields of power that he aims to combine as one. Ebenezer Howard wants, according to Beezer, to create clusters of garden cities and base on them the new social reform. His first garden city "was to be a planned city based on common ownership of the land on which it was to be situated and populated by organized migration".<sup>168</sup> He not only intends to attract individuals but also manufacturers, philanthropic societies, and others experienced in organizing, and with organizations under their control. The garden city is to be administered, according to Ebenezer Howard, by an anonymous company, a cooperative, which would be the owner of the land, but not of the dwellings, the infrastructural and commercial buildings. In regard to the garden cities government and ownership Ebenezer Howard's writing are vague leaving the relationship between the trustees and the Board of Management undefined. The Board of Management was to have the power and the rights over the community as it was the representative and had the ownership of the land. The individuals whose investment would make the garden city possible "would inevitably demand a place on such powerful governing body"<sup>169</sup> and might eventually insist to be in control of the government. The Board of Management is established to control municipal functions of finance and the provision of services of infrastructure, such as roads, railways, drainage, lightning and water supply.

The rest of the city's activities are to be taken care of in a hierarchic administrative system of semi-municipal groups and pro-municipal groups, who served the community, but were potentially non-profit making, like churches, hospitals, banks and alike. The position of banks is according to Howard to be ideally non-commercial, which means, that "a bank might arrange to pay its profits into the municipal exchequer, and to give to the Board of Management the option of taking it over should it be convinced of its utility and general soundness."<sup>170</sup> Further administrative elements are to the cooperative and individualistic groups, which are not subject to municipal control or inspection. In regard to the topic of housing Howard suggests to foster "co-operative self-help". He intends, according to Beezer, to establish a new town in which "working people might form building societies or induce co-operative societies, friendly societies and trade unions to lend them the necessary capital".<sup>171</sup> To Ebenezer Howard co-operative building societies re a way to avoid that housing was left to speculative builders, who would make profits at the cost of the working community.

Jane Jacobs criticizes in 1961 in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" Ebenezer Howard's proposal for planning a new urban settlement, stating "both in his preoccupations and in his omission, Howard made sense in his own terms but none in terms of city planning".<sup>172</sup> In the opinion of Jane Jacobs, the garden city concept of Ebenezer Howard has been a feudal version of city planning. Howard intends, according to Jacobs, to restore a static society, i.e. a society of industrial working class, agricultural working class and industrials, to an obsolete pattern of life in the countryside. "Howard feared and rejected the energetic forces inherent in urbanization combined with industrialization".<sup>173</sup> The city planning of today has been build according to Jacobs upon these objectives and has never been re-examined.

Charles Benjamin Purdom defines in his book "Building of Satellite Towns" of 1925 an agricultural belt as "(...) an area of agricultural land surrounding a town, with which the town has direct and constant economic relations".<sup>174</sup> He states, "The belt surrounds the town in the same way as a garden surrounds a house, and the amenities and actual commercial values of the town benefit exactly as the house does from its garden".<sup>175</sup> This agricultural belt around a city prevents it according to Purdom from expanding and at the same it the belt prevents the increase of land value to "(...) escape into other hands and to encourage parasitic

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<sup>168</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 61.

<sup>169</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 63.

<sup>170</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 66.

<sup>171</sup> Beezer 1988, p. 66.

<sup>172</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 18.

<sup>173</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 289.

<sup>174</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 318.

<sup>175</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 324.

development on the outskirts of the town”.<sup>176</sup> Purdom gives the definition that the garden city has “a town-plan in which provision is made for healthy living for all classes of the community and for industry”.<sup>177</sup> To answer the idea to restrict the number of residents of an urban settlement as a way to plan an infrastructurally functioning settlement was answered he called for a restriction of the number of population to 50,000 persons with the help of the creation of an agricultural belt around a city. Purdom states, “The ability of these towns to preserve their agricultural land (...) is restricted by vested interests of various kinds and by the fact that some of the land has a prospective building value”.<sup>178</sup> In his opinion especially a small town like the garden city with up to 50,000 could supply itself with a large part of its needs in certain vegetable products. He continues, “Of course not every household in it would be able to run an allotment or would desire to do so, but with many of the inhabitants working allotments there would be a certain amount of surplus produce”.<sup>179</sup> Purdom also proposes “(...) a central distributive agency, such as exists at Welwyn Garden City (...)” to organize the distribution of surplus produce “(...) not only for the purpose of supplying those who have no allotment of their own, but to supply families with what they do not or cannot grow themselves”.<sup>180</sup>

Purdom introduces the idea that garden cities need to be developed in the context with regional planning. He states, “In the garden city theory of town development, agricultural belts do not mean the preservation of green girdles around towns, such as are shown in the London Society’s Development Map of London or the maintenance park belts, as in some American cities. They are wide stretches of food-producing land surrounding towns, to be retained as an integral part of town economy”.<sup>181</sup> The agricultural land belongs to the garden city’s concept. It is part of the unity of the town and is thus in the same way preserved and maintained as any other part of the town. The basic idea for the layout of a garden city plan has been significantly altered a lot of times. Purdom states “the association of the principle of “twelve houses to the acre” with the garden city accounts, perhaps, for a good deal of the incorrect use of the term “garden city”.<sup>182</sup> He explains “many people think that to lay out a site with ample garden space is to plan on “garden city lines”.<sup>183</sup>

#### **2.4.3.1.1 Garden cities at the example of Germany**

Heinrich Krebs, a merchant from Berlin, brought the garden city concept of Ebenezer Howard to Germany.<sup>184</sup> The German Garden City society was founded subsequently to the English Garden Cities Associations, which were based on proposals by Ebenezer Howard. The German Garden City society rejected Ebenezer Howard circular layout for the garden city as too uniform, too monotonous and schematic. But his idea of a reduced number of population and buildings per parcel of land was adopted, since it was identical with the popular demand for one-family buildings with garden situated in a park. The German Garden City society aimed at the ideal of social harmony and a class-less, un-politic community.

The English garden city concept of Ebenezer Howard needed to be adapted for the German public, industrialists and municipalities. Thus the ideas of Theodor Fritsch, which predated the garden city concept of Ebenezer Howard, were reflected upon in order to make the garden city a typical German invention, i.e. to reduce the novelty of the idea and to give it a Germany tradition. Still, the layout of the garden city concepts by Fritsch and Howard are similar in regard to the geometry of the form, the separation of the urban environment in different zones, the bands of green as well as the low height and spacious placement of buildings.<sup>185</sup> Bergmann states, that neither Fritsch nor Howard realized that the city reflected a society, which meant that the human being was not automated and place-able or plan-able like an immaterial good. Bergmann emphasized that the garden city ideas of Howard, Fritsch and the

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<sup>176</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 324.

<sup>177</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 32.

<sup>178</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 329.

<sup>179</sup> Purdom 1925, pp. 322-323.

<sup>180</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 323.

<sup>181</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 316.

<sup>182</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 51.

<sup>183</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 51.

<sup>184</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 27.

<sup>185</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 33.

German Garden City society were based on the co-operative concept and were in general of anti-capitalist tendency.<sup>186</sup> All approaches to the garden city concept blamed the liberal capitalism for the social, economic, political and cultural instability of the time. A reason for the fact, that Howard's ideas were more progressive and more urban than its realizations on the European continent than in England is probably a misunderstanding caused by the name "Garden City".

In 1888, the architect Ludwig Baumann designed an idealistic housing development for the steel company Krupp in Berndorf in the style of a garden city. It was constructed in a mixture of row houses, detached dwellings and blocks of tenement buildings, which were all built in different sizes and with different layouts. The introduction of allotment gardens and trees throughout the new city was intended to create a friendlier atmosphere, the connection to a picturesque environment and the feeling of being "at home." In Germany the first Garden City cooperative, "Gartenstadt Karlsruhe", was founded by Hans Kampffmeyer in 1906, in the same year as the garden city Hellerau close to Dresden.<sup>187</sup> Many German garden cities were built from 1908 until 1914, but the concept was not exactly translated into reality. With the beginning of the First World War, construction ceased.

After the First World War in Germany the home coming masses lived in self-made temporary shelters at the periphery of the cities. The garden city concept was not realized in the years after the war and during the time of depression. The economic and political autonomous ideal of the garden city was no longer interesting to the planners of the Republic of Weimar. Settlements were planned and built by using uniform housing types in presenting a formalized, international and functional approach. In the 1920s residential areas were created, which were only used for living, a concept that distorted in the 1960s to the creation of sleeping towns. The garden city movement occurred along with other reformist movements. Landlords' and property owners' protest against the garden city and several German municipalities and cities, like for example Munich successfully blocked their development. That means landlords and property owners were not only the ones deciding on political environment and decision-making, but were also controlling the field of publishing. The intention of the German garden city movement was to create a decentralized industrial network by establishing garden cities in the countryside. The idea was to support through the new settlement the rural economy and culture as well as to interrupt the migration into the urban centers.

The advocates of the German garden city concept were convinced that the inhabitants of the garden city would positively influence the society in general, because of the confrontation with democracy and aesthetic environmental conditions in the garden cities.<sup>188</sup> The garden city movement was a threat to landlords and property owners, since it intended to revolutionize the existing political system and distribution of property. They feared that the masses living in urban tenement buildings or in shelters in allotment garden colonies at the periphery of the cities, pushed for mansions and gardens of their own. The garden city movement ended in 1937, when the political and economical circumstances had changed.

The reforms of housing and city planning initiated by the garden city movement were legally established in Germany during the Republic of Weimar. In the German Reich, for example, no uniform building ordinance existed due to the decentralized administration. In Germany, city planning in the time of the Republic of Weimar was as well as in the era of the garden city characterized by urban animosity and negligence of the inner city. In the period between the First World War and 1924, 10,000 new apartments were constructed in huge housing developments away from Berlin's city center, like for example the Gartenstadt Staaken, Onkel-Toms-Hütte or the Siemensstadt.<sup>189</sup> Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker became famous not only in England at the time, but also influenced, in 1914, the garden city "Staaken" by Paul Schmitthenner. Garden cities were constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century in Germany, following the model of Hellerau, like the garden city Falkenberg close to

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<sup>186</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 158.

<sup>187</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 31.

<sup>188</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 44.

<sup>189</sup> Weihsmann 1985, p. 100.

Grünau designed by the architect Bruno Taut.<sup>190</sup> Taut designed the housing development in Berlin-Falkenberg, in which he transformed the idea of the ideal city of the utopian visionaries to the real-pragmatic level of Ebenezer Howard.

Richard Riemerschmied designed the first German garden city in Hellerau close to Dresden in 1906. He was influenced by Camillo Sitte<sup>191</sup> aesthetic discussion of city planning. Riemerschmied was supported in designing dwellings and institutions by a panel, which also controlled the artistic design and uniformity of the city. In 1910 Heinrich Tessenow supported him and Hermann Muthesius designed also several single houses and some row houses for Hellerau.<sup>192</sup> Muthesius was influential since he is said to have been responsible for importing "(...) the garden city concept from England to Germany".<sup>193</sup>

Of the German garden cities "(...) Hellerau near Dresden [was, added C.M.] the largest (...) and a place where each architect was assigned a section (...)".<sup>194</sup> As Purdom states, "The intention was to build a small town of 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants as a centre of hand-crafts, art and education".<sup>195</sup> In 1908 the prototypes of the design for Hellerau's buildings were shown on an exhibition in Munich, called "München 1908" by the "Deutsche Werkstätten". The founding of the first German garden city Hellerau by Hermann Muthesius among others, was supported by Karl Schmidt-Hellerau, the initiator of the Dresden workshops for craftsmanship and the owner of the furniture factory "German Workshops for Design Hellerau" - a social reformist, founder of Hellerau and main initiator of "Der Deutsche Werkbund".<sup>196</sup> Consequently the new settlement was named after him "Hellerau". Schmidt was a carpenter of profession and intended to move his expanding business out of the city of Dresden into a new garden city in order to improve his economic situation. He acted as the developer and negotiated with landowners close to Dresden and secured in 1908 the right to buy 370.6 acres (150 hectare) of land for the next five years. The ideal and emancipatory aspects of the social, urban concept of the garden city interested Dr. Wolf Dohrn<sup>197</sup>, who was the son of wealthy parents and the first secretary of the Deutsche Werkbund. Dohrn supported Karl Schmidt in the establishment of the garden city Hellerau and because of him the Deutsche Werkbund was transferred there from Munich. His initiative also backed the dance school of Emile-Jaques Dalcroze<sup>198</sup>, which proves the diversion of interests combined in the garden city movement.

The construction of the first German garden city Hellerau was taking place during a time of an intensive discussion of city planning in Germany, which culminated in the city planning exhibition in Berlin of 1910. In Hellerau many ideals of the garden city concept were realized and it was, influenced by the prominent architects of the time, the model for the subsequent city planning and settlement development in Germany. The garden city Hellerau was seen as the new village, which would provide the urban resident with a better environment, an intact world, and influenced the new German style of city planning.<sup>199</sup> This new settlement, the garden city of Hellerau, was planned and established, according to Hartmann as a reformist settlement during the time of the monopoly of the capital and strong imperialism, while the working class was a living in misery.<sup>200</sup> But, according to her, the first German garden city had

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<sup>190</sup> Hartmann 1976, pp. 104 -124.

<sup>191</sup> Sitte 1889.

<sup>192</sup> Schneider 2000.

<sup>193</sup> Burckhardt in: Gans 1967, p. 7.

<sup>194</sup> Creese 1966, p. 312.

<sup>195</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 40.

<sup>196</sup> Hartmann 1976, pp. 46-47.

<sup>197</sup> The "Deutsche Werkbund" was founded in 1907 in Munich and Dohrn was secretary from 1908 to 1920. It had been established in order to support modern architecture and design. It sponsored exhibitions in Cologne (1914), Stuttgart (1927) and Paris (1930). After the Second World War, it was re-established in Düsseldorf in 1947. (Meyers 1995, p. 182)

<sup>198</sup> The cultural life of Hellerau improved with the construction of a school building for the dance school of Emile-Jacques Dalcroze and attracted many renowned artists. The school was designed by Heinrich Tessenow and was placed like a temple above the city. It was used by the studio for rhythmic gymnastic and dance.

<sup>199</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 83.

<sup>200</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 101.

not the expected practical and reformist effect, because of the circumstances of the time and the missing historic analysis.

For the design of Hellerau, the architect Richard Riemerschmid laid out curved streets on a hilly area and distributed it in the four areas - four separate zones, according to the classes using them and to the uses established. There was a district with small houses for the working class, an area with cottage houses for the middle-class, artists and alike, a zone for welfare and charity institutions and the area of the industrial buildings. The dwellings were built by the incorporated building cooperative Hellerau, which bought the land of the garden city at prime cost, constructed and rented out the apartments to members.<sup>201</sup> The building cooperative had the power to decide about the character the new settlement was going to have. The planning panel supported Riemerschmid in generating thirty different types of row- and detached one-family houses, which differed in size and design. Even though the dwellings of the garden city were fulfilling varying demands of housing, they were of formal similarity, which was expressed in their arrangement along streets and places. The buildings were designed as group elements and not merely as individual objects.<sup>202</sup> The idea to build a distinctive area only for the mansions of the wealthy proves of the charitable background of the garden city concept.

Hellerau's layout was composed of one-family dwelling with garden. It was established as a conscious contrast to the urban tenement building, which was to the garden city planners the expression of a liberal economy. The physically and psychically stressed residents of the urban working class districts were to be moved out of their overcrowded apartments into spacious dwellings situated in an healing natural environment. The English cottage style was translated into the German context. It was ideologically attractive to the planners at the time, since it provided the human being with a piece of "homeland" and a home of his or her own.<sup>203</sup> To counteract individual isolation and to support solidarity, commonly used institutions were erected and the overall appearance was designed as a visually connecting. In 1911 the new garden city was connected by an electric railway to Dresden, which was built by the Department of the Interior.

Hellerau was created according to an idealized concept of encouraging the self-respect in order to re-transform the laborer into a sociable human being. The education of the residents in regard to architecture, craftsmanship, and physics was approached out of an artistic perspective. The Swiss musical teacher, Emile-Jacques Dalcroze, for example, was working at Hellerau and tried to enhance the self-esteem of the inhabitants through rhythmical gymnastics.<sup>204</sup> The design of Hellerau presented the essence of the reform of housing and city planning in the time before the First World War and was publicized as the liberation from the tenement building.<sup>205</sup> The laborers were encouraged by an especially established panel to contribute to the development of the new apartments by drawing the current and the desired layout of their apartments. Other aspects of the laborers living conditions were researched as well in regard to their needs and demands of the new settlement. The tenants were included in the planning process and were asked to become active participants in the creation of their future environment.

Hellerau was founded by the Werkbund before the First World War and it can be seen as an experimented with apartments for the subsistence level. As Lucius Burckhardt states "the ideologies of the 1920s and the crisis of the 1930s gave the Garden City concept a renewed boost".<sup>206</sup> He adds, "while the avant-garde discovered air, light, green open space and neighborhood, the reaction praised settledness, health and the neighborhood as apt instruments for surveillance".<sup>207</sup> Burckhardt is convinced that "while socialism thought of a at least partial dependence by the means of a vegetable garden and the keeping of small animals, the militarism talked about the deep rootedness to the land and thought of war

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<sup>201</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 48.

<sup>202</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 68.

<sup>203</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 97.

<sup>204</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 41.

<sup>205</sup> Hartmann 1976, p. 87.

<sup>206</sup> Burckhardt, Lucius in: Gans 1967, p. 7.

<sup>207</sup> Burckhardt, Lucius in: Gans 1967, p. 7.

economy”.<sup>208</sup> But in general, according to Burckhardt, “The conclusion of the settlers and the members of the Werkbund of the 1930s have above all been understood by speculators. Air and light are inexpensive, where the land is cheap; the life at the subsistence level can be upgraded by a refrigerator and a dish washer, because the profit made of appliances is higher than that made of bricks anyways, and the streets are paid for by the government”.<sup>209</sup>

The new urban concept of Hellerau attracted a nationalist and anti-Semitic movement, which established its basis and printed propaganda materials in this new urban environment. This movement was concerned with the creation of a new German agricultural human being of uniform racial blood and high performance quality as well as with other anti-Semitic conceptions that were also demanded later by the National-Socialist party.<sup>210</sup> In 1927, supporters of the German settlement movement assembled in Hellerau. From 1933 on the cooperative and democratic aspects of the garden city concept were suppressed. The nationalist ideology prevailed and the national-socialist party was using the rural components of Hellerau for their advantage. In the 1930s the German National Socialist party used anti-urbanism and agrarromantic as an instrument of their propaganda. The masses were introduced at the time to the ideal of the agricultural life through mass media. The national-socialists rejected the modern city, but simultaneously acknowledged the need of the existence of cities as industrial centers.

Some authors at the time demanded regional, “organic” centers with a maximum of 500,000 inhabitants, in order to reduce the economic and “biological” stress of the population. They wanted to create a new urban environment with a concentration of monumental buildings, demonstrating the power of the state.<sup>211</sup> Around this center of cultural and profane buildings the theorists intended to arrange an expansive urban environment with green bands, which was directed towards the center. According to Bergmann, the national-socialist city planners projected the garden city concept onto a monumental level. They wanted to create urban landscapes, which were to be conceptually organized on the basis of their new political and global orientation, so that they could to re-gain the unit of living in accordance with their ideology.<sup>212</sup> The new city planning was supposed to follow and express aspects of the National Socialism by creating the totalitarian city. Since animosity against the city and anti-urbanism were a rejection against the modern it was a characteristic of the National Socialism.

#### **2.4.3.1.2 Garden cities at the example of the United States of America**

After the First World War, garden cities had a revival in the United States of America and the concept of community planning made them popular as distinctive civic units. Purdom states that garden cities“(…) were described as satellites to great cities (…)” and that the “(…) term satellite town became a synonym for garden city”.<sup>213</sup> That means the garden city idea of the creation of an autonomous town was replaced by the concept of the creation of a satellite town, dependent on a city in the vicinity. The invention of the automobile, “(…) which debilitated the garden city principle of self-containment before it had an adequate chance to stand and be understood by the general populace”<sup>214</sup> introduced the difference between the garden city and suburban sprawl. The rapid urbanization expressed also construction of skyscrapers in New York City in the 1920s spurred the interest of intellectuals in the density problems of the future American metropolis was initiated. In addition after the return of prosperity in the United States in the 1920s, called for investment in new settlements. Creese explains that in the 1920s “the greatest difference between American and European conditions (… ) was the sudden return of prosperity in the United States”.<sup>215</sup>

In the United States the construction of the “garden city” Radburn located in New Jersey, ten miles in linear distance from the center of Manhattan. It belongs to the municipality Fair Lawn,

<sup>208</sup> Burckhardt, Lucius in: Gans 1967, p. 7.

<sup>209</sup> Burckhardt, Lucius in: Gans 1967, pp. 7-8.

<sup>210</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 243.

<sup>211</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 358.

<sup>212</sup> Bergmann 1970, p. 358.

<sup>213</sup> Purdom 1925, p. 26.

<sup>214</sup> Creese 1966, p. 6.

<sup>215</sup> Creese 1966, p. 303.

of Bergen County, and is situated in the metropolitan area of New York City. Radburn was established with the intention of making a contribution towards improving urban living conditions. The development of Radburn was started in 1929 at the time of the Great Depression by the City Housing Corporation following plans designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. Radburn was planned in its layout and community organization in the expectation of that constant growth and development. It characterized by the implementation of separate circulation of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic, the construction of “superblocks” and a green belt.

Radburn was the first realization of the concept of neighborhood units<sup>216</sup>, a concept developed by Clarence Perry in 1929, i.e. in the same year that Radburn was built, which was a frame-work for urban planners for a model community rather than a detailed plan. “The underlying principle of the scheme is that an urban neighborhood should be regarded both as a unit of a larger whole and as a distinct entity in itself”.<sup>217</sup> According to Perry, “the ‘character’ of a district in which a person lives tells something about him. Since he chose it, ordinarily, it is an extension of his personality”.<sup>218</sup> Perry’s interest in developing the conceptualisation of the Neighborhood Unit was to look at the development of a new urban settlement outside of the City. “(...) The neighborhood itself, and not its relation to the city at large (...)”<sup>219</sup> was of concern to him. Perry explains that if the neighborhood “(...) is to be treated as an organic entity, then it logically follows, that the first step in its conversion of unimproved acreage for residential purposes will be its division into unit area, each one of which is suitable for a single neighborhood community. The next step consists in the planning of each unit so that adequate provision is made for the efficient operation of the four main neighborhood functions”.<sup>220</sup> These four main neighborhood functions are to Perry “(...) (1) the elementary school, (2) small parks and playgrounds, (3) local shops and, (4) residential development”.<sup>221</sup> In addition, to achieve this objective of planning single neighborhood units with efficiently operating function, Perry recommends to the urban planner to observe requirements of “size”, “boundaries”, “open spaces”, “institution sites”, “local shops” and “internal street system”.<sup>222</sup> In regard to open spaces he proposed to provide “(...) a system of small parks and recreation spaces, planned to meet the needs of the particular neighborhood (...)”.<sup>223</sup>

Robert B. Hudson wrote in 1934 the study “Radburn. A Plan for Living.” Therein he discusses the design and development of Radburn. To Hudson, Radburn was in its layout with a green belt and with the strict separation of streets for the use of pedestrians and cars, but in no other respect similar to the garden cities in England. Radburn was composed of a superblock of grouped houses that consists of a central core of open parkland bordered by a public street, which is only accessible by foot. This center is surrounded by several lanes, cul-de-sacs or short streets used by automobile traffic, which are dead ended on one end and connect to the highway surrounding this superblock on the other. The dwellings are arranged in groups, each facing a street used by pedestrians and one used by cars. The inner park area is only accessible by foot and is connected by a footway system to the center of the next superblock. “The physical plan of Radburn centers chiefly about the maximum usage of land, due consideration and thought being given to space, light and air without the dwelling, and maximum convenience within the dwelling, all provided at a minimum cost, with a payment plan fitting neatly into the household budget”.<sup>224</sup> This layout in superblocks has also been called “checker-board city”.

Cul-de-sac streets were employed at Radburn, allowing less costly communication and a better economy in the use of individual. As the Austrian architect and city planner Roland Rainer writes in 1948 in his book “Städtebauliche Prosa – Praktische Grundlagen für den Aufbau der Städte“ about the different provisions for traffic in a city and is in this context

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<sup>216</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 322.

<sup>217</sup> Perry 1929, p. 34.

<sup>218</sup> Perry 1929, p. 34.

<sup>219</sup> Perry 1929, p. 34.

<sup>220</sup> Perry 1929, p. 34.

<sup>221</sup> Perry 1929, p. 34.

<sup>222</sup> Perry 1929, pp. 34-35.

<sup>223</sup> Perry 1929, p. 34.

<sup>224</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 2.

pointing towards the settlement of Radburn. He is convinced that it would be an advantage for living as well as transportation, when within a residential area the areas for walking and driving would be clearly separated. He points out, "A first effort in this direction has just been developed appropriately in the abounded in automobiles North America: In the renowned 'settlement of the age of the motor vehicle' Radburn close to New York, the houses are not situated at the transit roads, but merely at cul-de-sacs, and on the backside an interior green open area is accessible, in which pedestrian ways lead to schools, playing fields and so on and thereby passing underneath the roads, so that on the way to school and to the playing field no street has to be crossed".<sup>225</sup>

Rainer criticizes that the close spacing of the cul-de-sacs is causing traffic jams. He proposes to transform the cul-de-sacs into pedestrian streets and to add collectively driven on streets with garages, stores and small trade shops, which are connected to the main transit road with large spacing in-between them.<sup>226</sup> Rainer is convinced that "If the one-family houses are placed at pedestrian ways of 70-100 meters length, they are not in disadvantage to the apartments, which are accessible only by a more laborious way over several stairs".<sup>227</sup> Rainer states that a differentiation of the network of streets and paths is necessary in regard to traffic. He calls for a planned distribution of the diverse building types and explains that this "(...) leads to a structure of the urban area into different spatial spheres all by itself: into wide green spaces, which are experienced in the rapid speed of the traffic machines, into the small and larger centers of commercial life and finally into those larger district of pure human scale, in which the pedestrian experiences the spectrum of the quiet effects of the intimate to the festive".<sup>228</sup>

The community mindedness of the residents developed in this environment of grouped houses and accidental social contacts on pedestrian walkways and in parks. People, who were working in New York City, moved to Radburn, because they were looking for an economical place to live in a natural environment and to enjoy the amenities of life, which could not be found in the suburbs at the time. The specialty of the Radburn community was, according to Hudson, that "(...) rarely will one find an entire community of people better prepared to participate intelligently in all that democracy has to offer and to guide the destinies of the community in which they live".<sup>229</sup> About half of the adult population was commuting to their work in New Jersey or New York City. That means that the community's income did not depend on the economic wellbeing of an industry or institution and despite originally a section of Radburn had been reserved in the plan for industries and commercial enterprises, the new town developed into a strictly residential community. Even though new settlement of Radburn was constructed at the beginning of the Great Depression in the United States, the economic depression was even supporting the community mindedness of the residents. As Hudson states, "the depression has proved a boon to intra-community activities, and at the same time these same activities have assisted many persons to weather the depression with greater ease".<sup>230</sup> Radburn's safety features, facilities and opportunities for children to play were advertised, so that many families with children were living there. According to Hudson, "Radburn people are friendly and democratic. They are cooperative. They are ambitious for themselves and their community. They take pride in their homes and gardens. They are good neighbors".<sup>231</sup>

Radburn had been built in 1929 as a planned community for young families of moderate income belonging to the business and professional classes. "The physical plan was based upon the assumptions that most families want a home, and that motor vehicles are an integral plan of present-day living and are likely to continue for many years to come".<sup>232</sup> The young families living in Radburn had an equal income, were of almost equal education and were standing at a similar point in life. Radburn's safety features, facilities and opportunities for

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<sup>225</sup> Rainer 1948, p. 131.

<sup>226</sup> Rainer 1948, p. 131.

<sup>227</sup> Rainer 1948, p. 131.

<sup>228</sup> Rainer 1948, p. 133.

<sup>229</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 12.

<sup>230</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 14.

<sup>231</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 15.

<sup>232</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 5.

children to play were advertised, so that many families with children were attracted to move out of the city and started living there. The town was planned with reasonably priced and financed houses, which were of simple design and arranged so that they were easily accessible by car. Recreational and cultural institutions were included in the urban plan of Radburn and, according to Hudson, an extremely high percentage of families living there participated in community activities.<sup>233</sup> That was due to the employment of a permanent secretariat, which offered community programs.

The residents of Radburn organized themselves shortly after moving into their dwellings in the Citizens' Association in order to discuss issues of common interest to the neighborhood. A non-profit organization, called the "Radburn Association", was established to collect annual charges as a supplement to the municipal taxes, which were to be used for example to maintain community services like parks and recreation facilities. "The Association provides a common meeting place for Radburn residents so that a neighborly spirit of cooperation may be reinforced by personal acquaintance and social contacts".<sup>234</sup> The intention was not only to plan the physical features of the new town, but also the community life in order to realize the full possibilities of an idealized community. Additionally, as Hudson states, "the Association provides and agency for cooperation in an organized and effective manner with individuals and organization outside of Radburn for the advancement of certain municipal services in which all have a common interest".<sup>235</sup>

A variety of social programs were enacted and social clubs founded in Radburn. There was for example the Garden Club, whose general objective was the improvement of gardens in the community and the promotion of the development of Radburn as a garden city. This club distributed general information on gardening "(...) by means of lectures, demonstrations, inspection tours, flower shows and community garden competitions, the maintenance of a plant and flower exchange bureau and the encouragement of nature study among children through the public schools and the recreation department".<sup>236</sup> This statement of Hudson is indicating that there were community gardens in Radburn – and enough of them, that the gardeners participating in them were competing. The garden club also cooperated with the Citizens' Committee on Parks and Gardens in order to preserve parks as well as the greening of highways and on public properties. The majority of the residents participating in the garden club, which were also mainly women, owned their homes and property adjacent to it. When the economic depression became more severe, according to Hudson, there was "(...) constantly increasing numbers of people participating in recreational activities and also an increase in regularity of attendance (...)", so that for example "(...) parks and open spaces were used more and more".<sup>237</sup> He continues, "Lawns and gardens are the recipients of the greatest amount of time that Radburn allots to home care. This is especially true during the spring and summer months when lawns and flower beds and borders need attention".<sup>238</sup>

The population of Radburn was actively participating in their town's government and since the functioning of a municipality depends largely on how well the democratic principle works, Radburn was therefore in a social, economic and open space use terms of a high quality of life. As Hudson states, "While not all of the residents of Radburn actively participate in the government of the town, the percentage of participation is higher than in most other communities".<sup>239</sup> Haar states that this situation of Radburn was the consequence of its new legal and physical framework of city planning, which allowed new thoughts and activities. He explains, "At Radburn we were able to work on a clear slate because we got there before the zoners and the subdividers and the municipal highway engineers".<sup>240</sup> The Second World War interrupted the development of Radburn and despite its good start its development was never continued.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 6.

<sup>234</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 8.

<sup>235</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 8.

<sup>236</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 25.

<sup>237</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 53.

<sup>238</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 79.

<sup>239</sup> Hudson 1934, p. 59.

<sup>240</sup> Haar 1959, p. 60.

<sup>241</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 322.

In California as well experiments in housing and community planning were taking place in regard to “land use planning and the provision of infrastructure, house and neighborhoods design, construction techniques and building practice, and the financing and marketing of community scale projects”.<sup>242</sup> In 1928 in Los Angeles the development of Leimert Park was started, designed by the Olmsted brothers the sons of Frederick Law Olmsted. It became one of the first comprehensively planned communities. The land sub-divider Walter Leimert had the intention to create a planned subdivision for moderate-income buyers, which he intended to be comparable to Beverly Hills in regard to attributes and amenities. A railway and a boulevard, which was lined with a planting median for pine and palms, diagonally divided the site. Another boulevard crossed the first one creating a second axis. Walkways were situated in the back of building lots.

The residential and commercial designs were reviewed and community improvement associations established to monitor internal controls. In order to promote sales as well as the cooperation between trades and developers, single-family and multi-family units were constructed for demonstration and local contractors were encouraged to build speculative houses for sale. Los Angeles’ first Small Homes Exhibition was hosted in 1928. The Leimert Company completed 300 hundred houses in the first year. Residential construction was zoned by building type and arranged along separate corridors. “Duplexes, fourplexes and six-family flats lined the boulevards; interior streets were ceded for single-family housing”.<sup>243</sup> Leimert Park is according to Hise an example of modern community planning because of its comprehensive urban planning “within a lineage that stretches from nineteenth-century alternatives for industrial cities such as Ebenezer Howard’s garden city to current town-planning debates”.<sup>244</sup> As Greg Hises states, “Leimert’s design, construction, and marketing strategies epitomized modern community planning”.<sup>245</sup> It was built at a community-scale according to shared, modern construction standards and presented by local and regional agencies.

Another example are the new four mass-produced suburban developments called Levittown, which the construction corporation Levitt and Sons, Inc., built and planned between 1947 and 1951 in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Jersey as well as in Long Island, Nassau County, NY. The first Levittown built was the one in New York. It became a synonym for life in the newly developed suburbs of industrialized, but sparsely populated areas: a city of small one-family houses, with a green lawn and a car in the front yard. Herbert Gans analyzes in the book “The Levittowners – Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community” of 1967 life in the American suburb in sociological terms. He explains that his “(...) book does not describe America, and it is only showing, how people are living in a suburb, but not why they do it and where they work”.<sup>246</sup> His method of research was to live in the community of Levittown as a participant and an observer while writing the book. In general, Levittown became, according to Gans, a prototype of the suburban settlement of the post-war years.<sup>247</sup>

Gans analyzed the development of the residents in Levittown, New Jersey<sup>248</sup>, in regard to “how a new community is formed, how human beings change, when they move out of the city, and how they then live in suburbia and take part in the public life”.<sup>249</sup> According to Gans, “(...) Levitt constructed entire municipalities and not only settlements, which means, that a number of local facilities and institutions, which necessarily belong to a community, would be newly constructed”.<sup>250</sup> Herbert J. Gans points out that the class conflict in the United States of America is evident. “Even if the public opinion in America is dominated by members of (...) [middle, added C.M.] class, their knowledge of society is mostly insufficient. It regards in the common people of the lower income classes, with whom I lived together in Levittown, as the

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<sup>242</sup> Hise 1997, p. 11.

<sup>243</sup> Hise 1997, p. 18.

<sup>244</sup> Hise 1997, p. 20.

<sup>245</sup> Hise 1997, p. 19.

<sup>246</sup> Gans 1967, p. 12.

<sup>247</sup> Gans 1967, p. 11.

<sup>248</sup> In the late 1960s, Levittown, New Jersey, was renamed and is now called Willingboro.

<sup>249</sup> Gans 1967, p. 11.

<sup>250</sup> Gans 1967, p. 16.

uneducated, dupable and insignificant 'mass'".<sup>251</sup> According to Gans, it the dominant American society assumes that this mass "(...)" is always dismissive of culture, of that very culture, which only would turn them into complete human beings, that 'good government', which could create a better society, that rational planning, which would get rid of their ridiculous, small settlement's houses that destroy the landscape".<sup>252</sup> He is convinced, that "class differences could have more prolific effects, if each class would know more about the other. We know so little about our society and do so little research in this field, that each analysis about one part of society is generalized right away".<sup>253</sup>

According to Gans, "Levittowners are young people, who work or belong to the lower income class (...)".<sup>254</sup> He adds, "(...) they give up the attachments to their point of origin and meet in the big melting pot of the three religions. They are Catholics, Protestants and Jews, whose concepts of god become more and more similar and who increasingly share the same Jewish-Christian values and who visit their, in the form adapting, church services less and less".<sup>255</sup> Consequently the Levittowner can be called a typical American of his time. As Gans states "If the Levittowners are at all typical for America, than because people like them are the most important accepters of consume goods for the big enterprises as well as for the offer of entertainment and information by the mass media and the political shows from Washington. They are the consumers who products and news are produced for and they are the ones, one can gear talking about Aspirin and soap in the commercials".<sup>256</sup>

Gans analyzes Levittown primarily "(...) the behavior of the group and its influence on the behavior of the individual (...)".<sup>257</sup> He states, "Suburbs would have coined a new type of Americans, who are standardized in the same way as are the prefabricated houses they live in".<sup>258</sup> Gans explains, "(...) The suburb [presents, added C.M.] a danger to the intellectuals and to the cultural and political life, because they mass-produce colorless human beings, who have no respect of the art and the democracy".<sup>259</sup> Architects and urban planners agreed with this statement of the intellectuals of the time and "(...) accused the suburbs and their builders to destroy of the image of the landscape, to suffocate the cities and to transform America at the turn of the century into one huge Los Angeles".<sup>260</sup> But as Herbert J. Gans observed in various sububrbs, that neither did people alter their behavior radically, when moving to the suburbs, nor was he able to relate the changes to the new environment".<sup>261</sup> Gans finds in his research that the Levittowners are organized in the way typical for the United States of America, as "they are solicited by church associations and organizations as well as by the two political parties, who especially endeavor this uncommitted groups of voters".<sup>262</sup> But still, the community of Levittown is according to Gans not a typical American community. "It is a suburb outside of the municipal borders of Camden and Philadelphia, and it is a dormitory suburb, because almost all of the residents work outside of the town".<sup>263</sup>

#### 2.4.3.2 "Das Neue Bauen"

The undesirable development in city planning and housing development during the nineteenth century resulted in new settlement concepts and the development of open space planning for settlements during the Republic of Weimar.<sup>264</sup> The precondition as well as the consequence of the industrial revolution was technical development as well as a rapid rise in population, which made on the one hand cheap laborers available for the industry and at the same time

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<sup>251</sup> Gans 1967, pp. 11-12.

<sup>252</sup> Gans 1967, p. 12.

<sup>253</sup> Gans 1967, p. 12.

<sup>254</sup> Gans 1967, p. 12.

<sup>255</sup> Gans 1967, p. 12.

<sup>256</sup> Gans 1967, p. 12.

<sup>257</sup> Gans 1967, p. 13.

<sup>258</sup> Gans 1967, p. 16.

<sup>259</sup> Gans 1967, p. 17.

<sup>260</sup> Gans 1967, p. 17.

<sup>261</sup> Gans 1967, p. 16.

<sup>262</sup> Gans 1967, p. 1.

<sup>263</sup> Gans 1967, p. 13.

<sup>264</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 21.

difficulties in the provision food supply came up.<sup>265</sup> In addition the demand for affordable housing in the city centers increased, which was “(...) an emergency situation, which was intensified by the context with speculation, exorbitant rents and a profiting social and economical system”.<sup>266</sup> The development of social housing as well as of privately owned buildings that had begun at the turn of the century was greatly demanded to alleviate the drastic housing misery. The new era of urban housing development was started with a high intensity in construction activity. In the time between the two World Wars a great number of housing units were erected and new building typologies invented. During the 1920s the way tenement buildings was altered to reflect the new concepts of adequate enclosed and open space provision. Baumann explains, “In the middle of the 1920s the focus of housing construction was moved from the construction of large settlements to the construction of rentable apartments in multi-family buildings”.<sup>267</sup> He adds, “Many settlements of the 1920s, especially the ones of ‘Das Neue Bauen’ express the experiments with various building forms, plans and methods of production”.<sup>268</sup>

The architects of the Bauhaus started out with the objective to improve the housing conditions of the working class and favored rentable houses with rationalized plans and prefabricated elements that were placed as row houses in order to be able to arrange kitchens and bedrooms to the East and living rooms to the West, so that the tenant had access to sunny light all day long. The typologization and rationalization of design elements and spaces were introduced as a way to make housing affordable to the masses by reducing the price of housing construction, but “(...) in reality [it, added C.M.] did not reduce the price in any way”.<sup>269</sup> Instead other unfavorable side effects were produced with the invention of row houses. For example, the “(...) orientation of rows according to the sun (...) resulted in a disengagement of the design to the environment”.<sup>270</sup> Due to the improvements to housing developments, tenant gardens became more important in the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>271</sup> The open space in the inner courtyard of apartment blocks became valuable. Baumann explains, “Because of the density of construction and the high value of land, the inner courtyard of blocks was the open space that was to be found the most”.<sup>272</sup> In addition it was taken into concern how to include gardens into new housing concept. Baumann states, “For example, the climatic conditions of the ground were improved for the creation of allotment gardens through a more spacious style of construction and the down zoning of the floor height”.<sup>273</sup> But he added that in the new settlements built in the 1920s, “the front gardens were regarded as only limitedly privately usable or individually designable, but were usually subordinated to the public space and were designed as a part of it”.<sup>274</sup> The architects of “Das Neue Bauen” were determined to create new settlements with equal housing conditions for all residents and thus new settlements with equally designed apartments throughout.<sup>275</sup> Baumann added that to to them “the constructive expression of these considerations was the functionally justified architecture of the buildings”.<sup>276</sup>

Until the beginning of the twentieth century open space design was, not considered by architects to be part of their work. Baumann states, “Until the beginning of the twentieth century, (...) architects regarded almost exceptionally the bourgeoisie house garden as a open space in the vicinity of the home as their professional job”.<sup>277</sup> He adds, “In reality, (...) architects were not only little interested in the job to design open spaces for apartment buildings, but apartment buildings were rejected by many (...) architects [interested in the

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<sup>265</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 21.

<sup>266</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 22. [translation C.M.]

<sup>267</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 56. [translation C.M.]

<sup>268</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 56. [translation C.M.]

<sup>269</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 59. [translation C.M.]

<sup>270</sup> Baumann 2002, pp. 56-57. [translation C.M.]

<sup>271</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 68. [translation C.M.]

<sup>272</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 61. [translation C.M.]

<sup>273</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 68. [translation C.M.]

<sup>274</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 68. [translation C.M.]

<sup>275</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 76. [translation C.M.]

<sup>276</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 76. [translation C.M.]

<sup>277</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 90. [translation C.M.]

design of open spaces, added C.M.] altogether”.<sup>278</sup> This was due to the understanding by many architects, that in contrast to apartment buildings only the small building allows to ensure the necessary connection of the living space with the garden.<sup>279</sup> If architects of “Das Neue Bauen” were concerned with the design of open space, it was according to Baumann “(...) the specialty of the open space design of the 1920s was the social claim, that stood behind it. The design was oriented at the needs of the residents and thereby at a high degree of usability and was standing in a context of the general social ambitions in the open space planning of this time, that especially were expressed in the design of the public park”.<sup>280</sup>

One of the few architects of “Das Neue Bauen”, who applied the principles of “Das Neue Bauen” – the creation of equal housing conditions for all residents and the functionally justification of architecture - to the design of a new settlement’s open spaces is Leberecht Migge (1881 – 1935).<sup>281</sup> To him, as Baumann puts it, “open space was to be usable by all residents in the same way, either in the form of spacious, commonly usable open areas or as house gardens or tenement gardens, which were allocated to each apartment and which were each identically designed”.<sup>282</sup>

In 1913, Leberecht Migge published his book “Die Gartenkultur des 20. Jahrhunderts”<sup>283</sup>, which was according to Baumann “the first systematic and comprehensive analysis of urban green and open space forms, among others in regard to the location in the urban area, the functions and the possibilities of usage (...)”.<sup>284</sup> In this book, Migge asks for “(...) a foresighted ‘garden politic’ of the cities and criticized the missing understanding of planning in the communal gardening departments”.<sup>285</sup> Later in 1918, after the First World War, Migge published the book “Jedermann Selbstversorger. Eine Lösung der Siedlungsfrage durch neuen Gartenbau”, calling for alleviating the housing situation of the working class with providing gardens for all, and later, before the Second World War, he wrote the book “Die wachsende Siedlung nach biologischen Gesetzen“. Therein he discusses the possibility to create a new settlement based on the concept of gardening as a form of living. When this book came out, Kleingartens had already existed for half a century, so that the experience of the Kleingartens was influencing the proposed self-help settlements.<sup>286</sup> In addition Migge collaborated with other architects to enhance the open space planning of their building designs.<sup>287</sup>

After the First World War, Leberecht Migge proposes that everybody should cultivate a piece of land by him- or herself to be able to support him- or herself in times of food shortages. The industrial workers should according to Migge cultivate the ground next to their factory to provide for an extra income, food supplement and recreation. The basis of Migge’s concept for new settlements was the understanding that the human being needs in order to survive not only food, but also a shelter. The main question is according to Migge how to provide the masses of homeless and jobless with an adequate environment and housing and not how to deal with them materialistic aspect or how to re-populate the countryside as a means of inner colonization of the nation. In his opinion the masses of people need not only to be re-settled from the city to the countryside, but they also have to be provided with gardens and houses

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<sup>278</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 97. [translation C.M.]

<sup>279</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 97. [translation C.M.]

<sup>280</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 88. [translation C.M.]

<sup>281</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 76. [translation C.M.]

<sup>282</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 76. [translation C.M.]

<sup>283</sup> Migge 1913.

<sup>284</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 48. [translation C.M.]

<sup>285</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 48. [translation C.M.]

<sup>286</sup> Migge 1918(a), p. 20.

<sup>287</sup> Baumann states, “Migge worked (...) together with several renown architects, including especially members of the so-called “New Building” like Erwin Gutking, Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, Ernst May, Otto Haesler, Martin Wagner, Otto Salvisberg, Carl Stahl-Urach, Hans Scharoun, Hugo Häring, Hans Herlein and others”. (Baumann 2002, p. 113. [translation C.M.]) For the garden city Hellaerau, Migge designed in 1909 “(...) the gardens of five small houses by the architect Muthesius (...)”. (Baumann 2002, p. 107. [translation C.M.]) Later during the post-First World War years, “with the improvement of the overall economic situation in the [Weimar, added C.M.] Republic, the necessity to provide food supplies of the own garden and consequently the interest in concepts of the settlement movement and self-sufficiency declined”. (Baumann 2002, p. 84. [translation C.M.]

that they could improve with themselves over time. In general, as Baumann explains, Migge's concern is to provide an affordable, appropriate open space to an enclosed space. "Migge's concept of settlement and settlement garden was based on the concept of the universal connection of the apartment and the garden, that had been first presented by Muthesius. While Muthesius is thinking in this context of the upper class, Migge is rather concerned about the middle class and the working class, and modified the concept accordingly".<sup>288</sup> According to Migge, as Baumann puts it, "The settlement garden was to take over a part of the living function like for example to provide space for the children to play in and thereby to compensate the small size of the apartment".<sup>289</sup>

Migge supports the return to the rural lifestyle on the basis of the new urban experience and wanted to create a new urban situation.<sup>290</sup> In his opinion an organically grown housing settlement will eventually replace urban settlements that are too expansive in size. The growth of urban structures and systems according to biological laws is to Migge of central importance. Leberecht Migge states that an organically grown settlement was a precondition for the healthy life of its residents. According to him a settlement of detached buildings as well as a monotonous group of buildings could not "grow organically" and would create therefore an unhealthy environment. In his understanding a newly established settlement had to develop naturally, i.e. in the way a seed develops into a full plant. Consequently, since it was necessary to create an organic condition, it is important to him to start a settlement with a housing unit, which would then develop into a conglomeration of units.

In the settlement concept Migge envisions, called "Fruchtlandschaft", or fruit-landscape, land would be used intensively for gardening. The fertility of the soil in his settlement would be increased through the intensive technical cultivation of the land.<sup>291</sup> According to him the extensive farming of land creates characteristic landscapes, but does not create a Fruchtlandschaft, because it does not use the extensive land intensively. In his understanding a Fruchtlandschaft settlements need to be cultivated gradually and the residents were not necessarily educated in gardening. He concludes that a Fruchtlandschaft was a grown symbiosis of residents and the land they lived on and that it was therefore working to the maximum of its effectiveness. Migge describes the residents of Fruchtlandschaft as people who had migrated from urban environments to rural areas, who were accustomed to urban techniques and had the cultural needs of urbanites. He states that their technical advancement made them almost independent from climatic conditions in regard to their gardening effort. A detailed plan is generally not necessary for the development of Migge's new fruit-landscape, but it would not be an obstruction to it either since there are some spatial, economical, geographic and climatic aspects as well as the organizational and technical aspects that need to be considered, when planning a new settlement. In addition, according to Migge, these aspects are necessary, in order to determine and establish the direction in which the new community would grow. In regard to the spatial preconditions of planning the development of a new settlement an increase in population has to be considered according to Migge early on, which means there must be enough land available to provide for the new settlement and future expansion.

In Migge's concept for new fruit-landscapes, land was to be used for gardening prior to constructing houses upon it. Migge explains that consequently the gardens needed to be created before the houses in the new settlements. He explains that this was necessary to determine the direction of the production and to provide the appropriate space. The new dwellings and gardens of the settlement needed according to Migge's concept to be established along a grid of rows of walls, which would shelter the gardens and would provide at the same time the basis of the construction for the dwellings. The geographic and climatic situation of the location determine according to Migge the shape and size of the new settlement. The new fruit-landscape would be according to Migge useful to the industrial entrepreneurs, because the workers of the new settlement would live next to their work and would therefore be available at all times, i.e. independently from the national or international

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<sup>288</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 256. [translation C.M.]

<sup>289</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 256. [translation C.M.]

<sup>290</sup> Migge 1932, p. 17.

<sup>291</sup> Migge 1932, pp. 10-11.

economic situation of the market. The introduction of gardening was according to him the essential contemporary land-use activity and therefore the economical precondition for the development of new settlements. Migge explains that in the proposed new self-sufficient gardening settlements the technical requirements for the cultivation of land are far more important than the creation of housing. In regard to organizational aspects new fruit-landscape settlement could according to Migge be situated adjacent to villages and small towns, so that there is the choice to make it part of an existing municipality or establish a new municipality.

The new settlement needs, according to him, to exist out of equally valuable parts in the same way as a building, as the human being and the environment. The uniting factor for all these individual, but equally valuable elements of the new settlement, would be according to Migge the sun, since the sun was according to him in its effectiveness the determinant for the life within the new colony. This applies according to Migge to the enclosed as well as the open spaces of the settlement. Therefore not only the rooms of the housing needed to be oriented according to the sun, in order to regulate the intake of heat and light, but according to Migge, the efficiency and capacity of heat and light of the sun could be improved through the introduction of sheltering walls around the gardening spaces. Consequently he proposes that the new colony would be generally oriented towards the South. For the gardens he envisioned a layout with rows of sheltering and fruit-walls, which are to be introduced not only in order maximize on the sun but at the same time in order to function as the supporting skeleton for the buildings and elements of the settlement.<sup>292</sup>

In Migge's concept, the colony would be separated in two parts and one part of the new colony would be made up of gardens, dwellings and streets. In this part land was to be used intensively, in order to justify the high cost of the ground. The other part of the new settlement was to be used more extensively and less intensively. The extensive use of land in the second part of the new colony was needed, in order to use the first part of the gardens, dwellings and streets in such an intensive way. Since urban land was restricted, the minimum size of lots usable for gardening is determining in Migge's concept the size of the settlement. Therefore the size of land needed for gardening per person could be calculated in the same way as the size of living space needed per person. The various sizes of family and the difference in income, i.e. the difference in how much a family is dependent on selling parts of the food they cultivate in their garden, are explaining the different sizes of gardens required. Migge calculates, for example, the size of land required by unemployed gardeners with 26,909 square feet (2,500 square meters). Since the nutrition and calories needed per person and the amount of food that could be harvested is determining the ability for self-sufficiency, garden parcels in the new settlements were to be distributed according to the number of persons in a family. According to Migge an average size of a garden lot of 1,615 square feet (150 square meters) has been declared by research to be sufficient for a family, even though 861-1,076 square feet (80-100 square meters) per person are demanded.

Migge is convinced that the new settlement would be valuable to the resident living in them, because of improved food supply and living conditions. The new settlers would be provided with a garden and allowed to live in the traditional rural setting without requiring anything from the city altogether. The combination of enclosed industrial districts and fruit-landscape settlement would, according to Migge, be beneficial for the industrial worker, since the residents of the new settlement would be working in the industry and in his garden. The garden would thus provide a counterbalance to the factory work and improve the workers quality of life. Since other new urban developments were, according to Migge, usually provided new residents with turnkey dwellings, these residents remained unproductive were consequently a burden to economy. Therefore Migge demands that all residents of the new urban settlements proposed by him would participate in gardening activities, in order to avoid that the new colony would be a burden to the local economy. Even though the new settlers most likely lived in rural areas before, Migge suggests hiring professional gardeners to teach them intensive methods of gardening in small spaces and selling the produce at markets.

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<sup>292</sup> Migge 1932, p. 22.

In line with his considerations of organic development of the new settlement, Migge proposes that the dwelling had to be a “growing dwelling”. In his opinion, the dwelling needed to grow in size according to the savings of the settler in the same way as the entire settlements would be growing with the improvement of the financial situation of the settlers through their gardening effort. Migge envisions that the growing dwelling would grow with the means of the inhabitant, but to maintain an enclosed entity in each stage. The resident of the small sized dwelling with the adjacent garden would be in close contact to his land, as well have plenty of access to air and sun. Migge introduces the “sun-hut”, a furnished one-room dwelling, situated on a leased garden lot, as the smallest unit of housing of his new settlement concept. He understood this hut as a provisional and inexpensive shelter, which was in its construction half a tent and half a solid hut. The sun-hut would function as a core-house, the “Kernhaus” that would become more permanent and solid in its construction and grow in size with the addition of more rooms, once the income of the inhabitant of this sun-hut would have increased in accordance with his work on the leased parcel of land. Eventually the new settler would turn the sun-hut into a dwelling of regular size and own the land it was built on. This one room dwelling was intended to be the basic unit of an organic conglomeration of several units that would form a biological settlement entity.<sup>293</sup>

The growing dwelling is according to Migge to be built directly along a southern facing wall, which shelters the land from wind and catches the sun and the light. He explains that the rooms are to be separated according to the various functions and are to be arranged in relation to their use next to each other or on top of each other.<sup>294</sup> Migge proposes, for example, to add to each small house in the first step another a small hut, which could be open, half-enclosed or made of glass panels and which would serve as a greenhouse as a transitional space to the garden. Migge adds that the distinct functions are not necessarily to be protected by a single sheltering roof, but the growing dwelling is according to Migge organized, so that the building encourages various possibilities of use. The house can be altered consistent with the way the land is used, i.e. to allow more space for living or more for gardening and production. In Migge’s opinion it has to be possible to connect a new individual cell of the building to an existing part as well as to separate it, so that the growing house can be adapted to the growth of the family living in it.<sup>295</sup> The construction of the dwelling is according to him to be done by the inhabitants in the do-it-yourself method and with support by specialists using standardized, pre-fabricated building parts.<sup>296</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the location of open space in context with the development of land used for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that while at the turn of the eighteenth century villages were still surrounded by the commons, i.e. open spaces usable by everyone, with the ongoing urbanization and privatization of the commons, the provision of access to open space for residents especially in urban low-income neighborhoods became more and more a topic of concern to intellectuals and municipalities. During the time, the discussion among intellectuals at the time looking to improve the housing situation of the urban low-income population ranged from the satellite and garden city to the creation of common accessible open space, used by all residents of a new tenement building. The conflict discussed was to construct one-family dwellings for low-income residents outside of the city to reintroduce the rural lifestyle or to re-construct tenement buildings for the low-income, working class in the urban centers. For example Dohna-Poninski is interested in improving the existing urban housing conditions for the low-income population in the urban centers by adding regulations and accessible green open space, while Leberecht Migge envisions that the urban low-income residents would return to the rural lifestyle with the help

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<sup>293</sup> Migge 1932, p. 8.

<sup>294</sup> Migge 1932, p. 33.

<sup>295</sup> Migge 1932, p. 34.

<sup>296</sup> To implement his concept for a new type of settlement, Migge created in 1922 the model settlement “Sonnenhof” in Worpswede and moved there with his family. He started with the construction of core-houses with gardens, which were developable into farm buildings or full-size dwellings with garden, as a transition between the rural and urban lifestyle. At Worpswede there was also a school to educate the new settlers in gardening as well as in other fields. Garden-welfare societies were established to organize the gardening settlement. They were responsible for giving advice, for planning, delivery and the management of the construction sites as well as for the financial and cooperative organization of the settlement. (Migge 1932, p. 34)

of food production and would live in a new urban settlement in one-family housing that increase in size and standard with the income of the residents.

The garden city movement also proposed the revival of the rural lifestyle in new urban settlements, but with a restricted number of lower-income residents living in one-family homes with gardens, while agricultural land was laid out like a belt around the new city. A variation of the garden city concept was designed in 1929 by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright with a new settlement of Radburn in New Jersey, ten miles from Manhattan. It is characterized in its layout and community organization by the planners' expectation of a constant increase of population and urban development answered by a separate circulation of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic as well as the construction of "superblocks" that were higher in standard of living than the apartment buildings of the inner city and a belt of green open spaces surrounding the new settlement. In the urban centers social low-income housing construction were constructed at the same time that followed new regulations to provide sanitary conditions for the tenants and to reduce social conflict. The inclusion of private open space in these new developments was neglected. Therefore the urban low-income residents improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

#### **2.4.4 Change in location of open space**

After the turn of the eighteenth century the commons, the open spaces surround villages in England that were public spaces that could be used by everyone, were subdivided and leased to low-income, landless residents, who became consequently rural workers, whose standard of life was consequently at a minimum.<sup>297</sup> The reduction of open space accessible to all residents - i.e. the reduction of public open space - continued and the political, economical and social development at the beginning of the nineteenth century has its expression in the development of the amount, the availability and accessibility or usability of open space during this time. Baumann, analyzing this development in regard to the situation of the working class, states, "While until the nineteenth century the urban green spaces were dominated by representative bourgeois aspects, more social aspects like the usability of open spaces prevailed especially at the end of the nineteenth century, due to the additional spreading of the reformistic concepts in urban and housing development".<sup>298</sup> To him "the desolate housing conditions were mirrored to some degree in the provision of open space".<sup>299</sup> In other words, the ongoing construction boom and land speculation in the second half of the nineteenth century created formerly unknown density in living quarters and of buildings. Consequently land prices became so high that open space in the vicinity of one's home, a garden, public park or playground, was turned into a luxury asset of a property. Baumann explains that thus low-income tenants were the urban residents most deprived of open space. He states, "Open spaces remained only without construction at locations they were not object of speculation. Therefore it was impossible to create public open spaces, were they would have been most needed, near tenement buildings, but only there, where land was available and affordable, like for example in the urban periphery".<sup>300</sup>

Until the end of the nineteenth century, accessible urban public green spaces included cemeteries, planted promenades, public parks and planted urban public places.<sup>301</sup> But, as Baumann states, "(...) these landscapes were not suitable to compensate the desolate housing and the tenements' lack of providing green open spaces, because they were provided only few and far away between in the urban environment and were predominately designed as representative, decorative landscape, that were employed to beautify the places of train stations and new development areas for members of the upper classes, in order to hike up the price of housing".<sup>302</sup> The open spaces were not installed to improve the quality of life and welfare of the individual human being, but to guarantee the individuals function for society. Until the end of the nineteenth century the actual situation of society was not

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<sup>297</sup> Benevolo 1971, p. 14.

<sup>298</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 30. [translation C.M.]

<sup>299</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 31. [translation C.M.]

<sup>300</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 31. [translation C.M.]

<sup>301</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 31. [translation C.M.]

<sup>302</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 31. [translation C.M.]

analyzed and the social structure was not altered, which would have been a way to improve the miserable conditions of the working class.<sup>303</sup> Eventually the municipality saw the need to step up and to demand the provision of green open space by regulating urban development.

The public park was meant to implement open space politics on the municipal level that were oriented towards public demand. According to Baumann“(…) he beginning of municipal provision of green open spaces by the city was meant to react to the desolate state of health of the urban population, which were problems, that could not be answered by traditional means of administration”.<sup>304</sup> The design of public parks did not reflect the needs of the working class. Baumann states, “the design principles of (…) parks were oriented at the design of the landscape gardens of the eighteenth century and not at the needs of the residents of an industrial town at the end of the nineteenth century”.<sup>305</sup> In other words, in Europe “(…) until the turn of the century, in most of the landscapes – despite being named ‘garden of the people’ or ‘park of the people’- there were only few provisions for recreation”.<sup>306</sup> The landscape park of the nineteenth century was open to all residents, but not designed according to the needs of all residents. Baumann elaborates, “The members of the working class were allowed to those landscapes, but the urban landscapes of the nineteenth century were primarily meant to be used by the upper classes for representation and were, according to the conception of the educated bourgeoisie, supposed to have an educative and democracy forming function and effect”.<sup>307</sup> Baumann explains, “Only after the turn of the century the concepts of the function of urban green were newly oriented. In context with the reform oriented city planning (…) a new understanding of the principles of functions and design started to be developed, with the usability and social-hygienic aspects increasingly focused on”.<sup>308</sup>

To Baumann equal political rights and communal self-administration are the prerequisites for urban open space politics. Looking at the time of the Weimar Republic in Germany he states that “the equal political rights of the socially disadvantaged classes and the strengthening of the communal self-administration with an expanded radius of action in regard to legal planning, that were the new conditions which made the development of an intensive urban open space politics possible at all”.<sup>309</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the change in location of open space in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that after the subdivision of the commons, the open spaces surrounding villages in England that were until be used by everyone, the reduction of open space accessible to all residents continued. Consequently urban land values became and an accessible open space in the vicinity of a residential building became a luxury asset of a property. Until the end of the nineteenth century, accessible urban public green included cemeteries, planted promenades like the Grand Concourse in the South Bronx, public parks and planted urban public places, but these public open spaces did not compensate the urban low-income population for the lack of accessible private open spaces, since these public open spaces were provided only few and far away from most residential location and were predominately designed as representative, decorative landscape, meant to beautify these residential locations in order to hike up the price of housing. That means these public open spaces were not designed according to the needs of all residents and were not installed to improve the quality of life of the urban low-income population. Therefore low-income residents improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as residents’ groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

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<sup>303</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 31. [translation C.M.]

<sup>304</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 32. [translation C.M.]

<sup>305</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 31.

<sup>306</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 32. [translation C.M.]

<sup>307</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 32. [translation C.M.]

<sup>308</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 45. [translation C.M.]

<sup>309</sup> Baumann 2002, p. 46. [translation C.M.]

#### **2.4.5 Neighborhood and location of open space**

In the beginning of the industrialization urban centers expanded unplanned and chaotically as well as at a rapid speeds. Because of industrialization and the demands of the free market the new building sector produced housing of adequate standard that was affordable to wealthier residents, but not to the low-income population. City planning was needed in order to curb speculation and to provide more quality of life for the low-income populations by creating more sanitary urban conditions that would improve the general welfare of the urban population. Many deficiencies caused by the rapid urbanization have been regulated by building and city planning regulations, which set for example minimum requirements of light and ventilation in apartments as well as of a lot's open space ratio. But still privately usable and public open space is still not sufficiently provided in most of the low-income neighborhoods until today. That means since the end of the nineteenth century, housing was planned as an isolated aspect of urban life and other aspects like the social networks made on the way to work on the street or after work in the open spaces as well as the identity of the location itself - i.e. the connection of the residents to the neighborhood - were ignored. The personal, familiar and neighborly life in a city can therefore be helped through the structure of its buildings or it can be destroyed by it. Therefore the adequacy of the residential building for the low-income population in context with accessible privately usable open spaces needs to be examined further.

Consequently the analysis of neighborhood and location of open space in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that city planning was needed in order to curb speculation with substandard low-income housing, to provide more housing of more quality for the low-income population. Even though city planning was introduced at the end of the nineteenth, the beginning of the twentieth century, especially low-income housing was planned as an isolated aspect of urban life and did not include other aspects like the social networks and open spaces as a necessary connection of the residents to their neighborhood. That means city planning did not include regulations for the provision of accessible open spaces next to low-income housing. Therefore low-income residents at the time improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as about one hundred years later residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

#### **2.5 Urban land use and specific land use**

In the following I will investigate the context of urban land use and specific land use by looking at the aspects of residential location and gentrification as well as the context of common land use and community gardens.

##### **2.5.1 Residential location**

A specific group of residents has strong bonds to a specific urban district, in which they like to be or remain living, thus migration of this group is focused on that certain urban area.<sup>310</sup> The motivation to prefer a specific residential location stems from cultural aspects and income: Cultural groups tend to live in the same neighborhood and block, because the apartments are offered within their social network. Income groups tend to live in the same neighborhood, because the real estate market forces them to do so. Residents, who are working self-employed in a specific urban area, for example in a store, are usually strongly rooted in that specific location, since they are dependent on a specific group of local customers. Their employees and workers - especially those without a family - are usually willing to move for economic reasons, but also in dependence of the housing situation and quality of life in general and in preference of neighborhoods that confirm with their cultural context and of course income. Most of the time residents of specific districts have strong bonds to that area of the city.<sup>311</sup> This is due to the specific advantages of a location, the quality of the buildings and the social character as well as the familiarity with the place and the people. City districts with old cultural traditions and strong physiognomy produce among the inhabitants the consciousness of participation at the cultural values. Residents identified themselves with an urban area dependent on the ownership of land and oriented at the architectural and social

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<sup>310</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 233.

<sup>311</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 235.

relations.<sup>312</sup> The preference of one residential location over another by residents' groups is also dependent on transportation to other parts of the city as well on the accessibility of private and public open space, i.e. the options for recreation in the neighborhood and in the surrounding areas.

Consequently the analysis of residential location in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that a specific cultural groups prefers a specific residential location because of aspects of income and culture, but also because apartments are offered within their social network. Residents identify themselves with an urban area dependent on land ownership of land and social relationships. In addition they chose a residential location because of the accessibility of private and public open space that are accessible by transportation or that are located in the vicinity of one' home. Since urban low-income neighborhoods lack accessible open space in the vicinity of housing community gardens are especially necessary as a land use form in those areas. Therefore low-income residents improved their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

### **2.5.2 Gentrification**

To accommodate the mass of new residents it was not only necessary to build more housing, but also to provide new infrastructure like for example to broaden the streets for the increase in traffic caused by the migration of the urban population to the countryside. Consequently, apartment buildings - mainly in the low-income districts with a lack of strong interest groups on the political stage - in the inner city were demolished to build new streets. Then, next to the new streets, new apartment buildings were constructed with higher standards and higher rents. Subsequently, more affluent residents were moving into the district attracting concomitantly more affluent businesses – due to the “gentry” moving in this process is called gentrification. The rent of more and more apartments was set up and more and more low-income residents were forced to move out of the neighborhood. The real estate market and the construction coordinators of the city consequently played an active part in this urban development – helped by the banks, which “redlined” specific districts as ready for “urban renewal”.

The real estate market initiated urban renewal in specific district by locating industrial businesses in one district or other districts and forced low-income residents to keep on moving from one urban district to another in a continuous inner city migration. An inner city reformation is taking place, when the migration in a city moves in a certain direction, which changes the configuration of the age and social structure in the different districts.<sup>313</sup> That means that certain districts are vacated as others become more crowded. While the residential districts with the old buildings and standards are most of the time socially on the downwind the newly constructed settlements at the periphery are socially upgraded.<sup>314</sup> The parts of the city with old building structures, which are most of the time located in the inner city, are given up voluntarily by more affluent residents along with the desire to move with the family to the more spacious housing and open space in the urban periphery. Consequently inner city districts are left to the elderly and low-income residents while the residential areas that a more affluent population inhabits are the city's fringes. Low-income residents' groups, who are becoming active to improve their quality of life and thus attracting interest of the real estate market, can start this gentrification process.

Consequently the analysis of gentrification in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that the real estate market by initiating urban renewal in specific district and by locating industrial businesses in other districts forcing low-income residents to move between urban districts in a continuous inner city migration while introducing wealthier residents to formerly low-income neighborhoods. This so-called gentrification process can be started by low-income residents' groups becoming active to improve their quality of life that are attracting interest of the real

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<sup>312</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 236.

<sup>313</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 234.

<sup>314</sup> Pfeil 1950, p. 234.

estate market – as in the case of residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s. But since community gardens in low-income neighborhoods have existed in New York City citywide for more than 30 years shows the determination and the will of the people to garden on common ground in the inner city.

### **2.5.3 Common land use and community gardens**

Low-income residents have created privately used open spaces on public land in the urban environment since the beginning of the urbanization - first at the periphery of the city, but in a walking distance to housing. These "gardens" were situated next to each other, i.e. they were grouped to a garden "colony". With the ongoing urbanization, gardens in the inner city were built over, moved or reduced in size, so that with the decreased amount in land available more residents had to share a parcel of land where they then maintained individual garden beds. The organization of this land use form - both on the side of the gardening residents and on the side of the city - has developed over the years in protection of common and diverging interests. When looking at the example of Germany in regard to common land use, in the nineteenth century the German state owned public land outside of the cities. Additionally in every town or village of Germany there existed commonly owned land, called the commons. The members of the community cultivated in some cases the commons collectively and the harvest belonged consequently to all participants. In other cases this commonly owned land was divided into smaller parcels, distributed among the low-income residents and administered by the municipality. The right to use the common land was interconnected with the existence of the traditional market cooperative. The land was given at first for agricultural use for only a short-term. Then later a few farmers became owners of the land. During the time of the industrialization the institution of the commons has helped in many cases to prevent the creation of un-propertied rural workers as well as of migration.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century for example the city of Berlin provided common land, which was used by the community based on hereditary tenancy.<sup>315</sup> Subsequent common land use forms such as the community gardens starting in the South Bronx for example in the 1970s have been called by various names depending on by whom they were started and/ or who they should serve. Some examples include Victory Gardens, Relief Gardens, War Gardens, Company Gardens, School Gardens, Seniors' Gardens, Anti-Inflation Gardens, Organic Gardens, and Neighborhood Gardens. In my thesis I will not refer to most of these examples, since I do not make a distinction between Seniors' Gardens, Anti-Inflation Gardens, Organic Gardens and Neighborhood Gardens on the one hand and community gardens on the other hand.

Community gardens are an example of a common land use form. These gardens were started in the economic crisis of the 1970s in New York City and other American cities and open urban land. Until today these gardens have remained in the city centers, due to the struggle of their protection by the residents using them. In recent years community gardens have also been started in cities globally – like for example in Germany, France and England. A community garden is usually separated from the street's public space by a fence. The key to the gate is given to members of the garden group listed by name, passersby are to be granted access any time a gardener is present as demanded by the city's administration. That group of residents decides on the layout of the garden democratically, often in response to the needs of their neighborhood. Thus the design of community gardens varies greatly throughout the city. In general elements are included that allow private and common activity at the same time like individual garden beds next to a small, self-built, commonly used garden house.

Residents use garden space for spontaneous socialization, occupation independent from work, in self-reliance, democratization and independence, while digging the soil or harvesting fruits and vegetables and designing an open space according to their preferences. Materials and technical advice is provided by different organizations, but the residents gardening in a group decide the management of the garden space commonly. A community garden is not necessarily part of urban agriculture, since the term agriculture implies an activity that is

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<sup>315</sup> Pniower 1948, p. 21.

directed at production on soil – many times out of economic interest. Nevertheless it has been defined in the context with the zoning for urban agriculture in cities like Kansas City, Kansas, Seattle, Washington, Portland, Ohio and Chicago. But when defining a community garden in context with the historic development of individually and collectively used, public open spaces, a community garden can be seen in the tradition of the commons, allotment garden and Kleingarten. Therefore a community garden is a flexible public open space use that is set in context to an urban environment.

Consequently the analysis of urban land use and specific land use in regard to common land use in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that publicly owned land outside of cities, town and village, called the commons, existed for the use by members of the community, who cultivated this land either commons collectively or individually after dividing it up smaller grouped parcels of land. The commons was administered by the municipality and distributed among low-income urban residents at first for short-term agricultural use, but later the commonly used land was privatized for the use of only a few residents. Subsequent to the commons there have been various land use collective public land use forms have been initiated by low-income residents, more or less supported by municipalities but always used by low-income residents such as for example Kleingartens and allotment gardens as well as Victory Gardens, Relief Gardens, War Gardens. The initiative of low-income residents in the South Bronx to start community gardens starting in the 1970s to improve their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens is part of this common land use development.

## Chapter 3: Open space development in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s

### 3.1 Urbanization and open space development between the 1920s and the 1970s

In the following I will look at the context of urbanization and open space development between the 1920s and the 1970s by analyzing the topic of urbanization with focus on the aspects of recreation and open space provision as well as the amount of open space in relation to population density and its use according to income and race. Then I will introduce a digression on the open space development in the Philadelphia in regard to community open space land use to show the negligence of issue of open space use for community gardening in the South Bronx before the 1970s. Here I will investigate the Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association, the Neighborhood Gardens Association as well as of the context of university involvement and neighborhood commons.

#### 3.1.1 Urbanization in regard to open space availability

The global economic depression at the end of the 1920s known as the Great Depression brought publicly funded construction as well as privately financed construction of housing in the South Bronx to a stop, so that many lots along the laid out streets remained undeveloped and building sites remained unfinished.<sup>1</sup> Then, at the beginning of the Second World War, on July 1, 1933 the new Independent Subway Line along Eight Avenue was opened. This helped to restart up the real estate market, since the subway line provided a quicker commute to Manhattan, where most of the jobs were located. Since the area was wide-open and had cheaper land prices new settlements were constructed in the South Bronx, in East Brooklyn, in some parts of Queens, in the still-rural Long Island<sup>2</sup> and in New Jersey – which were of suburban character at the time. Because the U.S. government subsidized housing construction, and thereby private developers' interests, thousands of new one-family buildings could be constructed in the new suburbs in a short time. A new building with yard in the suburbs was previously reserved for the wealthy, but became now affordable for the middle class.

Due to this rapid urban development, "in 1936, the Regional Plan Association proposed an extensive network of expressways and parkways covering the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area. The expressway was to give to both pleasure and commercial traffic the type of safe and uninterrupted roadway enjoyed by pleasure vehicles on existing parkways. The Regional Plan Association believed that construction of a new freeway system for all types of vehicles would be the best permanent solution for New York's traffic problems. One recommended route, a controlled-access 'Cross Bronx' expressway that was to be open to all vehicles, was to connect the new George Washington Bridge<sup>3</sup> with the then-proposed Bronx-Whitestone Bridge<sup>4</sup>, as well as to a proposed expressway connecting the Triborough Bridge with Connecticut".<sup>5</sup> The construction at the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, know today as the Triborough Bridge, spanning from the southern part of the Bronx to Manhattan and Queens crossing the Harlem River, the Bronx Kill, and the Hell Gate in the East River, began

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<sup>1</sup> In 1923, in the vicinity of the Grand Concourse, the grand promenade of the South Bronx, the Yankee Stadium opened in 1923 with an immediate sell-out of the first game. In the same year the Concourse Plaza Hotel opened to become the "best address" at the Grand Concourse and in the Bronx. It is said to have been comparable luxurious in its standard like the Waldorf-Astoria in Manhattan. Governor Alfred E. Smith paid his tribute at both opening events of 1923. In his speech at the hotel's opening ceremony he called the Bronx the "(...) most striking example of urban development in the United States (...)", and concluded, "(...) today, the Bronx is a great city". (North Side News, October 23, 1923, quoted in Jonnes 1986, p. 56) He continued, "(...) after seeing this new structure, I am convinced that anything will go in the Bronx". (North Side News, October 23, 1923, quoted in Jonnes 1986, p. 56) In 1965, the Concourse Plaza Hotel was sold to the City of New York to be used for senior housing. Consequently welfare families, who had been living there in the last days of the hotel, as well as long-time residents had to move out.

<sup>2</sup> In 1938 in Levittown, Long Island, "a new house cost eight thousand dollars and the monthly charge over the thirty-year mortgage was thirty-eight dollars". (Jonnes 1986, p. 95)

<sup>3</sup> "The six-lane George Washington Bridge was completed on October 25, 1931 (...)" ([www.nycroads.com/crossings/george-washington/](http://www.nycroads.com/crossings/george-washington/))

<sup>4</sup> "The Bronx-Whitestone Bridge was completed on April 29, 1939, (...)" ([www.nycroads.com/crossings/bronx-whitestone/](http://www.nycroads.com/crossings/bronx-whitestone/))

<sup>5</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/cross-bronx/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/cross-bronx/)

in 1929. The bridge finally in opened 1936 with President Franklin D. Roosevelt present at the opening. Robert Moses took control of the project in the 1930s and realized it “under the \$44.2 million WPA grant that made this the biggest such work on the eastern seaboard”.<sup>6</sup> The total costs of the bridge construction were about \$60 million making it one of the largest public work projects of the time and that at the costs of the destruction of the closely built up residential neighborhood of the South Bronx. In order to make room for the approaching ramp of the bridge ten blocks of “old-law” tenement buildings, which were some of the earliest and least modernized buildings, on 134<sup>th</sup> and 135<sup>th</sup> Streets were demolished. Due to the construction, the demolition and the fumes many residents moved out of the area. The former neighborhood and community was destroyed and had to form again with new residents and in the new conditions. When the construction was finished, the Triborough Bridge connected the streets of the South Bronx were suddenly filled with cars, since the connecting highway was to not built yet. Consequently the neighborhoods adjacent to the bridge had to deal with the fumes and noise created by the traffic going to and from the new bridge.

In 1928, the Regional Plan Association of New York conducted a study of recreation in great cities in 1928, which stated that a recreation activity needed to be “(...) so compellingly attractive as to draw the children from the streets and hold their interested from day to day”.<sup>7</sup> In addition the Regional Plan Association’s proposed a restructuring of New York region. Part of the 1936 Regional Plan Association’s proposal was to construct in the area of the South Bronx was the Major Deegan Expressway. “In 1935, New York City arterial coordinator Robert Moses began work on the initial section of the Major Deegan Expressway. This original 1.5-mile section, which connected the northern Triborough Bridge approach with the Grand Concourse – a street modeled after the Champs Elysee in Paris and lined by apartment buildings built in the 1920s in Art Deco style<sup>8</sup> - , was completed in April 1939, just in time for the 1939-1940 World’s Fair”.<sup>9</sup> The Regional Plan Association’s proposal of 1936 also “(...) recommended that an east-west expressway be constructed to connect the Triborough Bridge with a north-south expressway through Westchester County and Connecticut”.<sup>10</sup> It was created as an additional main thoroughfare running through the southeastern part of the Bronx as the Bruckner Boulevard. “Formerly known as Eastern Boulevard, the road was renamed in the late 1940’s after a former Bronx Borough President. In addition to serving residential and business area, the boulevard was designed to connect the Triborough and Bronx-Whitestone bridges with Pelham Bay Park”.<sup>11</sup>

Five years after the Regional Plan Association’s proposal for a restructuring of New York region to meet the new mobility and need for new urban development due to an increase in population, the New York City Planning Department came up with a proposal of its own. “In 1941, the New York City Planning Department unveiled plans for a network of express

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<sup>6</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Jacobs 1961, pp. 84-85.

<sup>8</sup> The apartment building called the “Roosevelt Gardens”, for example was built in 1922 in the style of southern Spanish architecture - an elegant white six-story building with Spanish corners and mansard roofs. The building occupied an entire block and featured in its courtyard a large Italian garden, featuring a fifteen-foot high stone statue of Theodore Roosevelt that gave the building its name. “Gardeners cared for the flowers and shrubs in the Italian garden and trimmed the hedges in front of the professional offices along the Grand Concourse”. (Jonnes 1986, p. 289) The building was maintained by porters and secured by doormen and was for three decades a respectable residential address, so that many doctors, lawyers and businessmen lived there. The Roosevelt Gardens apartment block was placed next to other extravagant apartment houses, built in Art Deco style, which featured fountains in their courtyards like the Lewis Morris Apartment building, renowned as the Medical Building, because of the great number of doctors and dentists among its residents. Another apartment expensive building located a few blocks south at the Grand Concourse, The Andrew Freedman Home, opened in 1924. It was built in Italian renaissance style, a palazzo placed in a formal garden. The construction of the new IND subway line along Eight Avenue in the 1930s affected the type of buildings constructed along the Grand Concourse as it spurred development in the Bronx. The expensively built apartment buildings were sold one by one to give way to new large apartment houses. The Grand Concourse remained until around 1965 a good address to live at, but deteriorated by the end of the 1960s.

<sup>9</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/major-deegan/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/major-deegan/).

<sup>10</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/).

<sup>11</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/).

highways and parkways. (...) Work on the expressways was postponed by World War II".<sup>12</sup> Robert Moses, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation since 1933, proposed in 1945 a new highway system. In his opinion, only cars should be allowed to use parkways and the access to highways should be limited as well. Moses' urban planning objective seems to follow that of the Regional Plan Association, as he proposed to construct bridges, highways and parkways for a faster access to the recreational areas and new parks in the periphery of the city, to adapt the city to the new mobility of its residents. Moses became the City Construction Coordinator in 1946 and started to push through with his construction plans. Moses had planned to build the Cross Bronx Expressway as a connection between the George Washington Bridge in the west and the Bronx Whitestone Bridge in the east of the South Bronx, but the construction of the new highway caused problems in the borough's infrastructure as it cut "(...) across 113 streets, avenues and boulevards; sewers and water and utility numbering in the hundreds; one subway and three railroads, five elevated rapid transit lines, and seven other expressway or parkways, some of which were being built by Moses simultaneously".<sup>13</sup> It took a while until the residents of the South Bronx realized that Moses did not back off his plan to construct the Cross Bronx Expressway through an area where the homes of many of them were situated. In 1946 "thirty-one civic, religious, and veterans organizations banded together into the Cross-Bronx Citizens' Protective Association to oppose a road that would displace tens of thousands of families when that many veterans were still homeless".<sup>14</sup> But the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway began, forcing the residents moved to move. Many houses stood vacant and attracted homeless people until they went down in ruins under the ongoing construction of the expressway. "While it was painful for those who had to move, it was also painful for those who could stay. The demolition and ensuing excavation for the roadbed generated tremendous chaos in the contiguous streets."<sup>15</sup> In a short time 159 apartment buildings with 1.530 apartments were destroyed<sup>16</sup>, which could have been avoided if Moses would have called for the Cross Bronx Expressway to be laid out a half mile further to the North, i.e., cutting through the Crotona Park. But instead a great number of residents were forced to move and even more followed to get away from the noise and dirt of first the construction site and later the highway itself.

When the Cross-Bronx Expressway was completed it was "(...) a seven-mile-long, six-lane-wide ditch hacked through one solid Bronx neighborhood after another."<sup>17</sup> But Robert Moses was content, the Cross-Bronx Expressway allowed trucks and commuters in cars to pass through quickly the Bronx to the suburbs in Westchester or elsewhere in the North of the city or in the other direction to Long Island and New Jersey in the South. In 1951 Moses proposed to construct the Bruckner Expressway, a sixteen mile long roadway, elevated over and along the busy commercial Bruckner Boulevard, was confronted by the working-class tenants as well as by the local private businessmen, who were part of an influential interest group. "In 1951, Robert Moses, the New York City arterial coordinator and the chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, proposed an elevated expressway along Bruckner Boulevard from the Triborough Bridge to the Bronx River, and a depressed expressway from the Bronx River to Pelham Bay Park. The \$23 million cost of the expressway was to be borne by the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority".<sup>18</sup> But "the elevated Bruckner Expressway proposal ran into opposition from local storeowners who feared loss of business, and residents who feared the spread of blight common to areas that had elevated highways and subways."<sup>19</sup> But Robert Moses did not give up on the plan to construct the expressway and "(...) included the Bronx highway in his 1955 Joint Study of Arterial Facilities, a blueprint for the city's future highways and bridges. City and state officials approved the expressway in October 1956, paving the way for Interstate designation and the promise of 90 percent Federal funding".<sup>20</sup> By the 1960s, the three highways, Cross Bronx Expressway, the Major

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<sup>12</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/van-wyck/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/van-wyck/).

<sup>13</sup> Caro 1974, p. 839.

<sup>14</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> Caro 1974, p. 878.

<sup>17</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 120.

<sup>18</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/).

<sup>19</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/).

<sup>20</sup> [www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/bruckner/).

Deegan Expressway and the Bruckner Expressway as well as the ramp to the Triborough Bridge had been built according to Robert Moses plans, disrupting the residential neighborhoods in the South Bronx with the demolition of residential buildings, gardens, public open spaces and parks, with displacement of residents, noise and pollution.

After the Second World War with the increase in population in the South Bronx, the real estate market boomed once again. The South Bronx neighborhoods like that of Charlotte Street had grown from a rural area to an urban and multi-family buildings were constructed with prosperity returning and “the mad frenzy of building that historically characterized New York was unleashed once more”.<sup>21</sup> The former inner city district buildings were crowded and the city kept on expanding in the urban area. More buildings were constructed, so that open space was becoming increasingly sparse throughout the city. But soon after the Second World War, due to the influence of various interest groups, these South Bronx’ neighborhoods became low-income neighborhoods since it was common for the real estate market and therefore also for the urban development of New York City to write off a popular neighborhood and turn it into a low-income neighborhood within decades to revive it later and to make money from this development over the years.

The population changed during this time in number, cultural background and income structure. The South Bronx turned into a low-income district. Banks were closed, landlords stopped investing and tenants could not afford the rent any longer. Buildings were set on fire starting in the late 1950s due to various reasons. The South-East Bronx, with the area around Charlotte Street, had been the first to be hit by the fires, but the devastation spread and soon the Grand Concourse, the former pride of the borough was affected. The Concourse Plaza Hotel was sold in 1957 losing its former glamour without investment, so that its downfall did not take long. Later the Red Cross and the department of relocation placed welfare families, who had been burned out of their buildings in the East Bronx, temporarily in the hotel. Only the Yankee Stadium was closed in 1965 and re-opened by the new owner, the television network CBS one year later – a sign that development in the South Bronx was possible if supported by an interest group. Even the start of the global economic crisis in 1973, called the oil crisis, did not stop investment in the stadium as it was rebuilt from 1973 until 1976 in the new ownership of the City of New York.<sup>22</sup>

The impact of the global economic crisis of the 1970s hit the South Bronx as well as other impoverished neighborhoods of New York City. In 1975 City of New York was at the edge of bankruptcy and asked the federal government for support. Consequently the municipality cut down its infrastructural services, so that subway stations, police stations, fire stations and schools in the South Bronx were closed. Supermarkets were shut down, school buildings were closed and established universities sold their buildings. “In 1973, New York University sold its Bronx campus located in University Heights and withdrew from the borough, after being there for eighty years.” According to “the official explanation about this transaction is that NYU was undergoing a serious financial crisis (...)”, but “(...) the fiscal problems of NYU in the 1960s and early 1970s can mostly be attributed to low enrollments caused by perceptions of the decline of The Bronx”.<sup>23</sup> The cycle of drugs, crime, burning buildings, abandonment and more fires gained intensity and more and more apartments were left unoccupied, as people could not afford the rent anymore. While infrastructure services were shut down and buildings in the South Bronx continued to burn until the 1980s, vacated buildings and wide tracks of open land were left behind in a previously densely built up area. These open spaces were filled with rubble and remains of buildings that used to stand there and soon they were filled with more trash and used for drug trafficking. But some of the lots were also cleaned up by resident groups, beautified and used for gardening together, i.e. for community gardening.

#### **3.1.1.1 Recreation and open space provision**

The 1974 study of the National Recreation and Park Association called “Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America’s Inner Cities” is based on an analysis of the 1970 U.S.

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<sup>21</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> In 1972 the Yankees signed a contract with the City of New York for the next 30 years.

<sup>23</sup> Chronopoulos 2009, p. 5.

census data, open space and recreation data in low-income, high-density, center-city census tracts. It was an attempt to find out about the quantity and quality of open space and recreation opportunities that existed in the inner cities of the United States of America, based on the fact that "there is a serious lack of local park and recreation agency research, planning and coordination capability in America's large cities".<sup>24</sup> Consequently it is interesting to look at in the context of my research about the community gardens development in New York City. The National Recreation and Park Association's study states, "(...) Cities differ markedly from one another and so do the study areas with respect to such measures as population, land area, population density, open space and recreation opportunity".<sup>25</sup> And, as the report states, "population density in and of itself has little systematic relationship to measures reflecting recreation opportunity in study cities or study areas".<sup>26</sup> The study finds that "no single set of national space and facility minimum standards can be adequate for all cities or study areas. Continued reliance on traditional undifferentiated standard is unrealistic".<sup>27</sup> Even though New York City<sup>28</sup> is not included in this study, the report represents aspects of the relation of recreation, open space and urban low-income districts discussed at the end of the 1960s/ the beginning of the 1970s that can be transferred to New York City and the community garden development in the South Bronx.

The objective of the study was, "(...) to develop national facility guidelines, to identify park and recreation<sup>29</sup> management systems that have successfully developed and delivered services to inner-city clientele, to assess citizen participation in planning and implementation processes affecting open land use and leisure services, and to determine what future demands will be made on public resources".<sup>30</sup> In addition the report was meant "(...) to be a factual and conceptual tool to provoke debate and stimulate action to improve recreation opportunities for low-income residents of high-density areas".<sup>31</sup> Even though, as the study states, "the park and recreation profession has expended considerable energy throughout this century to devise and publicize minimum space and facility standards for urban populations"<sup>32</sup>, "(...) the efforts of the profession have resulted in but a single undifferentiated set of standards (...)"<sup>33</sup> neglecting the local situation. The report adds, "historical, standards evolved without regard for what actually existed (...)", because standard setters "(...) did not

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<sup>24</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> In 1966, the "(...) Parks Department had no map showing its facilities citywide. (...) Thus, attempts to design an integrated system of park maintenance were all but doomed (...)" (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 1) The study explains, "This condition prevailed in part because studies of urban recreation and parks were traditionally case studies for the particular use of a local government and/ or a consortium of local agencies". (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 1) Since "these single city case studies were not comparable in design or time period, and findings, while applicable to the study locale, did not provide adequate comparative data and information for use in determining national status and priority". (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, pp. 1-2)

<sup>29</sup> The study defines recreation as "(...) only one part of leisure", while "leisure is everything we do when not at work or performing other necessary personal chores". (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, preface, p. 11) In addition, the National Recreation and Park Association study defines open space as "(...) any noncommercial property, which could be used reasonably for active or passive recreation activity. It includes open land space (vacant lots over 1/4 acre, traffic malls, play lots, playgrounds, parks, etc.) and open water space (creeks, ponds, rivers, lakes, bays, oceans, etc.)". (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 2) The term recreation opportunity is defined in the National Recreation and Park Association's study to "(...) exclude commercially provided resources and services (...)" and to refer "to the broad range of open space, buildings and indoor centers, outdoor facilities, programs, personnel, related services and fiscal resources provided by government, educational and religious institutions, and the private and voluntary sectors to extend the options available to citizens for leisure time experiences in their neighborhoods, or otherwise within the inner city." (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 2) Consequently "open space is thus only a small portion of a growing factor of change in contemporary American society". (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11)

<sup>30</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 88.

have quantitative information about what in fact did exist in urban areas across the Nation”<sup>34</sup> – information that the National Recreation and Park Association’s study tried consequently to provide. At the same time, the National Recreation and Park Association’s study of 1974 recognizes the conflict of providing “(...) measures reflecting ‘equal resources for all’ versus those aimed at identifying the need for ‘compensatory resources for some’.”<sup>35</sup> Thus it was “the first large-scale empirical study of inner city recreation resources was undertaken to analyze critically the open space and recreation facilities in low-income, high-density inner areas of large American cities, and to develop an approach to meet recreation needs of residents of these areas”.<sup>36</sup>

Generally, existing concepts of recreation resources need according to the National Recreation and Park Association’s study of 1974 to be expanded “(...) not just for low-income, inner-city residents, but for all people (...)”.<sup>37</sup> This is confirmed by the creation of community gardens by low-income inner city residents to meet their own recreation needs in terms of open space use close to their home. The study questions that it is useful to treat cities, suburbs, and rural areas as well as the people who live in them the same in regard to the provision of open space and recreation opportunities: “Why an unattainable rural bias prescribed for the inner city? Such thinking leads to that ultimate in ‘tokensim’- the once- a-year bus trip of sixth graders to a regional park or ‘model’ farm. Bringing rural children to an urban cultural resource on the same terms is another manifestation of the same thinking”.<sup>38</sup> According to the same study “(...) over 75 percent of all recreation occurs close to home after work and school (...) and on short outings”.<sup>39</sup> It concludes that therefore “it is necessary to light that experience from fear of broken glass and gangs to a level where the inner-city resident can have pride in his community and in his recreation opportunity there, and can derive from both whatever dimension of experience he seeks”<sup>40</sup> –, which is expressed and given in the land use form community garden.

### **3.1.1.2 Amount of open space in relation to population density and its use according to income and race**

The relation of the amount of open space and population as well as open space use stands in context with income and race and influenced the community garden development in the South Bronx. The National Recreation and Park Association’s study called “Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America’s Inner Cities” of 1974 study states that “inner-city residential areas in 1970 (...) were not rampant with open-space site acquisition and development”, and in some study areas, “field researchers discussed (...) that urban renewal demolition of substantial acreage was underway (...)”.<sup>41</sup> Then again at the same time in other study areas, “(...) new government centers, office complexes, sport and convention facilities, and other nonresidential projects, as well as residential projects (often not low-income), had been completed (...) on formerly cleared slum areas”.<sup>42</sup> The study adds, “As pre-renewal residents were seldom relocated in the newly developed areas, their interest in park acquisition and development was non-existent”.<sup>43</sup> According to the study, “in inner-city areas not experiencing land-clearing activities, park sites had for the most part existed for decades, and site acquisition was not germane”.<sup>44</sup> Generally, the amount of urban open space and urban population density are interlinked, so that “(...) as the population increases in the cities, decreases occur in open land space, units serving the entire core area, (...) multifunctional building and the conditions of (...) open space and recreation units”.<sup>45</sup> But this was not the case in the South Bronx during the 1970s, when open space was increased and population decreased while there was a lack of infrastructural services and the provision of recreation

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<sup>34</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 54.

<sup>42</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 26.

units by the City. This neglect of provision of public services was met by the residents of the area themselves with the creation of community gardens. For other urban areas in the United States the National Recreation and Park Association's study of 1974 states that, "during the 1960's there was a substantial and growing amount of vacant land in the study cities; population declined in over half the cities; open space acquisition exceeded dramatically the loss of park land in most cities (...)"<sup>46</sup> But there were "(...) enormous variances in the proportion of vacant land from city to city (...)"<sup>47</sup> In addition "the interstate highway system's urban links and other street and highway construction were primary open space and park land encroachers in the 1950's and 1960's"<sup>48</sup>

In the late 1960s, "play lots, playgrounds and parks comprise nearly half of the open space in inner cities"<sup>49</sup>, but "many urban parks and playgrounds are empty (...)" due to "(...) inadequate maintenance, poor or uninspired leadership and/ or programs (...)"<sup>50</sup> The National Recreation and Park Association's study suggests also that there is a strong relationship between family income and recreation opportunity in America's inner cities"<sup>51</sup> That means, "(...) the more a family has, the more it is likely to receive in terms of open space, outdoor recreation facilities, personnel, and programs"<sup>52</sup> In addition there is a linkage between race and income in cities in the United States.<sup>53</sup> The usage of open spaces and the amount of open space is depended according to the National Recreation and Park Association's study "Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America's Inner Cities" of 1974 on the income and the race of the residents of a specific urban neighborhood. The study states, "The percentage of blacks in the study cities has virtually no relation to measures of recreation opportunity (...)"<sup>54</sup> But, "(...) as the percentage of blacks in study cities increases, the number of acres of open space in study cities decreases"<sup>55</sup> In inner-city study areas prevails the situation, as the study states that, "as the percentage of blacks increases, open space, outdoor recreation facilities, park and recreation personnel (...), and the number of volunteers in the study area decreases"<sup>56</sup> The National Recreation and Park Association's study of 1974 continues to explain, "Some of the finest of the Nation's leisure resources are close to low-income, inner-city residents, yet are comparatively little used by them"<sup>57</sup> It adds, "In part, this may be caused by traditional, often narrow, definitions of recreation resources, which omit important facilities such as museums, theatres, libraries and art galleries"<sup>58</sup> But also other recreation resources are omitted, probably, that low-income inner-city residents make use of such as community gardens created in grass-roots activities by the residents themselves on vacant land next to their homes. As "one field researcher summarized the irony: "throughout recorded history, one of the things that has made large cities great cities has been their superb leisure resources, yet the residents of these inner-city areas don't even know they exist"<sup>59</sup>

The report recommends that in general, "maintenance levels must be improved dramatically in nearly all public open space and recreation resources, particularly in inner-city areas."<sup>60</sup> In addition it states, "Program innovation should be encouraged to move public offerings beyond traditional activities and the status quo"<sup>61</sup> That means, community gardens as an innovatively by residents for recreation purposes programmed open space land use form that is voluntarily

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<sup>46</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 28.

<sup>53</sup> "In the United States, white urban dwellers have a substantially higher median family income than persons of other races or persons who live in nonurban areas." (National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 27)

<sup>54</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 27.

<sup>57</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 37.

<sup>59</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 73.

<sup>61</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 73.

managed by the residents' group are in line with this recommendation. The study states, "Basic to the provision of any service to the general public is the assumption of the existence of a condition of need".<sup>62</sup> It adds, "The concept of recreation need has both an individual and a societal dimension".<sup>63</sup> That means, "it is considered a basic desire but not a primary survival need; it has similarly been considered an amenity and its provision not a first level responsibility of the social order (...)".<sup>64</sup> The report concludes from this that "recreation is generally recognized as being a need spread evenly over the population".<sup>65</sup> That means, "It is not specific to atypical individuals or groups."<sup>66</sup> The consequence is, according to the study, that the "(...) challenge of allocating public and voluntary resources for recreation in an urban context is essentially that of any community organization dilemma: to attain and maintain a balance between needs and resources in the geographic area to be served".<sup>67</sup> Especially in low-income area that lack privately usable open spaces such as private gardens therefore the provision of community garden land for recreation purposes by the City is essential to answer the need of this part of population. According to the study "the measurement of the extent of a specific social need condition, and the measurement of the degree to which a particular public or voluntary service alleviates the condition, seem elementary".<sup>68</sup> Even though taxpayers assume that municipal services are provided to evaluate and allocate those measures "(...) it was not until the late 1960s that systematic measures of local government effectiveness were initiated, under the leadership of the Urban Institute".<sup>69</sup> But in the 1960s "the element of need, or how much is enough or too much, has still not been approached. (...) The consideration of need (...) has always been from the standpoint of the problem of distribution of too few resources or the battle of priorities by advocates of one kind against those pushing another".<sup>70</sup> The study continues to make several assumptions, based on the examination of need variables like age, juvenile delinquency rate, population density, income, housing, population stability, occupation, education, race, mortality rates, employment rates and percentage of foreign born<sup>71</sup>, like for example that "(...) priorities in community-subsidized recreation services should go to those experiencing maximum social pressures from density of population, number of youth, low income, and evidence of social disorganization".<sup>72</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the urbanization from 1920s to 1970s in regard to open space availability shows that open space was reduced due to an increase in population and the concomitant housing construction, privatization of land and the over time prevailing low-income in the neighborhoods. This was answered by the government with the parallel provision of public urban open space land uses such as streets, expressways, bridges and parks as well as welfare services and in the late twentieth century by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx.

### 3.1.2 Open space development at the example of Philadelphia

In the following I introduce a digression on the open space development in the Philadelphia in regard to community open space land use to show the negligence of issue of open space use for community gardening in the South Bronx before the 1970s. Philadelphia is interesting in regard to the community gardens development in the South Bronx because of the "Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association" that existed from 1897 until 1927 with the intention to provide the unemployed with access to open space so that they could grow food and provide for their own needs.<sup>73</sup> Open space use for gardening in Philadelphia continued in 1953 with Louse Bush-Brown, who started the Neighborhood Gardens Association to sponsor horticultural beautification programs in low-income neighborhoods and at public housing

<sup>62</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 85.

<sup>63</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 85.

<sup>64</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, pp. 85-86.

<sup>65</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 86.

<sup>66</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 86.

<sup>67</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 86.

<sup>68</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 87.

<sup>69</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 87.

<sup>71</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 103.

<sup>72</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 106.

<sup>73</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

projects.<sup>74</sup> The program exists until today, but the non-profit corporation “The Neighborhood Gardens Association / A Philadelphia Land Trust” was incorporated in 1986 and is until today funded by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society as well as by foundations and corporations. Due to the long tradition of community gardening development in Philadelphia there are today still more than 400 community gardens in Philadelphia.<sup>75</sup>

The city of Philadelphia, the first capital of the United States from 1790-1800 and the capital of the state Pennsylvania today, is one of the American great cities with a long tradition in urban gardening culture.<sup>76</sup> To transport the concept of the new democracy, Philadelphia was laid out with a square at the city center, which is now occupied by City Hall. At equal distance from this central place four residential squares were arranged of the same size, original use and advantages of location. But, according to Jane Jacobs the acceptance, use and attraction of these squares differs extremely today, which demonstrates “the volatile behavior that is characteristic of city parks”.<sup>77</sup> Urban decentralization in Philadelphia “(...) began with the early street car suburbs in the 1890s, and continues today with the leapfrog suburban development characteristic of the latter half of the twentieth century”.<sup>78</sup> As the City of Philadelphia’s Department of Parks and Recreation states today „the Recreation Movement at the turn of the last century led to the first forms of Municipal Recreation in Philadelphia but there were no clearly defined goals”.<sup>79</sup> The interest in social issues though is proven by the first developments towards public recreation, since “the first public recreation facilities built were Happy Hollow Playground and Starr Garden, which officially opened in 1911”.<sup>80</sup> In addition, “municipal Recreation became a function of the Department of Public Welfare under the 1919 Charter. It was called the Bureau of Recreation”.<sup>81</sup> This indicates, that the city understood the necessity to provide unemployed citizens and working class families with a recreational outlet. But even though the City of Philadelphia does until today not recognize urban gardening as part of being this Recreation Movement, or at least does not mention it on in the historic presentation of the City’s Department of Parks and Recreation, there was urban gardening taking place before this date – officially since 1897 with the start of the Philadelphia Vacant-Lots Cultivation Association promoting gardening in the city, i.e. a step towards the development of community gardening.

### **3.1.2.1 Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association**

In continuing to look at the common open space development of the City of Philadelphia before the 1970s to show the negligence of the open space issue in the South Bronx before the 1970s, I will introduce in the following the Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association as an example for the development of community gardens as a land use form. The “Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association” existed from 1897 until 1927. It was modeled after the Potato Patch program that the Mayor of Detroit, Hazen S. Pingree started in spring of 1894 with the intention “(...) that the unemployed could at least secure food for their families if they could employ themselves upon the land”.<sup>82</sup> Mayor Pingree “(...) observed that there was a large amount of unused land in the city, – 6,000 acres, it was found later. He therefore appointed a committee to secure for the unemployed the privilege of raising food for themselves on the vacant lots of the city. The owners of the unused land responded liberally to the appeal to aid their poorer neighbors in this new fashion, and the use of several thousand acres of land was promptly tendered. Four hundred and thirty acres were accepted and prepared for cultivation. The land was then allotted to 945 families in lots varying in size from one-quarter to one-half acre”.<sup>83</sup> Already shortly after the installation of the program, the numbers were convincing City officials that the Potato Patch Program was a success. “The main crop suggested was potatoes, and more than 14,000 bushels of these were raised the

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<sup>74</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>75</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>76</sup> Groening 2010, p. 26.

<sup>77</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 93.

<sup>78</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> City of Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.phila.gov/recreation/History\\_1.html](http://www.phila.gov/recreation/History_1.html).

<sup>80</sup> City of Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.phila.gov/recreation/History\\_1.html](http://www.phila.gov/recreation/History_1.html).

<sup>81</sup> City of Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.phila.gov/recreation/History\\_1.html](http://www.phila.gov/recreation/History_1.html).

<sup>82</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

first year. Other crops brought the total estimated value of the produce up to \$14,000. The committee had expended only \$3,600, and the new plan of helping people to help themselves had thus proved a financial success".<sup>84</sup> Due to the success of the program the City of Detroit enacted only one year later "(...) an ordinance appropriating \$5,000 for vacant-lot cultivation during the season of 1895".<sup>85</sup> In the "(...) meantime the work had attracted much attention throughout the country".<sup>86</sup>

The reason for the establishment of the Philadelphia Vacant-Lots Cultivation Association stated at the beginning of a study of April, 1898, of this association prepared under the direction of the editorial committee members Frederic W. Speirs, Samuel McCune Lindsay, and Franklin B. Kirkbride, follows the same line of thinking as that of Mayor Pingree. "We are beginning to realize that in our modern civilization we have to deal with an ever-changing yet never-absent class of unemployed men and women, who for various reasons can find no place in the industrial system".<sup>87</sup> This points to the development of community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s and to my thesis that this common land use form will continue to exist in the inner city. That means, the members of the Philadelphia Vacant-Lots Cultivation Association foresaw that unemployment would decline, but also that it would begin to increase again. "At quite regularly recurring intervals, general industrial depressions settle down upon us, and hundreds of thousands of workers are deprived of regular employment for months. Forces beyond their control close the factory doors against them, drive them from workroom and store, and turn them into the streets to beg in vain for a chance to earn a living".<sup>88</sup> In their understanding, a "class of unemployed" existed that will not go disappear in the future. "As the outlook brightens and business revives, the larger part of those excluded from employment are gradually reabsorbed by the industrial system, but even in the most prosperous times we have a residual class of the unemployed in our cities, recruited from those who are temporarily thrown out of work by some peculiar and abnormal condition. The individuals in this class are changing constantly, and the numbers vary greatly from time to time, but the class is permanent".<sup>89</sup> The study introduces the cultivation of vacant lots in Philadelphia as an answer to the increasing number of unemployed persons that needed to be taken care of by the government. "The recent depression, with its widespread suffering of the workless, strained to the utmost the resources of every existing plan of relief, and it created a new one, – the cultivation of vacant lots".<sup>90</sup> The benefits of Vacant-lot cultivation to the City and its citizens are clearly laid out. "Vacant-lot cultivation as an agency of relief for the unemployed rests upon the sound basis of self-help. It means an opportunity in times of stress to earn by honest toil the sustenance that cannot be obtained through the regular channels of employment. The self-respecting man who is able-bodied does not want charity; he wants work, that he may earn sufficient food and shelter for his family. This the vacant-lot plan offers. The cultivator is given the use of land that would otherwise be useless for the time, and he is further provided with seed and instruction only".<sup>91</sup> The cultivation of unused lots in Philadelphia began "late in February, 1897, about fifty persons who realized that great distress prevailed in the city on account of lack of employment, held a parlor conference to discuss the advisability of inaugurating in Philadelphia the cultivation of vacant lots as a measure of relief for the unemployed. After a presentation of the favorable experience of Detroit, New York, Boston, and other cities, the conference approved the 'Pingree Potato Patch' plan, and appointed a committee to carry it out".<sup>92</sup> The cultivation of land was to be organized by "(...) an independent committee or association created for the specific purpose of facilitating vacant - lot farming".<sup>93</sup> "(...) The committee (...) was constituted without reference to the representative idea. Only one of its seven members was officially connected with a charitable organization."<sup>94</sup> The honorary presidency of the mayor, Mayor Warwick, was

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<sup>84</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, pp. 23-24.

<sup>93</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 24.

“the only connection with the public authorities (...).”<sup>95</sup> For the procuring of land and to secure funds “an advisory committee of 230 prominent men and women was appointed (...).”<sup>96</sup>, but “all the executive work was done by the committee of seven”.<sup>97</sup>

The organization responsible for cultivation work in Philadelphia was called the “Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation association”. Its members were convinced, as the study of 1898 states, that it was important that it worked on the administration of the vacant lot cultivation independently: “Independent organization is justified in the absence of a strong and broadly representative philanthropic society. Such organization, furthermore, has the distinct advantage of emphasizing the difference between vacant-lot cultivation and ordinary forms of poor relief. An independent society finds it easy to attract the self-respecting unemployed who shrink from accepting anything, even an opportunity to work, from the hands of a charitable society.”<sup>98</sup> To help with the inspection of the vacant lots and the cultivation on site, a superintendent was hired. The superintendent “Mr. Powell’s services were secured on March 22, which may be considered the date of beginning actual operations. The investigation of the land offered began at once. Many lots were inaccessible; some were too small to operate economically. Still others were rejected because of the poor quality of the soil”.<sup>99</sup>

When vacant lot cultivation in Philadelphia began in 1897, “(...) one tract of thirteen acres in the western part of the city was selected as the site of the first farm”.<sup>100</sup> The site “(...) 56th & Haverford was divided into 1/5th acre plots by the Philadelphia Vacant Lot Cultivation Association to afford gardening space in Philadelphia (...)”.<sup>101</sup> It was located “(...) in the western and northwestern part of the city, about five miles from City Hall.”<sup>102</sup> Consequently “it was rather far from the distinctly manufacturing and mill districts, which (...) [were at the time, added C.M.] located in the northeastern and southern parts of the city”.<sup>103</sup> Due to immediate success, “later six acres within three-quarters of a mile of the first tract were secured. Another tract of four acres, about one-quarter of a mile from the first tract, was accepted”.<sup>104</sup> In addition “two smaller lots in the same general neighborhood were obtained and used as seeding beds”.<sup>105</sup> Since “there was (...) much distress among families within easy reach of this land, (...) the selection of applicants was made with a view to relieving only those in actual want”.<sup>106</sup> When “three additional acres of land were secured in the northern part of the city”<sup>107</sup>, “(...) the holdings of the committee amounted to about twenty-five acres in the aggregate. All these pieces of land were received on the stipulation that they should be returned to their owners on ten days’ notice. Fortunately none was withdrawn, and the committee was therefore spared the difficulty of making provision for farmers whose allotments had been taken from them”.<sup>108</sup>

For the City of Philadelphia the provision of land for cultivation provided a relief to its budget strained by the welfare costs of the unemployed. “Ninety-six families, comprising 528 persons, received allotments, the larger number receiving a quarter acre each. The total value of the produce taken from these ninety-six little farms was about \$5,860, an average of \$62 each. The total expenditure of the committee for superintendence, seed, tools, and all incidental expenses was \$1,825.33. Thus each dollar invested in helping men to help themselves was multiplied about three and one-quarter times through vacant-lot cultivation”.<sup>109</sup> In other words, in its first year, “Philadelphia had about twenty-seven acres under cultivation in ninety-six allotments, which showed an average yield of \$61 per lot and a

<sup>95</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 24.

<sup>97</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 24.

<sup>99</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>100</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>102</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>103</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>106</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>107</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>108</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 25.

<sup>109</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 26.

return of more than \$3 for every dollar expended [by the City, added C.M.] throughout the whole experiment".<sup>110</sup> The interest of the unemployed citizens of Philadelphia in cultivating vacant lots was that great that the securing of private land proved to be the most difficult in the work of the Philadelphia Vacant-Lots Cultivation Association. "The greatest difficulty encountered, much to the surprise of the committee, was the securing of sufficient suitable land. Many persons were not willing to have the sod broken, and others did not care to give its use subject to even so short a quit notice as ten days, for fear it might prevent a quick sale for building purposes. The six tracts of land already enumerated were each called a farm and numbered, and each farm when it was prepared for planting was divided into gardens 76 by 100 feet in size".<sup>111</sup>

The Philadelphia Vacant-Lots Cultivation Association continued its independent administration organization for 22 years, providing "(...) land and technical assistance through at least 1919, encouraging children to garden and adults to begin for-profit market gardens on lots throughout Philadelphia".<sup>112</sup> Common gardening on vacant lots in Philadelphia continued during the World Wars with the help of the government sponsored War and Victory Garden Programs as well as the Relief Garden Programs. "During both World Wars, the government advocated vegetable gardening so that more farm products could be sent to the military. I remember 200 to 300 square foot plots in Fairmount Park not far from the old Woodside Park. Not so generous as the early "farms", but big enough for a family of four".<sup>113</sup> This shows that vacant lot cultivation for common gardening as a step in the development of the land use form community gardens was part of the inner city of Philadelphia for decades and that the assumption is justified that this common land use form will continue to exist in the urban center.

### 3.1.2.2 Neighborhood Gardens Association

When governmental funding and support of common urban gardening in Philadelphia in the form of War and Victory Garden Programs as well as the Relief Garden Programs ceased with the end of the Second World War, vacant lot gardening was still continued when Louise Bush-Brown, started in 1953, "(...) to organize settlement house workers, and garden clubs into the Neighborhood Gardens Association to sponsor horticultural beautification programs in low-income neighborhoods and at public housing projects".<sup>114</sup> In 1960, Louise Bush Brown assisted Philadelphia low-income residents in beautifying their blocks with flower boxes, roof gardens and other types of "city gardens" as she called it. Thus with support by the Neighborhood Gardens Association and Louise Bush Brown "neighbors on the 700 block of Mercy Street, became 'The first Garden Block in America' when they planted window boxes built at St Martha's Settlement".<sup>115</sup> But the beautification of Philadelphia's neighborhood encouraged landlords to increase the rent of apartments so that eventually the tenants that had beautified the neighborhood with their flower boxes and gardens could not afford living there any longer. Karl Linn commented on this development in his article "Sacred Commons" of 1999, "Community gardens can be seen as forerunners of urban gentrification — Trojan Horses setting in motion processes that will displace people of lesser means. Mrs. Bush Brown, for example, assisted residents of lower-income neighborhoods in beautifying their blocks with flower boxes initiated a seemingly innocent project in Philadelphia in the 1960s. The brilliant colors of flowers improved the appearance of these blocks considerably which inspired the absentee landlords to increase the rents to levels which tenants could not afford".<sup>116</sup> With the Neighborhood Gardens Association active support, vacant lot cultivation began again "(...) in 1960 through 4-H"<sup>117</sup>, Cooperative Extension's youth program led by William A. White".<sup>118</sup> Common urban gardening activities in Philadelphia increased again "in

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<sup>110</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 9.

<sup>111</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 26.

<sup>112</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>113</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>114</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>115</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>116</sup> Linn 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html).

<sup>117</sup> 4-H is "(...) the youth development program of the nation's 109 land-grant universities and the Cooperative Extension System, (...)" (4-H - Positive Youth Development and Mentoring Organization, [www.4-h.org/about/youth-development-organization/](http://www.4-h.org/about/youth-development-organization/))

<sup>118</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

the Green 70's"<sup>119</sup>, with a "(...) rash of 'farming out' on vacant lots (...)"<sup>120</sup> The Neighborhood Garden Association "(...) had seen 850 blocks planted by its 25th anniversary in 1978 shortly before becoming part of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green Program".<sup>121</sup>

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, founded in 1827<sup>122</sup> and nationwide renown for the Philadelphia International Flower Show, "(...) the largest indoor flower show in the world (...)" had its own gardening program, Philadelphia Green, that was started in 1974 "(...) grassroots efforts to plant neighborhood vegetable gardens".<sup>123</sup> In 1978, when vacant land was available in Philadelphia due to the worldwide economic depression, the Neighborhood Gardens Association, which had existed independently for 25 years, was merged Philadelphia Green to one urban gardening program in order to provide use "(...) horticulture to build community and improve the quality of life in Philadelphia's neighborhoods and downtown public spaces".<sup>124</sup> This proves the renewed interest of the society in the 1970s in using vacant urban land for common urban gardening as a welfare and unemployment relief activity.<sup>125</sup> At that time Philadelphia's Department of Parks and Recreation began to understand common urban gardening as its responsibility as well. "The Recreation Department was helping neighborhoods change vacant lots into flower and vegetable gardens, tot lots and basketball courts", while "the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society began developing community vegetable gardens, and Penn State Urban Gardening Program provided technical assistance".<sup>126</sup> According to the National Recreation and Park Association's study called "Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America's Inner Cities" of 1974 the "(...) best analysis of inner-city citizen participation in park and recreation decision-making (...)"<sup>127</sup> was done in regard to citizen participation in Philadelphia with its recreation advisory councils. It analyzed differences "(...) in that participation associated with the socio-economic status of geographic areas within the city".<sup>128</sup> The conclusion was that "(...) citizens participate on advisory councils both within poverty areas and nonpoverty areas, but that there are systematic differences in that participation".<sup>129</sup> Additionally the study clarified that "urban recreation advisory councils are likely to be composed of individuals with a high degree of socioeconomic homogeneity who are generally no less representative of their constituents in poverty areas".<sup>130</sup> In the thesis by Geoffrey Clay Godbey, written in 1972 at the Pennsylvania State University with the title "The Role of Advisory Councils in Philadelphia's Department of Recreation (...)"<sup>131</sup>, is, according to the National Recreation and Park Association's study, also stated that "(...) advisory councils are a poor racial integrating mechanism within a neighborhood".<sup>132</sup> It puts forward that "(...) poverty area councils actually fulfill a different role from councils outside a poverty area".<sup>133</sup> That is "whereas a nonpoverty area council is primarily concerned with improving, expanding, and altering existing programs and facilities,

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<sup>119</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>120</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>121</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>122</sup> "In 1827, the nation's first passenger and freight railroad, the Baltimore & Ohio, was incorporated, slavery was abolished in the state of New York, and on November 24, a group of gentleman farmers, botanists and other plant enthusiasts held a meeting to create the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. There it was resolved, 'to establish a Horticultural Society in the City of Philadelphia for the promotion of this interesting and highly influential branch of Science'". (Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org))

<sup>123</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>124</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>125</sup> As Philadelphia Green states today on its webpage, "For more than 30 years the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green program has used horticulture to build community and improve the quality of life in Philadelphia's neighborhoods and downtown public spaces. In that time there have been significant signs of rebirth in the city, and the work of Philadelphia Green has played an important role in the environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic changes taking place". (Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org))

<sup>126</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>127</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>128</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>129</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>130</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>131</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>132</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>133</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

poverty area councils are often forced to attempt protection of the status quo, seeking to protect the very existence of the recreation facility and its programs".<sup>134</sup> The study concludes from its descriptive data analysis that "(...) citizen participation in site acquisition and development was related positively to many aspects of recreation opportunity in the study area"<sup>135</sup>, pointing towards the development of community gardens as a land use that involves participative decision-making.

In 1986 the non-profit corporation "The Neighborhood Gardens Association / A Philadelphia Land Trust" was incorporated, "(...) whose mission is the long term preservation of existing community-managed gardens and open spaces in Philadelphia".<sup>136</sup> The corporation is until today "(...) funded by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, as well as major foundations and corporations".<sup>137</sup> It "(...) typically acquires and holds vacant land for lease to groups interested in preserving gardens and other passive open space uses. These groups, in turn, are required to maintain the land and contribute to property tax and insurance costs".<sup>138</sup> The number of community gardens was reduced since the late 1980s when "over 1000 vacant lots had become vegetable and ornamental gardens"<sup>139</sup>, but there are today still "(...) more than 400 community gardens in Philadelphia (...)".<sup>140 141</sup> Of these gardens, "since 1998, over twenty community flower and vegetable gardens have been acquired and maintained with NGA's [Neighborhood Gardens Association's, added CM] assistance".<sup>142</sup> The Planning Commission strongly recommends that the "(...) City government should lent its full support to both Philadelphia Green's gardening initiatives and the vacant land acquisition efforts of the NGA [Neighborhood Gardens Association's, added CM], in order to continue these valuable neighborhood open space programs".<sup>143</sup> That means common gardening on inner city land in Philadelphia has existed for over hundred years, which proves my thesis by confirming that the assumption is justified that community gardening a land use form will continue to exist in the urban center.

### 3.1.2.3 University involvement and neighborhood commons

There was further interest in providing support for the land use of common gardening in Philadelphia. Thus, in 1960, the landscape architect Karl Linn<sup>144</sup> while teaching at the University of Pennsylvania "(...) involved neighborhood residents and university students in the construction of 'neighborhood commons' projects (Linn, 1968)".<sup>145</sup> That means Linn "(...) helped inner-city residents transform vacant lots into 'neighborhood commons,' urban variations on the traditional village green that brought neighbors, and strangers, together".<sup>146</sup> "He came to reject what he called 'landscapes of affluence,' and in 1961 founded the

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<sup>134</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 57.

<sup>135</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 59.

<sup>136</sup> Neighborhood Gardens Association / A Philadelphia Land Trust, [www.philadelphialandtrust.org/history.html](http://www.philadelphialandtrust.org/history.html).

<sup>137</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 36.

<sup>138</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 36.

<sup>139</sup> Goldstein (no date), [www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/Phillyhistory10.html).

<sup>140</sup> "The nonprofit group SHARE (Self Help and Resource Exchange) helps connect gardeners with local food cupboards for distribution of the produce, and the Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania provides nutrition workshops and recipes to food cupboard clients". (Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).)

<sup>141</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>142</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 36.

<sup>143</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 36.

<sup>144</sup> "The landscape architect for Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building in New York, Mr. Linn also designed the interior landscaping for the Four Seasons Restaurant. But in the late 1950's he turned to making community gardens in depressed neighborhoods around the country". (Fox 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?_r=2&oref=slogin))

<sup>145</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 13. [here: Linn, Karl (August 14, 1968): Neighborhood commons. Architectural Design]

<sup>146</sup> Fox 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?_r=2&oref=slogin).

Neighborhood Renewal Corps<sup>147</sup>, based in Philadelphia, which assisted members of disadvantaged communities in reclaiming, designing and rebuilding blighted urban spaces”.<sup>148</sup>

Later, in 1987, the University of Pennsylvania was involved again in neighborhood reconstruction through common open space use of vacant lots in West Philadelphia<sup>149</sup>, when Professor Ann Whiston Spirn and students of landscape architecture began the West Philadelphia study. One of the eight community gardens they helped to install over the years was the Aspen Farms that was begun in 1975 under the sponsorship of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. “Located in West Philadelphia’s Mill Creek neighborhood, this garden was once the site of rowhomes and a dry cleaning business, both of which were demolished in 1965”.<sup>150</sup> When started “(...) Aspen Farm’s fledgling group tended only a small area, but in two years, the garden doubled in size. By 1979, it had filled the entire vacant lot (28,400 square feet).” According to the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, “the continued success of Aspen Farms is primarily the result of its active leadership and well-organized garden club, which boasts over 40 members. Each member pays an annual fee of \$10, with additional income generated through benefit dinners, casino trips, and donation—all of which help to defray Aspen Farms’ operating costs”.<sup>151</sup>

Despite the effort of the different non-profit organizations and university vacant land projects by Professor Anne Whiston Spirn in 1990 of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania, a lot of land in Philadelphia neighborhoods remained “vacated” i.e. underused or not used for common gardening. In 1995 the “Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring” of the Planning Commission of Philadelphia was released with a focus “(...) on the causes, effects, and reuse potential of vacant land in Philadelphia’s distressed residential neighborhoods”.<sup>152</sup> The report represents the effort to rethink “(...) how such land should be reused, managed, and maintained”.<sup>153</sup> The Planning Commission recommends actions that the City of Philadelphia needs to take in order to encourage and support “(...) citizen efforts to make their neighborhoods a better place to live in (...)”<sup>154</sup>, while “(...) redefining the relationship between housing types and private open space, better integrating automobile use and parking needs into urban neighborhoods, and retrofitting an aging physical infrastructure to accommodate new neighborhood design ideas (...)”.<sup>155</sup> The report recommends among other actions to “(...) help community groups turn vacant lots into “intentional” open space by supporting neighborhood property acquisition efforts, community gardening and greening programs, and low-maintenance vacant lot treatments”, to “encourage community, block, and town-watch groups to act as the City’s eyes and ears by monitoring the condition of, and activity around, vacant properties” as well as concrete actions like to “(...) provide more support for neighborhood clean-up/ fix-up days by providing brooms, trash bags, and same-day trash pickup”.<sup>156</sup> These actions were called for by the Planning Commission based on the assumption that an “(...) economic shock of shattering proportions (...)” should be needed to “(...) stop or reverse the trends of urban decentralization that began with the early street car suburbs in the 1890s, and

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<sup>147</sup> “Similar programs followed in Washington, Chicago, Boston and other cities”. (Fox 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?_r=2&oref=slogin).)

<sup>148</sup> Fox 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/design/12linn.html?_r=2&oref=slogin).

<sup>149</sup> “West Philadelphia is primarily a residential community, but is also home to several large institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania. West Philadelphia’s population is multi-racial and multi-cultural; there are many middle-class families and many others living in poverty. The population is mostly African- American, with a large Caucasian population living near the University, and a growing Asian-American population”. (West Philadelphia Landscape Project, [www.wplp.net/](http://www.wplp.net/))

<sup>150</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>151</sup> Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org).

<sup>152</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 2.

<sup>153</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 2.

<sup>155</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 2.

continues today with the leapfrog suburban development characteristic of the latter half of the twentieth century”.<sup>157</sup> The Planning Commission proposed “(...) the development of permanent green areas (...)”<sup>158</sup> as an integral part of the restructuring effort of the inner city residential areas. Philadelphia’s Planning Commission called for “(...) new, cooperative agreements between City government and neighborhood-based organizations (...)” that “(...) need to be established in the form of a vacant land stewardship program”.<sup>159</sup> This land stewardship is seen on the basis of community land trusts that would “acquire, hold, and maintain land for community benefit. Such a benefit may in the form of new housing development, making available plots of land for neighborhood gardening, or providing permanent open space for the community”.<sup>160</sup> The report continues, “Under this Land Stewardship Program proposal, the City would donate surplus public property in a targeted area to a land trust organization. The organization would then be free to use this new capital asset in its neighborhood revitalization effort”.<sup>161</sup> In addition, “The City would retain reversionary rights to this land in the event performance requirements are not met”.<sup>162</sup>

To the Planning Commission at the time, “Developing permanent and intentional open space in residential areas is an important element of neighborhood restructuring”.<sup>163</sup> This statement is based on the fact that “the Philadelphia Green Program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has demonstrate that neglected vacant land can be maintained as attractive open space that produces tangible neighborhood benefits and enhance community development efforts”.<sup>164</sup> The actions proposed by the Philadelphia Planning commission are based on the background of the fact that “(...) the City’s renewal needs far outweigh available resources, (...)” so that “(...) restructuring Philadelphia’s distressed neighborhoods must, by necessity, be a long-term proposition”.<sup>165</sup> Consequently the permanent institution of green open spaces like community gardens was seen as inevitable, which proves my thesis by confirming that the assumption is justified that community gardening a land use form will continue to exist in the urban center. Based on the fact that “the Philadelphia Green Program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society demonstrated that neglected vacant land can be transformed into attractive open space that produces tangible neighborhood benefits and enhances community development efforts”.<sup>166</sup>

Consequently the digression on the community open space development in Philadelphia between 1920s and the 1970s shows that the urban open space use for common gardens has a long tradition as well as the negligence of the issue of open space use for community gardening in the South Bronx before the 1970s.

### **3.2 Open space land use and population in the South Bronx between 1920s and the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of open space land use and population in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s by analyzing the aspects of the cultural background

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<sup>157</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 7.

<sup>158</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 19.

<sup>159</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 19.

<sup>160</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 35.

<sup>161</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 35.

<sup>162</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 35.

<sup>163</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 36.

<sup>164</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 36.

<sup>165</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 61.

<sup>166</sup> Vacant Land in Philadelphia. A Report on Vacant Land Management and Neighborhood Restructuring 1995, p. 65.

of residents and the income of residents. Then I will look at the topic of criminal activities versus social control of residents.

### 3.2.1 Cultural background of residents

When in 1841 the subway system was expanded over the Harlem River, population increased. In 1874, Morrisania, West Farms and Kingsbridge were the part of the Bronx East of the Bronx River, with a population of 33,000 living on the 12,317 acres.<sup>167</sup> In 1890, the City of New York totaled 3.4 million citizens with a population of 100,000 persons living in the Bronx, whereas the population of Manhattan reached 1.5 million.<sup>168</sup> A surplus of rural workers, many of them from Europe and especially from the Netherlands migrated either to the great city's within their homeland or immigrated to America, the promising "New World", in order to acquire some of the plentiful wide open they had heard of – but first they stranded in New York City with one of the main transatlantic sea ports. Due to the political repression that arose after the 1848 Weimar Revolution and the poor potato harvest causing the so-called potato famine in Germany, a wave of German immigrants came to New York City at the turn of the nineteenth century. These immigrants were often well-trained and skilled craftsmen and industrial workers, so that they assimilated easier into the city than other immigrant groups. Many Germans moved in the Bronx to live as farmers or to open their own breweries, as they "(...) disdained the weak American beer".<sup>169</sup> In the time from 1820 to 1850, one million Irish immigrants fled hunger that arose out of bad potato harvests and came to New York City. They helped as laborers in the construction of the New York and Harlem Railroad, the High Bridge and the Hudson River Railroad of 1847 in the North-West Bronx. Many stayed to live in Highbridge, where the Aqueduct crossed the Harlem River, and in Melrose, which would become later the first stop of the railroad from Manhattan to the Bronx. But the Germans as well as the Irish that had opened businesses in the Bronx moved soon to more spacious homes, "(...) turreted, gabled, bedecked with ornamentation and encircled by wide porches for the hot summer days and nights".<sup>170</sup>

Before the years of depression and war there had been a cycle of new immigrant groups arriving in residential neighborhoods pushing out older groups then working hard to improve their quality of life and then came another group of new residents pushing the latest group of residents out just when they had settled in. That means it was a cycle of neighborhoods booming and declining, with residents under pressure to move economically upward since when they failed, they had to join the increasing low-income population. "Yet this cycle had been slowed or stopped in the Bronx, as elsewhere, by the Depression and then the war".<sup>171</sup> These newcomers in addition to industrial interests pushed previous residents to move further north, i.e. eventually up to the South Bronx. When the new housing was constructed starting from the subway stops reducing the open space in the area, those immigrants, who were wealthy enough, moved from the overcrowding tenement buildings of the Lower East Side - where people shared not only apartments but even beds, the so called "(...) immigrant 'hot bed' (...)"<sup>172</sup> - up to the new apartments that offered higher standards in regard to access to air, ventilation and open space. New immigrants kept moving into the Bronx, altering the cultural mixture of the population and with every the next cultural group arriving the more wealthy residents were pushed to move on into the Northern part of the Bronx where more open space and thus more land for housing construction was still available at an affordable price. By 1900 the population of the Bronx had reached 200,000 while the main building type consisted of five- and six- story rental apartment buildings that accommodated workers of Manhattan and their families.<sup>173</sup> That points towards a further reduction of open space in general and of open space that was privately usable for gardening in particular.

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<sup>167</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 22.

<sup>168</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 27.

<sup>169</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 19.

<sup>170</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 19-20.

<sup>171</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 109.

<sup>172</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 110.

<sup>173</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 35.

On July 4 1927, New York State freed African-American slaves<sup>174</sup>, many of which moved into Harlem before being pushed only about a decade later also across the Harlem River into the South Bronx by the real estate market<sup>175</sup>. “The black population of New York grew from 450,000 before the war to 800,000 after it and traditional black neighborhoods began to burst at their seams”.<sup>176</sup> These new immigrants were unskilled workers, uneducated and unfamiliar with urban life. Additionally the social and economic changes that had taken part in the city after the war were not in favor of African Americans. Thus did for example the unions, which were composed of whites, tried to make sure that no unskilled job was given to African Americans. In the 1940s, immigrants from Puerto Rico arrived in New York by airplane and not any longer by ship. They came in large numbers and when they settled in groups in several parts of the city, like for example in Simpson Street in the Bronx, “(...) relief costs had jumped 54 percent.”<sup>177</sup> And the Puerto Ricans continued to immigrate to New York. “Each year through the late 1940s another twenty thousand Puerto Ricans flooded into New York City”.<sup>178</sup> Groups of Puerto Ricans and African-Americans moved driven by the real estate marked from Harlem to the Mott Haven and Hunt’s Point area of the South Bronx they pushed out the previously European and Jewish residents. In the Bronx alone lived more than 60,000 Puerto Ricans by 1950.<sup>179</sup> As other immigrant groups before they worked on the lowest-paid jobs. In the postwar years the demand for unskilled jobs was disappearing, small businesses and industry closed or were relocating. The immigrants arriving at this time had it therefore difficult to establish themselves and to create an economic basis for their families and to integrate into the social fabric of the city. Families that depended on welfare in a foreign country fell on drugs and crime to cope with the situation. Even more people, mostly white, fled the neighborhoods. The remaining population was of ethnic “minority, poor and without hope”.<sup>180</sup> European Jews and Italians moved in the new Bronx’ apartment houses and neighborhoods that had risen on the estates of the old farms. Then with the advancement of transportation and the ongoing development in the first decade of this century more and more immigrants moved from the crowded Downtown Manhattan into the Bronx. The Irish occupied the area of Mott Haven, Melrose and Highbridge, the Italians settled in Morrisania and Belmont.

Cultural diverse neighborhoods with stores providing a variety of culturally diverse products and food opened up along the avenues. Since many urban residents were equally struck by the global economic depression of the years of the World War, they were all of the sudden of equal low-income and moved to more affordable neighborhoods like the Bronx were they remained for the time of the war. About at the same time the ongoing First World War stopped the shipping routes from Europe and with them the flow of immigrants to America and especially New York City.<sup>181</sup> That means new residents continued to move to the South Bronx and “the Bronx of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s became a staging ground for the American Dream<sup>182</sup>, the unremarkable home of 1.5 million first-and second generation Americans.”<sup>183</sup> Thus in 1930 about “(...) 1,265,000 people lived in the Bronx. Fully 70 percent were either foreign-born or children of foreign-born- 97,000 Irish; 106,574 Germans; 464,608

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<sup>174</sup> African-Americans living in New York City had been first slaves and then free persons after the Civil War. The emancipation of southern blacks and their migration had doubled their population to ninety thousand, which made two percent of the citizenry in 1890. (Bronx Historical Society, [www.bronxhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bronxhistoricalsociety.org))

<sup>175</sup> The African American immigrants settled in Harlem, which had originally been inhabited by Dutch and then by Jews, who had moved over to the Bronx.

<sup>176</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 98.

<sup>177</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 100.

<sup>178</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 100.

<sup>179</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 100.

<sup>180</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 6.

<sup>181</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 110.

<sup>182</sup> The term “the American Dream” came up during a time of nation identity crises in the time of the Depression years of the 1930s. It is supposed to have been first published by James Truslow Adams in his book “The Epic of America” of 1931. It is an expression of individual and national values and based on the basic ideas of honesty, saving of money, hard work and endurance. The phrase of the “American dream” conveys the concept “from rags to riches” that allows anybody the chance to become a millionaire if he or she only worked hard enough for it. Immigrants from all over the world were attracted to the United States in order to live this dream, their only choice for a better life.

<sup>183</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 4.

Polish, Austrian, and Russian Jews; and 165,004 Italians".<sup>184</sup> After the Second World War, in 1946, the homecoming soldiers were welcomed back home with special privileges in order to enable them to attend college and to settle down. Legislation was passed to allow every veteran to a mortgage backed by the Veterans Administration encouraging housing construction and thus reduction of open space.

With the economic upswing during the postwar years, the population increased in the South Bronx, while the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway, built from 1941 to 1955 by Robert Moses, cut through the densely-built center of the Bronx, creating a rift between neighborhoods, pushing residents out as tenement buildings were demolished and many residents relocated. At the same time the real estate market pushed low-income residents - mainly Latin American immigrants and African-Americans - across the Harlem River. Social tension and crime multiplied. Gangs dominated the streets in the 1960s and yet more residents left the district: of about 437,000 residents in 1950, only 386,000 remained in 1970, i.e. the population reduced by 50,000 in two decades.<sup>185</sup> "The South Bronx, in particular, went from being two-thirds white in 1950 to two-thirds African American and Hispanic in 1960".<sup>186</sup> The cultural background of the population changed rapidly with the increasing number of residents moving in the South Bronx, pushing other residents out. "The 1960 census for tract 153, encompassing Charlotte Street, shows that of 4,537 families only about 11 percent had lived there since before the war. Almost 60 percent, or 2,666 families, had moved in during the previous five years!"<sup>187</sup> In New York during the 1950s and 1960s there was generally the trend that white people were leaving the inner city. "During the 1950s "a million whites moved out of New York City, including 200,000 from the Bronx. In the 1960s, when the number of whites leaving New York City stabilized, the number leaving the Bronx rose by a quarter, to 256,000".<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, "the African-American and Latino poor, themselves displaced from urban renewal projects in other parts of the city, were 'dumped' into high-rise public housing constructed in predominantly white working-class communities".<sup>189</sup> After the Second World War two new groups of immigrants, this time from America and not Europe, arrived in New York. The one group were African-American from the South, who had been driven from the cotton fields by automation, and the other group were Puerto Ricans, who left their overpopulated, impoverished island by taking the now affordable airplane. "(...) The Southern Blacks (...) migrated into the City during the 1930's and 1940's; the Caribbean Islanders and Hispanics (...) settled primarily during the 1950's and 1960's, and the Asians, and Central and South Americans, (...) [made, added C.M.] during the 1970's and 1980's (...) New York their home. For all these diverse groups, gardening became an opportunity to recreate a familiar environment with familiar plants and traditional methods of cultivation".<sup>190</sup>

When the Puerto Ricans and African-Americans migrated to New York City at the end of the war, economy had picked up again. The influx of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans transformed the cultural mixture of the neighborhoods further with social conflicts as a result. "The old immigrant 'hot bed' was reinstated, with people taking turns sleeping in the same bed: those on the night shift came home every morning to collapse in a just-vacated bunk, while the nighttime occupant trudged off to his day job".<sup>191</sup> Puerto Ricans continued to immigrate into New York City to flee in their home country. Many were farmers – rural workers as the other immigrants from different parts of the World before them. When in the 1940s Puerto Ricans had moved into apartment buildings of Spanish Harlem, they now, during the 1950s, moved over the Harlem River to the Bronx. When the number of residents in the Bronx' apartment grew, landlords started to subdivide large apartments and to transform their tenement buildings into rooming houses. Families shared community kitchens and soon, since Puerto Ricans were used to live outdoors, fire escapes, stoops, sidewalks and streets were included into their living space – i.e. privatizing public open spaces in the

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<sup>184</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 74.

<sup>185</sup> Gonzales 2004, p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Gonzales 2004, p. 1.

<sup>187</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 222.

<sup>188</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 223.

<sup>189</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 69-70.

<sup>190</sup> Fox, Koepfel, and Kellam 1984, pp.4-5.

<sup>191</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 110.

same way South Bronx residents would do when starting community gardens in the late 1970s.

At the end of the Second World War due to new immigration waves, New York City was struck with another housing problem. Economically well-to-do whites moved to the suburbs and their vacated apartments were left to the African Americans and Puerto Ricans. When the Puerto Ricans and African Americans moved into the South Bronx the former white immigrants wanted to leave the neighborhood, but were hindered by the same housing shortage that had driven the newcomers into their neighborhood. The change of a South Bronx neighborhoods ethnicity can be traced at the example of PS 61 on Charlotte Street. In 1957 the public school record showed “48 percent Puerto Ricans, 15 percent blacks, and 35 percent whites. (...) By 1960 PS 61 had become 62 percent Puerto Rican, 21 percent black, and 17 percent white. (...) By 1965 PS 61 was 66 percent Puerto Rican, 27 percent black, and 5 percent white, (...)”<sup>192</sup> With drugs and crime on the forerun, the middle-class Hispanics started to abandon their buildings and to move out of the South Bronx. While during the 1920s mainly Jewish immigrants, then the largest group of the Bronx’ population, created neighborhoods with stable social networks in the areas of Hunt’s Point, West Farms, East Tremont and the buildings bordering the Grand Concourse, this area had by 1965 a poor reputation as a residential neighborhood with many of its stores were vacant.

Since many Jews used to live in the area close to the Grand Concourse, the American Jewish Congress conducted a study of the residential situation of the Grand Concourse. The report found that there were still many white residents in the Bronx, but it predicted that from this neighborhood not many residents would be attracted to the newly built Coop-City outside of the South Bronx. In fact the study of the American Jewish Congress did not come to a conclusion about who was to blame for the development, but guessed that potential landlords were turned away by the bad example of the neighboring East Bronx and the rumors of African Americans and Puerto Ricans moving into the area. The report proposed to rehabilitate the area through investment, by organizing residents, by giving the vacant stores a new use, by collecting more garbage, by increasing police protection and by balancing cultural tensions. The findings did not create confidence nor did they calm down the Jewish residents, but made them leave the residential area of the Grand Concourse turning it into a more low-income location lacking a long-term residents’ community that cared for their neighborhood. This would change with the creation of community gardens a decade later, which were an effort of the newer and the remaining residents to beautify the area close to their home and to socialize in the open space in grassroots activities.

Consequently the analysis of cultural background of residents between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that the cultural background of the population changed rapidly from a Jewish and European to Latin-American, Caribbean and African American population while the population number increased and open space land use was reduced causing a lack of long-term residents’ community.

### **3.2.2 Income of residents**

When the first industrial development began in the Bronx in 1841 under industrialists like Jonas Bronck the workers that he had hired moved up to the area. Many of them came from the crowded tenements of Lower Manhattan. To them moving to the Bronx represented not only having a job but also the possibility to live surrounded by open space in a new settlement, i.e. the possibility to improve their quality of live. Working class families as well as the middle class favored the Bronx, because of the area’s vicinity to Manhattan in regard to commuting to work as well as because of its preservation of nature that made it a close-by location for a countryside home. The residents that moved into the developing South Bronx lived first in “wooden frame houses, with pigs, cows, and chickens in the side yards, and cultivated vegetable gardens in the rear”<sup>193</sup> They either worked in the new factories of the

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<sup>192</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 220.

<sup>193</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 20.

Bronx or commuted over the River to Manhattan.<sup>194</sup> When the new housing was constructed starting from the subway stops immigrants, who were wealthy enough, moved from the overcrowding tenement buildings of the Lower East Side up to the new apartments that offered higher standards in regard to access to air, ventilation and open space. After the First World War, the continuously developing transportation system made shipping less and less an issue, so that the market and competition became more and more global. This globalization caused rising wages, since new costs were created. Consequently New York City became uncompetitive from a business point of view, so that industries left the region. Then after the stock market crash of October 1929 many people lost money and jobs. When people could not afford the rent anymore, more and more apartments were left vacant. New tenants were offered two or three month free rent. Consequently a lot of families left one apartment to move to another and to save a few month of rent. "Each day its ragged army of poor emerged to seek work or scrounge through garbage cans, trying somehow to survive the collapse of the booming, frenetic, prosperous world that had been America in the Roaring Twenties."<sup>195</sup> In 1930, "national income plunged from \$81 billion the year of the crash to 68 billion (...)"<sup>196</sup> and "by November [1930] six thousand out-of-work men were selling apples from make-shift stands for a nickel apiece on the sidewalks of New York."<sup>197</sup> Around 1930 of the 1,265,000 people living in the Bronx<sup>198</sup>, while "(...) 123,572 working men [were, added C.M.] recorded in the 1930 census".<sup>199</sup>

When the harbor of New York City, which was once after Rotterdam the second largest marketplace in the world, became less used with the invention of the cargo container in the mid-1950s and the move to New Jersey's harbors more jobs were cut in the city. Consequently during the 1960s the uneducated poor multiplied rapidly and were depending highly on public resources. "Poverty in New York City, in 1964 was not worse than it had been in Jacob Riis's time, but far more complex".<sup>200</sup> In the postwar years the demand for unskilled jobs was disappearing, small businesses and industry closed or were relocating. The immigrants arriving at this time had it therefore difficult to establish themselves and to create an economic basis for their families and to integrate into the social fabric of the city. Families that depended on welfare in a foreign country fell on drugs and crime to cope with the situation. More people, mostly white, fled the low-income neighborhoods of the South Bronx. The remaining population was of ethnic "(...) minority, poor and without hope".<sup>201</sup>

Generally, jobs for the under-educated had become less with the development of machinery and technology. In the postwar years "industries which provided entry-level employment and were the foundation and were the foundation of vibrant working-class neighborhoods, relocated to the south or overseas during the 1960s and 1970s".<sup>202</sup> This destroyed the job market for the low-income class. But, "the city also helped to destroy the job market in the South Bronx. There were other reasons for the decline of the borough's manufacturing base, but the city made things worse by imposing new corporate income taxes on top of federal and state taxes, and boosting permit and inspection fees".<sup>203</sup> Thus "in 1959 the area had 2,000 manufacturers; by 1974 there were only 1,350, and the number of jobs they supplied dropped by a third, according to a 1975 article in Fortune magazine".<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> In the time from 1820 to 1850, one million Irish immigrants fled hunger caused by bad potato harvests and came to New York City. Most of them were under-educated, had to live in the city's tenement houses and to work in the lowest paid jobs. The extreme poverty of the Bronx arose of the continually changing groups of impoverished immigrants of various ethnic groups occupying the great number of speculator-owned tenement buildings. Jacob Riis described the situation in the tenement houses of Manhattan in 1890 with "some slum neighborhoods had 290,000 persons living in a mile-square area (...)" (Jonnes 1986, p. 24) and made the poor housing responsible for social disorder of a city. (Riis 1890, pp. 1-3)

<sup>195</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 69.

<sup>196</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 65.

<sup>197</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 66.

<sup>198</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 74.

<sup>199</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 74.

<sup>200</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 146.

<sup>201</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 69.

<sup>203</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>204</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

Due to the lack of jobs, the welfare population in the Bronx increased. "In the Hunts Point neighborhood alone, there were 11,000 welfare recipients in 1962, and 53,000 a decade later".<sup>205</sup> In other words, during the 1960s the uneducated poor multiplied rapidly and were depending highly on public resources. "Poverty in New York City, in 1964 was not worse than it had been in Jacob Riis's time, but far more complex".<sup>206</sup> That means during the depression years of the late 1920s as well as the time of both World Wars residents of the South Bronx were in lack of work and income, depended on relief programs by the government, such as for example War Gardens, Victory Gardens and Relief gardens.

Consequently the analysis of income of residents between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that open space land use has been reduced due to an decrease in income of the population due to global and local economic development. The government answered this with the parallel provision of public urban open space land uses and welfare services as well as later in the 1970s by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx.

### **3.2.3 Criminal activities versus social control of residents**

In the following I will introduce open space land use in the South Bronx and population between 1920s and the 1970s in regard to population and criminal activities versus social control of residents in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the area starting in the 1970s.

At the middle of the nineteenth century the overcrowded apartments of the densely built tenement houses in Lower Manhattan's were "breeding grounds" for criminal activities, because every new group of immigrants had first to establish themselves among the earlier arrivals and long-term residents of the city. Some immigrant groups were more involved in criminal activities than others – possibly because of the way they formed their cultural communities and the way they adapted to the new social situation. "Although by the 1850s the Irish were one-third of the populace, they accounted for 55 percent of the arrests (about half for drunkenness) and two-thirds of the paupers. (...) The Germans made up 10 percent of the populace and had a tenth of their people in the jails and poorhouses".<sup>207</sup> One reason for the crime in the densely populated low-income area was probably the lack of influence on creation of one's private environment due to the dense population and the lack of accessible open space. Another reason was probably the anonymity among the new residents, the lack of community – both reasons that led to the development of community gardens in the South Bronx in the late 1970s. The Jewish and Italian immigrant groups brought some of the most notorious criminals to New York. In the 1920s "the City's population was seven-or eightfold what it had been in the crime-ridden 1850s, but the murder rate (the most reliable barometer of violent crime) still averaged about three hundred homicides a year".<sup>208</sup> The crime rates were at the time "(...) lower in the Concourse area (...) than for the city or the Bronx as a whole"<sup>209</sup> was not blamed for the Concourse's decline in real estate market values and for the vacancy of four hundred stores. During the time of the Second World War, cultural tension in New York City as in the rest of the country was high.

The Bronx was filled with cultural and social class tensions in the same way as the neighboring Harlem<sup>210</sup> on the Manhattan Island. Whenever one group of longer settled immigrants did not like the way in which newcomers in their neighborhood lived, they reacted with aggression and there was nothing they could do to change it, many moved to another neighborhood and if they could not afford to move, social tensions increased. The migration of many low-income people into the Bronx was creating increasingly low-income districts and ethnic "ghettos". Crime multiplied in the late 1950s, when the immigrants from Puerto Rico

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<sup>205</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>206</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 146.

<sup>207</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 18-19.

<sup>208</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 138.

<sup>209</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 276.

<sup>210</sup> In 1943 a riot broke out in Harlem, when an African-American soldier was shot by a white policeman and five people died and 500 were injured.

and African-Americans moved into the existing minority slums. "Within the decade the annual homicide rate topped one thousand murders, a swift and spectacular rise that reflected the explosion of violence of all kinds".<sup>211</sup> Every borough of the city was hit that had a low-income neighborhood. The low-income residents of the Bronx neighborhoods lacked jobs, adequate living space and concern by society in general. They were left out of the more wealthy classes of society living the American dream with a home and a garden of one's own. Drugs seemed like an easy way out. Crime increased with the number of addicts as is shown in the example of the Charlotte Street neighborhood. "In 1961 in the Forty-second Precinct there had been 18 murders, 183 robberies, and 667 burglaries, and the citywide homicide total was 390. By 1971 those figures had soared to 102 murders, 2,632 robberies, and 6,443 burglaries in the Forty-second Precinct. The citywide figure for homicide had more than quadrupled to 1,466."<sup>212</sup> That means "as the area's social fabric frayed, crime exploded: Reported assaults quadrupled between 1960 and 1969".<sup>213</sup> But the crime was not spread equally in the Bronx. As a study by the American Jewish Congress reported "(...) since 1960, crime above 170th Street had decreased while below 170th Street crime had increased but was still much lower than the New York City average, and, in fact, juvenile delinquency in the same area had declined".<sup>214</sup> Especially the young generation had difficulties to cope with the social conflict and adapting to the new environment. They formed gangs to express their belonging to one specific group and their hostility against other groups. Families who could afford it considered moving out of the South Bronx to provide their children with adequate schools and a more secure place to grow up. During the 1970s, the number of residents declined concomitant to the number of children attending the local schools. "Enrollment at PS 61 had dropped from twenty-six hundred in 1970-71 (when half the overcrowded students had been attending classes in Quonset huts or other temporary quarters) to twelve hundred children in 1972-1973".<sup>215</sup>

Due to this development residents became afraid to stay or even walk on their streets. Nobody felt safe in their own neighborhood as the addicts of addicts were held up people wherever they could. More and more supermarkets as well as neighborhood stores closed in low-income districts making shopping for food and other everyday supplies tedious for the residents. By the early 1960s the desperate economic and social situation had brought many residents into drug addiction and crime. "(...) Crime was a powerful and seductive alternative to the hard grind to survive honestly and dull in low-paying jobs".<sup>216</sup> This was nothing new, since even the early immigrants of New York City had already turned to drugs and criminal as a way to cope with their new situation. When in the summer of 1964 Harlem was hit by another street riot, starting after the killing of an African-American boy by a white policeman and the beating down of the police of protesters against this action, the tension in the low-income districts was rising and the pressure to deal with the poverty on parts of the city as well. Through cultural segregation, economic transactions and political decision the deterioration of Bronx neighborhoods was encouraged. Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 racial riots broke out in many American cities. These riots were followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which is also known as the Fair Housing Act, intended to outlaw housing discrimination. In the late 1960s the neighborhoods of Melrose, Mott Haven, Hunt's Point, Morrisania, West Farms, Tremont, Concourse, Highbridge and Morris Heights were hit by the wave of crime, arson and abandonment and were consequently considered as an area called the South Bronx.

With the combination of racial riots, drugs and crime the South Bronx became famous under the term "South Bronx", which became a synonym for urban disaster, of "the vicious cycle of poverty, drugs, crime, and then arson."<sup>217</sup> If originally, the neighborhood in the far southeastern corner of Mott Haven, an area of one mile in square, was called the "South Bronx", starting from the 1960s the name was applied to more and more neighborhoods as the crime, "abandonment" and arson struck them, spreading throughout from the southern

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<sup>211</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 138.

<sup>212</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 227.

<sup>213</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>214</sup> American Jewish Congress, *The Grand Concourse*, pp. 5-6, p. 10 in Chronopoulos 2009, p. 18.

<sup>215</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 250.

<sup>216</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 138.

<sup>217</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 8.

part of the Bronx to the North. In the same way as in other low-income neighborhoods in New York City, buildings in the South Bronx were set on fire starting in the 1960s. Jonnes describes, "Between 1960 and 1980 ten thousand buildings were burned by arson-for-profit rings in response to 'redlining' by banks, who refused to make property-improvement loans in so-called blight areas. Two hundred thousand people were displaced from their neighborhoods. Business fled."<sup>218</sup> By 1967 the workload of Engine Company 82, "(...) the company that served the Charlotte Street-Jennings Market neighborhood (...)"<sup>219</sup> had doubled to 1957. "They were called to three thousand fires a year, making this the busiest firehouse in the City."<sup>220</sup> And "during 1970 Engine Company 82 made 6,204 runs to 4,246 fires, or eleven fires a day."<sup>221</sup> Buildings in the southern and central part of the Bronx borough, the lower-income and more densely occupied part, was first affected, but buildings in North-Bronx neighborhoods were burned down soon as well. "At first, most of these problems were located in the South Central Bronx; however, crime and housing deterioration was also beginning to disrupt the Northwest section of the borough, especially in the neighborhoods north and south of the Fordham Road corridor".<sup>222</sup>

Social control of a neighborhood can be seen as a measure to counteract crimes and until the middle of 1950s, the social networks in the neighborhoods of the South Bronx provided more quality of life in terms of neighborly surveillance and social control. Then streets became more and more dangerous due to a decrease in population that made the streets unsafe due to lack of neighborly surveillance or social control of open space leading to a rise in crimes, gangs and drugs. It became dangerous to go outside, of course especially at nighttime, when even less people were on the streets and less economic activity is going on. This shows for example a quote from the New York Post of February 1960, concerning the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway in the South Bronx: "The slaying in Cohen's butcher shop at 164 E. 174<sup>th</sup> St. Monday night was no isolated incident, but the culmination of a series of burglaries and hold-ups along the street. (...) Ever since work started on the Cross-Bronx Expressway across the street some two years ago, a grocer said, trouble has plagued the area. (...) Stores which once stayed open to 9 or 10 o'clock are shutting down at 7 P.M. Few shoppers dare venture out after dark, so storekeepers feel little business they lose hardly justifies the risk in remaining open late (...)".<sup>223</sup> Then in the 1970s the community gardens movement was started by low-income residents in New York City and other cities of the United States in answer to the lack of support by the municipality to improve their quality of life by taking on social responsibility for the open space next to their homes. That means residents participated in open space development because of lack of their quality of life and access to as well as lack of satisfaction with parks and other established open spaces close to their home. Generally, according the National Recreation and Park Association's report "Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America's Inner Cities" of 1974 open urban spaces need to be maintained by a group that is responsible for those spaces, i.e. takes on control over the spaces in the same way as social control is taken over a neighborhood by the creation of community gardens, in order to offer qualitatively high recreation.

Consequently the analysis of criminal activities versus social control of residents between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s shows that open space land use has been reduced on the one hand due to an increase in criminal activities, including crime, drugs, gang activities and arson, caused by a change in population and cultural and social class tensions and the lack of community. On the other hand it shows that open space land use has been reduced due to a lack of social control of residents because of the destruction of social networks in South Bronx' neighborhoods and a lack of satisfaction with public parks and other commonly and privately usable open spaces close to their home. This

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<sup>218</sup> Linn 2007, p. 159.

<sup>219</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 231.

<sup>220</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 231.

<sup>221</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 233.

<sup>222</sup> Bronx African American History Project, Fordham University, [www.fordham.edu/academics/programs\\_at\\_fordham\\_/bronx\\_african\\_american/archival\\_survey/northwest\\_bronx\\_comm\\_27930.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/academics/programs_at_fordham_/bronx_african_american/archival_survey/northwest_bronx_comm_27930.asp).

<sup>223</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 260.

was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.3 Open space land use and interest groups in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s**

In the following I will look at the context of open space land use in the South Bronx and interest groups between the 1920s and the 1970s by investigating the topic of social activities resulting in a lively and un-lively neighborhood. In the same context I will look at the actions of the federal government and the municipal government of New York City, the actions of the Department of Parks and Recreation, of banks, landlords and tenants as well as of private businessmen.

#### **3.3.1 Social activities resulting in a lively and un-lively neighborhood**

During the nineteenth century, life in the South Bronx was, due to a relatively low building density and low number of population, much like that in a village: People remained living in their neighborhood, everybody knew someone, if not everyone, on the street he or she lived at.<sup>224</sup> Work, school, shopping, religious service and entertainment was given a certain time of the day or a specific day of the week, creating community for those involved. Enclosed as well open spaces provided privacy as well as opportunities for individual and common creative expression – which is provided today in the urban setting partially in the form of the land use community garden situated in the inner city next to apartment buildings. There was a community spirit among the South Bronx residents like for example among the Irish immigrants, who in the middle of the nineteenth century, bonded together as a strong cultural group because of they commonly belonged to the Roman Catholic religion. Thus strongly organized the Irish took control over the Democratic Party of New York City and the Bronx' mainly working-class districts. The great number of new immigrants in the borough voted for that political party which offered jobs and a good life and this was in that case for them the Democratic Party. Each of the Bronx eight districts at the time had a district leader, whose supporting residents were registered Democrats. The party was very hands-on at the time and due-paying members of the Democratic Party as well as others would come to the district's political clubhouse "(...) seeking help with the landlord, a job, or a son in trouble. In exchange the recipient would register as a Democratic and vote accordingly".<sup>225</sup> Thus the Democratic Party took over an active part in the economy of the Bronx as it provided personal service for votes. Before elections, precinct workers, equipped with the file cards showing the favors done visited Bronx residents were in their apartments and made sure that they would go to the vote. Some residents were registered members of the Democratic Party "(...) for its excellent personal services but voted with the Socialists, or later the North-American Labor party, because they backed these parties' programs to redistribute income and establish social programs to redistribute income and establish social programs to help the common man".<sup>226</sup>

Before Edward J. Flynn was elected in 1922 as the new leader of the Bronx Democratic Party, the Manhattan Democratic Party called "Tammany Hall" the dominated the borough. Flynn set up a new headquarters in the Bronx and delegated all patronage matters to the district leaders, who would report back at the headquarters to Flynn. He structured the political organization to make it function like a business "(...) rather than a neighborly affair".<sup>227</sup> In addition to the Democratic Party, unions supported the interests of the working class when at the end of the First World War, they successfully demanded higher wages, better working conditions and benefits. In the beginning of the 1920's, residents of the Bronx neighborhoods working in factories became members of the union. The system of support was copied from "(...) the classic tradition of the Irish political machine from the time as they were built up at the end of the nineteenth century (...)".<sup>228</sup> Still, in the Bronx at the time, the Democratic Party was highly favored, since it provided personal service and brought social improvement. When in government, the Democrats had banned the tenement houses with windowless inner spaces, had ensured the supply of drinking water by building the aqueduct,

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<sup>224</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 60-61.

<sup>225</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 45.

<sup>226</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 48.

<sup>227</sup> Flynn p. 50 in: Jonnes 1986, p. 48.

<sup>228</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 46.

changed the ownership of the subway system so it would be run by the state, had offered free college education at the city's colleges and had taken care of parks and playgrounds.<sup>229</sup>

Political party organizations were dampening the conflict among the different interest groups competing in the struggle of land use issues. In this regard the party clubhouses were useful as places for meeting and discussion. Members of the Democratic Party controlled the city's government for the first decade. During the 1930s, the Democrats of the Bronx and other political parties that had been influential in New York City over decades lost their power due to population shifts and poor leadership. Additionally the changes in the bureaucratic structure of New York City had reduced the impact of the political parties on the zoning of the City. When in 1948 the Bronx Democrats lost their seat in Congress to the North-American Labor party, it represented a political change in the Bronx, which was an expression of the anger of the longer settled residents about the cultural change in population. In the 1960s the structure of the Democratic Party and the reality of the Bronx changed when partially because television's presence became more important in the election process of the boroughs officials than the traditional clubhouses. Before the 1960s residents of the South Bronx, especially those, who had grown up in the neighborhood, voted for the Democratic Party out of a tradition that had proven that the party leaders would provide for their needs. But with the Democratic Party's attraction reduced and the unions' power fading the residents realized that their vote showed little effect anymore in influencing what was going on in their neighborhoods. Consequently South Bronx residents were for example not able to stop the construction of waste transfer stations in the open spaces the vicinity of their housing. In the same way they were not able to influence the building laws established by residents living in other districts of New York City that affected the provision of open space and housing with private gardens in the South Bronx. Besides the influence of the Democratic Party on the creation of community in the South Bronx – which influenced the development of open space in the area -, the local newspaper of the Bronx, the "Bronx Home News", which was founded in 1907 as "Home News" provided neighborhood reports until 1945 and was thus establishing a community among the residents. Then in 1945 the Bronx Home News was bought by the New York Post and was stopped soon after because it did not produce a profit any more, which showed the lack of buyers interested to read on Bronx local stories and thus a lack of interest in residents in their neighborhood. Still in the years after the war, around 1952, the Bronx preserved "(...) its air of bourgeois and working-class stolidity"<sup>230</sup>, which was especially due to the attractiveness of the Concourse Plaza Hotel and the Yankee Stadium. Nevertheless the county's character was changing.

During the late 1940s, early 1950s the low-income residents living in the South Bronx, i.e. those residents who could not afford moving out of the neighborhood, had to deal with the new highway and bridge constructions implemented by Robert Moses that were meant to improve the quality of life for the more wealthy residents by providing faster access to the urban periphery. The Cross Bronx Expressway was for example "hammered" through the middle of Bronx, destroying buildings, open spaces and cutting through neighborhood. The South Bronx' residents were not only disturbed by the noise of the construction site over a long period of time, but were also displaced and cut off their neighbors and infrastructural institutions such as schools, supermarkets or churches. Once interwoven neighborly structures dissolved and everyday life was altered, many families moved. Many apartments were left vacant and the new families who moved into the apartment next to the new highway had even less income than the one's living there before. With the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway as well as the other expressways, the Bronx became less attractive, less culturally diverse, more impoverished and a more asthmatic district in the long run. As Jane Jacobs describes in her book "The death and live of great American cities", in 1961 the Bronx had a population of about 1,5 million people and was nevertheless "(...) woefully short of urban vitality, diversity and magnetism".<sup>231</sup> Jacobs continues, that the Bronx "(...) has its loyal residents, to be sure, mostly attached to little bloomings of street life here and there in 'the old neighborhood', but not nearly enough of them".<sup>232</sup> In other words, the street life that comes

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<sup>229</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 74.

<sup>230</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 105.

<sup>231</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 149.

<sup>232</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 149.

along with open space use and a feeling of neighborliness was lacking in the South Bronx during the 1960s and the creation of community gardens by the residents in the 1970s was a response to this lack of quality of life.

Consequently the analysis of social activities resulting in a lively and un-lively neighborhood between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that the creation of community has been reduced due to a reduction in enclosed as well open spaces providing privacy as well as opportunities for individual and common creative expression. This was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.3.2 Actions of the federal government and the municipality**

To early immigrants coming to the North American continent, most of the land appeared to be accessible, available for usage and thus as public open space. Documents about the acquisition of land in the so-called “New World” date back to 1785.<sup>233</sup> With more and more immigrants settling in the “New World” more and more land was acquired, open space build up with housing and privatized for farming and other private uses.<sup>234</sup> The federal government encouraged the immigrants, the new settlers, to start settlements and to move out West, since most of them landed first at the East coast harbors such as the harbor of New York City. “As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed and the Nation’s land base expanded further west, Congress encouraged the settlement of the land by enacting laws, including the Homesteading Laws<sup>235</sup> (...) of 1872”.<sup>236</sup> Also in the nineteenth century, the federal government started to preserve public open spaces and thus began to restrict “wild” settlement of all parts of the country. “The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked a shift in Federal land management priorities with the creation of the first national parks, forests and wildlife refuges. By withdrawing these lands from settlement, Congress signaled a shift in the policy goals served by the public lands. Instead of using them to promote settlement, Congress recognized that they should be held in public ownership because of their other resource values”.<sup>237</sup> At the turn of the nineteenth century the plan for how the city should expand to accommodate an increasing population and improve the housing situation of the low-income class was discussed controversial especially by Andrew H. Green, who was an influential lawyer and political person at the time. Green was, until 1876, in the position of the city’s comptroller and had as such influence on its finances and economy. For financial and economical reasons, he did not want to support the city-planning concept of opening new streets for the development of more dwellings uptown with the consequential construction of sewers and parks. Green instead proposed to concentrate on improving services in the already built-up area of the city. Andrew H. Green agreed with the landscape architect Frederick Lay Olmsted that the metropolitan area should be treated functionally as an entity and not as a collection of communities. Green on the one hand called for the development of a new street plan in accordance to the manageability of the entire city. Olmsted argued, that the grid made all parts of the city equally uncomfortable, while Green claimed that the grid had allowed the city “(...) to accommodate a large prospective population (...)”<sup>238</sup> and had “(...) sufficed up to this time”.<sup>239</sup> Olmsted on the other wanted to develop New York City in a way that predicted the most probable future use of the still unpopulated areas with the intent of the well being of the future residents in mind. To him in the future development of New

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<sup>233</sup> “The BLM’s [Bureau of Land Management’s] roots go back to the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwestern Ordinance of 1787. These laws provided for the survey and settlement of the lands that the original 13 colonies ceded to the Federal government after the War of Independence”. (Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov))

<sup>234</sup> “As additional lands were acquired by the United States from Spain, France, and other Countries, Congress directed that they be explored, surveyed, and made available for settlement. In 1812, Congress established the General Land Office in the Department of the Treasury to oversee the disposition of these Federal lands”. (Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov))

<sup>235</sup> “The statutes served one of the major policy goals of the young country: settlement of the Western territories”. (Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov))

<sup>236</sup> Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

<sup>237</sup> Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

<sup>238</sup> Fein, p. 329 in Olmsted 1876, pp. 9-10.

<sup>239</sup> Fein, p. 329 in Olmsted 1876, pp. 9-10.

York City the area of the twenty-third and twenty-fourth ward, i.e. the area which is called the Bronx, were to be treated differently than the existing city, which meant to him an exclusion of the possibility to extend the street grid in this area. Green opposed to this concept and called for the continuation of the grid nevertheless. After 1874 the plan for the twenty-third and twenty-fourth wards, i.e. the Bronx, was laid out – following the grid.

With the ongoing urbanization, urban land increased in value and the management of public land became more and more a political issue. Thus, “The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 established the U.S. Grazing Service to manage the public rangelands. (...) In 1946, the Grazing Service was merged with the General Land Office to form the Bureau of Land Management within the Department of the Interior”.<sup>240 241</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century the municipality of New York was headed by the Democratic Party, called Tammany Hall<sup>242</sup> at the time, which favored the construction of new settlements by private businessmen in the periphery of the city, because the immigrants’ quarters in the low-income district of Lower East Side were overpopulated while newcomers continued to come in and the city budget was tight. That means the municipality supported factory owners and entrepreneurs for example like Jordan Mott who had built one of the first factories in the Bronx construction of one-family houses with gardens for the workers next to new factory buildings: The buildings and gardens could grow with the workers’ financial means while they were allowing for privacy and individuality and saving food dollars. At the beginning of the Second World War, economic, social and political changes characterized New York. The city had concentrated on manufacturing and its port for almost a century and had taken in millions of immigrants. When the war slowed down economy, the City leaders conferred to avoid another Depression. “The City intended to resume its interrupted program of capital works, with visions of eradicating slums and speeding every-snarled traffic”.<sup>243</sup> Welfare benefits were expanded and the federal government started in the 1960s the Great Society programs - domestic programs, which were promoted by President Lyndon B. Johnson to help the increasing number of urban low-income residents. The Model Cities program was one of these Great Society’s programs. But in the Bronx local disagreement diffused the effects of this program.

The National Recreation and Park Association’s study “Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America’s Inner Cities” of 1974 recognizes that “the Federal Government was changing in the 1970s “(...) its direction regarding inner cities and open space”.<sup>244</sup> In the 1960s “(...) federal money has not been a substantial part of local parks and recreation expenditures”, while in the 1970s “(...) federal advocacy has illuminated the problems of the inner city and encouraged compensatory measures”.<sup>245</sup> The report explains that in the beginning of the 1970s, even though with life style changes and shorter workweeks, people have the possibility to spend more leisure time, recreation had not received enough recognition yet. Still, “(...) recreation has always placed below such other financial priorities as education, public safety, transportation and many others in allocating the municipal dollar” and “(...) will not be significantly improved by new revenue sharing proposals (...)”.<sup>246</sup> This is according to the study due to the fact that “(...) recreation must still compete with more powerful interests to maintain even present levels of funding, much less increase them”.<sup>247</sup> As a consequence, the low-income population lacks in recreation options in the city. “(...) The real losers, (...) are the proposed beneficiaries of the recreation programs: the people who

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<sup>240</sup> “When the BLM [Bureau of Land Management within the U.S. Department of the Interior, added C.M.] was initially created, there were over 2,000 unrelated and often conflicting laws for managing the public lands. The BLM had no unified legislative mandate until Congress enacted the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)”. (Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov))

<sup>241</sup> Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

<sup>242</sup> Tammany Hall played a major role in controlling New York City’s Democratic Party and politics from the 1790s to the 1960s, even though it weakened after the election of Fiorello LaGuardia in 1934. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/582027/Tammany-Hall>) Tammany Hall took advantage of their immigrant voters to follow through with the party’s own political interests by, in a corruptive manner, misusing City funds for private interests.

<sup>243</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 91.

<sup>244</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>245</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>246</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, pp. 10-11.

<sup>247</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

reside in the inner city areas".<sup>248</sup> The National Recreation and Park Association's study summarizes that some cities were considering "planned shrinkage", i.e. "(...) planned abandonment of neighborhoods deemed nonviable or unlivable".<sup>249</sup> As an explanation the study adds, "(...) As Federal categorical grants for inner-city social and physical degradation decline, it is quite possible that this approach to returning the inner city to the market economy may be utilized".<sup>250</sup> This approach of planned shrinkage was presumably discussed in regard to the South Bronx as well even though the municipality denied this. The report agrees with that by stating, "(...) In some inner cities the differences between purposeful and accidental abandonment may be unperceivable (...)".<sup>251</sup> In regard to the effects of "planned shrinkage" on open spaces in low-income neighborhoods, the report refers to the connection of encouragement of residents moving out of neighborhoods and reduction of parks funding for maintenance of public open spaces. It states, "(...) Park and recreation agencies should be aware of the possibility that public services will be deliberately reduced to encourage massive flight from the areas".<sup>252</sup> It adds as an explanation, "If depressed land values result, say those who encourage this practice, free market forces could begin to operate again".<sup>253</sup> The report states, "The importance and value of inner-city open space and recreation opportunity is not sufficiently understood by citizens, nor is it sufficiently substantiated by recreation and park agency professionals".<sup>254</sup> The report demands that consequently, "linkages, if any, between open space and other recreation opportunity and a wide range of measures of individual and social health and/or pathologies should be identified and generally publicized".<sup>255</sup> My thesis adds here another level of research that proves the importance and value of inner-city open space in this context. According to the National Recreation and Park Association's study, in the late 1960s, early 1970s, recreation for the urban population was not in the center of interest of the federal government. The study states that this is due to, "(...) the absence of measurable goals for urban recreation (...)".<sup>256</sup> And with this absence of interest, it "(...) becomes almost certain that the non-specific goals of the Congress in this regard are in many ways quite different from those of poor inner-city residents".<sup>257</sup>

The way in which the municipal administration is acting as a whole, with different parts that do not have the same goal is according to the study also preventing the municipality to effectively improve the quality of life of urban residents. There is a general conflict in the goals of the diverse agencies as well in the "(...) rate or speed of means modification when strategies or tactics are reversed or redirected".<sup>258</sup> The report explains that "the circumvention of local agencies (bordering on contempt in some observed instances) led rather predictably to a redirection of local efforts to 'non-targeted' residents - where some 'control' was possible, and where traditional appreciation and respect, not rejection and vandalism, were part of the reward".<sup>259</sup> According to the study, this excuses "(...) the absence of agency - initiated innovative and successful inner-city, resident-specific programs and services not federally funded".<sup>260</sup> But, as the National Recreation and Park Association's study explains, "(...) as a Nation, Americans are going to have to make some decisions about the quality of national life".<sup>261</sup> That is "(...) if, for example, people in a city want factories, parks, and pollution-free air to exist at the same time in the same place. Government must be the mechanism by which the fairest choice is made".<sup>262</sup> In 1970, the study reports, a firm contracted by the "(...) Bureau of Outdoor Recreation severely criticized park and recreation administrators in the public sector for deficiencies in community organization aspects of their work".<sup>263</sup> In addition

<sup>248</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>249</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 14.

<sup>250</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 14.

<sup>251</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>252</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, pp. 14-15.

<sup>253</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>254</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>255</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>256</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 67.

<sup>257</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 67.

<sup>258</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 67.

<sup>259</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 67.

<sup>260</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 68.

<sup>261</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 69.

<sup>262</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 69.

<sup>263</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 69.

“(…) many agencies were inhibited by organizational charts or otherwise discouraged from interaction with important formal and informal leadership of community recreation, education and cultural agencies”.<sup>264</sup> In order to “(…) coordinate fragmented leisure recreation services in the cities”<sup>265</sup>, development of umbrella agencies or super-agencies was recommended. In 1971, a study done by the Community Council of Greater New York, came according to the National Recreation and Park Association’s report to the conclusion that “a fragmented, underfinanced delivery system yielded competition, overlapping, and duplication, (…)” and that “(…) coordination and cooperation must be facilitated”.<sup>266</sup> The National Recreation and Park Association’s study finds also that in the late 1960s, early 1970s “public parks and recreation systems in America’s big cities are in critical financial condition”.<sup>267</sup> This is proven according to the study by the fact that, “(…) field researchers found facilities crumbling, staffs cut back, and services slashed”.<sup>268</sup> In addition, “maintenance funds rarely came from Federal sources, monies from concessions, or fees and charges”.<sup>269</sup> But “funds specifically directed to programs (…) came most frequently from Federal sources and from fees and charges”<sup>270</sup>, such as the federal Community Development Block Grant supporting community gardening in the South Bronx since the 1970s.

### 3.3.2.1 Actions of the federal government

In the 1920s, the government of the United States under President Hoover subsidized living in the suburbs. President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) “(…) formulated endorsed and enacted policy and programs to encourage residential construction, extend home ownership and set neighborhood standards”.<sup>271</sup> The one family home with garden became the ideal living situation propagandized. When the economy of the United States in the industrial world in general picked up, the advertised ideal of living was to have a car, to explore of the wide natural preserves of the nation and to own a one family home surrounded by a privately usable open space in commuting distance to the city.

Before Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected U.S. President (1933-1945) in 1933, he called as Governor of New York (1929–1932) for the establishment welfare programs, but neither the state finances nor the million dollars raised by New York City bankers to lend to the City were enough to provide relief for the low-income families.<sup>272</sup> In 1932 Jimmy Walker resigned as Mayor and Governor Roosevelt was running successfully for presidency as the Democratic candidate. By then “the national income had dropped to \$41 billion, or half its 1922 level”.<sup>273</sup> In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed through the New Deal, a “(…) legislative and administrative program of designed to promote economic recovery and social reform (…)”.<sup>274</sup> The Works Progress Administration, an agency that employed the unemployed to help on public works projects, was for example part of this New Deal program. But Roosevelt’s New Deal had not a lot of effect and after tough recession years a lot of families had no more resources. In 1935 the Social Security Act was enacted to create relief and jobs. The wealthier population called Roosevelt’s New Deal policies communistic and un-American since they focused on relief for the low-income and unemployed classes, but Roosevelt benefited nevertheless from great popularity when he ran for his second term in 1936. His administration managed with the New Deal programs to “secure” the banks in the economic depression, to established deposit insurance as well as establish home mortgage programs, farm programs and social security, to provide relief and Civilian Conservation Corps camps for the young. In addition new labor laws were created and trade barriers lowered, which showed eventually effect on the global trading market. In regard to the development of community gardens in the South Bronx, President Roosevelt’s wife, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was influential since she planted during her husband’s time second term as

<sup>264</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 69.

<sup>265</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1986, p. 69.

<sup>266</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 69.

<sup>267</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 70.

<sup>268</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 70.

<sup>269</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 72.

<sup>270</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 72.

<sup>271</sup> Hise 1997, p. 8.

<sup>272</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 69.

<sup>273</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 69.

<sup>274</sup> www.merriam-webster.com.

President a Victory Garden next to the White House to promote self-reliance and public health, while encouraging the White House's chefs to prepare nutritious, low-cost meals – an example that Michelle Obama followed decades later in 2009.<sup>275</sup>

Another political person that was influential on the community garden development in the South Bronx during the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency was Edward J. Flynn, who was elected as the new leader of the Bronx Democratic Party in 1922. Flynn became Secretary of State in 1929, replacing Robert Moses, after the Democrat Jimmy Walker had been elected to the Mayor of New York in 1925 and in the same year when Franklin Delano Roosevelt took over the office as Governor of New York in 1929. Flynn was a long-time friend of President Roosevelt and advised him in 1935 of the changes going on in society that had to be taken account for in the Democratic Party. He wanted to attract voters, who were living "(...) mostly in the cities"<sup>276</sup> and who included "(...) racial and religious minorities and labor people".<sup>277</sup> Flynn stated, "We must attract them by radical programs of social and economic reform".<sup>278</sup> The change in national politics followed soon. Flynn was appointed by Roosevelt as the regional administrator of public works for New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In this position he had control over \$3.3 million, to be paid back to Congress. The share of New York City was used to "(...) put tens of thousands of men to work completing subway lines; building hospitals, incinerators, and disposal plants; installing new sewers; and regarding and paving streets"<sup>279</sup> The Civilian Works Administration, followed later the Works in Progress Administration, paid for the new jobs. The New Deal programs showed finally effect and the economy recovered slowly. In 1940 the United States was about to enter the Second World War under President Roosevelt and the war itself helped to create an up-lift in the economy.

In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson (1963-1969), member of the Democratic Party, declared the "War on Poverty", i.e. "(...) war on American poverty".<sup>280</sup> As the National Recreation and Park Association's study of 1974 explains, in the late 1960s, early 1970s "(...) came the Federal War on Poverty, with its identification of Model City areas, the passage of considerable legislation aimed at helping specific target groups, and categorical grant programs designed to further particular services or facilities".<sup>281</sup> The fulfillment of the "comparative need" remained on the agenda of the national policy until 1973, when "(...) the enactment of general revenue sharing and the current consideration of special revenue sharing (...)"<sup>282</sup> put the "equal opportunity for all" back into the local level".<sup>283</sup> At the same time that the federal government had announced the War on Poverty, the fight for civil rights, especially of racial rights, was going on in the United States with Martin Luther King Jr. as the leading person. In New York City Mayor Wagner directed city agencies to battle poverty, no matter what it costs, and professional social workers were employed by the government. On July 2, 1964 President Lyndon Johnson enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin. During this time, "(...) federal money was pouring into the South Bronx as never before. Hoping to stem the area's disintegration, the federal government spent hundreds of millions in urban improvement programs, all to no avail".<sup>284</sup> Then, "in 1967 the area became part of the Johnson administration's Model Cities program, drawing more than \$300 million. The result was more failed projects, some of which were memorialized with the term 'planner's blight'--vast areas of vacant land from which communities were ousted for new projects that never materialized".<sup>285</sup> Another idea of the federal government that was implemented also in New

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<sup>275</sup> Burros 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html).

<sup>276</sup> Moley, Raymond (1966): *The First New Deal*, New York: Hartcourt, p. 379, referred to in Jonnes 1986, p. 73.

<sup>277</sup> Moley, Raymond (1966): *The First New Deal*, New York: Hartcourt, p. 379, referred to in Jonnes 1986, p. 73.

<sup>278</sup> Moley, Raymond (1966): *The First New Deal*, New York: Hartcourt, p. 379, referred to in Jonnes 1986, p. 73.

<sup>279</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 77.

<sup>280</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 144.

<sup>281</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 85.

<sup>282</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 85.

<sup>283</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 85.

<sup>284</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html/](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html/).

<sup>285</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html/](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html/).

York City in the late 1960s was to set up multi-service centers in every low-income neighborhood of the United States of America, which were community based and run, and would provide first health care and later other community services for the low-income residents as an essential service and a step out of poverty. The Hunt's Point Community Cooperation directed the pilot project in their South Bronx neighborhood, which included City Health District 41 and 42. The multi-service center became a success and in 1967-1968 a family day-care center, a parent-child center, a health center, manpower training, and a housing office were added with federal funding for of anti-poverty programs and "(...) from federal coffers in Washington, circumventing City Hall altogether".<sup>286</sup> Furthermore, the involvement of five federal agencies in the Hunt's Point multi-service center provided great potential for more jobs and programs to come.

Since at the beginning of the 1970s the financial situation of public park and recreation systems in cities in the United States of America was in a "(...) critical financial condition (...)" and since municipal austerity had "(...) a profound negative impact on the operation and maintenance of city recreation and park systems as well as on other leisure institutions serving low-income, inner-city residents (...)" the report draws the conclusion that "public resources are currently inadequate to meet current demands".<sup>287</sup> It proposes that since "in the past, large city park and recreation systems (as well as voluntary agencies) have received most of their revenues from local sources" (...) that "this will continue, in a municipal economy characterized by greater competition for the dollar brought on by a constantly expanding panoply of local needs".<sup>288</sup> At the beginning of the 1970s, "(...) public park and recreation systems in America's big cities are in critical financial condition".<sup>289</sup> But there are many other infrastructural difficulties in the cities and consequently "the quality of noncommercial recreation resources in cities is a lower level problem to both residents and officials than many other aspects of city life, such as crime, transportation/ traffic, drugs and juvenile delinquency, and public education".<sup>290</sup> The study explains that technical assistance "(...) is needed by public and private/ voluntary agencies that deliver recreation services to inner-city residents".<sup>291</sup> In this regard "(...) the identification of an agent to perform the functions or to underwrite their costs is not obvious" and "(...) the fiscal resources to underwrite the costs of action flowing from technical assistance are even more difficult to identify".<sup>292</sup> In regard to the way agencies work, the study states that "at the local level, agencies providing recreation services are not only in competition for local revenues with the services, but also with one another".<sup>293</sup> Consequently, "coordination and cooperation can result in better recreation services for the constituency all profess to serve".<sup>294</sup> According to the study's recommendations, "it is desirable that park and recreation system administrators coordinate planning efforts with potential encroachers to minimize loss of high-quality open space and recreation acreage".<sup>295</sup> This indicates that from the perspective of government in financial terms at the local level residents that are voluntarily involved are necessary to provide recreation services according to the needs of a neighborhood, which is the case with the land use form community garden in the South Bronx.

### 3.3.2.2 Actions of the municipality of New York City

Before his election in 1951 to the Mayor of New York City (1954 to 1965) Robert Ferdinand Wagner II established as the Manhattan Borough President "(...) twelve 'Community Planning Councils' consisting of 15 to 20 members each. The councils were charged with advising the Borough President on planning and budgetary matters. In a very real sense, Wagner's experiment was a prescient response to a well-articulated postwar fear that, to an ever increasing extent, people's lives were controlled by large, faceless bureaucracies".<sup>296</sup> But

<sup>286</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 167.

<sup>287</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 9.

<sup>288</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 9.

<sup>289</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 12.

<sup>290</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 12.

<sup>291</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>292</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>293</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>294</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>295</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 15.

<sup>296</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

instead of setting Community Planning Councils up for the Bronx and the other boroughs ten years later, in 1961 in the position as Mayor of New York City, Robert Ferdinand Wagner II decided to change the City's charter to take the control over local public works away from the boroughs presidents, i.e. took an political action that was the opposite from what he tried with setting up Community Planning Councils. Until then the county of the Bronx had been in charge of its own affairs, as for example to give out contracts for local construction and services. But when the scale and cost of public works grew, the control was taken over by the City – to be followed in later years by state legislation and the federal government. The change of New York City's charter by Wagner made the outer boroughs to "(...) vassals of Manhattan (...)"<sup>297</sup>.

Through the centralization of power to City Hall, the City made decision on citywide development of public housing and highway projects - despite the protest of the borough's residents and their local government representatives. In short, by Mayor Wagner's coup to transfer all the power to City Hall with a change in the city charter the power was taken away from the boroughs presidents, who could no longer held accountable for the maintenance and service in their own boroughs. Later Mayor Wagner tried to receive more financial funding from President Lyndon Johnson for his War on Poverty directed to New York City. On August 20 of 1964 the Economic Opportunity Act was signed into law by President Johnson to eliminate poverty from the United States by encouraging participation of the low-income class. Consequently New York City received \$5 million and the Bronx a part of it. In the East Bronx four "first aid" centers for emergency psychological help were set up, which were situated in storefront offices and run by trained neighborhood residents.<sup>298</sup> Mayor Wagner praised the project for its participatory concept. More programs to fight poverty were started like for example an emergency repair program for low-income housing or jobs for dropouts through the neighborhood youth corps. When the money from the federal government actually reached the community groups and activists, more people became attracted to join the effort of the "War on Poverty". But the question of who would control the federal money stirred up a fundamental discussion in the city. It would be either managed by the traditional institutions of the City, which were controlled by the Mayor and the City's officials, or it would be directly administered by the leaders of the newly created community groups, who had not been elected into the position but chosen to do the work.<sup>299</sup> As a compromise Mayor Wagner created in May 1965 the New York City Council Against Poverty constituted of one hundred members of the city's poor neighborhoods, who would meet in six community progress centers. The council's administration was called the "Economic Opportunity Cooperation."<sup>300</sup>

When John Lindsay was elected to the Mayor of New York City (1966-1973) in 1965, he addressed New York City's mounting social problems, and the consequences of not solving them. He announced "if we fail, the implications of our defeat will be assessed throughout the nation, to be proclaimed by the cynics as proof that great cities are no longer governable".<sup>301</sup> After Mayor John Lindsay was inaugurated in 1966, the programs that were started under Mayor Wagner came to a hold. The new idea was to combine the existing social service agencies and anti-poverty programs under the "Human Resources Administration". The local components, the community progress centers, were to be transformed into community corporations. But before the changes could be implemented the City had missed the deadline to use half of the \$20 million that the federal government had been willing to grant for antipoverty programs, so that the other \$10 million were not being distributed at all.<sup>302</sup> This caused much publicity among the population with the result that the previously rising belief in the possibility to fight poverty declined again with their trust in the City's officials.<sup>303</sup> Mayor Lindsay's proposal to transform local community centers into corporation was about to take effect in 1967. These new local community centers were to gain a more autonomous status before the law when being transferred from individuals to a legal body, i.e. to a corporation, made up of community members. These community corporations were then to

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<sup>297</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 132.

<sup>298</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 148.

<sup>299</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 148.

<sup>300</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 149.

<sup>301</sup> [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html/lindsay](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html/lindsay).

<sup>302</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 151.

<sup>303</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 151.

decide on the anti-poverty programs that concern the community directly like for example job training and drug detoxification programs, and were to be in charge over their funds, sign the necessary contracts and prepare the payroll. The twenty-four seats of the board of the community corporation in Hunt's Point were for example distributed in 1967 to Puerto Ricans with twenty-one seats, one seat to African-Americans and two seats to the Anglo-Saxon whites.<sup>304</sup> This demonstrates that Puerto Ricans were populating the Bronx to a large extent in 1960s. To extend their control over the Bronx neighborhoods in which they were the majority, many changes in the local political organization were proposed. The possibility of service for the community outside of the traditional government service was an option for Puerto Ricans and African-Americans to find their place in a society and in the City, where the police and fire department was in the control of the Irish, where the sanitation was run by the Italians and where the Jews were in charge of schools and civil service. But since this concept failed to be implemented in full, the traditional government jobs remained in the hands of the traditional racial groups, who did not give up their specific terrain.<sup>305</sup>

The anti-poverty programs by Roosevelt had provided African-Americans and Puerto Ricans in the South Bronx with new means of control and political power and the community progress centers were led by them as well. The Great Society Programs paid for example those volunteers for their effort, who had previously worked for free in the political clubs and "the directors of the community progress centers in Mott Haven, Hunt's Point, and Morrisania were all Negroes".<sup>306</sup> The South Bronx had become the city's largest anti-poverty terrain creating one thousand jobs and receiving \$12 million poverty funds.<sup>307</sup> In the middle of the 1960s, in the Bronx "(...) racial transition endured (...)" so that borough officials "(...)" alarmed by the newspaper articles and under pressure from Bronx real estate interests, politicians, and community improvement organizations, embarked on a number of upgrades to the area".<sup>308</sup> They set up for example a joint community-government organization called "Concourse Action Program" and the organization "A Better Concourse, Inc." in the middle 1960s, which worked with New York City's administration under Mayor Lindsay to improve the deteriorating situation of the Grand Concourse. The intention for the area along the Grand Concourse was "(...) rehabilitation of public spaces fallen into visible disrepair, the planting of hundreds of trees, the installation of modern lighting fixtures of the type installed along the Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan, an increase in building inspections, and the rise of police presence in the area".<sup>309</sup> But "(...) besides infrastructural and security improvements, many of the efforts focused on reassuring residents that the government would make its best effort to maintain the whiteness of the Grand Concourse".<sup>310</sup> In addition, efforts by the municipality like the "(...) rallies, newspaper stories, new motorcycle police patrols, high-density street lights, and the redesigning of parks to thwart muggers"<sup>311</sup>, did not have long lasting results.

When Mayor Lindsay was re-elected, in 1969, the neighborhood along the Grand Concourse was hit by "abandonment", i.e. building owners neglected maintenance of their property and tenants moved out. "Abandoned" buildings were found at the time all the way into the West Bronx, then an area of middle-class neighborhoods with the largest concentration of Art Deco buildings in the United States of America.<sup>312</sup> Also it was presumed that areas further north would be the next to be deserted. Due to the lack of jobs, in the late 1960s, the population on welfare in New York City doubled within a year. "Before 1967 (...) there had been half a million people dependent upon welfare in New York City at a cost to the City of a thousand dollars per dependent. By late 1968 the number of citizens on welfare had doubled".<sup>313</sup> During that time, the city adopted a policy of concentrating welfare households in the South Bronx, where vacancies had become the highest in the city. Also in the late 1960s "(...)"

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<sup>304</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 174.

<sup>305</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 152.

<sup>306</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 164.

<sup>307</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 168.

<sup>308</sup> Chronopoulos 2009, p. 18.

<sup>309</sup> Chronopoulos 2009, p. 18.

<sup>310</sup> Chronopoulos 2009, p. 18.

<sup>311</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 277.

<sup>312</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 298.

<sup>313</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 178.

municipalities ceased putting all their eggs in the bond issue basket as Federal categorical funds became more and more available for land acquisition and development".<sup>314</sup> Still, "(...) capital outlay by municipalities for parks and recreation declined by nearly half (...) between 1967 and 1969".<sup>315</sup> In addition, "(...) as Federal funds (which often required State and local matching funds) increased, bond efforts decreased since localities did not need as much local input because of the Federal matching funds, and/ or localities were reluctant to commit the matching funds in advance because the Federal dollars might never be forthcoming".<sup>316</sup> Centralization in local public service administration had been maximized on since the early 1940s. Then in the 1960s there was a public conscience re-awakening. That means "decentralization, accessibility, and participation became legitimized goals for the first time since the 1930s - at least in theory at the local level".<sup>317</sup> Thus, "sub-units of urban areas were brought into focus to create an awareness that the parts which make up the whole city may be quite dissimilar, and more important, that the needs of the parts may be very different".<sup>318</sup>

Mayor Lindsay pushed his administration to accept community based planning. "In 1970, Lindsay declared "the year of the neighborhood" and opened the Office of Neighborhood Government (...). Aimed at reducing the lack of coordination among city agencies and improving service-level responsiveness at the community level, Lindsay set up eight demonstration districts headed by district managers. Within these 'Little City Halls,' managers were assigned to encourage more local planning and to improve service delivery through 'service cabinets.' Service cabinets were made up of officers of city agencies".<sup>319</sup> But these "Little City Halls", a step towards the Community Boards of New York City today, were closed when the Office of Neighborhood Government was shut down after "in May 1972, City Comptroller Abe Beame released a report charging misuse of funds by the Office of Neighborhood Government. That, combined with agency resistance to decentralization spelled the demise of that office when Beame became Mayor".<sup>320</sup>

In the Bronx the Democratic Party had lost its voters and that was one reason that there was little protest among the remaining residents in the 1950s and 1960s when, "(...), as new waves of poor Puerto Ricans and southern blacks came to New York, the city welfare department 'dumped' the poorest of them into the South Bronx by offering landlords above-market rents for taking welfare clients".<sup>321</sup> This policy created in the borough "(...) concentrations of extreme poverty that were bound to prove toxic".<sup>322</sup> But without much local protest "(...) it was the easiest route for the city (...). The borough's once-formidable Democratic political machine had fallen apart as the older Jewish, Irish, and Italian immigrants who supported it moved away".<sup>323</sup> In the middle of the twentieth century the work relief programs dealt with public works of a huge scale. First the Civilian Works Administration (...) and then the Works Progress Administration (...) paid for the labor. Concomitant to the work relief program, a lot of money was spent on public projects in New York City and "in the Bronx alone, from 1935 to 1937, almost \$58 million was spent for dozens of projects".<sup>324</sup>

Among the public open space and construction projects developed in the 1930s in the Bronx were a bath resort at Orchard Beach, a pool and playgrounds at Crotona Park, as well as tracks and playing fields in McCombs Dam Park, located behind the Yankee Stadium. Additionally 19 new playgrounds, new sewers, 119 miles of roads and highways were added throughout the borough. Recreational buildings were remodeled and 15 miles of walkways at the New York Botanical Garden rebuilt. Responsible for this was among others Robert Moses in his function as City Construction Coordinator, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation as well as head of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel

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<sup>314</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 88.

<sup>315</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 88.

<sup>316</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 88.

<sup>317</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 98.

<sup>318</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 98.

<sup>319</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>320</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>321</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>322</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>323</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>324</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 81.

Authority. The work relief projects that drastically changed the Bronx was the construction of the new Bronx County Building<sup>325</sup>, the Triborough Bridge, the Federal Post Office as well as the completion of the Eighth Avenue subway of the Independent Subway System that opened in 1932 and run up through the West Bronx. These public works shifted “(...) the center of power from the old East Bronx, which had grown up around the Harlem Railroad and the IRT [Interborough Rapid Transit, added C.M.] lines, to the newly developing West Bronx”.<sup>326</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965 had given minorities the right to raise their voice in politics and acknowledged the rising number of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans in the Bronx and thus the first Puerto Rican to be elected into the position of a Borough President, and this in the Bronx, as a mayoral candidate for New York City and a United States Representative was Herman Badillo. Badillo proposed the costly plan to construct 732 low-rise, middle-income apartments in the destroyed Charlotte Street neighborhood, speculating that the upcoming presidential election of 1980 would force the White House to accept his project.<sup>327</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the actions of the federal government and the municipality between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that the government’s actions responded to the reduction of public open space and an increase in urban population causing a lack of housing and open space access for the inner city population. The government answered this first with the subsidizing of suburbs and anti-poverty and work relief programs and later neglected as for example seen in the lack of funding for the maintenance of public open space. The response of the residents of the South Bronx was the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.3.3 Actions of the Department of Parks and Recreation**

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, New York City’s Mayor’s office and street commissioner also oversaw the city’s open spaces, “but as the city grew and open space diminished, it became important to preserve open space for the city’s citizenry”.<sup>328</sup> In 1856 the Board of Commissioners of Central Park<sup>329</sup> was established, followed by the first Department of Public Parks in 1870, more than a decade later.<sup>330</sup> The interest in preserving green open space must have been considerable at the middle of the nineteenth century, since this Department of Public Parks was overseeing public land 22 years before the Building Department, which was established in 1892.

In the opinion of the writer and landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852), public parks were necessary at the middle of the nineteenth century institutions to promote a more democratic social life in the United States. To him, parks needed to be part of a general reformist program including publicly supported libraries, art galleries and other opportunities for social interaction. In 1841, Downing wrote the successful book “A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening”<sup>331</sup>, in which he rejected the classical styles prevalent in landscape architecture. Downing created a new aesthetic category for landscape design and introduced the style of the ‘Beautiful and Picturesque’, which was inspired by previous English works and reflected the Romantic Movement in art and literature and included the necessity to introduce parks as public institutions. The landscape architect and writer Frederick Law Olmsted was until the end of 1877 the head of the New York Park department’s Bureau of Design and Superintendence. In this position Olmsted was involved in the restoration of Central Park that he had designed and later in the planning of the Riverside Park as well as the layout for the 23rd and 24th ward, the Bronx today, that had been recently added to the city’s ground. “Influenced by the open-space movement in England, Frederick Law Olmsted, the founder of the profession of landscape architecture,

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<sup>325</sup> Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia opened the new, luxurious and highly ornamented Bronx County Building on July 15, 1934.

<sup>326</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 81.

<sup>327</sup> Quindlen 10/7/79, New York Times.

<sup>328</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org).

<sup>329</sup> “The Board also built parks in Harlem (Jackie Robinson, Marcus Garvey, Morningside and St. Nicholas Parks)”. (New York Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org))

<sup>330</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org).

<sup>331</sup> Downing 1841.

firmly established park planning in the United States with his plans for Central and Prospect parks in New York City in the mid-nineteenth century”.<sup>332</sup>

Land to create Central Park in the middle of Manhattan had been acquired in 1856. This new public park had been created on “the most uninviting sections of the island (Manhattan) and a considerable portion of it had been used as dumping ground. It was simply a space for a park and the city had to make one and put it there at a cost of \$20,000 an acre, in addition to the six million six hundred and odd thousands paid for the land to create the park. The woods had to be planted, the large tracts of marsh filled in, roads and walks constructed, and the so-called lakes made. In the accomplishment of this necessary work fifteen years were consumed before it was ready for use.”<sup>333</sup> Olmsted envisioned together with Calvert Vaux a central park for New York City, which was to complete the city not in providing picturesque quality, but by creating openness - a quality that according to Olmsted could be achieved in contrast to the buildings. He wanted the park to be experienced in context with the surrounding city, or as he states, “(...) with constant consideration of exterior objects, some of them quite at a distance and even existing as yet only in the imagination”.<sup>334</sup> In regard to the park plan for New York City, Olmsted saw the difficulty of raising the money, without greatly increasing taxation. He predicted that local and special interest would be acting against one another. Despite topographic objections, the middle of the Manhattan Island had been reserved for a public park, called Central Park. That means, Central Park was not part of the original Commissioners’ street plan of 1811, a plan that laid out the orthogonal street grid of Manhattan, which was based on New York State legislation and which was accepted in 1811 as an urban development plan for the area between 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Heights on the Manhattan Island. The land had been set aside from the grid under objections by while the protesting adjacent landowners, who feared that it would add to their taxes and that the attracted public would diminish the value of their properties not only through their presence, but also through the business that would move into the area. Because of the businesses moving into the residential district, opponents of the park predicted that the park would eventually drive the upper class out of the city and would thereby harm New York’s prosperity. Olmsted explains that “(...) it was said, that ‘our circumstances are very different: surrounded by broad waters on all sides, open to the sea breezes, we need no artificial breathing places; even if we did, nothing like the parks of the old cities under aristocratic government would be at all practicable here’”.<sup>335</sup>

Central Park was built covering an area of six hundred acres when it opened and later more land was added to make a total area of 778 acres (314 hectares). The park as widely enjoyed as soon as it opened. The crime rate remained low because the park provided “innocent amusement” in nature, which had the “tendency to weaken the dangerous inclinations which man derives from his nature”.<sup>336</sup> Central Park was created as landscape for public enjoyment, i.e. a landscape to be used not by the privileged but by all the residents of New York City. The public was directed in its behavior and use of the park through Olmsted’s careful design that clearly defined the limits of the open space that were enforced through park keepers and police. The land value of the properties bordering Central Park had risen in value at the rate of two hundred per cent per year and the cost, which were with \$5,000,000 very high, were taken care of by a toll for the visitors, the amount of it depending on the means of transportation at arrival. Olmsted explains in regard to the property values of the properties adjacent to a park that the fact that parks “have been laid out and managed in a temporary, off-hand, common-sense way, it has proved a penny-wise, pound-foolish way, intuitions to the property in their neighbourhood”.<sup>337</sup> The creation of Central Park took 12 years and increased the total ground reserved for parks in New York City bringing it to 2000 acres “(...) and the public demand is now for more, not less”.<sup>338</sup> The workers were selected and trained by Olmsted himself. Two years later the Park Commissioners were asked to continue with a road

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<sup>332</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 2.

<sup>333</sup> Mullaly 1882, p. 21.

<sup>334</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 83.

<sup>335</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 87.

<sup>336</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 96.

<sup>337</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 99.

<sup>338</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 97.

plan for the upper part of Manhattan, which according to Olmsted “has caused an enormous advance of the property of all those interested”.<sup>339</sup>

The Mayor of New York City, William R. Martin, assigned Fredrick Law Olmsted together with J. James R. Croes, a civil and topographical engineer, to layout the future urban development in the 23rd and 24th ward starting with a street plan and a line of a rapid-transit steam railway. In the plan of 1877 Olmsted recommends to depart from the grid and to provide for New York City’s future requirements in regard to residences, art, science, religion, and recreation rather than for the commercial ones. He called to avoid planning the detailed use of every acre in the new wards, because he assumed that with the increasing number of urban residents there would be in the future factors that are not yet operative or invented - such as new energies or means of transit, as well as new methods of building and other scientific improvements to the infrastructure, would influence the growth of the city in unforeseen ways.<sup>340</sup> In other words, Olmsted proposed to preserve open space which use could be determined by future urban residents according to their needs – much in the same way as the land use community garden in the South Bronx. In addition, Olmsted concluded that, because of the rocky topography of the Bronx, the terrain was not easily divided into square sized city lots that followed the street grid, so that compact buildings and straight roads for fast driving could not easily be built upon it. To him the area called instead for residences for wealthier resident, for single-family suburban housing in an extraordinary natural setting, situated within the city limits. Accordingly he argued that neither commercial buildings nor low-income housing should be placed in the area of the Bronx today. In short, Olmsted proposed to create a rural suburban development by enhance the natural condition of the Bronx instead of creating urban development that was ignoring them.

Olmsted compared the quality of the Bronx’ environment to the attractiveness of Central Park - with the difference that the terrain would be used privately and not publicly. Consequently his plans for the Bronx’ urban development called for business sections in the Mill Brook and Cromwell’s Creek area, for suburban homes along the high ground along the center of the district as well as along the western and at the northern edge of the county. In addition Olmsted proposed to lay out avenues of easy grade, which opened into occasional small public parks, crossing the whole length and breadth of the two wards, as well as for routes for steam transportation so placed as not to interfere with other roads. Olmsted’s concept of the beginning of the twentieth century to include small public parks next to one-family housing in the urban plan of the South Bronx calls thus for a creation of private and public open next to enclosed spaces. Olmsted stated that the provision of land for public recreation was necessary in order to deal with the expected future growth of New York City. He explained that New York City would grow and would need a planned layout to organize the increase in the number of citizens. He envisioned a future urban development according to “the plan of a Metropolis; adapted to serve, (...), every legitimate interest of the wide world; not of ordinary commerce only, but of humanity, religion, art, science and scholarship”.<sup>341</sup> But Olmsted’s proposal was incompatible with Mayor William H. Wickham’s plan to urbanize the area to provide profit for private investors, so that in 1907, when the elevated train was extended into the Bronx, land was subdivided according to the grid - without preserving land for small size commonly used public spaces that could be used by the current and future residents in a way as the community gardens they started in the South Bronx in the late 1970s.

Since 1924 was Robert Moses the head of the New York State Parks Department and then he became in 1933 Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation as well as head of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. Moses proposed in this position in 1945 the new highway system and pushed this plan through in the following years without prior approval. In addition he was responsible for the construction of parkways and state park, the development Shea Stadium, of the United Nations Building and for the World’s Fair of 1960. As the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Moses went to the re-planning of New York City’s park system, based on the usage of the automobile as a means for the residents who could afford it to leave the inner

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<sup>339</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 98.

<sup>340</sup> Olmsted 1876, p. 13.

<sup>341</sup> Olmsted in: Sutton (ed.) 1971, p. 45.

city districts. He wanted to provide the possibility for every one who had a car to be in a natural open space as quickly as possible. Thus he pushed forward with the construction of bridges, highway, parkways and natural preservation areas in the New York Metropolitan region.

In 1965, when John Lindsay was elected as Mayor of New York City, “the Parks Department had no map showing its facilities citywide. (...) Thus, attempts to design an integrated system of park maintenance were all but doomed (...)”<sup>342</sup> “(...) This condition prevailed in part because studies of urban recreation and parks were traditionally case studies for the particular use of a local government and/ or a consortium of local agencies”.<sup>343</sup> “These single city case studies were not comparable in design or time period, and findings, while applicable to the study locale, did not provide adequate comparative data and information for use in determining national status and priority”.<sup>344</sup> Consequently in 1970, the Department of Housing and Urban Development of the United States made the effort to find out about the quantity of open space and recreation opportunities that existed in the inner cities of the United States of America. Still, “(...) capital outlay by municipalities for parks and recreation declined by nearly half (...) between 1967 and 1969”.<sup>345</sup> In the year he was later elected for Mayor of New York City, in 1965, “John V. Lindsay, as a mayoral candidate, published his ‘White Paper’ on parks and recreation (...). The document emphasized growing concerns for more community involvement in Parks Department policy decisions. It also suggested innovations, such as tiny ‘vestpocket’ and ‘adventure’ playgrounds, which were later implemented during the Lindsay administration (1966-1974)”.<sup>346</sup> In 1966 “the Office of Cultural Affairs was transferred from the Mayor’s office to the Parks Department. At the same time, newly appointed Park Commissioner, Thomas P.F. Hoving, encouraged the wider use of parks as settings for major cultural, artistic, and avant garde events. Cars were banned in Central Park on Sundays, and a wide variety of activities and ‘happenings’ not traditionally associated with parks were sponsored by the Parks Department”.<sup>347</sup> In 1968 “the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Administration (PRCA) was created when Mayor Lindsay consolidated the city’s more than 50 agencies into a dozen ‘superagencies.’ In addition to the regular responsibilities of the parks and recreation departments, the PRCA had charge of funneling millions of dollars to libraries, botanical gardens and performing arts groups. The parks division itself, though, suffered annual budget cuts and staff reductions throughout this period. By the early 1970s attrition had caused a serious staff shortage”.<sup>348</sup>

In addition to the Mayors of the City of New York, the governors of New York influenced over the years New York City’s residents’ perception and use of open spaces through the creation of statewide park systems. The park system of New York State was developed based on the model of the Palisades Interstate Park, which had a commission that was created in 1900 by New York State Governor Theodore Roosevelt (1899-1900). The Palisades Interstate Park Commission then “(...) provided an inspiration and a model for the subsequent development of the statewide park system”.<sup>349</sup> Roosevelt had “(...) Theodore Roosevelt (...) declared (...) that ‘the nation behaves well if it treats the natural assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value’”.<sup>350</sup> Later, “as president, Roosevelt boasted an unprecedented record of environmental achievements, including the creation of national parks, monuments, forests, game preserves, and bird sanctuaries around the country. Roosevelt’s conservation ethic was premised on his belief that the wilderness was a repository of American values combined with an appreciation of the nation’s natural resources

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<sup>342</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 1.

<sup>343</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 1.

<sup>344</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, pp. 1-2.

<sup>345</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 88.

<sup>346</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, Rediscovery and Restoration (1965–1987), [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>347</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, Rediscovery and Restoration (1965–1987), [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>348</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, Rediscovery and Restoration (1965–1987), [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>349</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2006, p. 20.

<sup>350</sup> Pataki, “State of the State Address,” 7 January 2004. [www.ny.gov/governor/keydocs/sos04.html](http://www.ny.gov/governor/keydocs/sos04.html) in: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2006, p. 21.

as commodities. Thus, while championing public access to wilderness, he also advocated scientific management of resources in order to preserve their social and economic value”.<sup>351</sup> The New York State Governor Alfred E. Smith (1919-1920 and 1923-1928) led the New York State through the early stages of planning the new system, and under his tenure a state park program was officially incorporated into New York’s government structure. Among Smith’s most important achievements was passage of lion bond that provided funding for the initial acquisition and/or development of twenty-six parks and several parkways. Significant portions of the infrastructure, buildings, and landscapes that define our parks today were planned under Smith’s administration”.<sup>352</sup> New York State’s park system was expanded in the late 1950s under the New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller (1959-1973), whose family owned for example the estate Kykuit Upstate New York, which became renown for its landscape architecture<sup>353</sup>. “Beginning in the late 1950s, Nelson Rockefeller oversaw a substantial refurbishment and significant expansion of the system. Rockefeller won support for three major bond acts, making more than \$300 million available for acquisition of park and forest preserve land and the development of recreational facilities in state parks”.<sup>354</sup> The effect on New York City was that residents became interested in park bond acts and improvements of open space. Later in the 1970s and 1980s, “as evidenced by the popularity of park bond acts, residents are demanding increases and improvements in local open space”.<sup>355</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the actions by the Department of Parks and Recreation between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that despite promotion of small public parks next to housing in the South Bronx and the creation of large public parks such as Central Park in Manhattan there was a lack in the provision of small urban public open spaces. This was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

### 3.3.4 Actions of banks

The crash of the stock market in October 1929 affected everybody involved in the stock market on a broader scale - institutions, the wealthy, investment trusts - and it affected everybody else, as it caused an economic depression. Banks collapsed, when the depositors overwhelmed them with demands to withdraw their savings. People lost money that they had put aside, businesses failed and closed down all over the United States triggering a high unemployment rate. The action of banks influenced the ownership of land and the type of buildings built in the New York City and in the South Bronx. Home-loan funds as well as insurance were withheld from neighborhoods considered poor economic risks by banks as well as insurance companies – a practice called “redlining”.<sup>356</sup> The redlining of specific neighborhoods by banks influences in times of economic crisis, defined therefore who was given a mortgages, i.e. who could afford to build what type of building. Consequently the housing situation and the real estate market were controlled by the banks’ action. Due to the redlining few banks remained located in impoverished areas, as it was the case during the 1970s in the South Bronx. Thus the residents in these neighborhoods had little chance to attain a mortgage to build a house with garden on the vacant land available. At the same time the owners of apartment buildings in the area were cut off their access to mortgages when the banks moved out of the South Bronx. Consequently the maintenance of apartment buildings as well as the existence of private grouped gardens next to private residential buildings, i.e. the home- and open space ownership of low-income residents is influenced by the action of banks.

When during the 1970s, several banks in the South Bronx neighborhoods closed in line with their red-lining concept - blaming it on the fact that employees were threatened and attacked by drug addicts and criminals - fewer mortgages were granted to South Bronx’ residents. Thus for example “in 1965, 298 new mortgages had been granted in the northwest Bronx (but

<sup>351</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2006, p. 21.

<sup>352</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2006, p. 20.

<sup>353</sup> Mees 2009, p. 284.

<sup>354</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2006, p. 20.

<sup>355</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 1.

<sup>356</sup> www.merriam-webster.com.

that) in 1975, only 44 came through”.<sup>357</sup> Another example is that “in 1965, Eastern Savings Bank (formerly Bronx Savings Bank) had granted 59 mortgages and refinanced 63. Ten Years later it gave one new mortgage and refinanced two (...)”.<sup>358</sup> But the Eastern Savings Bank stopped granting mortgages to low-income residents of the Bronx while “the bulk of its deposits still came from the Bronx”.<sup>359</sup> The investigation of the activities of yet another bank, the North Side Savings bank, “(...) showed almost \$300 million in deposits, 90 percent of that from Bronx depositors, and two-thirds of that in northwest Bronx branches”.<sup>360</sup> But, similar to the Eastern Savings Bank’s conduct, “in the year 1975, the savings bank had granted only one mortgage (thirty-four thousand dollars) in the northwest Bronx”.<sup>361</sup> In the same manner yet another bank, the Dollar Savings Bank, “(...) the fifth largest bank in the country, with \$2.4 billion in deposits, had given only 26 mortgages worth \$2.2 million in the northwest Bronx in 1975”.<sup>362</sup> These banks acted according to their mortgage guidelines, which obviously were set up to “redline” low-income districts since the guidelines disqualified three-family dwellings and buildings constructed before the Second World War as well as tenement houses with less than twenty-five units, i.e. “(...) 90 percent of the dwellings typical of the northwest Bronx”.<sup>363</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the actions by banks between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that the actions of banks such as withholding home-loan funds as well as insurance from low-income neighborhoods such as the South Bronx influenced the ownership of land and the type of buildings built in the New York City and in area. This was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.3.5 Actions of landlords and tenants**

Before the industrial revolution and the subsequent creation of tenement buildings, every resident used to live in his or her own house with privately usable open space, both on land owned or leased by him- or herself. At the beginning of the twentieth century former one-family homes were converted and built-up to accommodate as many people as possible. Land was subdivided and open space reduced as more residential buildings were constructed in the South Bronx, with their owners competing with one another “(...) to provide better amenities, such special touches as courtyards with statuary and fountains”<sup>364</sup> to attract tenants. Landowners and tenants were proud of their buildings and landlords had names of their family members inscribed above the stone entryways. During the Great Depression after the stock market crash at the end of the 1920s, landlords ran out of money to invest into their properties. Thus apartment buildings built before the depression remained at the same standard for years or even decades to come. Tenants hit by the economic depression, had to move out of their apartments, when they could not afford to pay the rent any longer. Many turned to the welfare system and public housing to get support.

#### **3.3.5.1 Actions of landlords**

During the 1950s, a law was set up stating that central heating was to be provided in New York City’s tenement buildings and that landlords were to be recompensed for the improvements by rent increases or tax abatements. Problems appeared in socially stable areas, where the tenants could have absorbed the increases, and because generally “ (...) money to do the work (at rates under 20 percent interest) was generally unobtainable”.<sup>365</sup> That means banks and insurance companies refrained from lending financial funding or giving insurance policies to owners of tenement houses - especially landlords of tenements in blacklisted, “redlined” low-income neighborhoods, who consequently had to make the improvements with their own funds. If the property was situated in a locality marked as undesirable, i.e. in a low-income district such as the South Bronx, it did not matter what kind of

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<sup>357</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 356.

<sup>358</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 356.

<sup>359</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 356.

<sup>360</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 356-357.

<sup>361</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 357.

<sup>362</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 357.

<sup>363</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 357.

<sup>364</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 35.

<sup>365</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 303.

building was placed on the piece of land or who lived in it: the bank did not consider the owner worthy of credit. The owners appealed to the city for help, but "(...) no agency exists to help with the problem".<sup>366</sup> In the late 1960's it became less lucrative to invest into apartment buildings as costs had risen, while most rents in apartment buildings remained controlled and buildings were more and more subject to vandalism with the increase in gang criminality and drugs. At the same time many apartment houses had come, after 50 years of existence and fast and cheap construction methods to begin with, to the end of their expected life time in regard to plumbing, piping, electrical wiring and heat systems. This meant huge investments for landlords, which were not being paid for by the comparable low rents in these old rent controlled tenement buildings. The old buildings that had been neglected in regard to maintenance, which spaces had been rented out at a max, which had been sold and speculated with, were eventually burned down for insurance money and then demolished. That means these old buildings were turned into piles of rubble over time. Even though old tenement buildings needed renovation badly, landlords did not spend on upgrading since there was no profit to be made of the property anyway and since they would not receive improvement loans from banks in such a situation. In addition to the over-aged equipment of the building that broke piece-by-piece drug addicts and "strippers", a profession invented at the time, stole anything of value. To make the job of removing a building's fixtures, hardware, valuable brass and copper piping, they set fires to clear a vacant building, after collecting the items. Buildings like the Roosevelt Gardens went down in the maintenance standard when sold to new landlords, most of the times newcomers to the neighborhood, who made a fortune by forcing long-time residents to move out, by paying them for it or by providing no services anymore, by making the living situation unbearable. Consequently the new landlord would subdivide apartments while raising the rent to then collect the rent from welfare families, i.e. from the City, which meant a guaranteed rent income to the landlord. The city did not mind the high rent costs, since it was difficult to provide housing for welfare families at all. The 1969 master plan of New York City announced that 25 percent of the rental apartments of the Bronx were "dilapidated or deteriorating". The availability and provision of low-income housing in New York City was decreasing when almost one hundred thousand apartments were destroyed or unsuitable for occupancy.<sup>367</sup>

When in the 1950s and 1960s low-income Puerto Rican and Afro-American immigrants from the South were directed to the Bronx by the Department of Welfare, they moved into the old apartment buildings. The landlords were offered above-market rents for taking welfare clients, but the apartments were under rent control so for the next decades there was no way for the landlords to raise the rent. "The tenements where these newer immigrants lived, most of which were built before 1915, were rapidly wearing out. But the landlords couldn't afford to renovate them, thanks to another bad policy--rent control. By the 1960s, the inability to raise rents was making it increasingly difficult for landlords to make a profit, much less maintain their aging buildings".<sup>368</sup> Thus the rent control laws that applied to apartment houses built before 1947 were to be blamed partly for the development, which made it more profitable to abandon a property than to collect rent through its apartments. In 1969 "when rent began to rise more rapidly on the four hundred thousand apartment buildings excluded from any rent laws (those built after 1947) the City officials extended rent stabilization laws to these, too".<sup>369</sup>

### 3.3.5.2 Actions of tenants

Since the Second World War the housing policy of New York City, where 85 percent of the citizens lived in rental housing, had transferred the burden of paying the rent on the private landlord.<sup>370</sup> But since there was no law that a landlord had to keep an unprofitable building and so more and more landlords gave up their property, with nobody to take it over other than the City when the private property was turned into public property after the appliance of the in rem foreclosure law. Landlords of buildings in slum neighborhoods were not only disliked by the tenants of their buildings, since they were left by the landlords without heat and hot water, but by the City's administration as well, which blamed them for the development. In 1966 the City passed a bill that reduced the rent of apartments in buildings with a single violation to

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<sup>366</sup> Jacobs 1961, p. 303.

<sup>367</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 199.

<sup>368</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>369</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 200.

<sup>370</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 229.

one dollar a month as long as the landlord did not go to court to remove the violation.<sup>371</sup> The Department of Social Services was paying higher-than-market rents to landlords that would take in welfare families. For the South Bronx this meant, "By 1970, of 3,181 families living in the Charlotte Street neighborhood, 1,467 families, or almost half, were on welfare".<sup>372</sup> At the same time the Department of Social Services was supporting them, many welfare residents kept the rent money for themselves and preferred to be threatened with eviction, since the Department of Social Services would eventually pay the rent money again or would find another apartment for its "homeless" client. Landlords in lack of rent income started only to provide minimum services and security to collect rent from at least some tenants and at the same time they stopped to pay property taxes to the City. Fires that started in a building would allow the landlord in addition to collect insurance payment. "A Lloyd's of London syndicate was to lose \$45 million on fire insurance written in the South Bronx".<sup>373</sup> Before 1977 the City could - when applying the in rem foreclosure law - take over a building when the landlord failed paying property taxes for three years so that many buildings were sitting without an owner or maintenance for years.

While in the 1930s "the Bronx working class were almost without exception renters, not property owners",<sup>374</sup> thirty years later, by the 1960s, with the cycle of drugs, crime, burning buildings, abandonment and more fires, these rental apartments were increasingly vacated, when people could not afford the rent anymore. New tenants were offered two or three month free rent. A lot of families left one apartment to move to another and to save a few month of rent. Those residents, who the landlords could not force out, stayed even without heat, running water and the possibility of being burned out any time, until the city ordered to vacate the building or until it burned down. Tenants started fires to get priority on the City's public housing list. They were desperate to escape their current situation often living on welfare, without heat and hot water and under siege. In the late 1960s, early 1970s tenants and landlords alike set fires to apartment buildings in the South Bronx. Some fires were set by welfare families that wanted to leave their apartments for better ones situated in public housing projects and had to get on the priority list to do so. At the same time they could collect two or three thousand dollars distributed by the Department of Social Services for burned goods.

Low-income tenants who had remained living in run down high-density buildings and apartments depended on whatever happened to the adjacent building since buildings were built in a row. The residents that remained living in buildings without heat and sometimes without electricity or running water had to come up with ideas to overcome the shortages and started to live more like squatters. But when less and less stores where in the South Bronx, when less and less people were living there and when drugs and gangs began controlling everything even more people evacuated the buildings. New welfare tenants enticed by a couple of months free rents by landlords moved into apartments from which the previous low-income tenants had moved out, but they had lived in a much worse situation before and behaved therefore in some cases more passively in situations in which others would have acted up. For them, for example, was a period of two days without heat and hot water an improvement to for example a period of two years without any services, which they might have to endure before. The long-time tenant leaders gave up organizing when drugs and crime became worse and many moved out of the South Bronx themselves leaving the remaining tenants without leadership to organize and create community.

Consequently the analysis of the actions of landlords and tenants between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the area in the late 1970s shows that both parties were influenced by and responsible for the creation and maintenance the quality of life of an area. This was understood and answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

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<sup>371</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 201.

<sup>372</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 229.

<sup>373</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>374</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 74.

### 3.3.6 Actions of private businessmen

When the first industrial development began in the Bronx in 1841, low-income residents moved up from the Lower East Side to work in the new industrial buildings. Thus the innovative concept of private businessmen triggered urban development in the area, since new housing was needed to accommodate the incoming workers and their families. Many of them came from the crowded tenements of Lower Manhattan<sup>375</sup>. To them the move to the Bronx represented a job and the possibility to live surrounded by open space in a new settlement, i.e. the possibility to improve their quality of life. As desolate the overcrowded tenement houses of the Lower East Side were for the tenants, for real estate market investors they were very profitable, since as many tenants as possible were located in as little space as possible while rent was at a max. In Melrose and Morrisania, former one-family houses were replaced by these type of buildings, i.e. buildings built as dense as possible next to the adjacent, leaving as little open space as possible and providing for as many apartments as possible. The New York State Tenement House Act of 1901 stopped this type of housing development. The real estate market took advantage of this trend to relocate specific groups, thereby producing urban growth and in later decades “shrinkage”- meaning the reduction of population - while creating economic benefits for a few. This is the pattern of the urban development of the South Bronx. Due to the influx of newcomers, private businessmen, the so-called developers, kept on subdividing the former farmland and to construct as much housing as possible to increase on their profit. That means on smaller parcels of land more and more apartments were constructed. Consequently open space reduced rapidly.

Private businessmen were inventive in making a profit: They came up with luxurious interior equipment, improving the standards and thus attracting residents to the Bronx, which was considered the urban periphery at the time. In 1900, the building type prevailing in the Bronx was the five- and six- story rental apartment building. These buildings were, according to Arnold Bennett’s article in the Harper’s Monthly in 1912 equipped with “central heating, gas and electricity and among the landlord’s fixtures were a refrigerator, a kitchen range, a bookcase and a sideboard. Such amenities for the people – for the petit gens- simply do not exist in Europe; they do not even exist for the wealthy in Europe”.<sup>376</sup> To the landlords, who was living in the new buildings was not of their concern, as long as the rent was paid. Thus racial conflicts were produced out of ignorance of neighborhood networks and intact neighborhoods disrupted by new buildings and masses housed in them. “The African-American and Latino poor, themselves displaced from urban renewal projects in other parts of the city, were ‘dumped’ into high-rise public housing constructed in predominantly white working-class communities”.<sup>377</sup> This meant that the new tenants were not satisfied about being moved out of their former neighborhood and that the tenants who had lived in the buildings before them were not welcoming the newcomers since they interrupted their existing networks. Open space, the meeting spaces of apartment buildings, were not suitable to create community in the same way as community gardens that were created by residents in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

Consequently the analysis of the actions of private businessmen between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that private investments in property and businesses influenced the provision of housing and open space land use. This was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

### 3.4 Open space land use and organization in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s

In the following I will investigate the context of open space land use and organization in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s by elaborating on the topic of housing with focus on the aspects of New York City Housing Authority, rent control and public housing

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<sup>375</sup> Especially in the Lower East Side, tenement buildings were overcrowded and without adequate air and light. But not only light and ventilation issues were disregarded but also the question of supplying water and removing garbage. In the former backyards of these buildings were built more and even higher tenement houses, creating more density and taking away more of the sunlight.

<sup>376</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 36.

<sup>377</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 69-70.

program. Then I will look at the aspects of public housing as well as the Model Cities program. Subsequently I will look at the topic of zoning by exploring the aspects of the discussion before the introduction of a zoning resolution in New York City and New York City's first zoning resolution. I will look at the aspects of City Planning Commission and city planning in New York City as well other interest groups and city planning in New York City. Subsequently I will look at the topic of the location of open space by analyzing the New Parks Movement as well as the aspects of public parks, taxes and property value. Then I will elaborate on the aspects of neighborhood parks, Robert Moses and the location of open space and introduce the topic of the change of the location of open space as well as the topic of neighborhoods.

### 3.4.1 Housing

The urbanization of the New York City area and the development of the South Bronx took place in the beginning without regulation by law. Farm and estates with mansions and extensive gardens that used to be characteristic for the Bronx at that time, disappeared more and more with the ongoing urban sprawl. Land was subdivided; residential buildings were built higher with the development of the new apartment building type, which was then occupied by more and more tenants. At the same time, the amount of privately used open space, the garden space, was reduced more and more. When at the end of the nineteenth century New York City's economy boomed and even more immigrants were attracted to the city, welcomed there as cheap laborers, the accommodation of the masses became a pressing concern to the municipality.

One strategy to cope with the new masses was to build new housing in the then urban periphery like the South Bronx and to make it accessible with public transportation. The planning of the subway system in New York City took place from 1904 to 1912 with centers of new housing being constructed at the new subway stops. But not all urban planners were in support of it. For example, the city planner and lawyer Edward M. Bassett was against the subway system as a remedy against the overcrowding of the inner city. He did not believe in the possibility to allow all residents to move out of the center to affordable, more spacious dwellings of higher standard at the fringes, accessed by the new subway system. In short, Bassett believed that "the subways did nothing to relieve the problem of crowding"<sup>378</sup>, but was instead convinced that "by encouraging speculation in real estate, by making it possible for greater numbers of people to concentrate near the subway entrances, and by allowing the population to spread into older, settled residential neighborhoods, the subways increased instability and crowding".<sup>379</sup> The number of schools and churches was increasing along with the amount of housing units and the rest of the city's infrastructure. The residents moving into the new buildings in the South Bronx at the beginning of the twentieth century were looking forward to a live in the countryside. Thus, the residents that came to the developing South Bronx lived first in "(...) wooden frame houses, with pigs, cows, and chickens in the side yards, and cultivated vegetable gardens in the rear".<sup>380</sup> To them, the new buildings represented a better quality of live, since they had access to open space, which was a luxury asset when they were living in the overcrowded tenement buildings of for example the Lower East Side. When those tenement buildings were built after 1867, they were to be built to comply with the Tenement House Act of 1867 and thus apartments were provided with fire escapes and windows in each room. But in the design and construction often only windows in interior walls, i.e. between rooms, were inserted instead of placing windows in outer walls, so that the tenants living in those apartments still did not have access to light and ventilation. But in these first tenement buildings not only open space provision, but also provision with light and ventilation was disregarded, but also the question of supplying water and removing garbage. Living conditions were dire and worsened over time, when in the former backyards of these buildings even higher tenement houses were built, creating more density and taking away more of the light, ventilation and open space. Thus, in comparison the Lower East Side the standard of living in the Bronx apartment buildings was higher in the beginning, since the new housing was built to provide more amenities than in those tenement buildings.

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<sup>378</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 8.

<sup>379</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 8.

<sup>380</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 20.

In 1879 the Tenement House Act was amended and after 1879 and before 1901, apartments in tenement buildings had to have a fire escape and a window in each room that was to go to the outside, with the result that airshafts were built. Tenants misused airshafts for garbage disposal and consequently those airshaft increased the chance of fire spreading from one apartment to the next by functioning as a flue. Subsequently, with the next amendment, the New York State Tenement House Act of 1901 got rid off airshafts and replaced them with courtyards, large enough to store garbage and to provide access to the fire department for faster extinguishment of fires. Since the New York City Department of Buildings was only created in 1892, the development of further regulations took off slowly in the beginning of the twentieth century. At the end of the nineteenth century more and more five-and six- story rental apartment building were built in the South Bronx, but one- and two-family houses remained still in the main building type in the borough of the Bronx. Thus at that time, "(...) the Board of Trade tallied 13,177 freestanding houses, 4,782 'old-law' tenements, and 6,185 'modern' tenements, with 3,326 residential buildings under constructions".<sup>381</sup> From the 1920s until the 1970s the multi-story tenement buildings of the Bronx borough accommodated a changing mix of diverse ethnic and income groups over the years, while at the same time the landlords continued to make a profit using the buildings as commodities for profit.

The 1920s was the period of building boom in the South Bronx and "(...) each year another four or five thousand buildings sprang up".<sup>382</sup> New apartment buildings were constructed in applying the new method of wooden post and beam construction with one row of brick at the outside that allowed for a high speed of construction while producing a solid looking building and at the same time reducing the costs for material and labor for the investors, the so-called developers. The new multi-family buildings were built rapidly, in rows that allowed the pouring of continuous foundations and eliminated insulation at the buildings' shared walls. But due to the borough's rocky topography, it was difficult, to grade the land economically in order to follow to the street grid of Manhattan for equal subdivision of land and creation of the new apartment buildings<sup>383</sup>. Consequently the front entrances of the new structures were a lot of times several stories higher than their service entrances at the back street. Additionally the cross streets of the Bronx' street grid had many times long and steep connecting stairs made out of stone, known in the area as "step-streets". In 1922, the Concourse Plaza, a luxurious, grand hotel at the beginning of the Grand Concourse at 161<sup>st</sup> Street, and next to it in the area between 157th and 161st Streets the Yankee Stadium was constructed. Both buildings, the Concourse Plaza and the Yankee Stadium, where rather expensive in construction, but they attracted attention and even more residents to the borough as they were making the new prosperity of the borough visible. This growth in population, infrastructure and housing stock triggered the transformation of the borough into a county of its own rights. After the stock market crash in October 1929, shantytowns, i.e. self-constructed small structures built out of found material much like the casitas built by Puerto Ricans and Latin Americans in community gardens in the 1970s were placed on underused open space, rose up all over the city.

In the Bronx, the jobless and poor constructed their shed village, named after President Herbert Hoover "(...) Hooverville (...) on the Harlem River, not far from Highbridge, along the railroad track at the end of Burnside Avenue".<sup>384</sup> That next to the sheds private gardens were created as well can be assumed, since the situation must have been the same as in Berlin, where urban low-income residents had started gardens with sheds, called Kleingartens, in the periphery of the city. During the time of the depression years, the real estate market in the Bronx slowed down enormously. "From six thousand new buildings a year in 1926, pumping \$210 million into the local economy, new construction had plummeted by the early 1930s to seventeen hundred new starts worth \$49 million".<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 49.

<sup>382</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 59-60.

<sup>383</sup> For the urbanization of Manhattan a strict grid plan had been laid down in 1807 by a commission of citizens. The grid system subdivided the land in uniform blocks of two hundred feet depth with the purpose to provide at each site the same conditions for building. The grid disregarded topography, was thus more expensive to construct and created more monotony and lack of variety.

<sup>384</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 69.

<sup>385</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 75.

### 3.4.1.1 The New York City Housing Authority, rent control and the Public Housing Law

To combat the housing crisis, during the First World War and the concomitant national economic crises the government of the United States intervened in housing markets and emergency rent controls were installed in New York City. Then in 1934, when Congress passed the National Housing Act and when New York State endorsed a Municipal Housing Authorities Law, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia created the county's first public housing authority, the New York City Housing Authority<sup>386</sup>. When installed the New York City Housing Authority undertook the project "First Houses" and as a first step "(...) borrowed money from Bernard Baruch and bought dilapidated old-law tenements at the Lower East Side (...)".<sup>387</sup> With support by the federal Works Progress Administration<sup>388</sup> the New York City Housing Authority "(...) demolished every third building to let in more light and air and then used the cleared ground for small parks and playgrounds".<sup>389</sup> In addition the remaining 120 apartments of the remaining buildings were renovated.<sup>390</sup> This proved, "that the City could successfully undertake a real estate venture".<sup>391</sup> In addition it showed that the City could by back buildings from private businessmen and could take out individual publicly owned buildings instead of demolishing a whole block or row of buildings in order to make introduce public open spaces. At the same time, this measure by the municipality was probably part of its "slum clearance"<sup>392</sup> policy that was another step of pushing out low-income residents and encouraging construction of new apartment houses for the middle and upper classes in the Lower East Side.<sup>393</sup>

In following New York City's "(...) objective of eliminating slums (...) "<sup>394</sup> in 1937 the federal government passed the U.S. Housing Act that provided subsidies<sup>395</sup>, i.e. non-returnable grants by the state, to local authorities for the construction and operation of housing for low-income families, the so-called public housing. The New York state government followed in 1939 with the enacting of the Public Housing Law in order to get rid off housing without or with a low standard of sanitation or not enough ventilation or light. Subsequently the first state-aided public housing program in the United States of America was passed in New York City. Then in 1943, again following the example of New York City, the federal government set up rent controls nationwide in order to pay for rent shortfalls due to the wartime as well as to act against inflation. Even though this federal rent control program ended in 1950, New York State continued with its own rent-control-program to slow down rent hikes and rent evictions in New York City. It was presented by the New York State legislation as a contemporary

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<sup>386</sup> Since the housing authority owned the public housing complex the personal connection between a landlord and the tenants became anonymous, leaving the tenants alone with minor problems and slowing down responding time with major problems. The landlord, who once used to live in the same house, and who consequently felt more directly responsible for his property, was replaced and the tenants were left with nobody to be hold accountable for what was going on in the building, or to whom they could talk to put in a friendly word for relatives or friends, who were looking for an apartment. In 1969 the New York City Housing Authority increased rent in its public housing buildings by 50 percent, based on a rise in operating costs of 125 percent. Nevertheless, private landlords that had to comply with the old rent laws were only allowed to increase rent by 10 to 15 percent. An authority, as it was established in New York, is until today a corporate apparatus intended to manage a situation instead of leaving it in the confusion over the decision between private and public ownership of a natural resource. The financing of the authority, i.e. of the corporation, is nevertheless either privately or public funded. Under the administration of Robert Moses the authorities became self-sustaining and self-liquidating enterprises, supported by those who use them. A law for clearly defined purposes authorizes the authorities to issue bonds based on profits to be collected from tolls or services provided. (Jonnes 1986, p. 200)

<sup>387</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 102-103.

<sup>388</sup> "U.S. work program for the unemployed. Created in 1935 under the New Deal, it aimed to stimulate the economy during the Great Depression and preserve the skills and self-respect of unemployed persons by providing them useful work". (Merriam-Webster dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wpa>)

<sup>389</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 103.

<sup>390</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 103.

<sup>391</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 103.

<sup>392</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 103.

<sup>393</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 41.

<sup>394</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 103.

<sup>395</sup> Rent subsidies in New York City were guaranteed on the financial basis provided by an occupancy tax on commercial renters. (Jonnes 1986, p. 103)

measure during the emergency housing situation of New York City. Apartment buildings that were constructed after 1947 were exempted from the rent control law, in order to pay tribute to the interests of the building industry, the construction unions and the mortgage business of the banks. Once the law was enacted it was hard to change it back and to allow a raise in rents, especially "(...) in New York City, where renters wildly outnumbered landlords and which contained more than a million apartments, each housing one or two (even three or four) prospective voters".<sup>396</sup> In 1953 New York State permitted rent increase of 15 percent after landlords complaint that their properties did not produce revenue and were thus difficult to maintain. While in the late 1960's the rents remained controlled, costs of maintenance for apartment buildings were rising even further. Consequently more buildings were lacking appropriate maintenance, deteriorated and became subject to vandalism. In short, the city's rent control law left apartment owners with no incentive to maintain their properties, so that investing in apartment buildings became less lucrative while at the same time the standard of apartments decreased and vacancies rose.

### 3.4.1.2 Public housing

In the 1930s the low-income tenants of the Lower East Side and Upper East Side were to make room for commercial buildings and the construction of new apartment houses for the middle and upper classes. In order to accommodate refugee residents among others a 21,000-room public housing building was to be constructed in the Bronx.<sup>397</sup> But the new public housing buildings in the Bronx were especially built to provide relocation apartments for the African American population of the Harlem neighborhoods. Therefore the planners "(...) were asking the Housing Authority to venture into the city's most segregated borough".<sup>398</sup> Up to that time "(...) the Bronx's 15,000 blacks (1 percent of the borough) remained clustered in the Morrisania section".<sup>399</sup> The proposed project "(...) would have channeled 23,000 blacks into Hunt's Point on the East River, where they would have confronted industrial employers who observed the color line and realtors who already were rethinking their welcome to government-aided housing".<sup>400</sup> Robert Moses as well as the Regional Plan Association supported Mayor La Guardia's housing amendment of November 1938 "(...) to authorize broad city planning, slum clearance, and urban redevelopment, along with a city allowance to extend its debt ceiling".<sup>401</sup> But "(...) as race increasingly became a determinant of worthiness in a housing program that was chronically short of funds, the authority needed to develop sophisticated rationales to explain why the system turned people way".<sup>402</sup> Thus "years before Robert Moses gloried in what he called the 'dangerous' choices required of public works administrators, Housing Authority bureaucrats overcame their scruples about shifting people from one slum to another".<sup>403</sup> Later Moses "(...) came to power with the de facto support of the city's left wing, including tenant groups mobilized by the housing crises of the late 1930s".<sup>404</sup> He would engage in "(...) an urban agenda that included a showdown with slumlords, massive slum clearance, and an entire new housing system".<sup>405</sup>

In the 1930s Moses had come up with a concept for public housing for New York City, but he had to wait until funding became available to realize his plans. He proposed to build high-rise residential building blocks in the low-income areas of the city, following the "Towers-in-the-Park" concept of Le Corbusier. Moses was not that much concerned about the visual aspects of new housing, as long as the new public housing buildings would be surrounded with parks.<sup>406</sup> In addition he was more interested in maximizing the number of apartment buildings than in improving the way residents would be living in the buildings.<sup>407</sup> At the end of 1938, Mayor La Guardia realized Moses public housing plan with subsidies by the federal

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<sup>396</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 104.

<sup>397</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 41.

<sup>398</sup> Schwartz 1993, pp. 41-42.

<sup>399</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 42.

<sup>400</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 42.

<sup>401</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 42.

<sup>402</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 51.

<sup>403</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 51.

<sup>404</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 77.

<sup>405</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 77.

<sup>406</sup> Jacobs 1986, p. 90.

<sup>407</sup> Goldberger 1981. [www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/1218.html](http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/1218.html).

government of about \$2,5, but without including Moses in the planning effort. Consequently until the end of 1941, 13 public housing projects with a total of more than 17,000 housing units were constructed in New York City.<sup>408</sup> Finally in 1959, under Mayor Vincent Richard, Moses was able to be part of the planning of public housing. Moses oversaw the construction of about 28,000 apartment units built on about 99 acres of land, demolishing about the same number of apartment units for the construction of the new ones. At the end of the 1950s, 16 new public housing developments had been constructed to the Bronx – five of them in the South Bronx. Theoretically thus new apartment buildings had been created in the inner city for the low-income population that should provide more security in the neighborhoods, but instead through the destruction of established neighborhood networks through building demolition and the placement of new residents, these neighborhoods were destabilized.

In the 1950s Moses further promoted his “slum clearance” program, moving low-income residents from Manhattan to the Bronx. Moses intention was to replace lower income neighborhoods of Manhattan with middle-class housing. Thus under the title of “slum clearance” he moved low-income residents, mostly Puerto Ricans and African Americans, out of the area of Manhattantown, located in Manhattan’s Upper West Side between Central Park West, Amsterdam Avenue, 97th and 100th Streets. But instead of providing them with the promised apartments, left them without a comparably affordable place to go. “Instead of relocating families, throughout the early 1950s Moses created refugees”.<sup>409</sup> When Moses pushed through his urban renewal programs in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the former residents had to move - many of them went over the Harlem River into the South Bronx, where they could stay with relatives or friends. After the Second World War, in the late 1950s, new public housing projects were built in the Bronx. The residents of these new public housing developments came rarely from Bronx area, but moved in from other parts of town instead from those buildings that were demolished to make way for the very construction of those public housing complexes. The New York City Housing Authority constructed those public housing complexes mainly in the East and South Bronx in a scale that was out of proportion in comparison to the existing neighborhood around them. The new high-rise public apartment buildings named Forest Houses, Saint Mary’s Park, Melrose and Patterson houses were set up in place of former tenements and one-family houses. These new apartment buildings were built according to the “Tower-in-the-Park” concept with separate circulation for cars and pedestrians as high-rise buildings on the “green lawn” and thus following the design direction of the “Ville Contemporaine” and “Ville Radieuse” by the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. “Ultimately, ninety-six public housing buildings were raised in the lower Bronx for a total of 12,486 apartments”.<sup>410</sup> Consequently the Bronx had “the largest concentration of public housing anywhere in the country”.<sup>411</sup>

With new groups pushing into the already crowded and densely built inner city quarters at the end of the Second World War, New York City was struck with the next housing problem. As a measure to counteract the housing problem and the persistent inner city poverty, i.e. in order to stop the next housing crisis, the city officials turned to public housing - once again, since “New York City has always been a pioneer in public housing”.<sup>412</sup> The housing of the welfare families in the late 1960s was addressed by New York’s welfare department by providing rent support. For the more wealthy residents, the Model Cities program of the federal government provided support in subsidizing apartments in newly constructed high-rise buildings. At the same time, new residential areas were developed in the periphery of the city, the so-called suburbs for the middle-class. Consequently the old tenement building neighborhoods of the South Bronx were losing their substance with residents moving out and decreasing rent income for building owners resulting in lack of maintenance.

#### **3.4.1.3 The Model Cities program**

As a measurement against the inner city housing crisis and to act on the movement of the white middle-class to the suburbs, the federal government initiated in 1966 the nationwide Model Cities Program, funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity with \$65 million that

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<sup>408</sup> Caro 1974, p. 613.

<sup>409</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 125.

<sup>410</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 119.

<sup>411</sup> Jonnes1986, p. 118.

<sup>412</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 102.

would eventually be used for nine hundred thousand people. The Model Cities program was passed by Congress under the "Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act" as a five year program. It had to be renamed following riots in Watts, Newark, and Detroit in 1967. According to the "Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act" the Model Cities Program was intended to "(...) help cities plan, administer and carry out coordinated physical and social programs to improve the environment and general welfare of people living in slums and blighted areas".<sup>413</sup> The program was intended to be a combination of rebuilding the neighborhoods' housing and taking care of the social needs as well, since "(...) no one knew quite what to do about the cities. Their social ills had been accumulating ever since postwar migrations. Desperate to appear as if it were doing something, Congress enacted the Model Cities program and hoped that it would help".<sup>414</sup>

In New York City, the Bronx was next to Harlem and Brooklyn on New York City's Housing and Development Authority Agency agenda as a recipient of the Model Cities program. For the South Bronx, in 1967 the Mott Haven Plan Committee was set up by the Housing and Development Agency in order to build new housing as part of the Model Cities program. Instead of demolishing whole neighborhoods for urban renewal with high-rise towers, the new approach was that of "vest-pocketing", of constructing apartment houses that would fit in the existing neighborhoods without causing much disturbance and without placing low-income residents in an obvious and isolated situation as it had been the case with the public housing constructions in "Towers-in-the-Park". This new method of dealing with the housing of the low-income class was comparable to the First Houses public housing program of the 1930s. New York State Senator Jacob Javits envisioned to translate the Model Cities scheme to the South Bronx, and used his reputation to attract, next to the neighborhood residents, important persons to the board of directors. The South Bronx Community Housing Corporation was joined next to Javits by Victor Marrero, the investment Banker Henry Loeb, the department store owner Richard Sachs – all included by Javits because of the publicity and credibility they would add to the project as well as their potential in raising private money, attracting jobs, for commerce and housing development. To improve housing was the main concern of the programs director, Victor Marrero, who saw this approach as the most effective in the fight against low standard housing and poverty, since the result of it would be highly visible and would bring substantial change to people's lives. He wanted to build new apartment blocks as well as renovate the existing buildings, in a way that the Model Cities program funded. In order to create social changes Marrero set on providing better education and training for children and adults. Adults were trained in health and clerical work, were encouraged to join schools operating 24 hours or learn the English language. Summer camps were set up for children, drug-abuse centers for addicts, prisoners were appointed to a work release center. The City's agencies delayed negotiations of the construction of the housing even though the Bronx administration had been assigned large sums of the Model Cities program's funding by law. The South Bronx Model Cities program office was moved in 1970 out of the storefront supermarket where it had been located to a conventional and traditionally respected office space. But the program had until then "(...)"<sup>415</sup> aside from the vest pocket housing moving forward under the Mott Haven plan (...) "<sup>415</sup> nothing much accomplished.

The Model Cities program was laid out by the federal government for five years and it ended in 1972 - not because of insufficient funds, but because the officials did not make the commitment to keep it up.<sup>416</sup> In early 1973 President Nixon ordered to freeze all federal housing support and the federal government stopped giving tax breaks for building low-income housing. Construction on the South Bronx' Model Cities project came to a hold. It had been planned for a long time with many lots already cleared for the new construction. Without the federal money these lots were left vacant next to the already constructed housing blocks. In 1968 in context with the Model Cities program in the northeastern part of the Bronx the housing complex Co-op City opened. The high-rise buildings, built in connection with the Model Cities program for \$413 million, provided high standard apartments as condominiums attracting wealthier residents, i.e. those who had enough means to escape the rundown low-

<sup>413</sup> Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 in Vizbaras, Bronx, p. 4 quoted in: Jonnes 1986, p. 175.

<sup>414</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 176.

<sup>415</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 193.

<sup>416</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 330.

income neighborhoods.<sup>417</sup> For City officials Co-op City provided an easy solution to move people out of the area into the new and clean environment. The municipality advertised the new Co-Op City as a safe residential location at a time when crime rate was up, hoping – in line with the “planned shrinkage” concept that many Bronx residents would relocate from the South Bronx, clearing their former apartments. Many of the new residents left the Grand Concourse for the new apartments, as an article of 1967 published the New York Post reported<sup>418</sup>: “(...) Co-Op City, a Mitchell-Lama middle income cooperative development (...) received about 80% of its applications for its first building from people in the Concourse area”.<sup>419</sup> In the late 1960s, Coop-City was “the world’s largest cooperative apartment complex, housing sixty thousand people”.<sup>420</sup> It had been constructed on a former swamp area at the Hutchinson River, closed in by the New England Thruway and consisted of “(...) 15,375 apartments in thirty-five massive high-rise buildings”.<sup>421</sup> The building complex was not connected to New York City’s subway system, but since the price of the subsidized apartments was reasonable in comparison to other real estate at the time, apartments were sold quickly after its opening in 1968 and residents would take a bus to reach the next subway. The City advertised the new Co-Op City as a safe residential location at a time when crime rate was up. Indeed it provided higher standard apartments, but in practice there proved to be many inconveniences. Thus did the height of the buildings, which had up to fifteen stories, created difficulties for mothers and children, because the distance between an apartment and the outside playground was too high for intimacy and observance and play on the floors on the other hand was too loud. Co-Op city provided at the time the high standard apartments in the borough, and “(...) if it had been integrated into existing neighborhoods it might well have had a stabilizing effect, propping up local businesses and strengthening the area’s political constituency. Instead, the planners put it all by itself in the northeast corner of the Bronx, on the site of an old amusement park. Within a year it sucked out what remained of the South Bronx’s middle class, leaving those who remained in a virtual ghost town”.<sup>422</sup> In 1970s Co-Op City residents became famous for an over a yearlong rent strike over maintenance increase.<sup>423</sup>

Consequently the analysis of housing between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows measures by the City in regard to housing for the low-income population influenced the provision housing and open space land use in the area resulting in a lack of quality of life. This was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx starting in the late 1970s.

### 3.4.2 Zoning

In the following I will look at the development of zoning in New York City between 1920s and the 1970s, i.e. at the regulation of urbanization of New York City had not been regulated besides free market forces. **The** land of New York City was subdivided according to the street plan of 1811, in a grid, generally without creating advantaged sites for special functions. Residential streets were laid out just like commercial roads. The common lot size was 25 feet by 100 feet. This orthogonal division of the land by the grid has also affected the public land, so that most of the public land has been sized to be another block in the grid and not in regard to the land it is build upon. Individual dwellings on the 100-feet deep lots were uncomfortable for wealthier families and not affordable for everybody else. For apartment buildings, the lot size meant that the interior space in the houses was narrow, without enough ventilation and light. There were no back alleys and therefore the garbage had to be piled up in front of the houses, creating an untidy street even in wealthy neighborhoods.

At the beginning of the twentieth century New York City as well as other cities in the United States of America only had fire district regulations to control and curb the construction of

<sup>417</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>418</sup> Silver, Abel (March 9, 1967): *City Fights White Exodus from Grand Concourse*. New York: New York Post in: Chronopoulos 2009, pp. 17-18.

<sup>419</sup> Chronopoulos 2009, pp. 17-18.

<sup>420</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 274.

<sup>421</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 274.

<sup>422</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>423</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

buildings. But when in 1915 the Equitable Building was constructed in Lower Manhattan with 42 stories in height, the discussion about a regulation of height and form of New York City buildings was started, since the Equitable Building casted a shadow over adjacent buildings affecting their land use value. Thus, in New York City before the first zoning resolution was enacted in 1916, a building "(...) in any part of the city, could cover the entire lot, rise to any height whatever, and maintain the lot size at the highest story".<sup>424</sup> Consequently open space was reduced dramatically, especially in the residential areas close to the immigration hub of the harbor at the Lower East Side.

#### **3.4.2.1 Discussion before the introduction of a zoning resolution in New York City**

New York City was the first city in the United States to investigate the possibilities to employ police power to regulate buildings and their uses, i.e. to establish a zoning resolution. The limitation of Manhattan Island and the continued growth of the city made its expansion across the rivers necessary, so that bridges, tunnels and soon the subway system were build to create short distance to the center. Since zoning deals with land use and therefore with the real estate market, zoning influences the location of businesses and industries as well as the economical development of the city. Consequently a great number of groups were interested in the economic, social, political and urban planning aspects of zoning. Thus, next to the governmental officials, there were also non-governmental, organized interest groups active, who attempted to influence the structure of the zoning resolution. The real estate, business and financial interests of the city needed to be convinced that the introduction of the zoning ordinance would benefit them in order to get their vote and public support. The commission that was to establish the districting or zoning of the city additionally campaigned to receive the support of financial institutions and of the property owners. In short the zoning system was shaped by the action of the parties showing interest in it. The zoning resolution was thus eventually established only after hearings of the various interest groups and the crafting of a comprehensive plan. It was then amended over the years due to conflicts with and activities of special interest groups.

Individuals leading economic, social and ideological organizations were active in the conflict of interest in zoning issues. These groups were most of the time characterized by the locality of their interest, i.e. an interest rooted in specific geographic areas of the city. They concentrated therefore on specific aspects of the comprehensively created zoning resolution. The business real estate groups for example wanted to maintain unlimited area available for growth. These "realtors responded to zoning because of their interest in the city's land economy".<sup>425</sup> The group of the homeowners and local civic associations on the other hand were concerned to protect their neighborhoods, playgrounds and parks. The homeowners were mainly interested in the preservation of "(...) neighborhood virtues (...)"<sup>426</sup>, which was emphasized as an important issue of the zoning resolution. The homeowners' groups were strongly interested in the integrity of their residential neighborhoods. They spoke up against the encroachment of businesses into their districts and therefore in the use and bulk regulations. "The particular fear of the homeowners' groups was the invasion of multiple dwellings with the concurrent 'downgrading' of the areas".<sup>427</sup> The homeowners' groups constantly demanded higher use and bulk classifications and brought them in direct opposition to the local chambers of commerce, the real estate groups, and builders' associations. The local civic group associations were composed of homeowners, apartment dwellers as well as local businessmen and professionals. Their geographical base was often large, since it included residential and retail areas in their concept of neighborhood and community. The local civic group associations, "(...) also attempted to 'upgrade' their areas, by excluding obnoxious uses and maintaining the status quo in bulk restrictions".<sup>428</sup> There were also more ideologically oriented groups, such as general civic groups or groups interested solely in planning and housing like the Regional Planning Association, whose members came mainly from the city's professional middle-class population. The press and the newspapers represented an additional non-governmental interest group. Since the

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<sup>424</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 20.

<sup>425</sup> Makielski, The Politics of Zoning, p. 110.

<sup>426</sup> Makielski, The Politics of Zoning, p.145.

<sup>427</sup> Makielski, The Politics of Zoning, p.145.

<sup>428</sup> Makielski, The Politics of Zoning, p. 147.

newspapers were large landholders they “(...) rarely allowed zoning matters to pass without taking a positive stand on the issue”.<sup>429</sup>

In addition, city planners at the beginning of the twentieth century discussed the introduction of a zoning regulation. Some planners were of the opinion that the special interest of the community should be secondary to the demands of the entire city. They argued that “the city, as an entity, had an interest or a need beyond the simple collective needs of all the inhabitants, and that there was a way of expressing this interest in physical or procedural terms”.<sup>430</sup> Generally city planners at the time agreed that the public interest did exist as something “(...) more than any mere summation of all private or special interests” and that “(...) comprehensive zoning, with its complex interrelations of a wide range of social and physical factors was one of the preferred ways to arrive at the public interest”.<sup>431</sup> Comprehensive zoning attempted to zone the entire city instead of applying regulations only to limited parts of the city. It represented therefore a major innovation in municipal public policy. Planners understood comprehensive zoning it as “(...) the product of municipal reform, a set of responses to complex economic and social problems, and the claims of local and special interests”.<sup>432</sup> Some city planners at the time proposed that “(...) the search for the highest and best use (...)”,<sup>433</sup> low-income neighborhoods needed to be shifted to “(...) peripheral sites rather than tackle the housing problem where it existed”.<sup>434</sup> Edward M. Bassett for example published writings concerned with restraints of the new profession of city planning and other city planners were like for example John Nolen<sup>435</sup>, were convinced that comprehensive zoning plan was needed for New York City and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. propose also to introduce comprehensive planning. In 1913, at the second national conference on City Planning and Congestion of Population<sup>436</sup> he “(...) called for comprehensive planning that coordinated the disparate economic activities of the city”.<sup>437</sup> Olmsted Jr. advocated the allocation of space “(...) according to the new functionalism, which assumed that office towers and retail stores gave the highest rate of return, and factories and tenements gave the lowest”.<sup>438</sup>

At the time zoning regulation was understood as an instrument to secure a “(...) minimum standards of health and safety”, but in the discussion about different standards of height and floor area in different parts of the city “(...) the argument prevailed (...) that greater density always has existed and probably always will exist in the centers of a city where the need for speedy transaction of business causes people to be near together”.<sup>439</sup> In other words already at the beginning of the twentieth century it was understood, that density was a trademark of the city and that thus open space was not a topic with which one could argue against urban density. The urban development was proceeding in the meantime and the building situation became so chaotic, that “no landowner in any part of the city could erect a building of any sort with assurance that in ten or twenty years the building would not be obsolete by reason of an unnecessary and undesirable change in the character of the neighborhood”.<sup>440</sup> Thus low-income residents the zoning resolution promised better health and safety standards, to the real estate market it promised secure investments and to the municipality it promised more tax income. Since the zoning regulation was intended to restrict the desolate housing situation of the low-income class and to stabilize separate urban districts for different functions by declaring the land suitable for different uses, it involved public policy as well as complex legal situations. Consequently mainly technical experts resolved zoning issues, but in addition to technical skills, political expertise was of importance in dealing with the different

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<sup>429</sup> Makielski, *The Politics of Zoning*, p. 150.

<sup>430</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 182.

<sup>431</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 183.

<sup>432</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 7.

<sup>433</sup> Schwartz 1999, p. 22.

<sup>434</sup> Schwartz 1999, p. 22.

<sup>435</sup> Nolen 1927.

<sup>436</sup> The first conference on City Planning and Congestion of Population had been in 1909. (Schwartz 1999, p. 22)

<sup>437</sup> Schwartz 1999, p. 22.

<sup>438</sup> Schwartz 1999, p. 22.

<sup>439</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 25.

<sup>440</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 25.

zoning claims. Since in “(...) the zoning struggles, only a few were representative of the underprivileged, unpropertied, and the economically or socially disadvantaged”<sup>441</sup>, the zoning system can be called pro- middle-class.<sup>442</sup>

### 3.4.2.2 New York City’s first zoning resolution

Before the implementation of New York City’s first zoning resolution in 1916 there were no laws to limit a building’s height neither in New York City nor in other cities in the United States. In New York City “(...) a building could legally rise to any height whatever, assume any form, be put to any use, and cover 100 percent of the lot from the ground to the sky”.<sup>443</sup> In regard to lot coverage, there were the tenement laws regulating fire department access, air and ventilation for apartment first by demanding airshafts until 1879 and since 1901 courtyards, making thus tenement buildings “(...) the only structures that might not cover the whole lot”.<sup>444</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, New York City’s urban development was expanding at a great pace in horizontal and vertical direction. Certain districts of the inner city became more and more overcrowded. But despite the tenement laws “the difficulty was that there was nothing to control the crowding of a large number of families into a building that complied with all the area requirements, i.e., those of courts and yards”.<sup>445</sup> That means at the time, “When Greater New York was zoned there was no segregation of residence districts according to the number of families in a dwelling”.<sup>446</sup>

The urban environment of New York was characterized by the fact that “(...) skyscrapers cut off light and air from surrounding buildings; commercial buildings invaded residential areas, and industrial uses invaded both commercial and residential areas; real estate values were forced up to unrealistic levels; and city living became less comfortable, less bearable”.<sup>447</sup> Any parcel of urban land could be bought for money and used as wanted. At the same time the real estate market was characterized by great instability as well as rising rents and prices. The basic concerns of the city that planners agreed upon were “(...) building heights and the concomitant loss of light and air, as well as declining land values”.<sup>448</sup> In short there was a policy making process in regard to city planning going on in New York City at the time, and “(...) those who have been proponents of zoning have been so in the hope of resolving some of the problems of urbanization”.<sup>449</sup>

On July 25, 1916, the Board of Estimate and Apportionment of New York City<sup>450</sup> – a legislative institution which made New York City unique at the time<sup>451</sup> – passed the first resolution for citywide zoning, which was called “districting” at the time in order to prevent the increase of the resulting chaotic and unsanitary conditions. This first comprehensive zoning regulation of New York City was established including commercial, industrial and residential

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<sup>441</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 157.

<sup>442</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 157.

<sup>443</sup> Bassett 1936, pp. 23-24.

<sup>444</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 24.

<sup>445</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 28.

<sup>446</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 63.

<sup>447</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 8.

<sup>448</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 14.

<sup>449</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 2.

<sup>450</sup> The Board of Estimate, installed in 1898 in New York City, was a legislative institution, which was special to New York City unique at the time. (Makielski 1966, p. 187) Members of the Board of Estimate decided on the zoning resolution and since most of them were also members of a political party they were also interested in elections held in the city as well as in their party’s standing. Thus “(...) to a large extent, they calculated their policy stands in terms of the effects that such stands might have on the party organizations and on the electorate”. (Makielski 1966, p. 115) Consequently they were “(...) not anxious to advocate specific bulk or use restrictions (...)” since from their perspective “(...) at best such stands could only alienate some segments of the electorate”. (Makielski 1966, p. 117) Members of the Board of Estimate could act as brokers of special interest and “(...) reap the benefits of a favour done for a friend”. (Makielski 1966, p. 117) The Board of Estimate of New York City was required to hold public hearings on public issues, but it is said commonly that it tends to decide on the topic first in executive sessions and than listen to the public. For example Henry Bruckner was in his function as the Bronx’s Borough President from 1918 to 1933, “(...) also a voting member on the Board of Estimate, the body that approved every penny of spending in New York City’s budget”.<sup>450</sup> (Jonnes 1986, p. 78.) In 1989 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the Board of Estimate was unconstitutional.

<sup>451</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 187.

zones recreational<sup>452</sup>. In detail the city was zoned according to use, height and area coverage. Buildings were constructed thereafter as dense as the zoning resolution of the time allowed. New York City's zoning was regarded as one of the most sophisticated cities for a while since it "(...)" was far advanced for its day and was often copied verbatim by other cities which wished zoning protection".<sup>453</sup> This first comprehensive zoning of New York City was crafted with the support of the author and city planner Edward M. Bassett, who "(...)" drew on foreign precedents (...) and on the precedents set in Boston and Los Angeles".<sup>454</sup> Bassett might have also heard about the city planning discussion in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century, like for example of Baumeister's "Städtebauliche Vorträge" of 1911. Edward M. Bassett pointed out in his book "Zoning. The laws, administration and court decisions during the first twenty years" of 1936 that it is important to look at the type of land that is to be zoned. He continued, "The usual enabling act does not state what land can be zoned".<sup>455</sup> But even "(...)" only land available for buildings can be zoned".<sup>456</sup> Bassett explained that accordingly "the first zoning map- that of New York City- placed height and area regulations on all land except streets, and the use map covered all land except street and parks".<sup>457</sup> In regard to the regulation of land uses, Bassett clarified, the land use districts "(...)" are ordinarily residential, business, and industrial".<sup>458</sup> He added that, "the district of less restricted use always admits the uses of the more restricted ones".<sup>459</sup>

In the beginning the metropolitan area of New York City was zoned according to the number of families living in a dwelling. But there was a great demand to separate one-family dwellings from multi-family buildings, based on health and safety consideration, so that eventually residence districts were introduced graded according to the number of families per building unit. According to Bassett, "this means that a two-family-house district or a multi-family-house district is based on a use regulation and not on an area or density-of-population regulation".<sup>460</sup> In regard to the first zoning resolution of New York City, Bassett pointed out that "on the original use map of New York City public parks were not shown, although they were shown on the height and area maps".<sup>461</sup> This shows that real estate interests and the rights of property owners were of great concern when establishing zoning regulations and that public parks were regarded as subordinate to other land uses. Nevertheless, as Bassett explained, "it was considered that the city should conform the height and area of recreational and service buildings to the park surroundings".<sup>462</sup> The zoning resolution regulated the density of population and the type of buildings or dwellings erected in a specific urban district. This was specified mainly by amendments to the first version of the zoning ordinance. Additionally the establishment of transitional districts, traffic or special adjustments for non-conforming uses and other topics had to be dealt with in amendments. Gerald Edward Fitzgerald stated in his thesis "A History of Zoning in New York City" of 1995 that "Since 1916, the Building Zone Resolution has been amended over 1500 times".<sup>463</sup>

When the first zoning resolution was installed in New York City, after the First World War, there were almost no larger undeveloped areas left in the inner city, so that developers constructed housing almost exclusively on land in the periphery of the city, zoned for unrestricted uses. In addition, small manufacturing enterprises were restricted in finding industrial buildings in the inner city that were sufficient in regard to their access and moved out to the unrestricted land use zones in the urban periphery as well – at least this is what I assume, since the Bronx was situated in the periphery of the inner city, which was at the time Manhattan. That means the Bronx, which was zoned for unrestricted land uses, became

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<sup>452</sup> Until today no zoning regulations apply to public parks in New York City.

<sup>453</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 74.

<sup>454</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 21.

<sup>455</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 29.

<sup>456</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 29.

<sup>457</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 29.

<sup>458</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 63.

<sup>459</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 63.

<sup>460</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 64.

<sup>461</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 69.

<sup>462</sup> Bassett 1936, p. 69.

<sup>463</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 75.

further attractive after the enactment of the first zoning resolution and a development boom of housing and small industries was started.

### 3.4.2.3 The City Planning Commission and city planning in New York City

New York City first city charter was established in 1686. "On April 27, 1686, Governor Thomas Dongan issued an early city charter that enumerated responsibilities of the Colonial government. The Dongan Charter of the City of New York officially put all 'waste, vacant, unpatented and unappropriated lands' for the first time in municipal care, under jurisdiction of the Common Council. These 'unappropriated lands' included the outdoor marketplace and public commons that later became the first city parks".<sup>464 465</sup> The 1936 City Charter introduced the City Planning Commission, but did not establish it yet. In 1938 this City Charter of New York was amended and the City Planning Commission established.<sup>466</sup> One of the purposes of the establishment of the City Planning Commission was to guarantee fewer influences on the zoning aspects. With the establishment of the City Planning Commission of New York City in 1938, the zoning system was modified and became less locally oriented. That means the City Planning commission "(...) was charged with zoning functions which had formerly been the responsibility of the fire commissioner the tenement house commissioner and the borough superintendents of buildings".<sup>467</sup> Another responsibility of the City Planning Commission was "(...) drawing up a master plan, keeping the city map and preparing the city's capital budget".<sup>468</sup>

The introduction "(...) of the Planning Commission, the enhanced role of the city-wide officers on the Board of Estimate, and the decreased authority of the borough presidents limited the function of the party leaders as funnels for claims against the Zoning Resolution".<sup>469</sup> Consequently "the old bonds between interest group, party organization, and Borough Hall in zoning matters were destroyed by the Charter of 1938".<sup>470</sup> Still the creation of temporary alliances remained the order and "in general, the groups opposing zoning amendments were more successful than the Planning Commission in search for allies (...)".<sup>471</sup> The City Planning Commission began operating with seven members appointed by the Mayor. The 1989 Charter expanded the Commission to 13 members. Until today the Mayor appoints the Chair who is also the Director of City Planning. The Mayor also appoints six other members, each Borough President appoints one member, and the Public Advocate appoints one member. The Chair serves as long as the Mayor is content with his work. The other 12 commissioners each serve for staggered terms of five years. The city planning commission was established with the intention to be responsible for the coordination of plans created by other city agencies, i.e. after their officials have at least tentatively figured out what they want to do. The different proposals about various aspects of the city structure are then supposed to be coordinated and tactics to be worked out for the specific places.

The Planning Commission votes on applications concerning development and improvement of real estate property within the city. The environmental impacts of these applications are looked at where required by law. But, as Jane Jacobs states in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" of 1961, "(...) nobody, including the planning commission, is capable of comprehending places within the city other than in either generalized or fragmented fashion".<sup>472</sup> Jane Jacobs is of that the opinion, that "(...) planning commissions have become, not effective instruments for complex city detail, but rather destructive instruments, of greater or lesser effectiveness, for 'unbuilding' and oversimplifying cities".<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org).

<sup>465</sup> "In addition to Bowling Green and City Hall Park, the Battery, at the southern tip of Manhattan served as an open area for the batteries of cannon that gave the park its name. The City's ownership of all these parks can be traced back to the Dongan Charter". (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org))

<sup>466</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 75.

<sup>467</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 75.

<sup>468</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 75.

<sup>469</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 118.

<sup>470</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 119.

<sup>471</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 177.

<sup>472</sup> Jacobs 1966, p. 416.

<sup>473</sup> Jacobs 1966, p. 417.

She argues, "(...) their staffs do not and cannot know enough about places within cities to do anything else, try as they might".<sup>474</sup> Still, as S. J. Jr. Makielski states in 1966 in his book "The Politics of Zoning. The New York Experience", "the planning commission was the major innovation in the zoning structure of the zoning system".<sup>475</sup> The task of the planning commission was "(...) the preparation of a master plan, a capital budget, and proposals to amend the Zoning Resolution".<sup>476</sup> Therefore the City Planning Commission of New York was in charge of controlling the physical environment of the city. Gerald Edward Fitzgerald points out in his thesis "A History of Zoning in New York City" of 1955 that in regard to the zoning and a master plan of New York City in 1955, due to the shortage of staff of the City Planning Commission, "less attention as been paid to zoning and practically none to the master plan, which is still temporary and incomplete".<sup>477</sup>

In 1961 the zoning resolution was revised based on the original framework of 1916 to include use and bulk regulations, parking requirements and to emphasize the creation of open space with the introduction of incentive zoning. Incentive zoning allowed developers to add an extra floor space to the building if public plazas, i.e. privately owned public spaces, were incorporated into the project. The 1961 zoning resolution was meant to reduce density in the city. With the remodeling of the zoning resolution in 1961, the "(...) Zoning Resolution separated industrial and residential areas to ensure safety and insulate residential communities from industrial traffic and other irritants, and to shield industry from nuisance-generated complaints. No new residences were permitted in manufacturing districts, although many existing residences remained as non-conforming uses because of historic land use patterns".<sup>478</sup>

Consequently the analysis of zoning between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that with subdivision of land for the construction of apartment buildings and the subsequent reduction of open space was followed by regulation to provide sanitary conditions and quality of life to the urban population. This was done by provision of public housing and subsidizing suburbs, but also with the help of zoning, i.e. through separating urban districts for different functions by declaring the land suitable for different uses. Since the quality of life especially of the low-income inner city population was low due to the lack of provision with privately usable common open space land, residents of the South Bronx answered with the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

### 3.4.3 Location of open space

In the city "(...) services and goods are not efficiently distributed nor are they equally distributed, whether we are considering food, housing, education, employment, open space, or recreation opportunity".<sup>479</sup> Thus for example layout of buildings in urban areas, i.e. city planning, causes racial segregation in recreation. In other words "housing patterns continue to cause participation and visitation at most inner-city recreation facilities to be racially segregated".<sup>480</sup> In addition the location of open space is connected to the housing pattern in the city and needs especially to be provided in low-income areas. In the land-use planning in the United States of America in the nineteenth century, "briefly, with origins in the New England commons, the public park took on a central role (...)".<sup>481</sup> In 1901, the distribution of parks in New York City was debated and some intellectuals called for making a percentage of acres the basis for the distribution of open space. "Some felt that population growth was going to be so enormous, or at least so unpredictable, that percentage of acreage, rather than population ratios, should be the basis for distributing parks. For example, in the borough of Queens, the population had increased 100 percent over ten years, so the park commissioners claimed that a 10 percent area should be open space and parks. Another expert concluded that one-twentieth of a city's area should be reserved for parks and

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<sup>474</sup> Jacobs 1966, p. 417.

<sup>475</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 114.

<sup>476</sup> Makielski 1966, p. 114.

<sup>477</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 75.

<sup>478</sup> [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zh\\_manudistricts.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zh_manudistricts.shtml)

<sup>479</sup> National Recreation and Park Association Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 13.

<sup>480</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>481</sup> Newton, 1971; Heckscher, 1977 in: Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 2.

squares: for every thousand acres there should be 10 acres for playgrounds and squares, 40 for large parks, 100 for streets and alleys, 5 for school grounds, 155 for public purposes, and 850 for private ownership”<sup>482</sup>.

### 3.4.3.1 The New Parks Movement

In 1880 an environmental movement started in New York City, called the New Parks Movement. This public park movement was started by groups of rallying citizens, who detested the living conditions of the new immigrants and who were convinced that land that public open space needed to be set aside. The new parks were thought to enhance health, manners and moral as well as “(...) the imagination, the creative genius and artistic instincts of the population – an influence not less real because intangible, not less valuable because it cannot be reduced to dollars and cents”<sup>483</sup>. The idea of the movement was to bring the masses of citizens out of the densely packed tenement houses into newly created public parks. The promoters of the New Parks Movement did not want to repeat the experience of Central Park in the outskirts of New York City, but instead they were interested to use the land of the Bronx as it was and only add the necessary roads and paths.

John Mullaly, an author of several texts on the New Parks Movement, was one of its activists, who fought for the extension of the New York City park system, for the Bronx Parks and against New York politicians. The new open spaces, the parks, were intended to help the residents of the tenement houses by providing the atmosphere of “(...) fresh air and life in country cottages (...)”<sup>484</sup>. As John Mullaly points out at the first meeting of the promoters and friends of the parks, held at the end of 1881, New York City had at the time one acre of parkland for every 1363 residents in comparison to cities like London, Paris, Vienna, Dublin, Chicago, Saint Louis, Boston and San Francisco that had no greater ratios than one acre of parkland to 211 inhabitants.<sup>485</sup> The New Parks Movement intended to create new “natural parks”, which they regarded as being less expensive than designed landscapes. John Mullaly proposed to build more parks with tax income. He refers to the fact that the enhanced value of the properties surrounding new established public parks would increase tax income for the City and thus would pay back more than the creation these public parks had cost the City. Consequently, according to Mullaly, his idea to preserve open spaces for development of public parks should be of the interest into the city’s treasury. Mullaly presents as support for this argument the exemplary situation of the properties surrounding Central Park, where property values were advancing “(...) in one year from 100 to 300 per cent in some localities, and one instance is recorded of an advance in a single plot of 1,300 per cent, within five years”<sup>486</sup>.

The New Parks Movement based its proposal to increase New York City’s parks system on the city’s increasing number of population, which was considered with an average population of 539,713 to the square mile in New York City wards 10,11,13,14 and 17 (census data of 1880) as too dense.<sup>487</sup> In response to that John Mullaly calls for “(...) more laws to regulate and secure the essential sanitary conditions, the proper distribution of space in the erection of buildings (that) should be erected as early as possible to prevent the perpetuation and extension of the fatal tenement system over the yet unoccupied territory”<sup>488</sup>. He envisioned that the establishment of new public parks would help to create a healthier and less crowded environment for the masses. He states, “Here there will be no packing into close, narrow, pest-breeding apartments, but neat, commodious cottages free from that mental and physical contamination, which is the curse of overcrowded cities”<sup>489</sup>.

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<sup>482</sup> Report of the Committee on Park Census for 1901, American Park and Outdoor Art Association, Vol. 5, part 1 (1901), pp. 5-9 in: Cranz 1982, p. 83.

<sup>483</sup> Mullaly 1882, p. 19.

<sup>484</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 1.

<sup>485</sup> Mullaly 1882, pp. 15-16.

<sup>486</sup> Mullaly 1882, p. 25.

<sup>487</sup> Mullaly 1882, p. 42.

<sup>488</sup> Mullaly 1882, p. 42.

<sup>489</sup> Mullaly 1882, p. 42.

### 3.4.3.2 Public parks, taxes and property value

In the discussion about creating new public parks in the Bronx the distance to Manhattan as well as taxation were the main issues. One of the plan for the creation of new public parks in the Bronx intended to make residents of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> ward, i.e. the southern part of the Bronx today, pay for half of the cost of these new public parks. To these residents this proposal meant an increase in taxation by more than 90%. In addition this tax plan neglected the fact that there was already plenty of public parkland available for those residents in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> wards and that the new public parks would benefit actually the other 22 wards of New York City since they would commute to the new public parks to get out of the city. New public parkland was proposed, but the Mayor of New York City at the time, Franklin Edson, who was a member of the Executive Committee of the New York Park Association and who has been involved in 1882 in the distribution of the booklet "More Public Parks!" opposed the location, extent and expense of the proposed parks.

The Parks Commissioner, John Wales, as an individual commissioner and not as a representative of the Parks Department, criticized the proposal in his presentation speech to the Mayor's office on March 1, 1884, stating that "(...) any public benefit, accruing from the park, which would increase the taxable value of all adjacent private property, would be entirely for the benefit of Westchester County, while the cost of the park, as proposed, would be paid entirely by the City of New York".<sup>490</sup> Wales proposed to create in the Bronx more small downtown parks instead of huge areas of parkland. The reason for this proposal was that in his opinion "the people chiefly to be benefited by parks are those who are obliged to remain in the City during the summer months, and parks should be located as to be readily reached by children during the day and by grown people after the day's work".<sup>491</sup> Wales alternative proposal foresaw 177 small parks in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Wards. This idea was objected against by John Mullanly with the argument, that "the structures which now encumber the ground must be removed, the vacant spaces filled in with new earth, the grounds laid out and the trees planted- a work which will involve, in addition to the cost of the buildings, a heavy expense".<sup>492</sup> The New York Tribune did not agree with Wales proposal as well and defined that "(...) the essence of a park proper is its landscape effect, and to furnish scenery which will have any restful influence upon the mind (...)" and added that "an adequate escape from oppressive urban conditions can only be offered when the city is planted out of sight".<sup>493</sup> The Tribune questioned further whether the Park Department would be capable of "(...) maintaining a park after its design has been developed".<sup>494</sup> The New Parks Bill was cleared the State Senate, but opposed by Theodore Roosevelt as the chairman of the Assembly Committee, even though he later turned out to be known as "(...) the foremost conservationist of the period (...)".<sup>495</sup> On June 14, 1884, the New Parks Bill was passed the Assembly and signed by Governor Grover S. Cleveland into law. The bill was however still attacked by opponents of the parks movement.

The Mayor of New York City, William R. Grace, attempted to block the purchase of new public parkland by the New York State Constitutional Amendment. This amendment stated that the city, which was already past its debt limit, fell short in funds. Thus, in the opinion of the Mayor, the New Parks movement was too expensive and he tried to cut it down in size or at least to slow down the process of acquiring land at the rate of a million dollars a year. To support the Mayor's cause, agents were sent to the tenement buildings downtown in the Bronx, i.e. in the South Bronx, in order to make the tenants sign false statements, which declared that since "the parks could only be paid for by direct taxation their rent would be increased until such a time as the whole expense was cleared off", something which was of course to be an unbearable expense to the low-income residents.<sup>496</sup> In addition Mayor Grace of New York City tried to involve the Real Estate Exchange to stop the New Parks Movement. But the interest of the Real Estate Exchange in the New Parks Movement was apparently strong as indicated by the last pages of each New Park Movements document consisting of

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<sup>490</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 59.

<sup>491</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 59.

<sup>492</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 60.

<sup>493</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 60.

<sup>494</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 60.

<sup>495</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 60.

<sup>496</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 63.

advertisement for real estate companies. In 1887, the last attack on the New Parks Bill occurred, when about 80 residents from the town of Pelham, Westchester presented a petition, stating that the Pelham Bay Park would increase the landowner's taxation intolerably. But after final legislative arguments, the New Parks Bill of 1884 was left unchanged. The land to create all proposed parks was purchased in 1887 at \$9,969,603.04 for about 4,000 acres. Only two years later, in 1889, Mayor Hugh J. Grant proposed to sell of parts of Van Cortlandt Park and to transform Pelham Bay Park into "(...) a site for alms houses, charity hospitals, insane asylums and penal institutions".<sup>497</sup> Consequently the New Parks Movement was reorganized by John Mullaly as a reaction against this proposal by Mayor Hugh J. Grant and against the enactment of two more bills through which "the Department of Parks and the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund were to be authorized and empowered 'from time to time'" to change the boundaries of the new pleasure grounds, (...) and to lease (...) any or all of the parks at public or private letting".<sup>498</sup> The value of the parks properties rose dramatically over the years as well as the annual value of recreational opportunities provided by these parks.

### **3.4.3.3 Neighborhood parks, Robert Moses and the location of open space**

In the 1930s public open spaces were very much unrepresented in New York City so that for example "In 1932, only 14,827 acres or seven per cent of the entire city had been reserved for the recreation of its citizens, a percentage smaller than that set aside for recreation in any of the other ten largest cities in America or the world. With only 119 playgrounds for 1.7 million children under 12 years of age there was only one playground for every 14,000 children".<sup>499</sup> During that time Robert Moses was the Commissioner of Parks, but even though he created public parks in a great scale in the New York metropolitan area, the city center, especially the low-income areas there, was underserved by public open space.. "When Robert Moses (...) began creating public parks in the 1930's and 40's he did little to remedy the situation. As the master builder of Jones Beach and Heckscher State Park, Moses saw little reason to create a green space of a few benches or a seesaw or two. Even knowing how important the small parks were to the City's poor, the reformers had no way to stop Moses from giving to the 'well-to-do' baseball fields, tennis, handball and basketball courts, skating rinks and swimming pools, while the most congested neighborhoods did without a park for their children to jump rope or play ball".<sup>500</sup>

Joe Schwartz states in his book "The New York Approach. Robert Moses, Urban Liberals and Redevelopment of the Inner City" of 1993, "(...) For years, New Yorkers refused to face the moral paradox of liberal policy that left social wounds".<sup>501</sup> After the Second World War the redevelopment of New York City was the most important public policy undertaken. Low-income housing was to be replaced by middle-income housing. "With local subsidies, backed by millions in federal funds from Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 (...)" the City "(...) led the nation in racial decency (...)" that "(...) would lead it in the fine art of 'Negro removal'".<sup>502</sup> Thus "(...) redevelopment supporters claimed that New York's special problems, its miles of tenement slums and daunting property costs, required ruthless measures and some inconvenience".<sup>503</sup> The assumption was that New York's "(...) liberalism, the tradition of government responsibility for the downtrodden, guaranteed that redevelopment would not work hardship on the poor".<sup>504</sup> It "(...) became clear that redevelopment proceeded on the backs of the poor and produced a city more divided than before by income and race (...)"<sup>505</sup>.

Robert Moses was widely involved in this redevelopment of New York under the Title I of the Housing Act of 1949. As Schwartz states, Moses "(...) handed choices of locations to redevelopers, allowed them to occupy sites at their leisure, and encouraged them to build

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<sup>497</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 64.

<sup>498</sup> Schnitz and Loeb 1984, p. 64.

<sup>499</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 8.

<sup>500</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, pp. 6-7.

<sup>501</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 15.

<sup>502</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 15.

<sup>503</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 15.

<sup>504</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 15.

<sup>505</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 16.

luxury high-rises without regard for city plans”.<sup>506</sup> A high priority of Moses was the eviction of “(...) black occupants of condemned tenements”.<sup>507</sup> By linking slum clearance with the projects of the New York City Housing Authority, private sponsors responsible for the relocation of the low-income residents “(...) could call upon the city’s public housing to absorb the refugees”.<sup>508</sup> Thus “(...) redevelopment gave legal authority and large public subsidies to private realtors to uproot low-income people”.<sup>509</sup> That means “(...) with a faith that decent people would implement decent plans, New York liberals embraced redevelopment”.<sup>510</sup> According Schwartz “(...) the origins of the New York approach (...)” can be traced “(...) back to the Progressive Era, when municipal reformers first recognized the need for inner-city renewal and the related question of rehousing the poor”.<sup>511</sup> He adds, “(...) Recognition pitted municipal priorities against the residential needs of the working class, a weighing of values that struck a blow against the tenements of the poor”.<sup>512</sup> Schwartz describes that together with “(...) Moses’ hunger for power (...)” and together “(...) with the language of modern city planning, sponsors privately arranged the transformation of neighborhoods, calculated what they regarded as acceptable limits on black and working-class removals (...)”.<sup>513</sup> In addition the “(...) New York approach also depended on collaboration with planners whose broad views (and personal gains) coincided with Moses’ agenda”.<sup>514</sup> The key members of the postwar City Planning Commission of New York City were ready to comply with Robert Moses intention and “(...) supported superblocks, bulldozer clearance, and arterial highways (...)”.<sup>515</sup> All of this happened without providing a concept for securing open space in the low-income neighborhoods that were to be “re-structured”. Instead the restructuring of urban life in the postwar years has been spurred by “(...) burgeoning world trade, the advent of multinational corporations, and growth in global credit and monetary flows (...)”.<sup>516</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the location of open space between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that in land-use planning in the United States in the nineteenth century the public park took on a central role in regard to increasing the wellbeing of the urban population as well as property value, the land of the South Bronx was subdivided without setting aside neither enough land for public parks nor specific land use sites such as for the creation of small public parks used by the community. This was answered by residents of the South Bronx with the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

### 3.4.4 Change of the location of open space

At the beginning of the twentieth century the fast-developing South Bronx with the open space adjacent to the residential area, i.e. located in the Northern part of the borough, was a desirable residential location outside of the city: The South Bronx was an early form of suburb, for working class residents due to its homes with gardens and accessible open space. But, when more and more of the wealthy residents, who used to inhabit the South Bronx, sold their land and when their estates and mansions were dismantled and subdivided by developers for the construction of apartment buildings, in a short period the suburban South Bronx was transformed into a densely built-up and occupied inner city district. Until the 1950s, the open spaces in the Bronx were greatly reduced by housing construction for incoming immigrants and low-income residents. These new buildings were erected on newly subdivided land, i.e. next to existing housing, in backyards of former one-family houses or as a larger alteration of those houses converting them to multi-family apartment dwellings. Consequently the open spaces were reduced and pushed out further and further to the periphery, while the South Bronx became even less attractive as a residential location for

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<sup>506</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 16.

<sup>507</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 16.

<sup>508</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 17.

<sup>509</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 17.

<sup>510</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 17.

<sup>511</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 18.

<sup>512</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 17.

<sup>513</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 19.

<sup>514</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 19.

<sup>515</sup> Schwartz 1993, pp. 19-20.

<sup>516</sup> Schwartz 1993, p. 20.

wealthier residents. With the decline in population and the demolition of housing in the inner city, open space became available there again, but quality of life remained lacking until residents started to create community gardens. The National Recreation and Park Association's study "Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America's Inner Cities" of 1974 stated that "during the 1960's there was a substantial and increasing amount of vacant land in the study cities; population declined in over half the cities; open space acquisition exceeded dramatically the loss of park land in most cities (...)"<sup>517</sup> At the same time "the interstate highway system's urban links and other street and highway construction were primary open space and park land encroachers in the 1950's and 1960's"<sup>518</sup> The report recognized that in the 1970s the federal government was changing "(...) its direction regarding inner cities and open space"<sup>519</sup> That means while in the 1960s "(...) federal money has not been a substantial part of local parks and recreation expenditures (...)", in the 1970s "(...) federal advocacy has illuminated the problems of the inner city and encouraged compensatory measures"<sup>520</sup>.

Consequently the analysis of the change of location of open space between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that the reduction of open space influenced the attractiveness of a residential location and that with the decline in population and the demolition of housing in the inner city, open space became available there again while quality of life remained lacking. This shows that open space next to housing makes a residential location attractive to its residents, while the lack of open space makes a location less attractive since it was lacking quality of life. Residents of the South Bronx answered this with the creation of community gardens in the late 1970s.

### 3.4.5 Neighborhoods

Karl Linn defines in his book "Building commons and community", published in 2007, a neighborhood as "(...) a place where people converge to realize their lives"<sup>521</sup> He adds that neighbors, i.e. individuals living in a specific area, can form a new kind of "extended family"<sup>522</sup> "To nurture the growth of a new kind of extended family based not on blood relations but on growing friendship. Mutual aid, and intergenerational support, neighbors can collaborate in planning and constructing an easily accessible commons"<sup>523</sup> This is according to Linn necessary in the twenty-first century since, "in our post-industrial society, families often find themselves living an isolated and segregated existence without the emotional and physical support once provided by traditional extended-family living"<sup>524</sup>.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the development of new "suburban" areas in the Bronx and the outskirts of the city meant the creation of new neighborhoods next to new industrial areas. In regard to the living there Gerard Edward Fitzgerald states in his thesis "A History of Zoning in New York City" of 1995 that "the citizen may rent or buy in an older area and sacrifice modernity or he may move to a new modern dwelling and take a chance that the residential character of the neighborhood may be destroyed because of the intrusion of commercial activity"<sup>525</sup>.

The southern part of the Bronx was subject to urban development since the construction of the subway system of the greater New York area in the 1930s. As the subway line was extended in to the Bronx, neighborhoods developed around the subway stops. At the same time when the social fabric of the southern part of the Bronx changed the Cross Bronx Expressway was built through the middle of the county, dividing it, destroying neighborhoods and leaving families homeless. Also at the end of the 1950s the center of the borough of the Bronx, the neighborhood next to the Grand Concourse, was destroyed by the construction of

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<sup>517</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>518</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>519</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>520</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

<sup>521</sup> Linn 2007, p. 202.

<sup>522</sup> Linn 2007, p. 202.

<sup>523</sup> Linn 2007, p. 202.

<sup>524</sup> Linn 2007, p. 202.

<sup>525</sup> Fitzgerald 1995, p. 77.

the massive Cross-Bronx-Expressway, cut into the Bronx valley, uprooting the Jewish, Irish and Italian families who had lived there for over 20 years. Consequently, tens of thousand of families were displaced and grown neighborhoods destroyed as demolition and construction dragged on for years. When more and higher buildings where constructed in suburban areas, open space was reduced.

With the demolition of the front yard, the stoop and with the addition of more stories, life on the street moved further away from the residents and neighborliness became rare. Then in the late 1960s, with the beginning of the arson, neighborhoods in the inner city were abandoned. Thus "(...) in cities all across the United States, vacant land has greatly impacted the quality of neighborhood environments. Housing abandonment, arson, middle-class exodus, unfinished urban renewal projects, and declining municipal services have resulted in literally thousands of acres of surplus vacant property in American cities<sup>526</sup>,<sup>527</sup>. The remaining residents of inner city neighborhoods at the time "(...) often view these vast amounts of rubble-strewn land as a safety hazard contributing to local problems of sanitation and crime. In addition, they see this land as a waste of a potentially valuable resource in neighborhoods that lack open-space amenities"<sup>528</sup>.

Consequently the analysis of neighborhoods between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that individuals living in a specific area, in a neighborhood, provide emotional and physical support to each other, which was lacking in the South Bronx due to the disruption of its social networks because of changing population and reduction of open space. This was answered by residents of the South Bronx with the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.5 Open space land use and specific land use in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of open space land use and specific land use in the South Bronx between the 1920s and the 1970s by looking at the aspects of residential location and waste issue as well as the topic of gentrification. Then I will introduce the topic of open space policy concerned with gardening and elaborate on Pingree's Potato Patch gardens, Vacant Lot Cultivation and War Gardens or "Liberty Gardens", Vacant Lot Cultivation and Relief Gardens, Victory Gardens and Vest-pocket Parks.

#### **3.5.1 Residential location and the waste issue**

The attraction to move in a residential neighborhood is based on the quality of life it provides. A neighborhood that provides stores, actively used streets and open space for spontaneous social interaction with neighbors on stoops or in gardens and parks and that has a functioning infrastructure is usually in high demand since it is socially stable. The land value in these neighborhoods is usually at a high and housing is consequently only affordable to the middle class, i.e. to the better-educated residents, who can attain jobs that provide for higher wages. Residents, who live in a neighborhood with a high quality of life, are usually more socially connected and thus more organized and politically able to push through their interests as their votes have more impact on what is interesting to them. Consequently they can determine what is built in their residential district by providing the political official with their vote to stay in power or not. For this reason the waste transfer stations were in the 1960s not located on the Manhattan Island, but have been removed across the Harlem River to the South Bronx where social networks. There the social structure is continually changing and the working class residents lack time, education and options, like spontaneous meeting points in the everyday life to organize themselves. That means the residents of the South Bronx voted for the Democratic Party as an act of tradition that had proven that the party leaders, being grown up in the neighborhood, would provide for their needs. With the Democratic Party's attraction

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<sup>526</sup> "The problem of vacant urban land is not unique to the United States. For example, 11 square miles of land are estimated [at the time this was written in 1984, added C.M.] within the city limits of London, and in a survey of urban wasteland in England, Wales, and Scotland, the Civic Trust (1970) identified 250,000 acres of vacant land in British cities. In 1971, in Toronto, Canada, 2,500 acres of vacant land utility rights-of-way were reported (Hough, 1983, p. 55)". (Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 3)

<sup>527</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 2.

<sup>528</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 3.

reduced and the unions' power fading the residents realized that their vote had little effect anymore to influence what was going on in their neighborhoods. Consequently they were not able to stop the construction of waste transfer stations in the vicinity of their housing. In the same way they were not able to influence the building laws established by residents living in other districts of New York City that affected the provision of open space and housing with private gardens in the South Bronx.

The 1960s, the environmental consciousness increased and waste management became an issue in the United States and the industrial world in general. The effect was that the wealthy residents of Manhattan Island demanded that waste stations were not to be located close to their apartment buildings. Consequently their waste came to be pushed out to the impoverished residential districts like the South Bronx for example. "Thanks to Robert Moses, the area is crisscrossed with expressways, and it has more than its share of bus depots and medical waste transfer stations. As a result, the air quality is worse than any other borough's".<sup>529</sup> In 2009, according to the South Bronx Environmental Studies, Public Health and Environmental Policy Analysis, the "Bronx County has some of the highest rates of asthma in the United States. Rates of death from asthma are about three times higher in the Bronx than the national average".<sup>530</sup>

Consequently the analysis of residential location and waste issue between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that residents, who live in a neighborhood with a high quality of life that is provided by access to open space, are usually more socially connected and thus more organized to protect their interests. This was answered by residents of the South Bronx with the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.5.2 Gentrification**

The movement of residents, who have saved money, out of one inner city neighborhood into a new neighborhood to improve their living situation, usually by buying a building for their family or as an investment measure, is called gentrification. Gentrification is the migration of the "gentry", i.e. the upper class, into a neighborhood or "(...) the process by which a neighborhood occupied by lower- income households undergoes revitalization or reinvestment through the arrival of upper income households".<sup>531</sup> If new residents move for into an inner city neighborhood where the land values are low, the social structures prevalent in the neighborhood are transformed while housing construction increases and open space is reduced. The increase in number of population also increases the demand in food and goods bought in the neighborhood's stores. Consequently the stores will raise their prices and the attraction to open more shops increases. Concomitantly the quality of life in the area improves for the residents, who can afford it, i.e. usually for the newcomers, but not for the previous residents. As the demand to live in the area is heightened, the land values as well as the rents are raised as well. The tenants, who cannot afford the rents any longer, move on to a new neighborhood, where they still can afford to rent an apartment or even to buy a building. This process of gentrification, the movement of population within the city with increasing demand of residential locations due to specific land use and consequently rising of property values, decreasing of open space access and then changing of population structure decreases the quality of life for low-income population.

Looking at the gentrification concept in the South Bronx for example shows that the apartment buildings of four-to five-stories were constructed in the 1920s at the subway stations and then the borough of the Bronx became more and more populated. Developers had seen the possibility to construct buildings in great masses and investors their chance for speculation. Subsequently the Bronx became quickly an attractive residential location the density of the buildings increased. Rents remained to be affordable and so the apartments were soon overcrowding. Open space and gardens became less and less in the borough as the number of tenement buildings grew. This was followed by an economic downswing and

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<sup>529</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>530</sup> Zimmerman 2009, [www.icisnyu.org/south\\_bronx/admin/files/NYUWagnerPhaseVIreport.pdf](http://www.icisnyu.org/south_bronx/admin/files/NYUWagnerPhaseVIreport.pdf).

<sup>531</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1979: 4 in: Jackson 2012, *The Consequences of Gentrification in Washington, D.C.* <http://paa2012.princeton.edu/papers/121231>.

an reduction of the quality of life in the South Bronx when the real estate developers pushed the gentrification of other urban areas.

Consequently the analysis of gentrification between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that the process of gentrification, the movement of population within the city with increasing demand of residential locations due to specific land use and consequently rising of property values, decreasing of open space access and then changing of population structure decreases the quality of life for low-income population. This was answered by residents of the South Bronx with the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

### **3.5.3 Open space policy concerned with gardening**

In the following I will introduce open space land use in the South Bronx and specific land use in regard to open space policy in regard to private gardens between 1920s and the 1970s in regard to the development of community gardens in the South Bronx.

#### **3.5.3.1 Pingree's Potato Patch gardens**

At the end of the nineteenth century the first organized urban public land gardening movement is recorded in the United States – a top-down movement started by the Detroit municipality. "The earliest organized urban community gardening effort anywhere in the U.S. was launched during the Panic of 1893, a period of industrial slowdown and unemployment. Detroit's Mayor Hazen S. Pingree coped with the growing congestion and squalor in the inner city by providing garden plots on municipally owned land and privately donated vacant urban lots".<sup>532</sup> Urban gardening on public land in Detroit at the time was "(...) a municipal enterprise under the management of the Agricultural committee, which was appointed by Mayor Pingree for the purpose of relieving the unemployed, whose numbers were increasing greatly as a result of the hard times in the winter of '93-94".<sup>533</sup> The funding for the urban garden program was appropriated by the City of Detroit. "During the year 1894 \$3,600 was raised by subscription, but much time and service were given by city officials in the prosecution of the work. In 1895 \$5,000 was appropriated by the Common Council for this purpose. In 1896 \$4,000 was appropriated and the city poor commission selected all the families to whom lots were issued, with two exceptions assigned by the committee".<sup>534</sup>

The City of Detroit supported gardening on public land, since the funds allotted for this urban gardening movement were saved in taxation and in the welfare department by growing food on public land to feed the low-income class. "The report of the Agricultural committee for 1896 states that in the three years, '94, '95, and '96, the city was saved an amount of taxation nearly equal to the difference between the total amount expended, \$10,893.35, and the value of the crops raised, \$72,790.10, or \$61,896.75, the net profit".<sup>535</sup> Consequently officials regarded gardening on public land as a success. In other words, as the same report states "(...) As a purely business transaction the Pingree Potato Patch plan is, to say the least, a very decided success".<sup>536</sup> Pingree's potato patches were situated on land donated by individuals to avoid paying taxes and on land at the outskirts of the city. In addition purchasing land to make it public was also discussed. "The committee in Detroit has also recommended that in addition to the land secured by donations from individuals the city purchase a farm".<sup>537</sup>

The success of the Potato Patches program is described by Mayor Pingree in an annual message to Common Council: "(...) 'It seems to me the experiment has clearly demonstrated, first, that at least ninety-five per cent of the people who are in destitute circumstances as a result of the hard times are ready, willing, and anxious to work; second, that a large number of these people can be supported by utilizing vacant lands on the outskirts of the city; third, that a very small space of ground is sufficient to raise enough vegetables to support a family

<sup>532</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>533</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, pp. 4-5.

<sup>534</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 5.

<sup>535</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 5.

<sup>536</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 5.

<sup>537</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 5.

through the winter; fourth, that a majority of our citizens who own vacant land would much rather allow it to be cultivated by the poor than to pay a large tax for their support; and fifth, that the needy are therefore assisted without creating the demoralization in the habits of the people that gratuitous aid always entails".<sup>538</sup> The report of the Agricultural committee of 1896 points out the context between community gardening, low-income residents and national economy. It states, "(...) no matter how prosperous the country may be in the future, there will always be those who require assistance, and it will be the part of wisdom and economy to make provision in advance".<sup>539</sup> Pingree's plan for Detroit was quickly copied in successful about 25 cities – Omaha, Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York among them. Thus at the end of the nineteenth century, municipalities in the United States looked at Detroit to learn more about organized community gardening. "About twenty cities and towns tried the plan in 1895, and about a dozen reported very satisfactory results. Several important cities made enthusiastic statements of large success. In other cities lack of success was explained by poor organization or late beginning".<sup>540</sup> More reports<sup>541</sup> followed in the next years until the Pingree Potato Patch program ceased to be in effect in cities in the United States after the growing season of 1897.<sup>542</sup>

The organization of community gardening in the cities varied and generally, "the more important experiments in vacant-lot cultivation have been conducted under three distinct forms of management: (1) by public authorities, (2) by existing charitable societies, (3) by committees or associations formed for the express purpose".<sup>543</sup> Thereby the management was sometimes a mixed form of public and private organizations. For example, "so far as the work for the season of 1897 is concerned, Detroit and Buffalo are the only two cities where it was conducted entirely as a municipal enterprise".<sup>544</sup> On the other hand, "in Kansas City the work was carried on by the agricultural commission of the municipality, appointed by the mayor, but our reports are not conclusive concerning the method by which the money was raised for the undertaking".<sup>545</sup> Generally, "in almost all cases public authorities have cooperated to some extent in furthering this movement, but in the majority of cities, other than those alluded to, the work has been conducted by private committees, or more frequently by the charity organization societies, or other benevolent bodies. In 1895 and 1896 in Toledo, Ohio, and in 1896 in Reading, Pennsylvania, the work was carried on through appropriations from the municipality".<sup>546</sup> Still, "the most common form of management has been that by existing charitable societies"<sup>547</sup>, which was adapted for example in Brooklyn<sup>548</sup>. To get a

<sup>538</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 5.

<sup>539</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 5.

<sup>540</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 2.

<sup>541</sup> "The experience of Detroit under municipal management during the second season proved entirely satisfactory to those most interested. The work of the third season, that of 1896, was greatly aided by an excellent report on the 'Cultivation of Vacant City Lots by the Unemployed,' prepared by Mr. Bolton Hall and Dr. William Howe Tolman, General Agent of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, and published in December, 1895, by the association. The report gave exact information regarding the best methods of vacant-lot cultivation as worked out very carefully by the New York committee and its efficient superintendent, Mr. J. W. Kjelgaard. It also contained brief reports of the work in other cities, and its publication did much to spread abroad knowledge of the methods of vacant-lot cultivation and to bring the various experimenters into touch". (Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 2)

<sup>542</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 2.

<sup>543</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 13.

<sup>544</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 6.

<sup>545</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 6.

<sup>546</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 6.

<sup>547</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 14.

<sup>548</sup> In Brooklyn for example community gardening was "(...) managed by the Mayor's committee on the Tillage of Vacant Lands under the direction of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities. This plan has the advantage of utilizing to the fullest extent existing philanthropic machinery, thus economizing effort." (Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 14) "Brooklyn (...) has tried the experiment for several years. At first a committee appointed by the mayor raised a fund by private subscription, and during the third and last season of 1897 the Associated Charities has had the work in charge. During the two first years between five and six hundred dollars per year were expended, with results not wholly satisfactory. The land was very inaccessible and work was begun late in the season. Only a few persons availed themselves of the opportunity to take gardens, and this added to the proportionately high cost of superintendence. During the second and third years a notable feature of the work was the aid granted

positive feedback and broader public support, “in most cases in which a charitable society has undertaken vacant-lot cultivation the representatives of other philanthropic or trade organizations have been placed upon the executive committee (...)”.<sup>549</sup>

### 3.5.3.2 Vacant Lot Cultivation and War Gardens or “Liberty Gardens”

In New York City, the Vacant Lot Cultivation program “(...) was started (...) in 1895, under peculiar difficulties because of the scarcity of land, by a representative committee from several benevolent societies, but organized by and working under the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor”.<sup>550</sup> The first gardening effort took place in the first year in Long Island, where “(...) a good-sized plot of ground was secured through Mr. Steinway, on Long Island, and the committee has had the able services of Mr. J. W. Kjelgaard without cost as superintendent”.<sup>551</sup> Records were kept “(...) to see just how much preparation for garden work each individual had, and it was found to be, as a rule, very little”.<sup>552</sup> In addition these records showed that “the financial returns indicated during the first two years between two and three dollars in crops for every dollar of expense”.<sup>553</sup>

Land use in the inner city of New York was already seen as an issue in 1897 as “it was found impossible to secure in the city any quantity of land that could be economically worked [for gardening purposes, added C.M.], and so only a few allotments were made”.<sup>554</sup> And terms of economic efficiency of gardening for the urban residents, “(...) the superintendent reports that most of the farmers did well, and that the committee went to little or no expense for seed, tools, etc.”.<sup>555</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century vacant lot cultivation took place following the “Pingree’s Potato Patch” movement and for that “park land on the outskirts of a city, reserved for later improvement, (...)”<sup>556</sup> was sometimes made use. Thus the City of New York gave “(...) the use of 321 acres of Pelham park for the season of 1898”.<sup>557</sup> With the beginning of the First World War in 1914 when male residents of the South Bronx were called to join the army and the remaining women, children and elderly were forced to support themselves, the federal government began to support the development of urban gardens on public land called War Gardens or “Liberty Gardens” initiative in order to alleviate the burden on the municipalities welfare system. Residents created gardens in urban open spaces of any size in New York City. The first report on urban farming in the Bronx was in 1914, when St. Mary’s Park featured the borough’s first playground that opened in 1914, next to “(...) a baseball diamond, two tennis courts, and a children’s farm garden”.<sup>558</sup>

### 3.5.3.3 Vacant Lot Cultivation and Relief Gardens

During the time of the Great Depression after the stock market crash of 1929, i.e. about ten years after the War Gardens movement was stopped, the federal government once again encouraged residents to start gardening on urban public land, calling the gardens now Relief Gardens. Thus, “at the height of the Depression there was yet another peak increase in number of community gardens nation-wide”.<sup>559</sup> With support by the Department of Welfare residents developed Relief Gardens in New York City and had created by 1934 “(...) 300 plots, all of them located in Brooklyn”.<sup>560</sup> But one year later, in 1935, residents had created relief Gardens citywide. At the time, “(...) with two expert gardeners employed by the federal

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by the Brooklyn elevated railroad in giving the gardeners free transportation to and from their gardens by means of a free-ticket system carefully guarded from abuse. The committee felt that the return from the lots during the two first years more than paid the cost in money outlay, and was therefore justified as a good method of distributing so much relief through work, but the results did not create the enthusiasm observed in other places where the amounts thus distributed doubled or even quadrupled in the process of spending”. (Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 7)

<sup>549</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 14.

<sup>550</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 8.

<sup>551</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 8.

<sup>552</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 8.

<sup>553</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 8.

<sup>554</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 8.

<sup>555</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 8.

<sup>556</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 15.

<sup>557</sup> Speirs, Lindsay and Kirkbride 1898, p. 15.

<sup>558</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org).

<sup>559</sup> Fox, Koeppl and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>560</sup> Fox, Koeppl and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

Work Projects Administration (...) at each garden site and one supervisor seeing the programs in each borough, close to 5,000 gardens on vacant lots, totaling 700 acres, were established in four boroughs of New York City”.<sup>561</sup> The Relief Garden movement to bring relief to low-income residents ended in 1937 due to an improvement in the economic situation. “An improved economy surplus goods arriving by the carloads and the severing of the Federal WPA relief program destroyed the community gardening movement overnight”.<sup>562</sup> But even though the federal government had stopped the financial support, in the following two years, there were still urban gardens developed on public land, but much less residents were involved. Until the beginning of the Second World War, “(...) only an occasional group of enthusiasts staked out plots for another season after the Department of Welfare discontinued its city-wide garden project because of the lack of relief funds and the pronouncement that garden project workers disrupted other WPA projects when they sought employment during the off season”.<sup>563</sup>

Figure 4: Victory Garden poster of the federal government of the United States of America, Anti-German-Sentiment Poster 1919. Courtesy: Ohio Historical Society.

Figure 5: Victory Garden in Crotona Park, South Bronx, N.Y., 1942. Courtesy: GreenThumb.

#### **3.5.3.4 Vacant Lot Cultivation and Victory Gardens**

In 1939, with the beginning of the Second World War, the federal government revived again the concept of the War Gardens as a relief program for the residents of the United States and propagandized it as Victory Gardens’ movement. That means, “With the coming of World War II, the City of New York again announced that all the vacant city owned land would be available for Victory gardening”.<sup>564</sup> The Victory Gardens’ concept was more directed on the effort to produce food not only for the “home front” but also for the supply to the army overseas. “The National Victory Garden Program, aimed at reducing the pressure placed on the food industry by the war, reached peak production in 1944 when 20 million Victory Gardens yielded 40 percent of the fresh vegetables consumed in the United States”.<sup>565</sup> At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the federal government stopped the Victory Gardens program and thus residents were no longer allowed to garden on public land in the cities. At the time “(...) most households were no longer dependent on garden plot to provide a source of nutritious food. Not only was there an end to food rationing, but a burgeoning frozen food industry made packaged vegetables a welcome addition to the family meal. By 1948 there was little said about vacant-lot cultivation”.<sup>566</sup> In New York City public land provided for gardening was released for investors. New buildings were erected quickly for the homecoming soldiers, who needed apartments to create a family.

In the time after the Second World War, there were almost no more vacant lots, i.e. undeveloped areas, left in the inner city, i.e. in Manhattan, so that developers were constructing buildings almost exclusively on land zoned for unrestricted uses like in the South Bronx. Despite the lack of financial support by the federal government and despite the fact that gardening in Parks became again an activity not supported by the Department of Parks and Recreation, in the South Bronx one Victory Garden remained until today, situated in the southern part of Crotona Park across the street from the public school P.S. 110 Theodore Schoenfeld.

#### **3.5.3.5 Vest-pocket parks**

After the riots of Harlem in July 1964 “(...) the Park Association of New York City (now the Parks Council), (...) began to assemble support to construct the first vest-pocket parks in the city”.<sup>567</sup> In spring 1965, the first vest-pocket park was created in Harlem by a church around

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<sup>561</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>562</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>563</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>564</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>565</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>566</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 6.

<sup>567</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnetwilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnetwilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811).

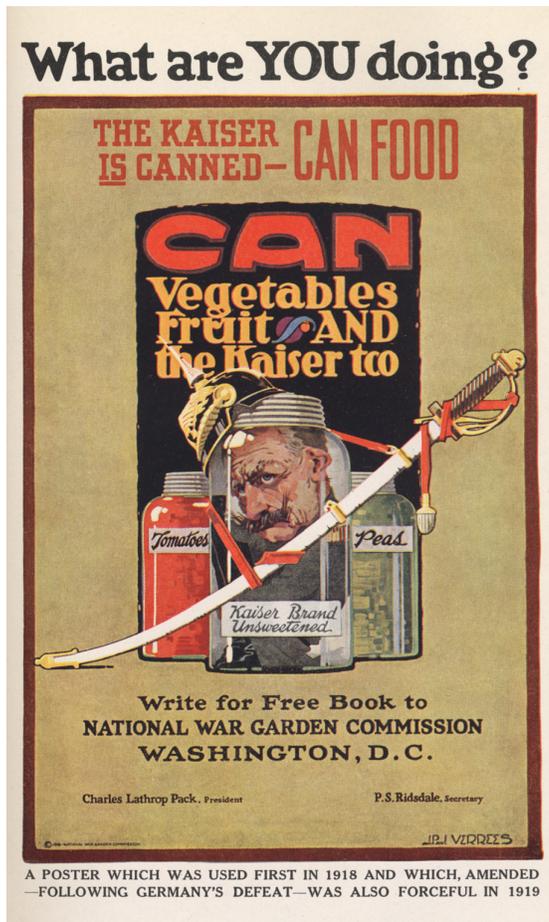


Figure 4: Victory Garden poster of the federal government of the United States of America, Anti-German-Sentiment Poster 1919. Courtesy: Ohio Historical Society.



Figure 5: Victory Garden in Crotona Park, South Bronx, N.Y., 1942. Courtesy: GreenThumb.



Reverend Linnette C. Williamson<sup>568</sup> on three vacant public lots of a total size of 0.61 acres<sup>569</sup>. “The first lot to become a vest-pocket park, located at 65 West 128th Street, opened in May 1965 with much fanfare. It included murals on the wall of an adjacent building and a metal structure designed to support a tent covering a social area. The other two 128th Street lots were developed and opened as parks later that summer with equal enthusiasm. One of these lots still exists at the northwest corner of 128th Street and Fifth Avenue”.<sup>570</sup> The local and national press reported widely on the Vest-Pocket Park installation in New York City. “Federal, state and local officials (including Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Jacob Javits, and Mayor Robert F. Wagner) visited the parks on West 128th Street and judged them to be models of inner-city open space design. A boom in the planning and construction of similar parks soon followed throughout the city, sparking a drive for innovative designs of recreational equipment suitable for the new parks”.<sup>571</sup> The initiative by the church to create a vest-pocket park in Harlem was “(...) resonated in the 1965 mayoral campaign of Congressman John V. Lindsay (...). His campaign’s ‘White Paper’ on reforming park and recreational facilities, drafted by Thomas P. F. Hoving (who would become Lindsay’s Parks Commissioner) fired the imagination of urban planners across the country. In the White Paper, Hoving called for a radical departure from the traditional concept of large, centrally located urban parks. He argued for creating open space and green areas as small as one building lot: 100 feet by 20 feet. This meant expanding the City’s park and recreational resources into the very heart of those inner-city neighborhoods most in need of new open spaces”.<sup>572</sup> In 1967, “(...) under Park Commissioner August Heckscher, 10 vest pocket parks were completed (...) in vacant city lots of one-quarter acre or less”.<sup>573</sup>

Through the Vest-Pocket Parks program the municipality seized private land when the property owners were delinquent in taxes and leased it “(...) to community organizations, which would then be responsible for the upkeep of the land”.<sup>574</sup> In the short time of the program’s existence, funding for the creation of Vest-Pocket Parks came first from the church and then from the municipality as well as from private foundation and the church. For example “(...) the Astor Foundation funded many of the vest-pocket parks, the small vacant lots that were converted to green spaces under the Lindsay Administration”.<sup>575</sup> Still the Vest-Pocket Parks program did not last long nor did the Vest-Pocket Parks. “Within a few short years, however, most of Lindsay’s parks were gone”.<sup>576</sup> This might have been due to the fact that the Vest Pocket Parks were planned top-down and equipped with standardized equipment, not responding to a specific neighborhood’s needs. Thus for example “play equipment was sometimes placed in neighborhoods with a large population of senior citizens who only wanted benches and some shade”.<sup>577</sup> That means, “(...) the community had not been consulted before a park was built. With teams of architects planning the parks, the facilities often reflected the aesthetic agendas of the artist instead of the needs of the local

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<sup>568</sup> “The Reverend Linnette C. Williamson (1923-1990) of the Christ Community Church of Harlem, a native of Jamaica, was ordained in 1956. Known to the community as “Rev,” she provided many services during her long ministry, including three day camps, a remedial reading program, a youth center, a day care for working mothers, the Head Start program, a soup kitchen and food pantry, and vest-pocket parks. Williamson was also co-founder of the New York Council of Smaller Churches, a nonprofit, social services agency created to alleviate the plight of the homeless, the substance abusers, and the neglected. (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811))

<sup>569</sup> The park still exists today and is called after her Rev. Linnette C. Williamson Memorial Park. (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation,

[www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811))

<sup>570</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation,

[www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811).

<sup>571</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation,

[www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811).

<sup>572</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation,

[www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/linnettewilliamsonmemorialpark/highlights/12811).

<sup>573</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation,

[www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>574</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/unitygardens/](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/unitygardens/).

<sup>575</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 27.

<sup>576</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 9.

<sup>577</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 9.

neighborhoods”.<sup>578</sup> Residents did not accept those new open spaces and vandalism was common. On the situation of vest-pocket parks, Liz Christy, one of the earliest community gardeners and founders of the non-profit gardening organization Green Guerillas, is quoted in Fox, Koeppel and Kellam’s report “Struggle for Space. The greening of New York City 1970-1984” of 1984, stating, “I was appalled by the condition of the Lindsay play lot program. (...) The asphalt surfaces with harsh paly equipment looked as though a helicopter had dropped them in without any neighborhood participation. It was deplorable to find that all that money had been spent on asphalt surfaces and metal play equipment. The sites were so badly vandalized that they deteriorated at an alarming rate”.<sup>579</sup> The vest-pocket parks only lasted a few years, because even though the location of the parks next to low-income apartment buildings was well thought out, the residents of these buildings had not been asked to participate. “There were several reasons for the rapid decline of Mayor Lindsay’s vest-pocket parks, not least of which was the fact that the community had not been consulted before a park was built. With teams of architects planning the parks, the facilities often reflected the aesthetic agendas of the artist instead of the needs of the local neighborhoods. Play equipment was sometimes placed in neighborhoods with a large population of senior citizens who only wanted benches and some shade”.<sup>580</sup>

Consequently the analysis of open space policy concerned with gardening between 1920s and the 1970s in context with the development of land used for open space for community gardening in the South Bronx in the late 1970s shows that the provision of open space for gardening by the government such as by the Pingree Potato Patch program at the end of the nineteenth century, the War Gardens, Victory Gardens and Relief Gardens during the years of the Great Depression and the two World Wars as well as Vest-Pocket parks during the 1980s provided the urban population with open space access for self improvement of quality of life. Since those programs ceased to exist while the need to access to open space continued this was answered by residents of the South Bronx with the creation of community gardens starting in the late 1970s.

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<sup>578</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 9.

<sup>579</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 9.

<sup>580</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 7.

## **Chapter 4: Community gardens development in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

### **4.1 Open space land use for community gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of open space land use for community gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s by looking at the development of community gardens and the number of community gardens in New York City and the South Bronx. Then I will investigate the changes in the number of community gardens by introducing the aspects of the development of housing versus community gardens, the auction of community gardens' land, the temporary restraining order on the development of community garden land, the Community Gardens Settlement, the Community Garden Rules as well as Local Law 48 and the Mayor's Obesity Task Force Initiative.

#### **4.1.1 Development of community open spaces**

During the 1950s and 1960s cities in the United States had altered considerably in regard to economy, population, building structure and density. "Urban renewal and the transformation of the physical structure of the city in the 1950s and 1960s brought significant social and visual change to many cities".<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s the global economy was in a depression affecting the United States strongest from 1973 to 1975 with New York City close to bankruptcy in 1975. For New York City and the South Bronx this meant a rapid downfall in the provision of infrastructure services such as streets, schools, firehouses and police stations. There was a lack of public funding for the maintenance of public spaces and parks as well as for the construction of affordable housing. Consequently, the overall quality of life of residents, especially the low-income residents, living in the inner city, went down in general. The South Bronx was in 1980 census the poorest place in New York City.<sup>2</sup>

Open spaces, streets and parks in New York City in the 1970s and early 1980s had become places that residents avoided due to lack of financial funding for maintenance by the City financial and a high crime rate. Housing construction in the outer boroughs was booming, while housing in the inner city deteriorated with the middle class leaving the inner city. Especially in low-income areas like the South Bronx where parkland was rare, residents were confined to living in their private enclosed spaces without making use of open space. Interaction with the neighbors and the rest of the community was reduced to a minimum. In 1978 "a U.S. Department of Interior study (Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 1978a) addressed the problem of urban recreation in the United States (...)"<sup>3</sup> The study " (...) finds that recreation land is inadequate and inequitably distributed; that potential open space is rapidly being lost to development on the urban fringe; that suburbs rather than central cities have been the primary beneficiaries of land acquisition projects; that most states have turned their backs on municipal recreation needs; that parks in many older cities are deteriorating faster than the cities themselves; that almost everywhere there are severe access problems, security problems and staffing problems".<sup>4</sup>

During the late 1970s time, the way open spaces in the inner city were used changed as residents living there were thrown back on their capacity to organize themselves and to improve their lives. Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson stated in their book "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 that it was necessary to acknowledge the changes in the creation of opportunities for urban recreation. According to them, "the New York City experience points to the significant historic changes in both the form and process of creating opportunities for urban recreation".<sup>5</sup> While at the time the use of traditional parks declined, the use of community open spaces increased, because "suburban growth, decline of central business districts, and vacant land created by massive urban renewal efforts sparked interest in community open space as an alternative to city parks".<sup>6</sup> The increased interest in community open spaces among urban

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> McCain 1987, [www.nytimes.com/1987/02/01/realstate/a-new-mall-for-the-south-bronx-hub.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/01/realstate/a-new-mall-for-the-south-bronx-hub.html).

<sup>3</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 2.

residents occurred thanks to changes in social environmental perception during the 1960s that started new movements.

Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state, "Community open space is emerging as an alternative park system in many towns and cities [in the United States, added C.M.]. In contrast to city parks and playgrounds, which are developed by park officials and professional designers, community open space is any green place designed, developed, or managed by local residents for the use and enjoyment of those in the community".<sup>7</sup> They explain, "Often these user-built and managed projects are spontaneous efforts resulting from local concern over lack of open space or inadequate neighborhood parks".<sup>8</sup>

In the 1970s in US-American inner cities inner city residents began to create commonly managed, self-built open spaces on "un-built", unused lots next to their apartment buildings – called community gardens. There are various definitions for the term "community garden". The American Community Gardening Association survey of 1998 states for example that a community garden is "land set aside for community members to grow edible or ornamental plants. The land may also include active or passive recreation space or other amenities".<sup>9</sup> For my thesis, I use the definition of the "2009/2010 Community Garden Survey and Report" that defines "(...) community gardens as gardening spaces that are open to the public and that in theory anyone can join (this excludes most schools)".<sup>10</sup> The use of public land for public land as well as for community open spaces such as community gardens has an influence on the property values in the neighborhood these open space uses are located in. Since the beginning of the creation of public parks, municipalities looked "(...) for new ways of financing the development and maintenance of public garden and park space. Some have turned to tax increment financing to generate resources, other are introducing impact fees or special assessments to cover the costs of urban parks".<sup>11</sup> The creation and voluntary maintenance of community gardens on public land by residents groups increases the surrounding property values and thus the tax income for the City. In the same way as property surrounding actively used public parks, the value of properties around well-maintained and actively used community gardens increases.<sup>12</sup>

Been and Voicu, state in their study "The Effect of Community Gardens on Neighboring Property Values" of 2008 that "(...) community gardens have significant positive effects on surrounding property values in all neighborhoods, and that those effects are substantial in the poorest of host neighborhoods (raising neighboring property values by as much as 9.5 percentage points within five years of the garden's opening) should help local governments make sounder decisions about whether (and how much) to invest in (or encourage private investment in) community gardens and other green spaces. Such investments have a sizeable payoff for the surrounding community, and ultimately for the city itself, as it realizes additional property tax revenues from the neighborhood".<sup>13</sup> The study shows that community gardens "(...) can lead to increases in tax revenues of around \$750,000 per garden over a 20-year period".<sup>14</sup> Been and Voicu conclude that in general "the opening of a community garden has a statistically significant positive impact on residential properties within 1000 feet of the garden, and that the impact increases over time".<sup>15</sup> They "(...) find that gardens have the greatest impact in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods" and that "(...) the opening of a garden is associated with other changes in the neighborhood, such as increasing rates of homeownership, and thus may be serving as catalysts for economic redevelopment of the community".<sup>16</sup> Despite the increase of property values surrounding community gardens, land with a community garden purchased at auction remains often un-built. "New owners of New York City lands purchased at auction are under no obligation to build on the sites. In fact, a

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<sup>7</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> American Community Gardening Association 1998, [www.publicgardens.org/files/cgsurvey96part1.pdf](http://www.publicgardens.org/files/cgsurvey96part1.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Been and Voicu 2008, p. 1

<sup>12</sup> Fergusson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>13</sup> Been and Voicu 2008, p. 277.

<sup>14</sup> Been and Voicu 2008, p. 277.

<sup>15</sup> Been and Voicu 2008, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Been and Voicu 2008, p. 2.

study issued by the Brooklyn Borough President in 1999 indicated that 96% of the 446 sites sold at public auction in previous years had remained vacant, often used for illegal garbage dumping or vehicle storage”.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently during the middle of the 1970s community open spaces emerged as an alternative to traditional public parks in terms of recreation and also in regard to residents' voluntary maintenance of public land and to increasing the surrounding property values and thus the tax income for the city. This is an argument for the provision of community garden land in urban centers proves that the assumption is justified that community gardens as a common land use form will continue to exist in the inner city as it is my hypothesis, which I will continue to check at the analysis of the development of community gardens in the study area South Bronx from the 1970s to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **4.1.2 Number of gardens**

With the urbanization, the increase in population and reduction of open space in the South Bronx, the type of housing changed from one-family dwellings with gardening space in front and in the back of the building to high-rise apartment buildings that were covering entire property lots to maximize the profit for the landlord. Consequently the privately usable open spaces and the number of gardens in the area were reduced over time. When buildings were vacated and demolished and open space increased in the 1960s-1970s, residents of South Bronx started together to create privately usable gardens in the open spaces on the property lots next to their homes. The real estate market was revived with the slow down of the economic depression and with this beautification and improvement of the quality of life of the neighborhood, so that new buildings were constructed.

##### **4.1.2.1 Number of community gardens in New York City**

Since the 1970s the number of community gardens in the New York metropolitan area has been changing due to housing construction on community garden land as well as bulldozing of community gardens in prospect of building construction. The number of community gardens over time stated in research and used by the municipality varies due to varying perimeters used to determine the numbers of gardens registered with GreenThumb, which is New York City's municipal community garden program since 1978. That means, over the last more than 30 years the numbers either include or exclude specific community gardens that are registered with GreenThumb - mostly community gardens on private land or school gardens on land under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. For my thesis the exact number of community gardens on public land and of housing in the South Bronx as well as the exact reflection of the changes in this number over time is irrelevant, since I am looking at the overall urban planning aspects and the fluctuation of the amount of commonly used private open space and housing in the South Bronx.

Until the economic crisis of the 1970s neighborhoods in New York City were built up on the one hand with densely with five- to six-story apartment buildings without privately usable open spaces as well as with a couple of multi-story apartment towers surrounded by non-accessible green lawns. Except for some old one-family buildings, there were few privately used open spaces such as the home gardens of the former estates or the new suburban one-family buildings and even balconies. At the end of the 1970s, when much of the wealthier population had moved to the suburbs, housing and open spaces in the inner city deteriorated together with the housing in lack of public and private financial means. Within a short time, buildings were abandoned, destroyed and soon a great amount of the housing stock was demolished. The economic recession slowed down the job market as well as the real estate market, so that “(...) individuals and private corporations added to the problem of abandonment through disinvestment, the collapse of the second-mortgage market, and regional job shifts”.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the financial crisis of the 1970s, there was soon lots of vacant land throughout the city's low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx, acres of land which became public because of the rem foreclosure law requiring owners who were not able to pay their property

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<sup>17</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>18</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43.

taxes to hand over their land to the City. The amount of open space resulting from land abandonment in New York City was huge at the end of the 1970s. In 1977<sup>19</sup> “(...) there were more than 25,000 city-owned vacant parcels of land (Messinger, 1978)”<sup>20</sup> If calculating this area based on a standard property lot size of 25 feet by 100 feet, this means that there were about 15,500 acres of vacant land. But another source states that there were less property lots vacated and that at the end of the 1970s “(...) an estimated 2,000 acres of vacant land in the five boroughs of the city (New York City Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, 1983)”<sup>21</sup> In the South Bronx alone at the end of the 1970s “(...) there are approximately 500 acres of vacant land (...) that are littered with rubble and debris.”<sup>22,23</sup> The phenomenon of vacated properties continued, so that the number of vacated lots and with it the amount of open space continued to increase. “(...) Since 1978, the number of vacant parcels owned by the city or privately owned but significantly delinquent in back taxes has continued to increase”<sup>24</sup> Consequently, in the 1970s, with the reduction of density of buildings, the amount of open space in low-income inner city neighborhoods like the South Bronx increased. This was followed by an increase in gardens, commonly created on vacated land by residents of the remaining apartment buildings. Neither the municipality nor real estate developers seemed to be interested in the newly available open space, – but the remaining residents living in the apartment buildings started to become active. They began to clean up some of the vacated property lots to cultivate gardens with flowers and vegetables next to their homes. Families, neighbors and friends started to meet in this newly created safe place outside of their apartments, in their community’s garden. Gardens flourished and even though many of them were not registered with GreenThumb, the city ignored the residents’ activities on public open space and regarded it rather as a welcome relief of its budget through voluntary maintenance. The status of gardens and the number of gardens started to change considerably when Edward Koch was re-elected as Mayor of New York City and announced his ten-year market plan in 1981. While some gardens were awarded the first long-term leases under the GreenThumb program of five to ten years instead of one year leases then previously, other gardens situated on land that was appraised with a value of more than \$20,000 became endangered and subject to housing development, but it took 15 years until under Mayor Giuliani economy and the real estate market was revived that far that numerous gardens were threatened by demolition.

In 1984 Francis, Cashdan and Paxson reported in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation”, “(...) During the past ten years, community residents in many neighborhoods have taken the initiative to develop and manage their own open spaces”<sup>25</sup> Most of these commonly managed open spaces are situated on public land in low-income neighborhoods. In 1984-1985 “seventy-five percent of the City’s community gardens and parks are located on city-owned land because the City is the largest owner of vacant lots”<sup>26</sup> And, “many of the community projects (...) are located in low-income, declining neighborhoods such as the South Bronx”<sup>27</sup> According to Francis, Cashdan, Paxson in the middle of the 1980s there were “(...) 448 open-space projects<sup>28</sup> in 1983 in New York City (...). (...) According to the survey, 149 acres of community open space were managed by local residents in 1983, with 10,462 active

<sup>19</sup> Fergueson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html).

<sup>20</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup> At the time “on the Lower East Side of New York (Houston to 14<sup>th</sup> from A through 4<sup>th</sup> streets), there are approximately 150 vacant lots”. (Francis, Cashdan, Paxson, Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation, p. 43)

<sup>23</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, Cashdan, Paxson 1984, p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43.

<sup>26</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> “These projects can be found in middle-income, single-family-dwelling neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn as well as in upper-income neighborhoods in Manhattan such as Greenwich Village”. (Francis, Cashdan, Paxson 1984, p. 43) The projects were not only community gardens The number of projects is equal to approximately 32 percent of the sites contained in the entire inventory of New York City Parks and Playgrounds. In addition, another 225 city parks (approximately 18 percent of the total number of city parks) are being tended by ‘Friends of the Park’ community groups”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 5)

participants. This represents \$33.45 million in new open space built, paid for, and managed by users”.<sup>29</sup>

For my thesis I assume that commonly managed open space can be categorized as community garden land. These numbers differ in another report by Fox, Koepfel and Kellam, *Struggle for Space. The greening of New York City 1970-1984* of 1985 stating “(...) As of January 1984 (...) 448 community gardens and parks on 155 acres of New York that were built and tended by 11,171 people”.<sup>30</sup> Going along with these numbers, of these 448 community gardens and parks, 410 are community gardens and 38 parks, as “an inventory completed by the Coalition [i.e. the New York City Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, added C.M.] in January, 1983 confirms that 143 acres, 102 acres of which were bricks and rubble, have been transformed through hard work and careful planning into 410 community gardens and parks throughout the five boroughs of New York City”.<sup>31</sup> But this number changes yet again in the same report and a few pages later Fox, Koepfel and Kellam state, “There are now [i.e. in 1984, added C.M.] 600 organizations holding GreenThumb leases on gardens throughout the City, most of which are short-term, for one year”.<sup>32</sup> Ten years later there were about 250 more community gardens in New York City as per American Community Gardening Association’s survey<sup>33</sup> of 1992 of community gardens in Northern American of that year, stating there were 845 community gardens in New York City.<sup>34</sup> This number of about 850 gardens in the 1990s is confirmed by Sarah Ferguson in her article “The Death of Little Puerto Rico” of 2001. She states, “By the early 1990s, some 850 gardens had been established (...)”.<sup>35</sup> But again there is a variance in numbers of gardens in New York City in the 1990s in different reports – varying by about 100 gardens. It seems fairly safe to say though that there were more than 700 gardens, because of the transfer of GreenThumb to the Department of Housing in 1998 and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s plan to auction gardens subsequently. Thus it is stated that in 1998, 741 community gardens registered with GreenThumb were transferred from the Department of General Services to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development<sup>36</sup> and that “in the fall of 1998, New York City announced a plan to auction off to the highest bidders 114 of the city’s more than 700 community gardens”.<sup>37</sup> Then, according to the American Community Gardening Association’s survey of 1998, there were 869 community gardens in New York City in 1998.<sup>38</sup>

In 1999 there were, according to Edie Stone, director of New York City’s municipal community garden program “GreenThumb” from 2001-2013, 797 Community Gardens registered with GreenThumb.<sup>39</sup> The writer Sarah Ferguson confirms in her article “The Death of Little Puerto Rico” of 1999 that there are about 700 community gardens in New York City that year. She states, “As of January 1999, there were 697 gardens licensed under the City’s Green Thumb program, and maybe two dozen more gardens operating with no official status. 55 gardens have been designated as parks or are in the process of being transferred to the City’s Parks Department for long-term preservation. Five gardens have been incorporated as landtrusts”.<sup>40</sup> In regard to the size and use of these gardens she adds, “The roughly 700 remaining gardens occupy about two hundred acres of green, open space — an area four times the size of the 52-acre Brooklyn Botanical Garden. (...) Yet these same 700 gardens represent no more than a tenth of the 11,000 vacant lots currently in the city’s sales inventory”.<sup>41</sup> Sarah Ferguson stated in 2001 in the article “A Brief History of Grassroots Greening” that in “(...)

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<sup>29</sup> Francis, Cashdan, Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> The American Community Gardening Association’s survey was updated in 2011-2012 by Laura Lawson and Luke Drake of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Rutgers University.

<sup>34</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>36</sup> Earth Celebrations 1998, <http://earthcelebrations.com/wp-content/uploads/updates/update042498.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Englander 2001, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, October 10, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>41</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

the diverse patchwork of more than 800 community gardens”.<sup>42</sup> In 2009/2010 there are according to the “2009/2010 Community Garden Survey and Report” by GrowNYC and GreenThumb “(...) 299 community gardens under the jurisdiction of the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation, 118 community gardens owned by a land trust, at least 36 privately owned community gardens, 13 HPD [(Department of Housing, Preservation and Development), added C.M.] gardens, and 23 more of various jurisdictions (...)”.<sup>43</sup> This adds up to a total of 489 gardens. Later the same report states, “In 2009, there were at least 490 community gardens in New York City”.<sup>44</sup> This number could, according to Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb statement of 2009, be increased by an additional 150 school gardens, to a total of over 600 community gardens<sup>45</sup>, but since I look at community garden numbers without including school gardens I will use in my thesis the number of 450 community gardens.

In 2010 there are about 500 community gardens in New York City and most of them are located in low-income neighborhoods. 283 of these gardens are situated on public land under the jurisdiction of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.<sup>46</sup> In 2012, there are about 581 active community gardens on private and public land in New York City today. Of these gardens, 264 community gardens are private gardens: 150 gardens situated on land owned by a private landowner, 68 gardens on land owned by the national non-profit organization Trust for Public Land, and 46 gardens on land owned by the privately funded local non-profit organization New York Restoration Project<sup>47</sup>. In addition, there are 317 community gardens located on public land in New York City. Of these gardens, 274 gardens are in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Then there are 36 gardens in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and 7 gardens, i.e. a very small number, on land supervised by the Department of Transportation. The 121 school gardens, on Department of Education property are not considered in this calculation of public community garden land, since these gardens are used by a specific part of the public only. In short, there are 317 public community gardens in New York versus 264 private community gardens – that makes a large number of public gardens and a special situation that New York City owes to past political decisions and its specific course of urban development during the 1970s.<sup>48</sup>

As of 2013 there are 37 in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and 288 in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation<sup>49</sup> adding the total number of community gardens to 325 community gardens not including school gardens. In addition between 2012 and 2014, 15 new gardens called “Gardens for Healthy Communities” are added under the Mayor’s Office Obesity Task Force Initiative and about 100 public lots suitable for gardening are made available under Local Law 48.

Figure 6: Map of community gardens by council districts including community gardens, council districts and highways in New York City, 2010. Cartographer: Mara Gittleman, 2010. based on data by GrowNYC, NYS GIS Clearinghouse, NYC Department of City Planning, StreetMap USA. Courtesy: GreenThumb, 2014.

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<sup>42</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html).

<sup>43</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, October 10, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, November 5, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> TPL and NYRP register their gardens with GreenThumb but do not receive a license since these gardens are situated on private land. GreenThumb provides TPL and NYRP gardens are not supplied with large items from GreenThumb like lumber, structures or soil, but only small items like plants and seeds. (Personal interview with Lillian Reyes, Outreach Coordinator GreenThumb, December 4, 2013)

<sup>48</sup> This paragraph was published in the article “Zoned out: The potential of urban agriculture planning to turn against its roots” co-authored by Edie Stone and myself in the peer reviewed online journal *Cities and the environment* in October 2012. (Mees and Stone 2012 (a), <http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/cate/vol5/iss1/7/>)

<sup>49</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, April 11, 2013.

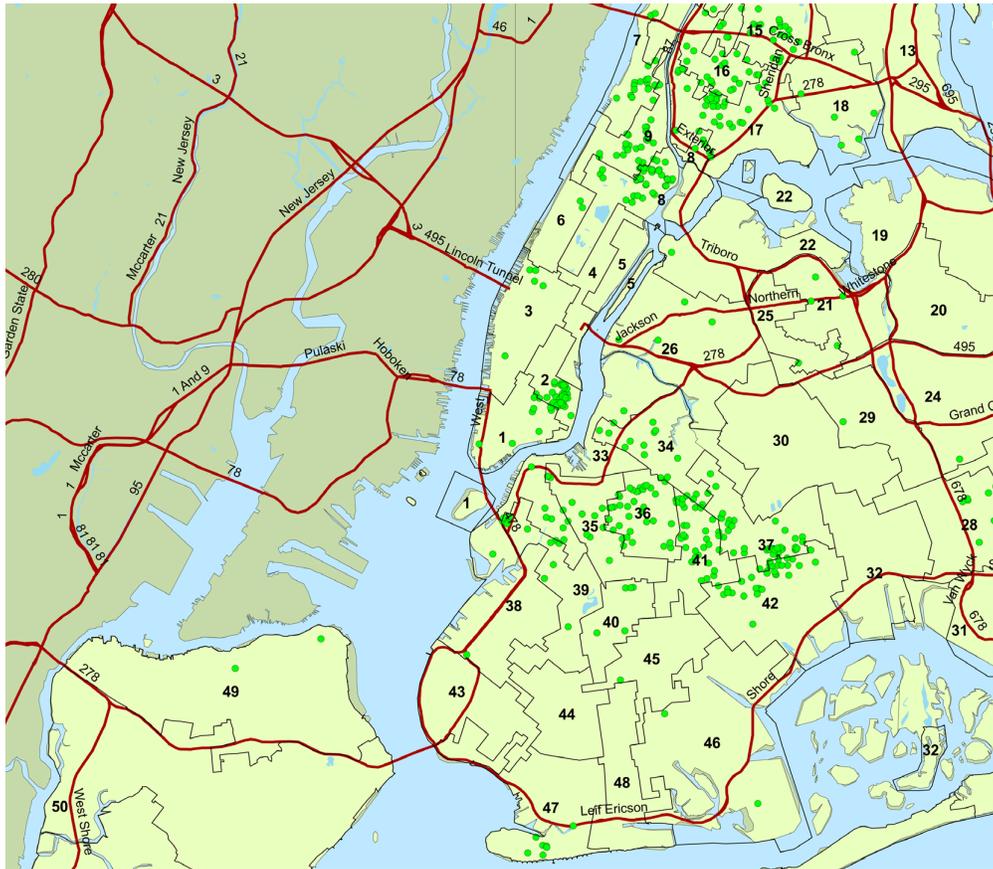


Figure 6: Map of community gardens in New York City including council districts and highways, 2010. Cartographer: Mara Gittleman, 2010. Based on data by GrowNYC, NYS GIS Clearinghouse, NYC Department of City Planning, StreetMap USA. Courtesy: GreenThumb, 2010.



#### **4.1.2.2 Number of community gardens in the South Bronx**

It is difficult to present the number of community gardens in the South Bronx since that have existed since the 1970s there are records only on parts of the Bronx in various years. The changes in the number of gardens in Melrose neighborhood for example are shown for example on the Homes and Gardens Plan by the non-profit group More Gardens! and the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal plan, but again it is difficult to come up with a number for a specific year and a specific area. In the central neighborhoods of Melrose, the Hub and Morrisania, which is part of Congressional District 16 as well as Bronx Community Board 1 and Community Board 3 and provide. In July 2013, according to the database of GreenThumb, there were 44 community gardens in the area called by me "South Bronx" in this thesis.

Consequently the analysis of the number of gardens since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that since the 1970s with the reduction of density of buildings, the amount of open space in low-income inner city neighborhoods like the South Bronx increased followed by an increase in community gardens, on vacated land by residents of the remaining apartment buildings. In New York City in 1984 there were about 450 community gardens, between 1992 and 1999 about 700 to 850 community gardens, between 2001 and 2010 there were only about 500 community gardens, but in 2012 there were again about 600 community gardens in the city area. In July 2013, according to the database of GreenThumb, there were 44 community gardens in the area called by me "South Bronx" in this thesis. The continuation of about 500 community gardens in New York City over about 30 years proves that the assumption is justified that community gardens as a common land use form will continue to exist in the inner city as it is my hypothesis.

#### **4.1.3 Changes in the number of gardens**

I will look at the changes in the number of gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s, because this reflects the community gardens development in the area and influences the justification of the assumption that community gardens will continue to exist as a urban land use in the inner city.

##### **4.1.3.1 Development of housing versus gardens**

The amount of privately usable, commonly accessible gardens and open space in New York City and in the South Bronx depends on the type of housing prevailing in the area, i.e. on the density of construction on a lot as well as along the streets, i.e. the building density. The building density and amount of open space depends on economic, social and urban planning aspects as well as requirements of the specific land use. Thus, when these conditions alter over time, the number of privately usable, commonly accessible gardens and open space in New York City and in the South Bronx changes. Therefore the number of community gardens changed over the last more than 30 years in the South Bronx, with the construction of housing reducing the amount of open spaces and increasing value of land prices. By the late 1970s community gardens were under development on many public lots in the city, while parks at the meantime lacked funding and maintenance. Housing construction on public and private land was slowed down as well, also because of lack of funding. This changed when Mayor Edward I. Koch started his ten-year capital plan of investing in New York City's open spaces and housing in 1981. "As the city reentered the municipal bond market in 1981, Mayor Koch issued his first ten-year capital plan. The plan proposed a \$750 million commitment to rebuild the city's parks".<sup>50</sup> When Koch began the redevelopment of housing on public land in the city's low-income areas, gardens were first seen as a stabilization and beautification measure that would enhance the real estate market in these low-income areas but soon some of the gardens became endangered of displacement by the new housing. Most garden groups had been gardening on public land illegally before the city installed the program GreenThumb in 1978. With the creation of GreenThumb public community gardens were set under one-year term leases. This term was extended in 1983. "In May, 1983, the first long-term five to ten year lease for a community garden was unanimously passed by the New York

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<sup>50</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

City Board of Estimate”.<sup>51</sup> But this long-term lease was only granted for a small number of gardens situated on public land that was valued less than \$20,000.<sup>52</sup> In addition, to ensure long-term use of community garden land that is not situated on lots valued less than \$20,000 some community gardens, 24 community garden groups – i.e. only about 40 per cent of the about 500 gardens existing in the early 1980s – organized themselves in land trusts. These “twenty-four community groups, through a variety of different techniques, have formed land trusts and purchased their land outright from the City, as well as from private land owners, and now hold title to the property. The Trust for Public Land, which facilitates the development of these land trusts, worked with GreenThumb to develop a City policy for long-term protection without the community assuming ownership of the site”.<sup>53</sup> The remaining gardens with one-year leases were under constant threat of housing development. “Highly vulnerable to development however, are many of the gardens on one-year leases. (...) When the Division of Real Properties decides a site is ‘prime’ for development and is ready to be sold to real estate developers, the one-year GreenThumb lease will generally not be renewed”.<sup>54</sup>

Gardens were destroyed when the City sold a lot to a real estate developer, often for subsidized housing. “The first notable garden that was destroyed for subsidized housing was Adam Purple’s Garden of Eden in 1986”.<sup>55</sup> The destruction of the Garden of Eden in the Lower East Side created on five city-owned lots by Adam Purple, who squatted in an apartment building behind it, a garden that featured elaborate plantings arranged in the form of a spiral, received international attention. “The city wanted to build low- and moderate-income housing there. The battle drew international attention and the scrutiny of the Federal courts. In January 1986, the city finally bulldozed the garden; several low-rise apartment buildings were put up on the site”.<sup>56</sup> Other gardens in the Lower East Side were threatened by real estate development as well during this time as well – such as for example the garden Little Puerto Rico. “Back in September 1987, our plots had been slated for market-rate housing under an agreement between the City and the local community board known as the Cross-Subsidy Plan. (Under the plan, the City agreed to rehab vacant, city-owned buildings in the neighborhood for low and moderate income housing, in exchange for the right to sell off an equal number of vacant lots to developers for market-rate housing.) But the market-rate development had stalled following the stock market crash in 1989, and in the intervening years, our garden, like the many others on the Lower East Side flourished in legal limbo”.<sup>57</sup>

The real estate development was stalled with the stock market crash of 1989 and until the middle of the 1990s only a minimum of housing was developed because of the ongoing financial crisis. Resident groups continued to create new gardens on public land in New York City, so that “during that time, the number of GreenThumb community gardens grew to approximately 750 some say to about 1000 gardens”.<sup>58</sup> But “(...), by 1994, [most, added C.M.] requests to create new gardens were no longer being approved”<sup>59</sup> and the preservation of the gardens was addressed by GreenThumb. “Over the years, concerns about the gardens’ future were addressed by GreenThumb’s Long Term Leasing Program (...). Not only did over 30 gardens secure a long-term lease, but also two gardens, whose appraisals were beyond the qualifying threshold, were designated as Preservation Sites. Although the Preservation Site gardens remained under DGS [(Department of General Services), added C.M.] jurisdiction, they were removed from the agency’s inventory of disposable land. With the transfer of GreenThumb to Parks & Recreation in 1995 to the Parks Department, gardens could be preserved garden by being transferred to Parks jurisdiction”.<sup>60</sup> With the ongoing economic upswing in the mid-1990s in New York’s inner city districts such as the in the South Bronx as well as in other low-income areas open space was decreased with an increase in

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<sup>51</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone, 2010, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam, 1984, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam, 1984, p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> McKinley 1998, [www.nytimes.com/1998/02/22/nyregion/adam-purple-s-last-stand.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1998/02/22/nyregion/adam-purple-s-last-stand.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>57</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>58</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>59</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>60</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

housing construction and population. Land value increased as well and more and more community gardens that had helped to trigger this redevelopment became endangered of demolition, since most the garden land was leased on a year-to-year basis and there was no legislation in place to protect the gardens' status as open space.

A survey conducted by the American Community Gardening Association in 1996 states that for the majority of community gardens in New York City "there is now no new long term protection other than permanent transfer to Parks. Despite trying other mechanisms [such as the creation of land trusts, added C.M.] to protect those lots in intermediate status, there is still no answer to the permanency dilemma".<sup>61</sup> When land prices increased, the city announced its plan to construct new so-called "affordable housing" on public land used by residents groups for community gardening. Sarah Fergueson explains in the article "The Death of Little Puerto Rico" of 1999, "In the fall of 1996, the city's Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (...) had acknowledged plans to develop half of the more than 800 gardens then thriving on city-owned lots over the next five years".<sup>62</sup> Assuming that every garden was used by a group of a minimum of ten residents, as it is mandatory today, that meant that 8000 New York City residents and their families were affected by a deprivation of access to privately usable open space. But the municipality argued that housing was needed desperately in the economically revived city. "While gardeners and open-space advocates cried foul, the Administration justified its policy with the need to build 'affordable' housing. The desire for green space, city officials claimed, was far outweighed by New York's mounting housing crisis".<sup>63</sup>

The new housing development was promoted by municipality as a countermeasure against urban blight and as an improvement of the quality of life in the inner city. The replacement of community gardens, i.e. of public open space that the residents had created to improve their quality of life successfully within only a few years, through housing was not regarded as a problem by city officials the since the gardens had been categorized by them as interim land uses all along. "These gardens they pointed out,<sup>64</sup> had for the most part come about when low-income tenements were demolished. Didn't it make sense now, when the economy and real estate market were more flush, to try to replace the housing that was lost? 'Let's remember,' wrote HPD [Housing and Preservation Development, added C.M.] Commissioner Richard T. Roberts in an editorial for the Daily News, 'that the aim of these housing initiatives is to wrest sound neighborhoods not out of virgin land or existing parks, but out of the cycle of decline' (Sept. 2, 1997). In other words, the gardens were perceived as remnants of the city's fiscal crisis, while the new housing and commercial projects were seen as signs of progress, a way to lift low-income neighborhoods out of poverty and boost their economies".<sup>65</sup>

#### **4.1.3.2 Auction of community gardens' land**

To push for a fast housing development, the City of New York announced in 1996 to auction of all of the public land in the jurisdiction and under administrative hold of the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development that was not built-up with housing – i.e. including the land that was used by about 800 gardens at the time. "In 1996, a mayoral directive mandated DGS [Department of General Services, added C.M.] auction its entire disposable vacant land inventory within five years".<sup>66</sup> In addition, "the Department of Housing Preservation & Development (...) was charged to develop (...) not only the vacant land in its own inventory, but also the DGS [Department of General Services, added C.M.] land for which it had an 'administrative hold'".<sup>67</sup> But land with gardens that was to be developed by HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] was to be suitable for housing and needed approval by the community board in order to prove that a garden site was not actively used by the community. Still because of the pending auction "for the hundreds of established gardens on these properties, the future was bleak. (...) From the about 400 community gardens endangered by the auction, land with 30 gardens was to be transferred to the

<sup>61</sup> American Community Garden Association 1998. [www.publicgardens.org/files/cgsurvey96part1.pdf](http://www.publicgardens.org/files/cgsurvey96part1.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Fergueson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>63</sup> Fergueson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>64</sup> Comma as per original text.

<sup>65</sup> Fergueson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>66</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>67</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation (...) pending local community board approval”.<sup>68</sup>

Once the unrestricted auction was announced, gardeners began to organize themselves in a citywide organization to save their gardens by stopping the auction. They arranged meetings with City Hall and, when those meetings proved unsuccessful, they staged demonstration to attain public attention and filed lawsuits. “Four separate lawsuits, on both the state and federal level, were introduced”.<sup>69</sup> One of those lawsuits, filed together by garden groups from the Lower East Side and Harlem against the City and the New York City Housing Partnership, which was supposed to develop housing on the garden sites. The lawsuit challenged the housing development of all 400 garden sites. The gardeners argued in this suit that, “In approving these projects (...) the City had denied (...) [them the, added C.M.] right to public review, and failed to assess the cumulative impact such a loss of open space would entail, as mandated by state environmental statutes”.<sup>70</sup> But the State Supreme Court ruled that the gardeners “(...) lacked sufficient legal standing to challenge the city’s plans because (...) [they, added C.M.] didn’t own the lots or hold any long-term leases for them”.<sup>71</sup>

The land of about 800 community gardens was transferred to Housing and Preservation Department in the spring of 1998. “On April 24, 1998 Mayor Rudolph Giuliani ordered the cancellation of all the leases on 741 GreenThumb community gardens in all five NYC [New York City, added C.M.] boroughs --he then requested transfer of the land to the department of Housing,<sup>72</sup> Preservation and Development (...), according to a fax memorandum issued by HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.]”. Consequently several gardens in the Lower East site were demolished.<sup>73</sup> According to Sarah Ferguson in her article “The Death of Little Puerto Rico” published in 1999, “in April 1998, the Mayor’s office unilaterally transferred all but a handful of Green Thumb gardens from the Parks Department to the Assets and Sales Unit of HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.]”.<sup>74</sup> This transfer “(...) signaled that virtually all of the city’s gardens were now vulnerable to development”.<sup>75</sup> Ferguson adds that “Sixty-one were bulldozed or are on the list to be bulldozed; 41 others have been slated for housing or commercial development.”<sup>76</sup> A couple of month later, in December 1998, “(...) The City Record, the official newspaper of New York City, issued over a three-week period a list of 114 gardens that the City planned to sell at auction in May 1999”.<sup>77</sup>

Of the community gardens on the list that the administration of Giuliani planned to auction off, 19 gardens were situated in the Bronx.<sup>78</sup> Many of the community gardens on this list had been actively used by the residents living in the surrounding buildings for years. “Over half the gardens on the list were over ten years old; several were 15 and 20 years old. They were well established, attractive, and activity hubs for their communities. Selling them without restrictions, as the City planned to do, did not even guarantee housing on the land. The new owners could do anything - build, pave them over for parking, land bank them. The reality was not promising. A study by the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President determined that the majority of Brooklyn land sold at unrestricted auction had never been developed in any way. It seemed that these community gardens were destined to be uprooted and become the neighborhood eyesores they replaced”.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>69</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>70</sup> Ferguson 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>71</sup> Earth Celebrations 1998, <http://earthcelebrations.com/wp-content/uploads/updates/update042498.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Comma as per original text.

<sup>73</sup> “On December 30, 1997, Little Puerto Rico, Chico Mendez, and the other East 11th Street plots were finally razed”. (Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html))

<sup>74</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>75</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>76</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>77</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>78</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>79</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

When aiming to stop the development of community garden land with housing community gardeners referred at least three arguments: first they demanded a review by community boards to determine the importance of the gardens for the community, i.e. the right to public review, second they questioned the suitability of a garden site for housing development, third they asked for the environmental impact that a loss of public open garden space would mean to the city. Even though the Brooklyn Supreme Court ruled to stop the auction not based on those arguments, these topics came up again later on in the community garden development of New York City in lawsuits and regulations. Finally based on the lack by the City to check the environmental impact of garden demolition “on May 11<sup>th</sup> [1999, added C.M.], the Attorney General [Eliot Spitzer, added C.M.] filed suit to stop the auction and sale. A temporary injunction was issued barring the city from selling any community garden properties until the Attorney General’s charges were addressed”.<sup>80</sup>

On the evening of May 12<sup>th</sup> 1999<sup>81</sup>, “at the (...) the day before the auction, Brooklyn State Supreme court issued an injunction to stop the auction. Within a half-hour, City Hall agreed to sell the gardens to the Trust for Public Land and New York Restoration Project”.<sup>82</sup> In detail, “(...) the Mayor’s Office agreed to sell 63 gardens to TPL [the Trust for Public Land, added C.M.] and the remainder to the nonprofit New York Restoration Project”.<sup>83</sup> The Trust for Public Land and New York Restoration Project paid together \$4.2 million for 112 gardens<sup>84</sup> with the Trust for Public Land paying \$3 million for 60 gardens and New York Restoration Project paying \$1.2 million for 52 gardens.<sup>85</sup> This transfer as Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013, explains in her article “Community Gardening in New York City becomes a political Movement” of 2000: “In exchange for several million dollars (which the private non-profit groups had been quietly raising from some of New York’s most wealthy and influential citizens for months) the City [announced that it, added C.M.] would transfer title of the gardens, to be preserved in perpetuity as Land Trusts”.<sup>86</sup> To make the sale of public land to two private non-profit groups for gardening purposes possible, the Attorney General Eliot Spitzer withdrew his lawsuit. When withdrawing the suit, the Attorney General “(...) reserved the right to reinstate it if the City proposed to sell any gardens in the future”.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, on May 12, 1999, 112 public community gardens were transformed into land trusts.

#### **4.1.3.3 Temporary restraining order on the development of community garden land**

After the sale of the 112 gardens to the Trust of Public Land and New York Restoration Project, there were still “(...) over 500 remaining gardens on HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] land (...)”.<sup>88</sup> Those gardens remained unprotected from development projects and consequently, “in the year following the auction, numerous gardens have been razed for subsidized housing construction, and the Mayor and the City Council have approved many more for future development”.<sup>89</sup> Edie Stone explains in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000 that “Following the spring 1998 transfer, development of community gardens became increasingly frequent. Fewer than fifty community gardens had been approved as sites for the

<sup>80</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>81</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>82</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>83</sup> Englander 2001, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> As with other numbers of community gardens in New York City, this number varies from 119 gardens up for auction (Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html)) to 118 gardens ([www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html)) to 114 gardens (Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 8) to 112 gardens (Herszenhorn 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protectors-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protectors-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html)) sold to TPL and NYRP. But the number of 112 gardens seems to be correct since, “(...) two gardens were removed from the auction list by the Giuliani administration in response to community pressure -- one in Park Slope, Brooklyn, that is across the street from a church and is used by local schoolchildren, and one in Corona, Queens, that is next to a day care center”. (Herszenhorn 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protectors-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protectors-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html))

<sup>85</sup> Personal interview with Lenny Librizzi, June 25, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>87</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>88</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>89</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

construction of housing before the transfer. In the two years subsequent, over one hundred development projects have been approved on land used for community gardening”.<sup>90</sup> To stop the ongoing development of housing on community garden land, the New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer was brought in once again by community gardening groups to intervene. “Pressure from garden advocates appalled by the number of community gardens being lost has prompted the Attorney General to reinstate his suit, this time in direct opposition to builders of subsidized housing”.<sup>91</sup> Consequently “in February 2000, the New York State Attorney General (...) secured a temporary restraining order (...) which prevented the City not only from conveying land to a developer, but also from entering the garden to perform test borings. The City’s appeal to stay the TRO [temporary restraining order, added C.M.] was denied in October 2000”.<sup>92</sup>

The temporary restraining order brought construction on properties that included property lots with about 25 community garden sites to a hold.<sup>93</sup> “These projects, subsidized with Federal, State and local dollars include low income housing as well as owner-occupied town homes and senior citizen’s housing. The majority of the projects incorporate dozens of city owned lots, of which only one or two may be community gardens”.<sup>94</sup> In other words, if a housing construction was scheduled to go up on several public lots, a community garden that was situated on one of those lots stopped the construction on all of the lots. But the temporary restraining order did not bring the development of gardens on land of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to a complete hold. “Although the battle over community garden development has led to costly construction delays and litigation for developers and the City, particularly the recent suit by the Attorney General, HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] continues to issue RFPs [Request for Proposals, added C.M.] containing garden sites, including as recently as June 2000 when the temporary restraining order on development of garden sites was already in effect”.<sup>95</sup>

In general, from 1998 until 2012 few community gardens were added on public land, if so on land of the Department of Education, but more on private lots, while according to Edie Stone almost 300 were lost since 1990.<sup>96</sup> From February 2000, “(...) until September 18, 2002, the OAG [State Attorney General, added C.M.] and the New York City Corporation Counsel were negotiating a settlement agreement”.<sup>97</sup> In February 2002, Spitzer evoked another temporary restraining order to prevent further auctioning off community gardens’ land and about half a year later, in September 2002, the agreement was reached.

#### **4.1.3.4 Community Gardens Settlement**

On September 18, 2002 a settlement was reached between Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York State Attorney Eliot Spitzer, called the “Community Gardens Agreement” or the “Community Gardens Settlement”. According to the organization More Gardens! The settlement was a result of a 25,000-strong people’s referendum that More Gardens had created in 2001.<sup>98</sup> The agreement set an end to Spitzer’s restraining order and determined that most of the community gardens were to be transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation within eight years, i.e. until 2010. Some sites were designated to first undergo a “Garden Review Process” to determine their suitability for gardening or housing development while others were to be developed right away with “affordable” housing. The garden group using sites that had undergone a Garden Review Process and were found suitable for housing development were to be offered an alternative gardening lot in the vicinity of their former garden site. The agreement “(...) preserved nearly 400 community gardens on city owned land while allowing development to move forward on over 100 gardens that were

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<sup>90</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>91</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>92</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>93</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>94</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>95</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>96</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>97</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>98</sup> More gardens! [www.moregardens.org/node/141](http://www.moregardens.org/node/141).

already included in proposed development plans”.<sup>99</sup> In detail, “the agreement calls for the preservation of 200 community gardens (they will either be transferred to parks or sold to a land trust), establishes a review process for 115 gardens that the City wishes to develop, and allows the City to proceed immediately with the development of an additional 38 gardens”.<sup>100</sup> In short, this settlement preserved most of the existing community gardens by transferring them to the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation. At the same time, it allowed the city to develop immediately some garden sites with affordable housing.

The agreement added a timeline to the preservation of community gardens in New York City: Mayor Bloomberg assumed that his term would run out and that he would be out of office by the time the settlement was over in 2010. But his term was extended for a third term, something that is out of the ordinary in New York City, where a two-year mayoral term is called for by law. Thus in October 2010, the Community Garden Rules were set up in order to continue to community gardens settlement’s preservation of community gardens. “The Agreement continued to protect community gardens until September 2010 when new garden rules were announced with similar wording and protections as in The Agreement. Under the garden rules new gardens will be allowed and will receive the same protections as existing ones. Discussions are ongoing to make sure that the gardens have the best long term preservation protection possible”.<sup>101</sup>

#### **4.1.3.5 Community Garden Rules**

The term of the Community Gardens Agreement ended in September 2010. To have another legally binding agreement, Community Garden Rules<sup>102</sup> were enacted in October 2010 by the Department of Parks and Recreation for its 283 as well as by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for its at the time 41 gardens.<sup>103</sup> The Community Garden Rules of Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Department of Parks and Recreation were the first rules that applied to community garden land in New York City and set up more regulations than those that community gardening groups signed with the license. Those two rules were basically the same, but the difference is that a license for the land of the Department of Parks and Recreation was extended from two-years to a term of four-years and that a license for land of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development remained to have a one-year term.

Especially conditions of moving a garden group in “default” from a community garden site were debated by community gardeners and the New York City Community Gardens Coalition. A community gardening group could become under default due to its “(...) failure or refusal to (i) comply with GreenThumb Registration requirements, (ii) complete the Registration process, (iii) comply with the terms of its Registration, (iv) comply with GreenThumb License requirements, (v) enter into a License, or (vi) comply with its License”.<sup>104</sup> In addition the gardening group could also be in “default” “(...) based in whole or in part upon any conduct, activity, or condition that (i) is contrary to law, (ii) constitutes a public nuisance, or (iii) affects, or poses a threat to, the health or safety of the community in which the Lot and Garden are located”.<sup>105</sup> Consequently the Department of Parks and Recreation or the Department of Housing Preservation and Development “(...) or an Other Agency directing a Gardening Group (...)” are asked per the Community Garden Rules “(...) to cure an Accelerated Default within 30 days after the date of such notice or a notice to cure a Default within 6 months after

<sup>99</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 8.

<sup>100</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>101</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> The Community Garden Rules for community gardens registered with GreenThumb in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development were added as a new Chapter 42 of Title 28 of the Official Compilation of Rules of the City of New York. The Community Garden Rules for community gardens registered with GreenThumb in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation were added as a new Chapter 6 to Title 56 of the Official Compilation of Rules of the City of New York.

<sup>103</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, November 10, 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Rules & Regulations of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/rules](http://www.nycgovparks.org/rules).

<sup>105</sup> Rules & Regulations of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/rules](http://www.nycgovparks.org/rules).

the date of such notice. Copies of such notices shall be sent to the council member for the council district in which the Garden is located and the community board of the community district in which the Garden is located”.<sup>106</sup>

That means, in the worst case scenario from the perspective of community gardeners, a community gardening groups whose activities on community garden land registered with GreenThumb conduct an activity that constitute a public nuisance or endangers the health or safety of the community can be put under “default” and then removed from a site within 30 days. Further, in regard to the discussion of long-term preservation of community gardens that has been ongoing among community gardeners since the beginning of the community gardening movement, these Community Garden Rules do not preserve the status of community gardens on the Department of Parks and Recreation as permanent as it is the case with mapped parkland like traditional parks. “Lots are not dedicated as, and will not be deemed to be dedicated as, parkland unless they have otherwise been mapped as parkland by the City”.<sup>107</sup> In addition, as it is the case with any other rules of the City of New York, Community Garden Rules are not permanent, but can be changed by the next mayor in office.

#### **4.1.3.6 Local Law 48 and the Mayor’s Obesity Task Force Initiative**

Community garden groups lobbied the City Council after the enactment of the Community Garden Rules for more transparency about the availability of public open land in the city. This led to the enactment of Local Law 48 in 2011 by the City council demanded the creation of a citywide inventory of vacant land in the jurisdiction of various agencies and was the preparation for the creation of 20 new community gardens under the Mayor’s Obesity Task Force starting in 2012. Sites that could potentially be used for urban agriculture projects were located by agencies citywide in their inventory in following Local Law 48. Those sites had to be a minimum of 2,500 S.F. and had to be “vacant”, i.e., they were not to be scheduled for use for other projects. A list with of vacant sites matching those criteria was then in were handed to GreenThumb and vetted to a great degree by Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb at the time, and myself in following a specific set of evaluation criteria that included sunlight, accessibility through public transport, provision of water and general site conditions. The vetting process was still going on at the time I am writing this, i.e. November 2013, but at this time already 82 potentially suitable sites were identified while 74 sites were not reviewed yet. It can be assumed that more than 100 public properties suitable for urban agriculture purposes will be made available. The data on the vacant lots reviewed and still under review was made available at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (...) webpage in September 2013.<sup>108</sup> The application process for gardens on those vacant sites is discussed at the time I am writing this, i.e. November 2013, as well as means to fund the creation of potentially a great number of gardens.

In January 2012 the Mayor’s Obesity Task Force initiative was started. “The Mayor’s Obesity Task Force was convened in January 2012 to combat the obesity epidemic, which is a leading cause of preventable deaths in NYC second only to tobacco. In May of 2012, the Mayor’s Obesity Task Force report was issued, identifying 26 initiatives to address obesity. Initiative #15 is to create new community garden sites via the Parks Department’s GreenThumb program”.<sup>109</sup> This initiative was supported by the Mayor’s Office with about \$437,900 for one three-year term position<sup>110</sup> at GreenThumb and for material for the construction of gardens to be bought within one year and used up in the three-year term. It should prove very difficult to spend all of the “one-shot” money within the first year. Consequently, the Mayor’s office under the Bloomberg administration announced to provide another \$51,000 per each consecutive year. For the 20 available sites under the Mayor’s

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<sup>106</sup> Rules & Regulations of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/rules](http://www.nycgovparks.org/rules).

<sup>107</sup> Rules & Regulations of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/rules](http://www.nycgovparks.org/rules).

<sup>108</sup> NYC OpenData, <https://nycopendata.socrata.com/City-Government/Local-Law-48-Of-2011-Report/2b6x-2bw6>.

<sup>109</sup> GreenThumb, [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org).

<sup>110</sup> I was the Project and Design Coordinator for the Mayor’s Office Obesity Task Force at GreenThumb from 2012- 2014.

Obesity Task Force there were two deadlines for the applications in 2013 – at the first deadline in spring 2013 applications for 13 sites and at the second deadline in November 2013 two applications were received. Of the first 13 sites that applications were received for, three sites were located in the South Bronx, four sites in Brooklyn, four sites in Queens, one site in Highbridge Park in Manhattan and one site in Staten Island. The construction of six sites was supported by GrowNYC, who was contracted as a vendor by GreenThumb and also brought in private money from corporations who were interested in volunteering at the new garden sites. Of the other seven sites three had to be moved to different locations and one was stalled because of building construction on the adjacent lot. Several sites had transparency issues with Community Boards and local Parks Department officials, who had not been aware that community gardens were started in their neighborhoods or on their parkland. Due to lack of continued funding with the change in administration to Mayor Bill de Blasio in the beginning of 2014 the Obesity Task Force initiative, only two more sites were developed and the development of the remaining five garden sites was brought to a stop.

Consequently the analysis of changes in the number of gardens since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the number of community gardens changed due to increase in housing construction and lack of legal protection of community gardens as a specific land use.

#### **4.2 Open space land use for community gardens and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will look at the context of open space land use for community gardens and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s by investigating the number of population, the cultural background of residents, the income of residents and the aspects of criminal activities versus social control.

##### **4.2.1 Number of population and community open space**

The study area that I call the “South Bronx” in my thesis is part of three Bronx community board (CB1, CB2, CB3) as well as part of New York’s 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. Census tracts were only established with the 1990s: In 1990 New York City as the first city nationwide started to use census tracts to track population data and to determine congressional districts that establish the choice of representative of the state. Census tracts change with population growth and are thus difficult to use as a measure of changes in the number of population. Consequently it is difficult to make a precise reference to the population number for my study area, so that I will present numbers that depend on what each reference calls the South Bronx. The number of population in the South Bronx of 1970 was cut almost by the middle of 1980. But the exact number of population living in the South Bronx during this time varies in reference literature, since, as described above, the area and size of what is called “South Bronx” varies. Thus, for example, an article on [www.demographia.com](http://www.demographia.com), states “In 1975, the (...) three community districts that comprise the core of the South Bronx had fallen 57 percent in population from 383,000 in 1970 to 166,000 in 1980, which has to rival the greatest short term population loss in any urban setting with the possible exception of war’s devastation”.<sup>111</sup> Then Evelyn Gonzales states in her book “The Bronx” of 2004 that while in 1970 there were 386,061 residents, in 1980 only 167,370 residents remained.<sup>112</sup> For this thesis I assume that the number of population in the South Bronx in 1970 was about 380,000 and in 1980 it was about 160,000, i.e., that it was about cut in half. In the late 1980s, early 1990s the number of population in the South Bronx increased again while open space access decreased. This happened because with the ongoing redevelopment in the 1990s “(...) many people who [had, added C.M.] fled the area in the 70s (...) [were, added C.M.] moving back”.<sup>113</sup> In 1990, New York’s 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District had a population of 581,053. And while redevelopment continued, the population of the Bronx County continued to increase and was in 2000 up to 1.3 million residents.<sup>114</sup> In 2004, in the area 1,330,000 residents are living in the South Bronx, which is in this reference here an area of 42 Square Miles (110 Square Kilometer) of land.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Demographia, City on a Hill, [www.demographia.com/db-sbrx-txt.htm](http://www.demographia.com/db-sbrx-txt.htm).

<sup>112</sup> Gonzales 2004, p.122.

<sup>113</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>114</sup> Gonzales 2004, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> Demographia, City on a Hill 2004, [www.rentalcartours.net/rac-sbronx.pdf](http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-sbronx.pdf).

Figure 7: Maps of Bronx public parkland, 2014. Copyright: The City of New York, 2014. [www.nycgovparks.org/maps](http://www.nycgovparks.org/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

Figure 8: Map of community gardens in the South Bronx. Google Map prepared by GreenThumb, May 23, 2013.

When looking at community open spaces in 1983 at community open spaces in New York City “(...) Tom Fox and his colleagues at the New York City Neighborhood Open Space Coalition inventoried 448 open-space projects (...)”<sup>116</sup>, which were equal to “(...) 149 acres of community open space were managed by local residents (...) with 10,462 active participants”.<sup>117</sup> Then 15 years later, “as of January 1999, there were 697 gardens licensed under the City’s Green Thumb program (...). (...) They serve an estimated 20,000 gardeners, who have contributed millions of dollars in materials and sweat equity to beautify their blocks, with little or no assistance from City Hall”.<sup>118</sup> That means, while the number of residents participating in community open spaces almost doubled, the number of community open spaces only increased by about a third during that time. In 2001 the value of community open spaces in New York City in terms of open space per person “(...) becomes more apparent when you consider that New York has less open space per capita than any other city in the country. The majority of the city’s 59 community boards fall below the state’s minimum open-space standard of 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. The Lower East Side, for instance, has 0.7 acres of space per 1,000. By contrast, Boston has four acres per 1,000, and Philadelphia has more than six”.<sup>119</sup> In 2003 the Bronx has 6,962 acres (28.17 square kilometers) of parkland, i.e. 25% of the borough. This area is unevenly distributed, with the Northern Part of the Bronx having the second highest parkland per resident ratio in the five boroughs of New York City, the southern part on the other hand only a few “traditional” parks.<sup>120</sup> With a population of over 1.3 million at the time there is for each 192 residents one acre of parkland accessible. “Despite the impressive number of parks, open space in the Bronx is not evenly distributed [most of the parkland in the borough of the Bronx was situated in the Northern part- added C.M.] and many neighborhoods lack green space, trees and recreational facilities”.<sup>121</sup> In 2009 Mike Jaccarino reports for the New York Daily News, “the Bronx has 44,457 NYCHA [New York City Housing Authority, added C.M.] units, with a total of 103,661 residents - some 25% of the citywide NYCHA [New York City Housing Authority, added C.M.] population”.<sup>122</sup> Since only a few residents of the public housing towers in the Bronx have community gardens<sup>123</sup> each implies that about 100.000 residents of the Bronx do not have access to privately usable open spaces - though some of the residents could be members of a community garden if there was one in the vicinity of the apartment tower.

Consequently the analysis of changes in the number of population since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the number of population in the South Bronx of 1970 was cut almost by the middle of 1980, from 383,000 in 1970 to 166,000 in 1980, which points to the lack of quality of life in the area during that time. This was answered by the creation of community gardens by residents in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s and was in 2000 up to 1.3 million residents. Then from 1983 to 1999 the number of residents participating in community open spaces almost doubled while the

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<sup>116</sup> “These projects can be found in middle-income, single-family-dwelling neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn as well as in upper-income neighborhoods in Manhattan such as Greenwich Village”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43) The projects were not only community gardens The number of projects is equal to approximately 32 percent of the sites contained in the entire inventory of New York City Parks and Playgrounds. In addition, another 225 city parks (approximately 18 percent of the total number of city parks) are being tended by ‘Friends of the Park’ community groups”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 5)

<sup>117</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a) [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>119</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>120</sup> New Yorkers for Parks, Council District Profiles, 2003, [www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org).

<sup>121</sup> New Yorkers for Parks, Council District Profiles, 2003, [www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org).

<sup>122</sup> Jaccarino 2009, [www.nydailynews.com/ny\\_local/bronx/2009/12/04/2009-12-](http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/bronx/2009/12/04/2009-12-04_its_project_fixup_new_group_tackles_bx_public_housing_ills.html#ixzz1vOeWIn7A)

[04\\_its\\_project\\_fixup\\_new\\_group\\_tackles\\_bx\\_public\\_housing\\_ills.html#ixzz1vOeWIn7A](http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/bronx/2009/12/04/2009-12-04_its_project_fixup_new_group_tackles_bx_public_housing_ills.html#ixzz1vOeWIn7A).

<sup>123</sup> Personal experience during NYCHA community garden judging, 2010.



Figure 7: Maps of Bronx public parkland. Copyright: The City of New York, 2014. [www.nycgovparks.org/maps](http://www.nycgovparks.org/maps). [accessed April 9, 2014]

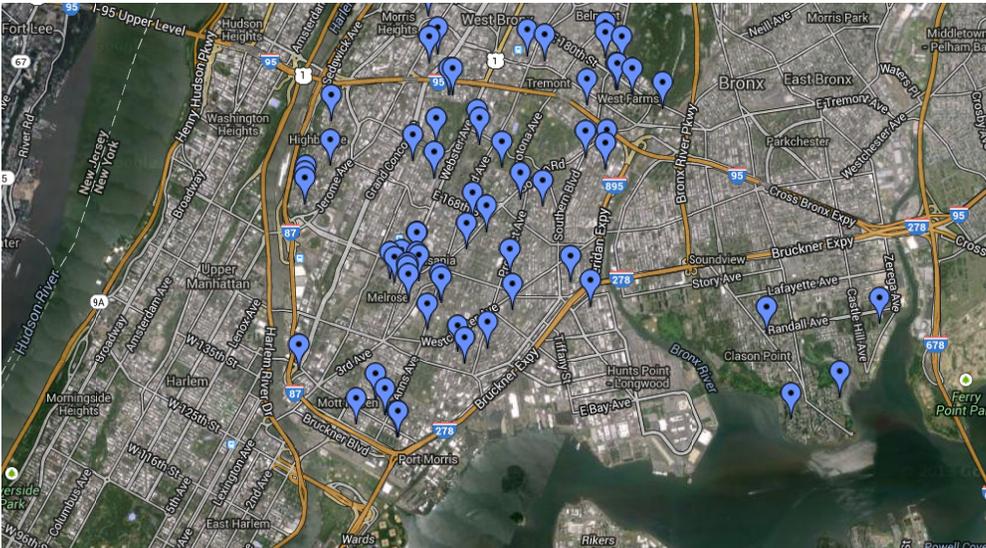


Figure 8: Map of community gardens in the South Bronx. Google Map prepared by GreenThumb, May 23, 2013.



number of community open spaces only increased by about a third and while New York had less open space per capita in 2001 than any other city in the United States of America.

#### 4.2.2 Cultural background of residents

I will introduce open space land use for community gardens in the South Bronx, population and cultural background of residents since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx.

Before the Second World War, there were many Jewish families or families of European origin living in the South Bronx, some of them had been residents of the neighborhood since the late 1920s. In the years after the Second World War, i.e. in the late 1940s, early 1950s, "The South Bronx [was, added C.M.] overtaken by the post-World War II influx of Hispanics to New York City (...)"<sup>124</sup> In the early 1970s those residents of the South Bronx, who could afford it, had moved out - and enticed by low mortgage rates - out to the new suburbs. "In 1978 (...) there were lots of white and elderly people, but (...) they all died or moved".<sup>125</sup> When the white middle-class was moving out or aging and dying out in the late 1970s new cultural groups moved into the vacated apartments. In the late 1980s, the Hispanic and African American population was slowly reclaiming the area around the Concourse Plaza Hotel and the Bronx Museum, i.e. the center of the borough of the Bronx, which used to be dominated by a Jewish population. But as soon as they had enough financial means to do so many of the Latin American families moved out of the Bronx as well. "(...) In 1980 we had a big Puerto Rican population, but as they were successful, they moved on".<sup>126</sup> From the middle of the 1970s until the middle of the 1980, "(...) Bronx (...) absorbed 50,000 immigrants from the Dominican Republic, a few thousand each from the former U.S.S.R. and China, almost 20,000 from Jamaica and close to 10,000 from Guyana".<sup>127</sup> In addition, there were many Albanians, Bengalis and Mexicans living in the area, most of them of low-income and some illegal.<sup>128</sup> Even though many Latin Americans moved out to the suburbs, it became even more populous in the 1990s when "(...) there was a tremendous influx of Dominican and Mexicans".<sup>129</sup> The second strongest population after the Latin American population remained to be the Afro-American population. Thus in 1990 of the 581,053 residents of New York's 16th Congressional District were four percent white, 33 percent of Afro-American, two percent of Asian and 59 percent of Hispanic origin.<sup>130</sup> Next to the Latin American population, in 2000, The South Bronx "(...) is also home to many African, and South and Central American immigrants, and has one of the lowest non-Hispanic white populations in the nation, at 4.2 percent".<sup>131</sup> In short, "(...) by 2000, the entire borough was almost all of black and Spanish ancestry".<sup>132</sup>

Consequently the analysis of the cultural background of residents since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that before and during the First World War the majority of residents of the South Bronx was of Jewish and European origin, while in the years after the Second World War, i.e. in the late 1940s, early 1950s the South Bronx population was mainly inhabited by Hispanic origin, who were new immigrants to New York City. Latin Americans remained the strongest part of the population of the area, which might be due to their self-improvement of their quality of life starting in the 1970s with the creation of community gardens in the area.

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<sup>124</sup> Washington Post 1999,

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16).

<sup>125</sup> Monsignor Jenik in: Jonnes 1986 p. 434.

<sup>126</sup> Monsignor Jenik in: Jonnes 1986, p. 434.

<sup>127</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 413-414.

<sup>128</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 414.

<sup>129</sup> Monsignor Jenik in: Jonnes 1986, p. 434.

<sup>130</sup> Washington Post 1999,

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16).

<sup>131</sup> Washington Post 1999,

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16).

<sup>132</sup> Gonzales 2004, p. 1.

### 4.2.3 Income of residents

In 1986 Jill Jonnes writes in her book "South Bronx Rising" that "every year now a million new legal immigrants arrive in the United States in pursuit of the American Dream (...)"<sup>133</sup> The term "the American Dream" came up during a time of nation identity crises in the time of the Depression years of the 1930s. It was mentioned for example in the book James Truslow Adams in his book "The Epic of America" of 1931. It is an expression of individual and national values and based on the basic ideas of honesty, saving of money, hard work and endurance. The phrase of the "American dream" conveys the concept "from rags to riches" that allows anybody the chance to become a millionaire if he or she only worked hard enough for it. Since the 18th century immigrants from all over the world were attracted to the United States in order to live this dream, which they saw as their only choice for a better quality of life. The South Bronx was according to the 1980 census the poorest place in the United States since the median family income in the area amounted to only \$7,800 per year at the time.<sup>134</sup> Six years later, in 1986, when the redevelopment of the South Bronx was on the way, as Jill Jones states in her book "South Bronx Rising" of the same year, the decline of families on welfare as well as the new immigrants and new homeowners have eased the concentration of poverty. "Nonetheless half of those living in the resurrected South Bronx are classed as poor".<sup>135</sup> At the time, the average median household in New York City had an income of \$33,000 whereas in the South Bronx this average median income of a household was between \$12,000 and \$15,000. Additionally half of the households in the South Bronx were on welfare regulations.

Still the quality of life improved with new housing construction and community gardens developing in the Bronx during the late 1980s, but the population in the South Bronx remained impoverished. But the families on welfare decline and the new immigrants and new homeowners have eased the concentration of poverty. In 1990 in New York's 16th Congressional District the median household income was \$15,060 annually, i.e. double to that of 1980, but still so low that it ranked bottom third in the nation of the United States.<sup>136</sup> Almost ten years later, in 1999, Robert Worth wrote the article "Guess Who Saved the Bronx" published in The Washington Monthly, "The South Bronx still has the highest rates of unemployment and public assistance of any area in the city, and its public schools remain among the worst".<sup>137</sup> The high rate of unemployment was according to Worth, not to be solved by local businesses, but by the vicinity of the South Bronx to Manhattan, where the bigger job market was. He states, "It's a 15-minute subway ride to midtown Manhattan, and that link is far more important to the area's future than the retailers who have come back to the area. 'Neighborhood economies are fine,' says Frank Bruconi of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council, which conducted the one major study to date of the Bronx revival, 'but the jobs have to be reconnected to the broader metropolitan market. Without that, you're not going to have the infusion of income you need to get people off public support'".<sup>138</sup>

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the South Bronx was still a low-income neighborhood. Nevertheless, due to residents' and community gardening organization it had become a place again with economical stabilization, with businesses and shops as well as a larger population of residents, who wanted to stay in the neighborhood. Still, in 2000, "New York's 16<sup>th</sup><sup>139</sup> [congressional district, added C.M.], covering the distressed neighborhoods of the South Bronx, (...) the poorest district in the nation. More than 40 percent of its residents live in poverty".<sup>140</sup> In 2000, the typical household in the Bronx was of Hispanic cultural background. 30 percent of the overall residents were children, which was more than in any other county in

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<sup>133</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 413.

<sup>134</sup> McCain 1987, [www.nytimes.com/1987/02/01/realestate/a-new-mall-for-the-south-bronx-hub.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/01/realestate/a-new-mall-for-the-south-bronx-hub.html).

<sup>135</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 403.

<sup>136</sup> Washington Post 1999,

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16).

<sup>137</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>138</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>139</sup> New York's 16th congressional district consists of the neighborhoods Bedford Park, East Tremont, Fordham, Hunts Point, Melrose, Highbridge, Morrisania, Mott Haven and University Heights, Yankee Stadium, Fordham University and the Bronx Zoo and is thus larger than the area that I call the South Bronx in this research.

<sup>140</sup> Washington Post 1999,

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16).

the state.<sup>141</sup> The two-parent homes were ranging with 43 percent, which is less than in other counties and half of the men in the Bronx did not work, compared with a citywide figure of 30 percent.<sup>142</sup> In 2005, in the United States more than 40 percent of the residents were living in poverty, with a poverty threshold in the United States for a two persons householder under 65 years at \$12,649 per year.<sup>143</sup> In the same year, "(...) among populous counties, the Bronx had the fourth-highest poverty rate in the nation, trailing three counties on the Texan-Mexican border."<sup>144</sup> In the same year, in 2005, the New York Times published the article "Goodbye South Bronx Blight, Hello SoBro" announcing that artists had begun to move into the South Bronx, and declare this a sure sign of gentrification. "Hundreds of artists, hipsters, Web designers, photographers, doctors and journalists have been seduced by the mix of industrial lofts and 19th-century row houses in the Port Morris and Mott Haven neighborhoods. Some now even call the area SoBro".<sup>145</sup> Even though the author, Joseph Berger, agrees that "(...) no one expects the area to become another TriBeCa or SoHo anytime soon".<sup>146</sup> Still Berger announces that the gentrification started: "The newcomers, some of whom have spent much of their lives abroad or in the hinterlands and are not as easily put off by the Bronx's outdated reputation, say they have felt welcomed. Nevertheless, those welcomes sometimes mask fears by longtime residents that they may someday be priced out of the neighborhood".<sup>147</sup>

The Census Bureau 2010 report states, "(...) The percentage of Americans living below the poverty line last year, 15.1 percent, was the highest level since 1993"<sup>148</sup>, explaining that in general these "(...) census figures do not count noncash assistance, like food stamps and the earned-income tax credit, and economists say that as a result they tend to overstate poverty numbers for certain groups, like children. But rises in the cost of housing, medical care and energy are not taken into account, either".<sup>149</sup> For the South Bronx, the Daily News reports on the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau's findings that that the "South Bronx is poorest [congressional, added C.M.] district in nation, (...)" and that 256,544 persons or "(...) 38% live below poverty line." And, "the figures are worse for children, with 49% living in poverty".<sup>150</sup> At the same time, "the highest overall poverty rate for a U.S. jurisdiction is in Puerto Rico, where 45% of adults and 56.9% of children are impoverished".<sup>151</sup> Most of the population living in the South Bronx at the time is of Latin American cultural background, which shows that the Puerto Rican immigrants moving to the South Bronx were of low-income in their country of origin and remain of low-income in their new neighborhood. Thus they even though many Puerto Rican residents of the South Bronx tried to make it out of poverty to live in a place of better quality of life as dreamed up in the American Dream by leaving their native country, but they had only moved to the a different place remaining of low-income. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the South Bronx was still a low-income neighborhood. Nevertheless, due to residents' and community gardening organization it had become a place again with economical stabilization, with businesses and shops as well as a larger population of residents, who wanted to stay in the neighborhood

Consequently the analysis of income of residents since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the South Bronx population was of low income in 1980 with a median family income in the area below the poverty level and half of the households on welfare regulations. While the quality of life improved with new housing construction and community gardens developing in the Bronx starting in the 1970s, the population in the South Bronx remained low-income, so that in 2000 the South Bronx was the

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<sup>141</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 404.

<sup>142</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 404.

<sup>143</sup> [www.nytimes.com/2005/08/30/world/americas/30iht-census.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/30/world/americas/30iht-census.html).

<sup>144</sup> Leonhardt 2005 [www.nytimes.com/2005/08/31/national/31census.html?pagewanted=print&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/31/national/31census.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0)

<sup>145</sup> Berger 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/nyregion/24bronx.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/nyregion/24bronx.html).

<sup>146</sup> Berger 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/nyregion/24bronx.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/nyregion/24bronx.html).

<sup>147</sup> Berger 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/nyregion/24bronx.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/nyregion/24bronx.html).

<sup>148</sup> Tavernise 2011, [www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/us/14census.html?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/us/14census.html?pagewanted=all).

<sup>149</sup> Tavernise 2011, [www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/us/14census.html?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/us/14census.html?pagewanted=all).

<sup>150</sup> Sisk 2010, [www.nydailynews.com/new-york/south-bronx-poorest-district-nation-u-s-census-bureau-finds-38-live-poverty-line-article-1.438344#ixzz2fTTk8fpj](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/south-bronx-poorest-district-nation-u-s-census-bureau-finds-38-live-poverty-line-article-1.438344#ixzz2fTTk8fpj).

<sup>151</sup> Sisk 2010, [www.nydailynews.com/new-york/south-bronx-poorest-district-nation-u-s-census-bureau-finds-38-live-poverty-line-article-1.438344#ixzz2fTTk8fpj](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/south-bronx-poorest-district-nation-u-s-census-bureau-finds-38-live-poverty-line-article-1.438344#ixzz2fTTk8fpj).

poorest congressional district in the United States with more than 40 percent of its residents living in poverty in 2005 and remained the poorest congressional district in 2010. In that year the overall highest poverty rate for a U.S. jurisdiction was in Puerto Rico, where many of the South Bronx residents had immigrated from, pointing to the difficulty to get out of low-income despite the effort to improve ones quality of life by moving to New York City.

#### **4.2.4 Criminal activities versus social control since the 1970s**

In the following I will discuss the context of open space land use in the South Bronx since 1970s to population and criminal activities versus social control, both in context with the development of community gardens in the area.

##### **4.2.4.1 Criminal activities**

Since the area I call the South Bronx for this research is part of New York's 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and not all of Community Board 1, 2, 3 the numbers I will give in regard to crime and fires in a specific area will depend on what each reference calls the South Bronx. Due to the lack of maintenance of open spaces as well as to the increasing crime in the South Bronx, parks and other open spaces without residents activities, i.e. surveillance through social control, became in the late 1960s places that residents would avoid. In lack of access to safe open spaces, the streets and stoops became the place children would play and neighbors would meet.<sup>152</sup> In the South Bronx, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Precinct reported on the crime statistics. "In 1961 in the Forty-Second Precinct there had been 18 murders, 183 robberies, and 667 burglaries, and the citywide homicide total was 390. By 1971 those figures had soared to 102 murders, 2,632 robberies, and 6,443 burglaries in Forty-Second Precinct. The citywide figure for homicide had more than quadrupled to 1,466".<sup>153</sup> In short, the crime rate in the middle of the 1970s was on the rise.<sup>154</sup> At the same time "In the Bronx, from 1974 to 1976, only fifty-one people in three years had been convicted (...) in 1977 alone fifty-seven people were convicted, and in 1978, sixty-one".<sup>155</sup> The murder rate of 18 murders in 1961 to 102 murders by 1971 parallel to an almost constant conviction rate indicates that neighborhood groups' statement at the time was correct that the police did in the late 1980s pursue crime in the Bronx less vigorously than in Manhattan<sup>156</sup>, and therefore the rate of crime had not dropped since the 1960s for the population to feel equally safe. Between 1990 and 1993 the murder rate in New York City averaged 2,000 a year, i.e. about 500 murders more per year than in the 1970s. In the same time 340,000 jobs were cut down and consequently 340,000 people were laid off. Additionally, taxes were increased by \$1.5 billion cutting the income of even more residents down.<sup>157</sup> In the middle of the 1990s the crime rate in New York City became less, which might be due to the fact that the City's administration under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani strengthened the police force in New York City and strictly fined any criminal activity. In the South Bronx the criminal activities became less during that time as well, as Robert Worth writes in 1999 in the Washington Monthly, "in the 42nd Precinct, which includes the worst areas of the 'Fort Apache' days, the number of shootings (...) dropped by over two-thirds in the past five years, the number of robberies and assaults by over half".<sup>158</sup> After the attacks of September 11, 2001, there were budget cuts throughout the city and the police force was diverted to serve the homeland security.

In the late 1970s, one of the persistent main problems of the Bronx was connected with the visible influence of illegal drugs, i.e. the dealers, prostitutes as well as the buyers from all over the city. The residents taking drugs as well as the drug dealers on the street drove many families to move out of the area. That the South Bronx had become a drug dealing area had happened in response to pressure from the police in Manhattan that moved some of the drug dealers from the northern part of Manhattan into the Bronx, where only a few police officers were around at the time. At the late 1980s, according to Monsignor John Jenik in Jill Jonnes book "South Bronx Rising" of 1986, several blocks east of the Grand Concourse on 196th street were not devastated because of people on welfare, but because of the drug problem.

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<sup>152</sup> Personal interview with Verna Lee Judge, September 9, 2005.

<sup>153</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 414.

<sup>154</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 414.

<sup>155</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 364.

<sup>156</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 415.

<sup>157</sup> Centennial Classroom, [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html#giuliani](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html#giuliani).

<sup>158</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

“If you could deal with the drug problem, it would be a first-class neighborhood”.<sup>159</sup> For him the reason why the New York Police Department’s Narcotics Unit did not come to the Bronx was that the residents of the neighborhood did not vote and that therefore the politicians were not forced to pay attention to issues of concern to Bronx’s residents.<sup>160</sup> In the early 1990s the battle against drugs and drug dealers seemed lost. The drug problem in city-owned buildings in the area of the South Bronx, South of Fordham Road, was becoming so serious that the neighborhoods stability was endangered. “In some cases, half the tenants were part of the drug enterprise in some way- using themselves or letting dealers use their apartments for selling, storing, stashing, cooking crack, or as a crack house”.<sup>161</sup> Drugs, especially crack, crime and homelessness were worst in the city in the late 1980s, early 1990s under the administration of Mayor David Dinkins. Crack, a cheap type of smoked cocaine that is highly addictive, was introduced in the New York drug scene in 1985 and had a disastrous impact on the poor neighborhoods that were struggling to rebuild their buildings and their community, since many residents were directly effected and it was sold a lot of times out of the ill maintained, deteriorated privately owned buildings. “The proliferation of the drug trade, first heroin, and most recently [, that is recently from a 1996 perspective, added C.M.] crack, and the increasing accessibility of handguns and semi-automatic weapons for use by indiscriminately violent, competitive drug entrepreneurs has created a climate of crime and chaos that has further entrenched itself into the everyday life of many New York City communities”.<sup>162</sup> Local organization assumed that if the landlords would not tolerate drug dealing in their building, drug problems would not persist in a neighborhood. Therefore resident groups became active in the 1970s to rehabilitate housing and later in the early 1990s the City sold apartment houses on city-owned land to non-profit corporations for rehabilitation in an effort to stabilize the neighborhood. In addition if tenants, i.e. the residents of an area would not tolerate drug dealing in open spaces next to their homes by taking on social control with the creation of community garden, drug problems would not persist in a neighborhood – which is hard to prove since this depends on the social control from street block to street block and is not reflected in statistics.

Another aspect of the criminal activities during the 1970s was that every block in the South Bronx neighborhood was under the “protection” of a specific gang. One gang was identifiable from another through names, symbols and uniform. Members, most of them were youngsters that had dropped out of school, benefited from the power of the group. They attacked drug addicts, authorities and regular residents. “It is hard to say exactly how or why these new gangs got started. Some say for social reasons, for fun, the way all clubs get going. (...) Some say they arose from a wish to rid the neighborhood of the heroin pushers, Certainly these teenagers had seen their older brothers and sisters, even their parents, ravaged by ‘smack’. They had come home to apartments burglarized by junkies and listened to tearful tales of muggings. They had seen many die from overdoses”.<sup>163</sup> Persons that grouped together in gangs were proud of their group and made their connection, to the community that they had established, known to outsiders. “The gangs imposed upon themselves elaborate rules and rituals and stern codes of ‘honor’. They had fearsome initiations and hierarchies to rule their territories. They adopted uniforms with emblems and colors that identified them. They had devised their own brand of order for their own small world. Every few blocks spawned new gangs”.<sup>164</sup> Many of the gangs were made up of young and unemployed residents. “The new youth gangs subscribed to violence and the macho ethic (...). The gangs acquired arsenals and weaponry that would have impressed any serious guerrilla group”.<sup>165</sup> For example “Charlotte Street’s gang was the Turbans, whose most serious rivals were the Royal Javelins on Vyse Avenue just east of southern Boulevard”.<sup>166</sup> Some gangs were know for the fact that their members “(...) had no occupation except harassing junkies and pushers, and this was not a full-time pursuit for young men with time on their hands. The gang

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<sup>159</sup> Monsignor Jenik: in Jonnes 1986, p. 435.

<sup>160</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 435.

<sup>161</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 429.

<sup>162</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 70.

<sup>163</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 236.

<sup>164</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 236.

<sup>165</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 237.

<sup>166</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 237.

members attended school sporadically or had dropped out completely”.<sup>167</sup> Gangs were fighting not only against drug users or dealers, but also against each other. And, “when they were not warring on one another, they mounted intermittent attacks on the authorities and a fearful local populace”.<sup>168</sup> At the same time during the late 1960s through the early 1980s, when there were gang fights and drug dealing, the South Bronx buildings were set on fire. In a desolate neighborhood, gangs were heavily armed and attacked brutally and on random. It was as if a war was going on.

When the schools in the South Bronx had to cut their courses and after-school activities even though the number of students had doubled over the years, the gangs and their clubhouses replaced the school as a focal point for children’s activity. Children became either junkies or gang members if they were not lucky and had parents who had provided other values. The press, which had not paid too much attention to the ongoing fires, published every action of the gangs making them celebrities. “A French filmmaker came to live with the gangs and had her videotapes shown at the Whitney Museum. Gang members appeared on the TV news and got their pictures and opinions in the newspapers and magazines”.<sup>169</sup> The neighborhoods of the South Bronx were socially uprooted and the social system that children would have relied on in earlier times was destroyed. There was little else that would create solidarity such as gangs were, except the creation of gardens by residents groups that helped to create community and to take back social control over their neighborhoods. In addition to drugs and gangs fires were part of the criminal activities taking place during the 1970s in the South Bronx. Between the late 1960s and the 1980s, i.e. during the tenures of Mayor Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Mayor Abraham D. and Mayor Edward I. Koch’s administration, the South Bronx was burning and lost about 40 percent of its housing stock<sup>170</sup> through fires while almost half of the population moved out and businesses fled. The reasons for the fires varied, some say it was because of the City’s policies or because of the ‘Redlining’ by banks and insurance companies, others such as the fire department chief Kirby blamed social and physical circumstances in general.

“Between 1960 and 1980 ten thousand buildings were burned by arson-for-profit rings in response to ‘redlining’ by banks, who refused to make property-improvement loans in so-called blight areas. Two hundred thousand people were displaced from their neighborhoods. Business fled”.<sup>171</sup> The “South Bronx” is not the name of an area in the south of the Bronx, but also the synonym for the spreading of fires and abandonment, of a spreading urban phenomenon that started in the late 1960s in the south central Bronx and affected neighborhoods all around like a contagious disease. The area of buildings damaged by fires spread through the southern part of the borough Jill Jonnes described the phenomenon “Each year the ‘South Bronx’ expanded”.<sup>172</sup>

Figure 9: South Bronx’ building burning in 1981; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.

It seemed that “an epidemic wave of arson broke in 1969 and for years the fire engines screamed endlessly through the lower borough, futilely distinguishing blaze after blaze. Engine Company Eighty-two was routinely answering forty calls in each twenty-four-hour tour. In the South Bronx more than 12,000 fires blazed a year. (...) The fires accelerated the abandonment, destroying about 5,000 apartment buildings with 100,000 units of housing (...)”.<sup>173</sup> The fires continued for years, destroying the housing stock of the South Bronx and forcing more and more people to move out of the area. “During the mid-’70s, the South Bronx averaged 12,000 fires a year. The area lost some 40 percent of its housing stock, and 300,000 people fled”.<sup>174</sup> Neither the police nor the fire department and not even the press seemed interested in the fires raging through the southern part of the Bronx. “All through the 1960s and early 1970s, there was no press coverage, and there were no denunciations by

<sup>167</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 235.

<sup>168</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 235.

<sup>169</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 246.

<sup>170</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>171</sup> Linn 2007, p. 159.

<sup>172</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 344.

<sup>173</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 7-8.

<sup>174</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).



Figure 9: South Bronx' building burning in 1981; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.



Model Cities officials or expressions of concern by politicians. As the Bronx began to burn, no one said anything”.<sup>175</sup> The police did not follow up the arson of buildings as a crime, i.e. as a felony. Jill Jonnes quotes in her book “South Bronx Rising” of 1986 a fireman, who states, “(...) The arson, I would say, was officially ignored. The fire commissioner, the chiefs of the department, they just wished this place would go away, that they could sell it to Westchester County and get rid of it. At Charlotte Street there were twelve hundred false alarms in one year. You know how many arrests they made? Zero. It was a very lax attitude all the way up – don’t make waves”.<sup>176</sup> The fire department avoided mentioning arson as the reason for fires at first. “In a long and prophetic memo written March 17, 1970, on fires in the Bronx by Charles F. Kirby, deputy fire chief, to John T. O’Hagan, the chief of the fire department, there is not one mention of arson as the major cause of the escalating incidence of fires. ‘Between 1964 and 1968 while structural fires in the city rose 42% the Bronx increased 70 percent,’ wrote Chief Kirby. ‘In the same period, non-structural fires (trash, bush, cars, etc.) in the city rose 75% while the Bronx increased 95%.’ He noted that the increase in fires began around the area served by Engine Company 82 and spread first south and then north. He predicted further increase in fires because ‘there are not physical and sociological changes to warrant a contrary assumption at the present time (...)’”.<sup>177</sup> The chief of the fire department explained that “There are many more physical and social changes which must be planned to reverse the fire trend. If these are beyond the fiscal capabilities of the City or inequitable with out economic structure it does not relieve us completely of our obligation to point up problems as we see and forecast them (...). The actual fires and the constant threat of fire must surely be a devastating horror to people required to live in houses in a deteriorating neighborhood”.<sup>178</sup> He understood that even more than the physical, i.e. urban planning situation, the social situation of the South Bronx in 1970 was the reason for the fires and social uproar in the South Bronx. He explains, “(...) I feel that it can be said that rather than being accidental, fire is largely a social problem and the Bronx has and will have its share of such problems”.<sup>179</sup>

The municipality did not counteract the slow response rate and thus it seemed that the arson was either welcomed or ignored. “It was obvious to the firemen in the field that the surge in fires was due to arson, but there were so few fire marshals in the department to investigate arson, a felony, that one or two marshals were given responsibility for entire boroughs. They did have cars on the job and often did not arrive at the scene of a suspicious fire until a day or two or even several days later”.<sup>180</sup> Moreover it seemed to be a battle of responsibilities between the police and the fire department: “If arson was a crime, the police believed, the police should have jurisdiction. Cops fought crime, firemen fought fires. The firemen and the cops both focused their hostility on the fire marshals”.<sup>181</sup> Even though the number of fires was increasing in the South Bronx as for example in the neighborhood of Charlotte Street “(...) there was no official reaction except to increase the number of firemen in the firehouse. The firemen reported that it was definite that the fires were arson. ‘Every fire in a vacant building had to be arson. No one lives there, and yet when we pull up, the fire’s out thirty windows. It’s a definite case of arson, not lightning or anything else’”.<sup>182</sup>

In New York City, “in 1970, the Marshals were upgraded from peace officers to police officer status. They needed all the power that came with their new status as they and the Department battled the growing firestorm that was raging over the city at that time”.<sup>183</sup> The city’s low-income neighborhoods were burning. “In 1977, several teenagers set fire to an abandoned factory in Bushwick, Brooklyn. It quickly spread to more than 30 adjacent buildings. After this conflagration, Mayor Beame ordered the Fire Department to appoint another 100 Fire Marshalls and an additional 100 the following year. Many of these new appointees were placed in expanded ‘Red Cap’ units, operating from trailers positioned where

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<sup>175</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>176</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>177</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 234.

<sup>178</sup> Chief Kirby: in Jonnes 1986, p. 234.

<sup>179</sup> Chief Kirby: in Jonnes 1986, p. 234.

<sup>180</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 231.

<sup>181</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 231.

<sup>182</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>183</sup> Hashagen 2002, p. 240.

there was an abundance of fire".<sup>184</sup> When "at its height, the Bureau had 405 men operating in three task forces. Whenever the 'Red Caps' saturated an area, not only did arson fires and false alarms go down, but so did other crimes".<sup>185</sup>

The federal government was not much interested in what happened in the Charlotte street neighborhood of the South Bronx either. This shown by the fact that an antipoverty agency was the "(...) neighborhood's sole governmental presence"<sup>186</sup> – and eventually, possibly due to its lack of support, that "(...) was torched".<sup>187</sup> In short, "the South Bronx was burning and no one seemed to care. The South Bronx was hooked on drugs and no one seemed to notice. But the generation that was coming of age in this hellhole was about to add new dimensions of misery, terror and brutishness. The new youth gangs were forming".<sup>188</sup> The electric blackout of New York City on July 13, 1977 brought thousands of people on the street, looting and burning the stores and buildings in their neighborhoods. "New York businesses lost \$150 million in goods and damaged property. (This was in marked contrast to the 1965 blackout, when crime actually went down and the camaraderie became part of the City's folklore.)".<sup>189</sup>

The borough lost more housing units in a decade "than any entire city in the country with the exception of Detroit. The Bronx had a net loss of 56,459 units between 1970 and 1980".<sup>190</sup> The borough lost more housing units in a decade "than any entire city in the country with the exception of Detroit. The Bronx had a net loss of 56,459 units between 1970 and 1980".<sup>191</sup> In 1975 alone, there were about 13,000 fires counted in about 12 Square Miles (31 Square Kilometers) in the South Bronx, i.e. a third of the formerly built-up area was on fire in one year.<sup>192</sup> But residential fires in the area had dropped "(...) from 9,201 in 1975 to 7,180 in 1978 (...)"<sup>193</sup> A reason for the decline might have been that welfare families that were burned out did not receive money any longer and that at the same time fire and police officials were successful in cracking down arsonists. Still, in winter of 1977-1978 more than a hundred buildings were abandoned and torched in the blocks south of Fordham Road. The Women's City Club had made a study and written a report, confirming the "(...) ineffectiveness of the city in checking or preventing the situation".<sup>194</sup> But, one year later, in winter of 1978-1979 only a few houses were abandoned<sup>195</sup> and in 1981 the fires stopped. Residents, who had managed to stay, living in the demolished buildings, organized to rebuild the neighborhood. Their persistence had driven away most of the drugs, gangs and crime in the neighborhoods. When arson seemed to start up once again in the Northern Bronx, the Northwest Bronx Clergy and Community Coalition's Reinvestment Committee arranged that the New York fire department's anti-arson squad, the Red Caps, was finally assigned to the Bronx for the first time and the local community organizations continued on to organize residents to improve and renovate their buildings.

Figure 10: Rubble filled lot after demolition of an apartment building, 1983; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.

Figure 11: A trash and rubble filled lot in the South Bronx used by a group of residents as an outdoor meeting place, 1981; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.

#### 4.2.4.2 Social control

During the 1970s, the number of children attending the local schools in the South Bronx declined with more and more families moving out of the area. "Enrollment at PS 61 had dropped from twenty-six hundred in 1970-71 (when half the overcrowded students had been

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<sup>184</sup> Hashagen 2002, p. 240.

<sup>185</sup> Hashagen 2002, p. 240.

<sup>186</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>187</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>188</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 235.

<sup>189</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 309.

<sup>190</sup> Feldman 1997, <http://www.webcom.com/ncecd/affordablehousing.html>.

<sup>191</sup> Feldman 1997.

<sup>192</sup> Newfield and DuBrul 1977.

<sup>193</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 363.

<sup>194</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 362.

<sup>195</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 365.



Figure 10: Rubble filled lot after demolition of an apartment building, 1983; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.



Figure 11: A trash and rubble filled lot in the South Bronx used by a group of residents as an outdoor meeting place, 1981; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.



attending classes in Quonset huts or other temporary quarters) to twelve hundred children in 1972-1973".<sup>196</sup> When John Lindsay was re-elected as Mayor of New York City in 1969, the Hunt's Point Community Corporation on Southern Boulevard, which had provided temporarily shelter to twenty- six families, whose apartments were without heat and hot water, was attacked by a fire-bomb and the office of the Neighborhood Counseling Center on Charlotte Street was torched as well. The priest of the Hunt's Point neighborhood complained to the New York City Council Chamber and wanted his neighborhood to be declared "(...) a disaster area (...)"<sup>197</sup>, the local schoolteachers sent petitions concerned about the low-income neighborhoods in which school children had to live. "Heat and hot water had become rarities, and children were constantly ill".<sup>198</sup>

The aspect of taking care of the youth and their interests and problems was given major importance by community organizations such as the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. A full-time youth organizer of the Youth Development Program worked next to another full-time organizer in each neighborhood association dealing with diverse topics ranging from local football leagues to general counseling. It is common knowledge of parents that residents prefer to remain in a neighborhood if there are modern, adequate schools for their children. Consequently for example in the 1980s the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition together with parents pressed the City's School Construction Agency to build new public schools or finish the construction of already started school buildings in the borough. In the following three years, six new schools or annexes were built in the Bronx. Interest in community open spaces in the South Bronx increased during the 1960s among due also to changes in social environmental perception during the 1960s that started new movements. The environmental movement that had started in the 1960s was part of the basis for the development of the community gardens movement in inner cities in the United States in the 1970s. The difference between the two movements for my thesis lays mainly in the fact, that the community gardens movement was and is a social movement, while the environmental movement was concerned about food production and other environmental issues. "Great increase in production of food grains (especially wheat and rice) that resulted in large part from the introduction into developing countries of new, high-yielding varieties, beginning in the mid-20th century. Its early dramatic successes were in Mexico and the Indian subcontinent. The new varieties require large amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to produce their high yields, raising concerns about cost and potentially harmful environmental effects. Poor farmers, unable to afford the fertilizers and pesticides, have often reaped even lower yields with these grains than with the older strains, which were better adapted to local conditions and had some resistance to pests and diseases".<sup>199</sup>

The community garden movement began in the 1970s in New York City and other metropolis of the United States. The Gallup National gardening Poll states that this movement started because of the increasing interest in gardening among US-Americans. "The rapidly expanding gardening activity of Americans has contributed to the national movement of local involvement in community open-space projects (Gallup Poll, 1983). In 1982, 82 percent of all Americans were involved in at least one gardening activity. In fact, the Gallup National Gardening Poll (1983) identified vegetable gardening as the number one outdoor leisure activity, ahead of vacation trips, running, and swimming".<sup>200</sup> This poll claims that gardening as an activity was the important factor that urban residents transformed underused urban open space as community gardens. "In the Gallup National Gardening Poll (1983), 18 million household respondents stated that they did not garden because they lacked suitable space. Pointing to the growth potential of community gardening, 76 percent of all Americans were reported by the poll to want their town or city to set aside permanent sites for community vegetable gardens".<sup>201</sup> In the late 1970s, early 1980s, as Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in their book "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984, "Open Space has been widely accepted as good for both people and cities. Historical events such as the city beautiful movement, the playground

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<sup>196</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 250.

<sup>197</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 191.

<sup>198</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 191.

<sup>199</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/green%20revolution](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/green%20revolution).

<sup>200</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

<sup>201</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 21.

movement and the environmental movement have firmly established open space as a vital element of everyday life”.<sup>202</sup>

The community garden movement took place “in cities across the United States and in Europe, [with, added C.M.] local residents (...) transforming vacant neighborhood land into community green spaces, including vegetable gardens, sitting areas, playgrounds, and small viewing gardens”.<sup>203</sup> It proved that the traditional parks did not meet the demand of the urban population any longer, since “(...) community-developed open-space projects are so successful that they are becoming an alternative to the city’s official park system”.<sup>204</sup> In fact, “community developed and managed open spaces have existed in the United States as an alternative to traditional parks at various times in history. (...) It is in the past decade, however, that interest in community open spaces has greatly expanded, with projects now found in many town and cities in the United States as well as abroad”.<sup>205</sup> This “(...) community open-space movement is strong – the quality of community open spaces is improving and the quantity of projects is increasing – and it is spreading to neighborhoods in most towns and cities”.<sup>206</sup>

Consequently the analysis of criminal activities versus social control since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the crime rate in the middle of the 1970s was on the rise with a murder rate of 18 murders in 1961 increasing to 102 murders by 1971 parallel while the police did not increase convictions. At the same time, between the late 1960s and the 1980s, the South Bronx lost about 40 percent of its housing stock while almost half of the population moved out leaving burned out, unoccupied buildings and open spaces filled with rubble and neighborhoods in lack of social control accessible to criminal activities. The arson of apartment buildings stopped in the beginning of the 1980s and in the middle of the 1990s criminal activities in New York City cut down. During that time the crime rate in the South Bronx dropped by over two-thirds and the number of robberies and assaults in the area by over half. The reduction in the crime rate by the middle of the 1990s might be due to the fact that the City’s administration during that time strengthened the police force in New York City to fine any criminal activity, but also due to the fact that the social control in neighborhoods had improved and curbed crime, drug trafficking as well as gang activities and stopped the arson due to residents taking on responsibility for their open space by creating community gardens.

Figure 12: Community Garden in New York City in the 1970s. Courtesy: GreenThumb, 2009.

### **4.3 Open space land use for community gardens and interest groups in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of open space land use for community gardens and interest groups in the South Bronx since the 1970s by investigating the topic of land ownership. Then I will look at the action of the federal and the municipal government, the municipal community gardens program “GreenThumb” and the financial funding for community gardens. Subsequently I will investigate in the same context the actions of banks, insurance companies, landlords, tenants and private businessmen.

#### **4.3.1 Land ownership**

The privatization of public land through community gardening has been of concern to the City since the beginning of the community garden movement in the 1970s and was one reason why the municipal community garden program “Operation GreenThumb” was created in 1978 as part of the New York City Department of General Services, later the name of the program was shortened to “GreenThumb” and in 1995 it was transferred to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Public land that is licensed to gardening groups via GreenThumb for private, collective use while it remains in the jurisdiction of a specific Department. A variety of departments have jurisdiction over the public land that community

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<sup>202</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, pp. 14-15.

<sup>203</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 1.

<sup>204</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 4.

<sup>205</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 1.



Figure 12: Community Garden in New York City in the 1970s. Courtesy: GreenThumb, 2009.



gardens are situated on and individual residents manage its open space commonly and voluntarily. Thus, community gardens are a specific land use form that does not fall under the control of one specific department only. When gardens are created on land of the Department of Parks and Recreation they have the longest term protection as a land use in New York, currently four years, but are not classified as “parkland” as other more permanently protected open space land uses in this department’s jurisdiction.

Community gardens on public land are used for various reason and have thus various “resource values” in the sense of the term as described in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act for public land in the United States of 1976 recognizing the value of the public lands by declaring that these lands would remain in public ownership<sup>207</sup> and under “(...)’multiple-use’ management, defined as ‘management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people’”.<sup>208</sup>

The use of land and the ownership of land can be understood in terms of land being “owned” in the sense of “designed participatively”, “maintained collectively” and “decided on its use collectively” by those who “use” it. Thus the terms “ownership” and “use” are closely related. Kevin Lynch explains in his article “Grounds for Utopia” of 1975, “The land (...) is owned, naturally enough, by those who use it. But ownership simply means the right of present control and enjoyment, and the responsibility of present maintenance”.<sup>209</sup> Lynch also “(...) writes about the importance of land being owned by those who use it. He defines ownership as the right to assume control enjoyment, and responsibility for a place. Lynch argues that cooperative effort among people in regard to the land helps them understand themselves and the environment”.<sup>210</sup> The use of public land needs used as community gardens to be collective or cooperatively and participatory in regard to design, development and maintenance, i.e., the design and decision-making process needs to be done participatively by all users, or garden members will fail to feel responsible for the space. “This participation brings people to understand themselves, and binds them together. The environment is the occasion for cooperative effort; it is consciously designed to reinforce cooperation – sometimes given to require it. Since more social groups have defined spatial territories, the mental images of place and of community are congruent with each other”.<sup>211</sup>

To stabilize neighborhoods in social, economic and urban planning terms, the city began to encourage land ownership - or home ownership -starting with the middle of the 1980s. “The city (...) tried to encourage home ownership, on the premise that homeowners would have a stake in the neighborhood and provide an anchor against decay, even in harder economic times”.<sup>212</sup> If people have a ownership over a home in a neighborhood, they are invested in the neighborhood and are less likely to put up with crime. “When people have a stake in the community, they’re less likely to put up with crime,” says Captain Thomas King of the 42nd precinct, which includes much of what was the ‘Fort Apache’ territory in the 70s”.<sup>213</sup> By the 1990s “(...) three quarters of the New York City Partnership’s<sup>214</sup> family homes in the South Bronx were bought by people already living in the borough”.<sup>215</sup> Consequently, an invested and active ownership of a shared urban element - i.e., a home next to another home in a neighborhood or a piece of privately used public land – stabilizes the quality of life in the city.

Consequently the analysis of actions of individuals since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardens on public land are used for various reason and have various resource values and need to be recognized in their

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<sup>207</sup> Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

<sup>208</sup> Bureau of Land Management, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

<sup>209</sup> Lynch 1975, p. 30.

<sup>210</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

<sup>211</sup> Lynch 1975, p. 41.

<sup>212</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>213</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>214</sup> “(...) The Partnership [is, added C.M.] (...) the brainchild of David Rockefeller, whose board membership reads like a Who’s Who of New York’s leading real estate and financial players”.

(Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html))

<sup>215</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

value by remaining public land maintained participatively according to their various resource values so that they are used to best meet the present and future needs of a neighborhood. This is reflected in taking on ownership of a property in terms of present control and enjoyment, and the responsibility of present maintenance that provides a stake in the neighborhood and an anchor against social and economic decay.

#### **4.3.2 Actions of the federal government and the municipality**

Community gardens were started bottom up through resident action and not top down from the government, i.e. not in the government's initiative, but rather due to its neglect. "(...) The diverse patchwork of more than 800 community gardens that have taken root in New York since the 1970s were born not out of government support, but rather its neglect".<sup>216</sup> Still the federal and municipal government as well as Bronx officials influenced the use of open space for community gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s. To explain this influence, I will present time periods with important turning points or events in the South Bronx' community gardening movement with the corresponding government officials and aspects of their influence on community gardening in New York City.

##### **4.3.2.1 Actions of the federal government**

Gerald R. Ford was President of the United States of America from 1974-1977, i.e. during the global financial crisis. He came into office when Richard Nixon resigned due to the Watergate scandal in 1974. When the City of New York was faced with financial bankruptcy in 1975, Ford denied Mayor Abraham Beame federal support. The Daily News printed consequently the headline on its cover page, "Ford to City: Drop Dead" on October 29, 1975, after President Ford rejected a bailout for the city by the federal government meaning that the state, the unions, the banks and City Hall would have to step up to the task of dealing with the city's status. "Mr. Ford, on Oct. 29, 1975, gave a speech denying federal assistance to spare New York from bankruptcy. The front page of The Daily News the next day read: 'FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD.' Mr. Ford never explicitly said 'drop dead.' Yet those two words, arguably the essence of his remarks as encapsulated in the immortal headline, would, as he later acknowledged, cost him the presidency the following year, after Jimmy Carter, nominated by the Democrats in New York, narrowly carried the state".<sup>217</sup>

In 1977 Jimmy Carter became the President of the United States (1977-1981). Carter became also the first president of several to follow in the following years, who visited the South Bronx as an exemplary low-income urban area that was hit hard by the financial crisis of the time. "The New York Times commented that the South Bronx was 'as crucial to an understanding of American urban life as Auschwitz is crucial to an understanding of Nazism'".<sup>218</sup> Before this visit, after New York City's electricity blackout of 1977, Carter had been criticized by the African-American civil rights leader Vernon Jordan and other African-American leaders that he had not paid attention to the struggle of the low-income residents living in inner-city neighborhood during the time. In order to respond to this accusation Carter planned to stop in a low-income neighborhood on his visit to the United Nation in New York City, which should then turn out to be the South Bronx. Thus on October 5, 1977 President Jimmy Carter, the federal secretary of housing and urban development, Patricia Harris and Mayor Abraham Beame, took a limousine to visit the South Bronx. They passed by the Bronx County Courthouse, the Concourse Plaza Hotel, the Andrew Freedman Home, the Roosevelt Gardens, formerly the main shopping area of Tremont Avenue and came to a stop at Venice Hall on Washington Street. The next stop was the neighborhood around Charlotte Street, which had been almost completely destroyed. The federal secretary of housing and urban development informed President Carter that the destruction of the area had taken place in the five years after President Nixon had stopped urban renewal funds. Carter promised to revitalize the area and responded according to the New York Times reports that the President told Patricia Harris, "See which areas can still be salvaged. (...) Maybe we can create a recreation area and turn it around".<sup>219</sup> For the residents of the South Bronx, it seemed at first that much came out of President Carter's announcement. "The city was in the throes of a

<sup>216</sup> Ferguson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html).

<sup>217</sup> Roberts 2006, [www.nytimes.com/2006/12/28/nyregion/28veto.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/28/nyregion/28veto.html).

<sup>218</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>219</sup> Fernandez 2007, [www.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/nyregion/05charlotte.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/nyregion/05charlotte.html).

fiscal crisis, and the feds were sick of watching their money fall into a burial ground of failed urban policies”.<sup>220</sup>

In 1977 Carter put a law into place that would re-attract banks and businesses in the area. In the same year, the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 was enacted to change the way of how capital and credit were distributed to low-income neighborhoods in New York City like the South Bronx. This law was set up to “(...) to bring banks and private money back to the area”<sup>221</sup>, since it rated “(...) banks based on their willingness to meet the ‘convenience and needs’ of low-income communities, and that rating is used to judge their applications for mergers and branch openings. The result, according to all the CDC [Community Development Corporation, added C.M.] officials (...) has been a dramatic return of bank lending into an area that helped to popularize the term ‘disinvestment’ back in the ‘70s. ‘There’s a market here now, because there’s a working-class community,’ says Ralph Porter, president of the MBD [Mid-Bronx Desperados, added C.M.] Housing Development Corp. ‘But I’m not sure the banks would be back if not for CRA”<sup>222</sup>. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 was only in 1986 supported by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, since even though “housing had traditionally been a federal responsibility, (...) the Carter administration was reluctant to pour money into such a notorious sinkhole”.<sup>223</sup>

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit of 1986 was next to the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 a federal laws made mainly responsible for the change in how capital and credit were distributed in the South Bronx. “The Low Income Housing Tax Credit, which offers breaks to private investors who become involved in poor areas, has had a similar effect [as the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, added C.M.] since it was passed in ‘86. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, low-income housing credits are involved in well over 90 percent of all affordable rental housing produced in the United States. ‘It’s brought private-sector discipline to the production of low-income housing,’ says LISC’s [Local Initiative Support Corporation’s, added C.M.] Buzz Roberts. ‘In places like the South Bronx, it’s been indispensable”<sup>224</sup>. Furthermore, the federal government planned to establish in the Bronx business loans, a new federal office building, a job corps barracks, a mental-health center, and to renovate the Claremont Village housing project south of Charlotte Street. And at the end of the 1970s, Urban Enterprise Zones<sup>225</sup> were created to attract business in low-income urban areas in the United States, by exempting them from local, state, and federal taxes and restrictions. Urban Enterprise Zones were introduced as a solution to the inner city poverty and the movement of business out of the area. In the following decades, “for 30 years, federal anti-poverty policy was based on the idea that the way to revive ghettos was by bringing in businesses through tax breaks and creating a local job base.” But as the development of community gardens shows and as “the South Bronx experience suggests that when it comes to restoring the social fabric of the inner cities, economic development is less important than physically rebuilding an area”<sup>226</sup>.

In 1978, the federal government stated it could make available \$55 million funding from several federal agencies and demanded that the City of New York would establish a planning unit that would distribute the money to the most needed cases.<sup>227</sup> Thus the main interest of the White House and Jack Watson, the presidential aide, was to improve economic development and to establish new jobs as a basis to fight the desolate situation of housing, open space and infrastructure in low-income urban neighborhoods like the South Bronx.<sup>228</sup> The idea of the White House was to enable the people to help themselves. Thus President Carter allocated financial funds for creation of recreation facilities and parks – as he had announced when looking at the run-down neighborhoods of the South Bronx – that needed to

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<sup>220</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>221</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>222</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>223</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>224</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>225</sup> Stuart Butler, a policy analyst of the Heritage Foundation, had brought the concept of Urban Enterprise Zones from England and promoted it in the United States.

<sup>226</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>227</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 319.

<sup>228</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 320.

be matched by the City of New York. But since the City was almost bankrupt, residents stepped up to clean up and rebuild their neighborhoods and to match part of the funds through sweat equity. Patricia Ferguson explains in her article "A Brief History of Grassroots Greening" of 1999 that Carter "(...) pledged \$500,000 for new parks and recreation facilities, part of a \$10 million proposal for immediate aid to the area. (...) The grant required a 50 percent match of local funds — monies the bankrupt city government could ill afford. So, in one of the first official recognitions of the value of sweat equity, gardeners tallied up their volunteer hours — as well as the bricks, beams, and fallen telephone poles they'd recycled from their devastated community, and even the compost they generated — in order to come up with \$300,000. The city made up the remaining \$900,000 through street tress and sidewalk improvements".<sup>229</sup>

In the beginning of 1980s, when the presidential re-election was on, the South Bronx received more financial funding from the federal government. According to the Christian Science Monitor, "the South Bronx had been the beneficiary of \$175 million for programs and \$25 million in loan guarantees since Carter's visit"<sup>230</sup> and in the last weeks before the election the South Bronx Development Organization received another \$1.5 million. In overall New York City in the 1980s "(...) \$22.5 million would be invested in major projects such as sewer construction, subway station makeovers, park renovations, connecting incomplete streets, and redoing Fordham Road, a major shopping street (...)".<sup>231</sup> In 1981 Ronald Reagan was elected as President of the United States of America (1981-1989). Before his election, "on Aug. 5, 1980, (...) Reagan, who was running against President Carter, visited a vacant lot on Charlotte Street and denounced the incumbent for failing to solve urban blight".<sup>232</sup> That means he followed Carter's example of visiting the South Bronx, but turned the lack of progress in housing and open space redevelopment against Carter.

When "(...) Reagan was elected the federal government made a full-scale retreat, slashing the overall budget for affordable housing by two thirds".<sup>233</sup> The administration under President Reagan reduced the subsidizing of rental housing programs, so that the rehabilitation of apartment houses came to a stop. In 1983 the US government under President Ronald Reagan redistributed the federal budget of \$1.3 million, which had previously been allocated to the South Bronx Development Organization to divide it among four other South Bronx neighborhood groups, the MBD [The Mid Bronx Desperados, added C.M.], Bronx 2000 the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, the South Bronx Consortium.<sup>234 235</sup> Still, there was no agreement between the White House and City Hall on how to handle the South Bronx' situation and Mayor Edward Koch proceeded according to his administration's plan. Later, in 1993, when William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton became the President of the United States of America (1993-2001), he promised to change the welfare regulations, because even though "by 1990 New York City households on welfare were down to one in seven, (...) in the South Bronx the number if welfare still hovered above 40 percent".<sup>236</sup>

Even though South Bronx was on the way of being redeveloped in the beginning of the 1990s there were still lots of vacant public land next to buildings in ruins while the Median Household Income was still so low that it ranked bottom third in the nation.<sup>237</sup> In 1997 after Clinton's re-election, and 20 years after President Jimmy Carter's visit, "President Clinton made a surprise appearance in the South Bronx".<sup>238</sup> The Charlotte Street neighborhood had changed from its devastated state of the 1970s and was "now a tree-lined street of suburban-

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<sup>229</sup> Ferguson 1999 (b). [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html).

<sup>230</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 342.

<sup>231</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 370.

<sup>232</sup> Fernandez 2007, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/when-presidents-visited-the-south-bronx/>.

<sup>233</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>234</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 383.

<sup>235</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 383.

<sup>236</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 404.

<sup>237</sup> Washington Post 1999,

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16).

<sup>238</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

style houses (...).<sup>239</sup> The purpose of the visit was to point out the initiative of resident groups in redeveloping neighborhoods that had been active during Clinton's first presidency, i.e. that had received support under his administration. "(...) Clinton credited local community development groups with transforming the nation's worst slum into a livable place over the past 15 years. 'Look at where the Bronx was when [president] Carter came here in despair,' he told the crowd at the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club. 'Look at where the Bronx was when President Reagan came here and compared it to London in the Blitz. And look at the Bronx today. If you can do it, everybody can'".<sup>240</sup> Clinton "(...) hailed the South Bronx as a model for renewing inner-city areas, a once-unthinkable statement".<sup>241</sup>

In March 2009, the First Lady of the United States of America Barack Obama (2009-today), Michelle Obama, supported the self-help of residents and the public health of urban population through creating gardens by planting a 1,100 S.F. vegetable garden on the South Lawn of the White House, to encourage U.S. citizens to eat healthier food – much like Eleanor Roosevelt had done with her Victory Garden during the Second World War. Michelle Obama's garden is "(...) the first at the White House since Eleanor Roosevelt's victory garden in World War II".<sup>242</sup> She explains, that her "(...) hope (...) is that through children, they will begin to educate their families and that will, in turn, begin to educate our communities".<sup>243</sup> Michelle Obama raised the awareness of healthy food and locally grown vegetables and thus supported the community garden movement indirectly. Still, in 2010, one year later the federal government under Barack Obama threatened to cut the funding of Community Block Development Grants that funded GreenThumb significantly and thus the funding of GreenThumb. The funds were cut and for Fiscal Year 2014, i.e. in 2013, GreenThumb had about one tenth of the money of former years, i.e. only \$100,000 annually to pay for a couple of staff persons not on the payroll of the Department of Parks and Recreation and for material support for about 500 gardens citywide during that year.

#### **4.3.2.2 Actions of the municipality of New York City**

In the City of New York, during the financial crisis and fiscal crisis in 1974/1975 the Emergency Financial Control Board had been created and set in power. Then in February 1975, the budget hearings were held before the City Council and the Board of Estimate. There Bishop Ahern, as a representative of the Bronx, declared that preservation of housing should be the City's priority since there was not the time of "(...) another year to save the 36,000 housing units the HAD [Housing Development Agency, added C.M.] estimates will be lost from low and moderate (i.e. working class) income housing stock this year".<sup>244</sup> In the middle of the 1970s the city's lack of financial funding was used as an excuse to cut back infrastructural services in the South Bronx even though especially in the low-income areas like the South Bronx, the aging urban infrastructure needed updating and maintenance. City construction projects had to be stopped and city employees were laid off. Nevertheless, Yankee Stadium was renovated until 1976, a renovation treated and paid as an urban renewal effort. So while the cost for the stadium increased, plans to improve the surrounding neighborhood were neglected. When Yankee stadium was re-opened on April 15, 1976, community groups protested against the way the city had wasted money on its construction, instead of spending it on the renovation of the surrounding buildings of the South Bronx, which was in a disastrous condition at the time.

The City's administration under Mayor Abraham Beame (1974-1977), who was elected in office in 1974, renounced two years later any plans of "planned shrinkage", i.e. of deliberately cutting back on infrastructural services in low-income inner city neighborhoods<sup>245</sup>, that Housing Department Commissioner Robert Starr proposed. As the National Recreation and Park Association's study, "Open Space and Recreation Opportunity in America's Inner Cities",

<sup>239</sup> Yardley 1997, [www.nytimes.com/1997/12/11/nyregion/clinton-praises-bronx-renewal-as-us-model.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1997/12/11/nyregion/clinton-praises-bronx-renewal-as-us-model.html).

<sup>240</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>241</sup> The Times in: Fernandez 2007, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/when-presidents-visited-the-south-bronx/>.

<sup>242</sup> Burros 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html).

<sup>243</sup> Burros 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html).

<sup>244</sup> Northwest Community and Clergy Coalition files in: Jonnes 1986, p. 351.

<sup>245</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 299.

of 1974 had reported, with the decline in federal funding there were cities at the time considering "(...) planned abandonment of neighborhoods deemed nonviable or unlivable"<sup>246</sup> in order to return "(...) the inner city to the market economy may be utilized".<sup>247</sup> Some saw a conspiracy in the events and "believed that there was an organized goal to the never-ending cycle of drugs, crimes, fires, and abandonment".<sup>248</sup> It seemed obvious to New York City residents, that government officials, whether federal or municipal, had no ideas, programs and especially not the money to pay for another attempt to stop the down spiral of inner city urban development. The Committee on Housing and City Services was founded when Mayor Abraham Beame cut down on New York City's services. The Emergency Repair Program, the City's Housing and Development Administration and Commissioner Roger Starr were the first targets of the Housing Committee, which kept on pressing until a program was set up that enabled the Committee to provide changes in a housing situation immediately, i.e. within days and not within weeks.

Due to the financial situation and the lack of the interaction of governmental agencies, support for the low-income inner city areas like the South Bronx was slow or completely missing. This shows for example request by Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition to the chairman of the City's planning commission, John Zuccotti<sup>249</sup>, in December 1974 shows: They were demanding that the money allotted by the federal government to New York City would be used in rebuilding the aging buildings especially in the community of the northwest Bronx. But from the time when they applied for the allocation of the federal community development funds it would take two years until a decision would be made.<sup>250</sup> That means in 1976, after two years of reconsideration, the request to allocate the federal Community Development funds to the Bronx was denied. The letters sent immediately to city officials like the Housing Department Commissioner Roger Starr, Mayor Beame and John Zuccotti, the deputy mayor, asking for re-evaluation were turned down. The Chairwoman Anne Devenney of the City Services Committee, a senior citizen and a grandmother, led twenty-five people to occupy the office of Deputy Mayor Steve Friedman at City Hall demanding improvement of the Bronx Parks showing a long list of park-by park complaints as evidence.<sup>251</sup> The Park Commissioner Martin Lang was instructed by Friedman to provide a written response to the Committee as well as to Deputy Mayor Friedman himself and a tour by Friedman and the Park Commissioner through the parks was set up. The cycle of drugs, crime, burning buildings, abandonment and arson seemed to be out of control. Officials saw that their theories on how to fight poverty did not work and began to worry that the devastation would spread further.

In 1973 Robert Moses suggested to relocate residents of the South Bronx to newly build high-rises at Ferry Point Park in the Eastern part of the Bronx that yet would have to be built and to bulldoze the low-income housing neighborhoods of the South Bronx. According to Moses the South Bronx "(...) was beyond rebuilding, tinkering and restoring. The people living there must be moved".<sup>252</sup> The director of the Bronx office, Peter Magnani, did not see a way to revive the South Bronx either<sup>253</sup>, and the Housing Department Commissioner Robert Starr recommended in 1976 that the City should conduct a "planned shrinkage", i.e., in order to save money, deliberately cutting back on infrastructural services in low-income inner city neighborhoods and thus close down subway stations, police and firehouses and schools to then transform the South Bronx, when the area had been razed, into a "National Park".<sup>254</sup> The situation had reached a point when the social conflict and low-income housing situation was out of control and the City out of money and the theorists out of ideas. In 1977, Mayor

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<sup>246</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1984, p. 14.

<sup>247</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1984, p. 15.

<sup>248</sup> Jonnes 1984, p. 299.

<sup>249</sup> Zuccotti Park named after him received international recognition as the starting place of the Occupy Movement New York in 2011. Personal experience 2011.

<sup>250</sup> Until the late 1970, according to the Office of Management and Budget in Washington, \$180 million of the \$343 million allocated to New York City had not been spent and "(...) 80 percent of what was spent went for salaries in City agencies". (Jonnes 1986, p. 359)

<sup>251</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 355-356.

<sup>252</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>253</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 298.

<sup>254</sup> Robert Starr later denied to have suggested a park on the South Bronx area. (Jonnes 1986, p. 298)

Abraham D. Beame was running for re-election and had to act. He announced on August 3, 1977 the establishment of the Arson Suppression Team, which was made up of a hundred persons, half of them policemen and the other half fire marshals.<sup>255</sup> They made sure that the burned out and unoccupied buildings were demolished or sealed up. And they evicted junkyard owner, who bought materials, which had been stripped out of buildings. A new recommendation for legislation stated that fire insurance proceeds given to landlords, who had not paid their taxes, were to be confiscated by the City of New York. Additionally Mayor Beame recognized the new welfare rule, that families on welfare, who were suspected of burning themselves out of their apartment would lose their priority status on the Housing Authority waiting lists, as well as they would not receive the two-thousand-dollar grant for lost furniture and goods.<sup>256</sup>

In 1977, in order to deal with the decreasing quality of housing due to the lack in maintenance by landlords, the City of New York under Mayor Abraham Beame amended the in rem foreclosure law to allow foreclosure on tax delinquent properties after one year of non-payment of property taxes instead of three years. This “ (...) resulted in increasing amounts of property falling into city ownership”<sup>257</sup> and in the creation of new public open space. The intention was to turn marginal buildings with tax arrears into city-owned property before they were completely rundown and uninhabitable – and then to sell them, when the economy improved. In the meantime, most of the buildings were bricked up to prevent residential use and rubble-filled vacant land was fenced off – the city’s budget did not include funds to maintain either buildings or lots. Consequently wide tracts of public open space were created in low-income inner city areas of New York City like the South Bronx. “The problem of public ownership of land was compounded by the city’s fiscal crisis and by the increasing number of surplus properties due to changes in the municipal real estate foreclosure process”.<sup>258</sup>

Not only the housing stock was hit by the financial crisis of the 1970s, but public open space managed by the Parks Department as well. In other words, the City’s fiscal crisis also had an impact on New York City’s Parks system as the funding for the Parks Department was cut. “The city fiscal crisis seriously aggravated the problems of an already strained parks system. In the early 1970s, the Parks Department had begun to plan capital restoration projects for the parks, such as the 1973 masterplan for Central Park. Such initiatives were delayed by the fiscal crisis. Already minimal staffing levels were further cut, particularly for recreation programs”.<sup>259</sup> In 1976 “under Mayor Abraham D. Beame, two autonomous agencies, the Department of Parks & Recreation and the Department of Cultural Affairs were established in 1976 to replace the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs Administration”.<sup>260</sup> In 1978 Edward I. Koch, a registered Democrat, was elected as the new Mayor of New York City (1978-1989). The new administration under Mayor Koch and its newly renamed Department of Housing Preservation and Development, formerly known as the City’s housing agency, introduced laws that helped in the fight against abandonment and to rebuild low-income areas like the South Bronx. Especially the Housing Commissioner Nathan Leventhal and the Parks Commissioner Gordon Davis brought change to the South Bronx, improving the housing and open space situation in the area. In addition the former city planning commissioner Victor Marrero had taken the position of the undersecretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Carter’s administration and was pressing for projects in the Bronx.

When Edward I. Koch was elected as the new Mayor of New York City in 1978, he signed on the Bronx’ Congressman Herman Badillo as Deputy Mayor. Badillo took on the task of the redevelopment of the South Bronx by getting rid off the poverty programs and analyzed the existing community corporations to eliminate those that could not proof good reason for their existence. His aim was it to create new housing and to improve the condition of the South

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<sup>255</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 310.

<sup>256</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 310.

<sup>257</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43

<sup>258</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 43.

<sup>259</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>260</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

Bronx visible for the whole nation. He hired Edward J. Logue<sup>261</sup> of the South Bronx Development Organization, who was a specialist in urban renewal and large-scale building and had constructed for example thirty thousand housing units as the leader of the Urban Development Corporation in New York State.<sup>262</sup> On April 12, 1978, Mayor Edward Koch and Herman Badillo laid out a housing plan, the so-called "Ten Year Plan" that would cost \$1.5 billion. But Herman Badillo's plan was discarded and he resigned from his position. Edward Logue on the other hand convinced Mayor Koch, the White House and the New York Port Authority to develop an industrial park on Bathgate Avenue in the South Bronx on a site of twenty- one-acre. The City's supported the project with \$3.1 million and the federal government's money with \$4.3 million to construct a large industrial building that was to be occupied by private businesses. In addition the Bronx boroughs president, Fernando Ferrer, supported the effort of Mayor Edward Koch where he could and did not interfere on a political basis. "(...) The Bronx also benefited from the skill and honesty of its own borough president, Fernando Ferrer, a former city planner".<sup>263</sup> Koch used his inauguration to send New Yorkers a message of redemption: "These have been hard times. We have been drawn across the knife-edge of poverty. We have been shaken by troubles that would have destroyed any other city. But we are not any other city. We are the city of New York and New York in adversity towers above any other city in the world".<sup>264</sup> Koch followed through with bringing quality of life back to New York City: Under Koch, the city's annual budget doubled to \$26 billion and approximately \$19 billion was spent on capital projects in the 1980's.<sup>265</sup>

Mayor Koch brought change to the South Bronx in regard to housing and open space use - proving what Jill Jones states in her book "South Bronx Rising" of 1986, "(...) when it come to housing mayors matter deeply".<sup>266</sup> But he was not able to move forward as fast as he intended. "In the wake of Jimmy Carter's celebrated visit to the rubble of Charlotte Gardens in 1977, Mayor Ed Koch tried to put up new housing on the site, but the city's Board of Estimate voted him down".<sup>267</sup> The City Board of Estimate voted on February 8, 1979 on closing off Charlotte Street, i.e. the members of the Board voted against the proposed new housing on Charlotte Street. Many board members spoke out with conviction against investing more of the federal housing money in the Bronx since expensive projects had ended there many times unsuccessfully like the \$2.8 million renovation of nine building in Fox Street, which had been abandoned after addicts had set a fire after the first year, or like the total destruction of twenty buildings renovated with the money from the Mott Haven Housing Development Fund. In February 1980 Mayor Koch introduced a new small-houses program that was federally subsidized and was intended to provide funding for the development of 250 single-family houses in the South Bronx. The four sites considered in the proposal were to be built up with suburban style houses with small front lawns and driveways instead of with densely built five and six-story brick tenement buildings that used to be there.

In the early 1980s the development of an industrial park on Bathgate Avenue South of the Cross Bronx Expressway in the South Bronx was started: 21 abandoned building in eight blocks were demolished with funding by the municipal and the federal government's and an industrial building complex for private businesses was to be constructed.<sup>268</sup> To the administration it was better to demolish vacated residential buildings, "(...) two thousand of which blight the South Bronx, potential havens for villainy, illegal dumping, and rats".<sup>269</sup> The construction of seven huge industrial buildings on the site was promoted actively by the Port Authority. This area along Bathgate Avenue, which had once been hosting a lively Jewish market, was after the demolition to be occupied by a twenty-one-acre industrial park featuring

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<sup>261</sup> Edward J. Logue was in addition responsible for example for the housing units on Roosevelt Island in New York City. When the Urban Development Corporation in New York State was near bankruptcy he had resigned his job in 1975 as its head and wanted to reestablish his reputation with the resurrection of the South Bronx. (Jonnes 1986, p. 319)

<sup>262</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 319.

<sup>263</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>264</sup> [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html#koch](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html#koch).

<sup>265</sup> [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html#koch](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html#koch).

<sup>266</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 431.

<sup>267</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>268</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 385.

<sup>269</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 387.

firms like Aircraft Supplies, Majestic Shapes, Amco Printers, Collectors Guild, Clay Park Labs, and the South Bronx Greenhouses. This new industry was to be attracted to this area, which had at the time, according to Ed Logue, "three million square feet of empty industrial space".<sup>270</sup>

In 1985, Koch was re-elected for the third time as the Mayor of New York. Especially in this third term, Mayor Koch played a significant role in restarting urban development the South Bronx. Robert Worth describes Koch's contribution in his article Worth, Guess Who Saved the Bronx, "It took three things to turn the city's head back towards the Bronx. First, the financial crisis ended and the city got back into the bond market in the early '80s, freeing it to spend money. Second, by the mid-'80s homeless men and women were living in cardboard boxes on Fifth Avenue, prompting an outbreak of civic concern and putting political pressure on Koch to build more affordable housing. Still, a third element was required: political commitment. Koch could have ignored the Bronx after his re-election in 1985, but he chose to follow through on an unprecedented 'Ten Year Plan' for affordable housing".<sup>271</sup> In April 1986, New York City had finally made it out of its years lasting financial crisis and Mayor Koch announced that billions of dollar would be spend over the next ten years to renovate and rehabilitate more than 100,000 units of housing. Under the citywide "Ten Year Plan" for affordable housing that Koch installed \$4.1 billion were allocated in reconstruction and was later upped to \$5.1 billion.

The rebuilding of the Bronx and especially the South Bronx was a main part of Koch's Ten Year Plan. "According to the city's department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD), some \$1.3 billion of city funds went into the South Bronx alone".<sup>272</sup> The City's administration under Mayor Edward Koch created a \$5.1 billion ten-year housing plan that eventually rehabilitated the South Bronx building situation. "A quarter of the rehabbed apartments went to house the homeless".<sup>273</sup> With support of this plan for example the district of Community Board 3 in the center of the South Bronx, "(...) gained 2,822 subsidized housing units, largely under the New York City Housing Partnership home ownership program".<sup>274</sup> Many of the units build by the New York City Housing Partnership were situated in "(...) two- or three-family houses, with gated parking spaces filling what could be a yard".<sup>275</sup> According to Robert Worth in his article "Guess Who Saved the Bronx" of 1999 the advantage of the Ten Year Plan over other development efforts of the last decade was that Koch followed "(...) a few basic principles (...)"<sup>276</sup> that can be summarized as "Use what's there. (...) Maintain a mix of incomes. (...) Use Third Parties. (...) Invest in neighborhoods, not just housing. (...) Don't put too much faith in 'economic development'".<sup>277</sup>

Looking at the proposals by Robert Moses of 1973 proposing to move the residents out of the South Bronx and by Robert Starr of 1976 suggesting the "planned shrinkage" of the area, "the Koch administration reversed this draconian logic, recognizing that it would be foolish not to make use of the city's countless abandoned buildings. 'We made a conscious decision that we could make scarce resources go farther if we did rehabilitation,' says Paul Crotty, Koch's housing commissioner from '86 to '88. In part, this decision grew out of a desire to maintain whatever sense of community was left, as the CDCs [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.] had been doing for years. But it also made economic sense. The cost of a 'gut rehab,' in which everything but the building's outer walls is removed and replaced, turned out to be \$65,000 per apartment, versus \$135,000 if you built from scratch".<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Interview with Ed Logue, 9. August, 1984 in: Jonnes 1986, p. 384.

<sup>271</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>272</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>273</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 398.

<sup>274</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>275</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>276</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>277</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>278</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

Due to the set up of the federal funds allocated by Carter to New York City, the City needed to match the federal funding – something which the Community Development Corporations had been doing with sweat equity when renovating housing in low-income neighborhoods in New York City since the late 1970s. Now, in the middle of the 1980s, since the City was financially down, the administration under Koch had to be inventive to make this happen. “(...) The city would sell the building for a dollar to the owner, usually a local nonprofit. The city would then contribute some portion of the money necessary for the rehab--depending on the income level of the prospective tenants. The rest would come in part from the owner, and in part through a loan arranged by the intermediary, or even by a bank. The city would often eliminate real estate taxes on these buildings for a specified period, so that the owner could charge lower rents for low-income residents. The result was a process that protected the city from swindlers--as previous construction efforts had not--by exposing the owner to the risks of a private loan. ‘We spent almost \$5.1 billion and there was never a hint of scandal,’ says Paul Crotty, the former housing commissioner. Equally important, the City’s plan allowed small local owners to finance a rehab without the tremendous risk and red tape of financing it themselves. ‘The key thing was that we created a system where small owners could work with a complex program,’ says Michael Lappin, president of the Community Preservation Corporation, which arranged loans for many of the rehabs. ‘All they had to do was get the job done. That allowed the city to engage the energy and resources of small businesses as they never had before”<sup>279</sup>.

Finally even more money, \$5.2 billion overall, was invested, 36 percent of which was used in the Bronx. The reason was that due to the ongoing tax defaults of the former landlords, the city had become the owner of the abandoned buildings in the borough, one third of which had already been demolished and the vacant land was therefore ready for re-development. Fortunate for the situation of the Bronx out of the City’s perspective was the great number of non-profit community corporations that had over the years slowly revived their neighborhood. These nonprofit Bronx community corporations were incorporated into the massive rebuilding program by the City’s administration under Mayor Koch that had not been seen before in this scale. That means the municipality’s plan helped to create new and subsidized affordable housing in the City and opened the opportunity for many private businessmen to buy and improve buildings. The City of New York did not object to this grassroots activism, but tolerated the voluntary efforts of the local residents as a welcome relief to the city’s budget. Not only were buildings revived, but also the open space next to those buildings was transformed into gardens by community groups.

While residents regained social control over their neighborhood and quality of life improved, their rehabilitation efforts, including the community gardens they had started, attracted media attention and nationwide public interest. More and more community gardens were started all over the city and run-down neighborhoods revived. To cope with the community gardens movement and “(...) to regulate the unofficial use of city land by the Latino and African Americans for community gardens,”<sup>280</sup> the city’s administration under Mayor Edward Koch supported the creation of the federally funded municipal community gardens program Operation GreenThumb in 1978 as a part of the City Department of General Services. The program provided material and technical assistance while leasing land to residents’ groups creating gardens on public and private land. In 1987, New York State Office of Community Gardens was established in 1987 within the Department of Agriculture and Markets. This supported community gardening in New York City in a variety of ways, but due to layoffs under the administration of New York State Governor Cuomo the job position of the staff who ran this office was eliminated.<sup>281</sup> The city’s administration under Mayor David Dinkins (1989-1993) sold city-owned apartment houses in the South Bronx that were drug-dealing centers destabilizing the neighborhood to local non-profit organization in the early 1990s under its new Neighborhood Ownership Works program.<sup>282</sup> The assumption was that if the landlords would not tolerate drug dealing in their building, drug problems would not persist in a neighborhood. Therefore the City sold apartment houses on city-owned land to non-profit

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<sup>279</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>280</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 81.

<sup>281</sup> More Gardens! [www.moregardens.org/node/147](http://www.moregardens.org/node/147).

<sup>282</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 430.

groups in the early 1990s in an effort to stabilize the neighborhood, but also to improve tax income for the City.

In 1993 when Rudolph Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, was elected as the Mayor of New York City (1994-2001), the City budget had a \$2.2 billion gap, so that Giuliani went out to restore the city's income and budget.<sup>283</sup> Giuliani lowered the projected spending by \$7.8 billion through a series of cost cutting measures and "productivity improvements". In addition he reduced the city's payroll by over 20,000 jobs without layoffs. The consequence of these measurements was that under Giuliani the rate of spending was kept for the first time in New York City history below the rate of inflation and that a \$500 million reserve fund was created.<sup>284</sup> In 1993 there were 1.1 million New Yorkers on welfare in 1993. To bring an end to politics that encouraged dependency on public assistance, in March 1995 Giuliani implemented the largest workfare program in the United States, but welfare reforms cut off many people from support, which saved the city, the state and the federal government millions in funds.<sup>285</sup> In the same year, Giuliani appointed William Bratton as the new Police Commissioner with the objective to restore public order by fining each and every crime and to enforce all laws. In 1995 the administration under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani transferred the community gardens program Operation GreenThumb from the Department of General Services to the Department of Parks and Recreation and changed the name to "GreenThumb" to make it sound less like a combat unit. The transfer of GreenThumb to the Parks Department meant that gardens that had leases with GreenThumb were moved in the jurisdiction of the Parks Department if they succeeded in a process screening their suitability that involved community boards and Parks officials. In addition, from 1995 onward, instead of the leases, garden groups signed license agreements. This new administrative development was seen by community garden groups as a step towards preserving public land for more permanent gardening use. "With the transfer of GreenThumb to Parks & Recreation in 1995, gardens could be preserved garden by being transferred to Parks jurisdiction".<sup>286</sup>

Figure 13: Housing development in the South Bronx endangered community gardens. View of the corner of Courtlandt Avenue and East 158<sup>th</sup> Street, June 20, 2005. Photo: Carolin Mees.

In 1996, "(...) a mayoral directive mandated DGS [Department of General Services] auction its entire disposable vacant land inventory within five years"<sup>287</sup> in order to push for a fast private housing development. At the same time, "the Department of Housing Preservation & Development (...) was charged to develop (...), not only the vacant land in its own inventory, but also the DGS [Department of General Services, added C.M.] land for which it had an 'administrative hold'".<sup>288</sup> With the ongoing development of public open land for housing in the City, community gardening groups became afraid to lose their gardens and began to organize themselves to preserve the public land they used for gardening sometimes already for decades. "Traditionally, if unofficially, as long as gardens were actively used and well maintained, they were exempt from auction except in special cases, e.g., the construction of a health center in a neighborhood. Now, however, no one knew or would say whether that exemption would continue".<sup>289</sup>

In 1997, the common organizational effort of the various community garden organizations active in New York City led to the attempt by New York State Senator John L. Sampson to introduce legislation regulating that community gardens was to be protected as public parkland. According to Sampson the approval of the community board as well as of the Parks Department should be the basis for transforming public garden land into public parkland. But the City's administration under Mayor Giuliani refused to be compelled to manage and finance more parkland and referred to the so-called "home rule" of self-governance. This law is different from state to state in the United States, but it ensures overall that a centrally acting local government needs to receive a large degree of rights of self-governance. The

<sup>283</sup> [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html#giuliani](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html#giuliani).

<sup>284</sup> [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html#giuliani](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html#giuliani).

<sup>285</sup> Centennial Classroom, [www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist\\_info/mayors.html#giuliani](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html#giuliani).

<sup>286</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>287</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>288</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>289</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).





Figure 13: Housing development in the South Bronx endangered community gardens. View of the corner of Courtlandt Avenue and East 158th Street, June 20, 2005. Photo: Carolin Mees.



“home rule” is part of the constitution of the State of New York since 1923. Since Giuliani refused to accept community gardens as the City’s public parkland, the city continued to construct housing on community garden land. The preservation of public land for community gardening per legislation was stopped, but the discussion of the categorization of community garden land as parkland to preserve them in the same way that traditional parks are preserved came up again in 2010 before the Community Garden rules were established and continues until today.

In May 1998, “only a handful of gardens in Manhattan CB [Community Board, added C.M.] 3 and in Brooklyn CB [Community Board, added C.M.] 6 - had been approved for transfer to Parks when, (...) a reversal in City policy regarding its community gardens (...) [took place, added C.M.]. In order to grant HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] quicker access to properties for which it had administrative holds the management of all gardens on DCAS [Department of Citywide Administrative Services, added C.M.] land was transferred to HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.]. (Although these gardens were under DCAS [Department of Citywide Administrative Services, added C.M.] jurisdiction, they had been, since 1995, managed by Parks.) GreenThumb licenses, which offered some measure of protection, were no longer valid. At one point, transferring the GreenThumb program to HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] was discussed. However, it was decided that GreenThumb would remain a Parks & Recreation program”.<sup>290</sup> Thus in 1998, all but a handful gardens were transferred to jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. “The move shocked the staff of Green Thumb and the city’s nonprofit greening groups, which have spent tens of thousands of dollars and in materials and training to help establish many of the gardens now up for sale. ‘In the past, there was always an unspoken policy that no viable garden which was actively used and well-maintained would be put up for sale at an unrestricted auction,’ notes former Green Thumb director Jane Weissman, who resigned from her post last fall. ‘We lost a few gardens through restricted sales — say for a community health center or subsidized housing — but they were never just put up for open speculation’”.<sup>291</sup>

The City Record had already announced in December 1998 that the City planned to sell 114 community gardens at auction in May 1999 for the reason of developing more affordable housing in the city.<sup>292</sup> With this announcement, Giuliani bluntly ignored residents’ groups actively using and maintaining these public open spaces for their neighborhoods. Instead he showed “(...) little but contempt for the gardeners’ cause. Asked at a January 11 [1999, added C.M.] press conference why he was selling off so many community havens he remarked, ‘This is a free-market economy — welcome to the era after communism’”.<sup>293</sup> Before the auction, “from the about 400 community gardens endangered by the auction, land with 30 gardens was to be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation (...) pending local community board approval”.<sup>294</sup> Those gardens were chosen by HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] based on the fact that their sites were not suitable for housing development and that the community used them actively, which was determined by the community boards. This was determined by the community boards, who were “(...) required to conduct a formal review of the gardens and to determine two things: that the land was no longer a priority housing site and that it would better serve the community as permanent open space”.<sup>295</sup> Giuliani threatened community gardeners, whose gardens were not on the list for the auction, by pointing out that public land licensed through GreenThumb was from the beginning on to be used temporarily for gardening only.

The newspaper Newsday reported on January 12, 1999, that Mayor Giuliani implied that any opposition to the sale of public land with community gardens would undercut the future of the City’s Green Thumb program: ‘I think people who are interested in these gardens are going to

<sup>290</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>291</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>292</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>293</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>294</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>295</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

ruin this program because they're reneging on the deal, and ultimately politicians won't turn over these properties on a temporary basis... It's like, when people make a deal, they shake hands; they have to both live up to it.' (Newsday, Jan. 12, 1999)".<sup>296</sup> In response to the announcement to auction off community garden land, community gardeners organized themselves citywide as one group and staged protests to make the general public aware of their situation. "Some of the protesters denounced the Giuliani administration for moving to sell the gardens at a time when the city was experiencing a record budget surplus of more than \$2 billion. But administration officials have long maintained that the city has met all legal requirements for selling the lots and that many of them are trash-strewn and better suited to development than gardening".<sup>297</sup> Still the plan to auction off public land with community gardens not only angered community gardening groups, but also "(...) outraged elected officials. 'They said these lots were for housing, and it's a lie,' charged Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, whose borough has 19 gardens on the list. 'What they're having is a cake sale.' (New York Times, Jan. 11, 1999)".<sup>298</sup> In his argument against the auction with the subsequent demolition of gardens for housing construction, "Ferrer and others (...) pointed out that many of the gardens exist[ed, added C.M.] on small or odd-shaped lots which would barely be useful as parking lots. Even the normally staid New York Times called the prospect of bulldozing well-used gardens 'an act of neighborhood violence.' (Jan. 14, 1999)".<sup>299</sup>

The non-profit organization Green Guerillas helped pushing the lawsuit by General State Attorney Eliot Spitzer, because "the Attorney General had declined to file this suit on behalf of community gardens prior to April 1999, no doubt loath to alienate powerful political interests supporting housing construction on garden sites. He was motivated to launch the suit by the Giuliani administration's decision in January 1999, to sell over 100 community garden sites at an open auction to be held May 13th".<sup>300</sup> In detail, "the Attorney General's suit, joined by non-profit open space advocacy groups and individual gardeners, charged that the State was denied its right to environmental review when the City transferred hundreds of garden properties to HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.]. It further argued that because the community gardens are used as de facto parkland, they are entitled to the additional protections from development afforded parklands under State law".<sup>301</sup> The lawsuit stopped Giuliani from auctioning off the over 100 gardens, since it "(...) blocked the sale or destruction of any of the city's remaining 650 community gardens without an environmental impact study. The suit argues that gardens in existence for 20 or 30 years have in essence become public parkland, said Christopher Amato, an assistant attorney general working on the case".<sup>302</sup> Then on May 12, 1999, the Brooklyn State Supreme Court issued a temporary injunction - after the State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer had filed a law suit against the City for neglecting to assess the environmental impact of community gardens - and the auction was stopped by and the City agreed to sell the gardens to The Trust for Public Land and the New York Restoration Project<sup>303</sup> for \$4.2 million for 114 community gardens situated on public land.<sup>304</sup> New York State General Attorney Elliot L. Spitzer became

<sup>296</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>297</sup> Herszenhorn 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html).

<sup>298</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>299</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>300</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>301</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>302</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>303</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>304</sup> As with other numbers of community gardens in New York City, this number varies from 119 gardens up for auction (Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html)) to 118 gardens (New York Times, [www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html)) to 114 gardens (Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 8) to 112 gardens (Herszenhorn, Protesters Fight Auctioning Of Community Garden Sites) sold to TPL and NYRP. But the number of 112 gardens seems to be correct since, "(...) two gardens were removed from the auction list by the Giuliani administration in response to community pressure -- one in Park Slope, Brooklyn, that is across the street from a church and is used by local schoolchildren, and one in Corona, Queens, that is next to a day care center". (Herszenhorn 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html))

involved again in the community garden movement in 2002. In February 2002, Spitzer evoked a temporary restraining order to prevent further auctioning off community gardens' land and about half a year later, in September 2002, the agreement was reached.

After the auction, the community gardeners in New York City had received publicity, had organized themselves and thus had proved that they were not to be neglected by the municipal government as an interest group. Thus, after the unsuccessful auction, the city's officials wanted to move on and not to be reminded any longer of the failure of the municipal government of the 1970s. Edith Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001-2013, states in 2000, "For many elected officials, community gardens, as the popular response by private citizens to the devastating abandonment and neglect brought upon by the city's fiscal crisis in the Seventies, are an unsavory reminder of bad times".<sup>305</sup> In 2000, some city officials proposed to review community gardens on public land and to preserve them if the community actively used them. Thus "a growing number of elected officials (...) [was, added C.M.] making distinctions between historic community gardens that deserve preservation and gardens of lesser import. A bill filed (...) by Councilman Kenneth K. Fisher of Brooklyn and others would require a case-by-case review of all the gardens on city-owned land, preserving the ones that anchor their communities".<sup>306</sup> In other words, the legislation proposed by Councilman Fisher "(...) would recognize gardens that have become more than a place to grow corn. The Design Trust [for Public Land, added C.M.], along with other groups like Trust for Public Land, the Green Guerrillas and the Municipal Arts Society, (...) [were, added C.M.] backing the legislation".<sup>307</sup> In the middle of 2000s the Governor of New York City, George Pataki, "(...) focused on the needs of densely populated neighborhoods, particularly those threatened by poverty and decay".<sup>308</sup> In addition he was aware of the lacking of open space especially in low-income neighborhoods, supporting community gardens. "The governor's priority for these areas has been to protect and increase open spaces typical of urban areas, including small-scale parks, waterfront access areas, and community gardens".<sup>309</sup>

In 2003 Mayor Michael Bloomberg (2002-2014) announced to support the construction or the restoration of affordable housing units with the so-called "(...) New Housing market plan that was to be realized by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (...) and, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (...)".<sup>310</sup> In detail "the plan is a multi-billion dollar initiative to finance 165,000 units of affordable housing for half a million New Yorkers by the close of fiscal year 2014. For every dollar invested by the City, the plan has leveraged \$3.41 in private funding, amounting to a total commitment to date of more than \$19.4 billion to fund the creation or preservation of over 130,770 units of affordable housing across the five boroughs".<sup>311</sup> By 2012, under the New Housing market plan "(...) nearly 40,400 units (...) [were, added C.M.] financed in the Bronx, with 7,190 of those units in Bronx Community Board 1 where Via Verde is located".<sup>312</sup> The change of the South Bronx from 2000 until 2012 was addressed by Mayor Bloomberg in a speech held in the South Bronx in 2012. He states that it was due to the City's urban planning strategies that the South Bronx revived – not acknowledging that it was the activities of the residents that had remained living in the area and had become active to renovate their neighborhoods despite purposeful neglect by the

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<sup>305</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>306</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>307</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>308</sup> *Theodore Roosevelt – Alfred E. Smith – Nelson Rockefeller – George Pataki*. The New York State Preservationist, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, p. 23.

<sup>309</sup> *Theodore Roosevelt – Alfred E. Smith – Nelson Rockefeller – George Pataki*. The New York State Preservationist, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, p. 23.

<sup>310</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-105](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-105).

<sup>311</sup> United States. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-105](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-105).

<sup>312</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-105](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-105).

local. “If ever there was a community that knows how powerful targeted city investments can be, it’s where we are today, the South Bronx. This area was once so burned out and abandoned that it was compared to Dresden after the Second World War. Today, the South Bronx is a poster child for urban revitalization, and one of the people who really deserves enormous credit for that is with us today: Mayor Ed Koch. Thank you, Ed. Mayor Koch showed that investment in affordable housing is a key element of a successful economic development agenda. Over the past decade, we’ve created or preserved 30,000 units of affordable housing here in the South Bronx alone and more than 150,000 units across the city”.<sup>313</sup>

On September 18, 2002 a settlement was reached between Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York State Attorney Eliot Spitzer, called the “Community Gardens Agreement” or the “Community Gardens Settlement” that determined Spitzer’s restraining order and thus allowed the development of some garden sites, while preserving others by transferring them to the jurisdiction of the Parks Department. The settlement was to run out in 2010, since Mayor Bloomberg assumed that his term would run out and that he would be out of office by the time the settlement was over in 2010 and then leaving it up to the next Mayor to deal with the community gardens on public land. But Bloomberg’s term was extended for a third term, something that is out of the ordinary in New York City, where law calls for a two-year term. Thus in October 2010, the community garden rules were set up in order to continue to regulate community gardens and the settlement’s preservation of community gardens.

In 2007 PlaNYC 2030, a comprehensive plan that brings together over agencies to work together on the future development of New York City was started. In the beginning this plan did not include community gardens, but pointed out that there were a lot of neighborhoods in New York City without a Park within a 10 minute walking distance.<sup>314</sup> Then in 2011, due to the lobbying activities of community gardeners and the New York City Community Gardening Coalition, PlaNYC 2030 was updated to acknowledge community gardens and encourage the development of urban agriculture projects throughout the five boroughs.<sup>315</sup> The Mayor’s Office Obesity Task Force and the Urban Agriculture Task Force developed due to this plan.

#### **4.3.2.3 The municipal community gardens program “GreenThumb”**

In 1978 a municipal community garden program was installed by the Koch administration under the name “Operation GreenThumb” as part of the Department of General Services and the city’s Division of Real Property. The new community garden program was based on the Neighborhood Open Space Coalitions liability program for community gardens, since “gardeners and greening groups had pressured for the program as a way of legitimizing their efforts. ‘They realized they were squatting and wanted some recognition of their right to be there,’ says former Green Thumb director Jane Weisman”.<sup>316</sup> When Operation GreenThumb was installed in 1978 “The Green Thumb program was designed to support gardeners in an already existing garden instead of creating garden space. Through its Plant and People Grant program, Green Thumb, provided funds and expertise for vacant land to be utilized in neighborhood revitalization efforts. (Schmelzkopf, Urban Community Gardens as Contested Space, p. 375) Operation Green Thumb (...) would lease vacant property to gardeners for a monthly price of \$1”.<sup>317 318</sup>

In 1978 “for a year GreenThumb operated with one part time staff person whose sole function was to issue leases. Permission to garden the land was authorized by a city-wide land use committee (this committee had many names over the years) that determined the disposition of city-owned land, e.g., to be sold at auction, selected for housing and commercial

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<sup>313</sup> Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s 2012 State of the City 2012, [www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor\\_press\\_release&catID=1194&doc\\_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2012a%2Fpr014-12.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1](http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2012a%2Fpr014-12.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1).

<sup>314</sup> PlaNYC 2030. [www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml).

<sup>315</sup> Personal experience 2011.

<sup>316</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>317</sup> This is different today, since today community gardens on public land are leased to garden groups of a minimum of 10 persons for free for a one- to four-year term depending on the jurisdiction.

<sup>318</sup> Schmelzkopf 1995, p. 375.

development, assigned to other agencies for open space, parking, or building construction. Leases were issued to community gardeners who requested land for which no immediate use was identified".<sup>319</sup> The administration of Mayor Edward Koch supported community gardening in New York City with this program under the military sounding name "Operation GreenThumb" to support residents' groups active to alleviate the severe situation in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx, but at the same time installed it to have a program to control the illegal use of city-owned land while curbing privatization of the sites – i.e. "(...) as a bureaucratic means to control the ad-hoc appropriation of abandoned land".<sup>320</sup> As for the duration of the community gardening effort, "from the start, the City made clear that all leases were issued on a 'temporary' basis".<sup>321</sup> That means, the objective of the program was from the beginning to administratively take care of the ongoing use of public land for community gardening by distributing short-term leases to gardening groups. In other words, "from the beginning, GreenThumb was described as an 'interim site' program, with access to land between demolition and development".<sup>322</sup>

The main purpose of Operation GreenThumb was to distribute leases and consequently, "for a year, GreenThumb operated with one part time staff person whose sole function was to issue leases".<sup>323</sup> This distribution of leases through Operation GreenThumb was based on the decisions that a citywide land use committee made on the suitability of land for community gardening purposes. That means, in the late 1970s, "permission to garden the land was authorized by a city-wide land use committee (this committee had many names over the years) that determined the disposition of city-owned land, e.g., to be sold at auction, selected for housing and commercial development, assigned to other agencies for open space, parking, or building construction".<sup>324</sup> Consequently, the use of public land for private residential or commercial development as well as for public uses such as parking or public housing were considered first by the city-wide land use committee before community gardening was granted. In 2012 the Urban Agriculture Task Force had also to determine which land was suitable for community gardening purposes and that there also was a competition between real estate and community gardening use of public land. Residents groups interested to have a legal standing on using public land for community gardening approached Operation GreenThumb to acquire leases and then "leases were issued to community gardeners who requested land for which [the city-wide land use committee, added C.M.] no immediate use was identified".<sup>325</sup> During the first years, Operation GreenThumb leased "(...) plots for \$1 a year. (...) In order to enter the Green Thumb program, gardeners had to agree to vacate their plots within 30 days if the land was ever selected for development".<sup>326</sup> Later, in 1983, leases were extended for some garden sites to longer terms.

During the late 1970s, even though the parent agency of Operation GreenThumb was the Division of Real Property, the Division of Real Estate, which I am assuming is the same division, can sell community garden land that is leased with GreenThumb thus undermining GreenThumb's interest in community use of open space and improvement of the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods. "(...) The results of the Department of General Services' Operation Green Thumb program, which is interested in neighborhood improvement through the use of vacant lots as community gardens, can be quickly undone by the Division of Real Estate's public auction process, which can sell a lot out from under the GreenThumb group".<sup>327</sup> Consequently community gardening in New York City was a very insecure land use at the time. By the 1983 the leases for some community gardens were extended and the City began "(...) issuing some five and ten-year leases"<sup>328</sup>. But property interests remained

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<sup>319</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>320</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>321</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>322</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>323</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>324</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>325</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>326</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>327</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>328</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson (1984) are convinced that the administration under Koch has promoted the community-open space movement. "On numerous fronts, progress has been made since 1981 that enhances the community open-space movement in New York City (...)". (Francis, Cashdan

primary; any gardens occupying land valued at over \$20,000 could not receive a long-term lease”.<sup>329</sup> In other words the “directors of Operation Green Thumb (...) recognized the value of long-term control of city-owned garden sites”.<sup>330</sup> That means, “through early discussions with representatives of the Council of the Environment and suggestions from representatives of The Trust for Public Land, Operation Green Thumb has convinced its parent agency, the city’s Division of Real Property, to agree to a long-term lease policy”.<sup>331</sup>

At the middle of the 1980s, community gardening land was not leased for free, but the cost for the community group using it depended on the assessed valuation of the land. “This policy provides for a longer lease term at an average of less than \$250 per year (dependent upon assessed valuation), provided that the community group is incorporated and can afford to insure the site”.<sup>332</sup> In the following years, concerns about community “(...) gardens’ future were addressed by GreenThumb’s Long Term Leasing Program (...). Not only did over 30 gardens secure a long-term lease, but also two gardens, whose appraisals were beyond the qualifying threshold, were designated as Preservation Sites. Although the Preservation Site gardens remained under DGS [(Department of General Services), added C.M.] jurisdiction, they were removed from the agency’s inventory of disposable land”.<sup>333</sup> Today, GreenThumb license agreements ask for two persons functioning as GreenThumb’s contact persons that will sign the license and for the names of an additional group of a minimum of ten persons that will participate in the garden. The gardeners agree to observe certain rules: for example, the lease “(...) will be terminated if there is an ‘illegal structure’ on the property, an ambiguous term defined as ‘any enclosed structure’”.<sup>334</sup>

#### 4.3.2.4 Financial funding for community open spaces

During the middle of the 1970s “(...) the number of vacant parcels owned by the city or privately owned but significantly delinquent in back taxes (...) continued to increase. Most city agencies (...) [were, added C.M.] not in a position to cope with the problem. Municipal budget cuts and the attitude of ‘owner of last resort’ weaken[ed, added C.M.] the city’s ability to effectively manage and maintain these properties”.<sup>335</sup> While the number of public open land increased, “the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation (...) [had, added C.M.] been unable to maintain existing municipal open-space resources to meet the needs of changing populations and age groups”.<sup>336</sup> In 1978 “Mayor Edward I. Koch appointed Parks Commissioner Gordon J. Davis, who initiated ‘load-shedding’ management policies to improve maintenance for parks. Many parks facilities, such as ice skating rinks and golf courses, were turned over to private concessionaires who operate and maintain them by permit”.<sup>337</sup> Then in 1981 “as the city reentered the municipal bond market in 1981, Mayor Koch issued his first ten-year capital plan. The plan proposed a \$750 million commitment to rebuild the city’s parks. For the first time in years, the Parks Department was also building up its permanent work force, which had fallen to under 2,500 workers in 1980 from over 5,200 in 1965”.<sup>338</sup>

In 1982 “the Department of Parks & Recreation began to decentralize its administration. Borough commissioners were appointed by the Park Commissioner to manage agency operations locally, in cooperation with central administration in the Arsenal. Since 1984, all

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and Paxson 1984, p. 51) But they add, “(...) Further city protection of community open-space interests is needed”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 51) They explain that “changes in administrative procedure indicate an acceptance of the long-term value of the community open-space movement, and city policies that support rather than inhibit the community open-space movement are now being helped”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 51)

<sup>329</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>330</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>331</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>332</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>333</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>334</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 81.

<sup>335</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 43-44.

<sup>336</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 43-44.

<sup>337</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>338</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

five boroughs have been administrated by borough park commissioners”.<sup>339</sup> In 1983 the “newly appointed Parks & Recreation Commissioner Henry J. Stern established the “Greening Policy” for the Parks Department. Green spaces and trees were given new consideration and protection in an effort to revitalize the city’s only living infrastructure: parks”.<sup>340</sup> While the administration renovated the set up of the Parks Department, residents of low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx renovated their buildings and cleaned up the “vacant lots”, i.e. the new public open spaces, next to them to start community gardens. “By 1976, their efforts were beginning to win over government officials, including Brooklyn Congressman Fred Richmond, who pushed through a federal program to support urban gardening<sup>341</sup>”.<sup>342</sup> During the first years, residents were gardening illegally, but tolerated on public open land – i.e. they were squatting on the land as they were in most cases squatting in the apartment houses next to it. “By 1978, scores of community gardens were flourishing by dint of hard labor and donated plants from nurseries and residents replanting their outdoor spaces. The one thing, however, that the gardeners did not have was permission to garden this city-owned land; technically they were squatters”.<sup>343</sup>

The local open-space groups active in transforming public open space into community gardens in New York City during the late 1970s were assisted by private organizations, but soon “New York City (...) developed programs to help local groups manage city-owned open spaces. These include[d, added C.M.] the Department of General Services’ Operation Green Thumb program, which leases city-owned property for community gardens; the Department of Parks and Recreation’s Volunteers in Parks program, for neighborhood groups who (...) [wanted, added C.M.] to repair and manage city park; and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development’s Site improvement program, which (...) [provided, added C.M.] community development funds for constructing parks maintained by local residents”.<sup>344</sup> That means the Department of General Services, the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development became involved to support residents in maintaining public land and property. Since most of the public open space used to be private land that had been built up with apartment buildings before the 1970s, most of the through demolition created public open space was now in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, but used by residential purposes for community gardening. Thus in 1978, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development began to spend \$3.6 million to develop new housing that included open space for gardening on vacated lots in low-income neighborhoods.<sup>345</sup> The new residents were encouraged to maintain these gardens, but HPD did not provide any support in the form of tools or other supplies to the residents to do so. In addition, there was neither a participatory planning process nor cooperative development of those gardens, so that soon the gardens were abandoned due to lack of interest by the community.<sup>346</sup>

In order to appease the City, which was aware of residents’ activities on public land, but did not want the liability over residents’ groups voluntarily maintaining public land, the residents organized themselves and created the Neighborhood Open Space coalition, among other issues to set up a liability program. “Government resisted legitimizing gardens without liability protection. Neighborhood Open Space coalition created a low-cost liability program that gardeners could buy into”.<sup>347</sup> <sup>348</sup> The municipal government of New York City was not able to

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<sup>339</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>340</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>341</sup> “In Brooklyn, the first demonstration project was set up through Cornell University’s Cooperative Extension Service. It was so successful that a national program was funded at \$3 million and expanded to include 15 other cities”. (Ferguson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html))

<sup>342</sup> Ferguson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html).

<sup>343</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>344</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 44-45.

<sup>345</sup> Schmelzkopf 1995, p. 375.

<sup>346</sup> Schmelzkopf 1995, p. 375.

<sup>347</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>348</sup> The Neighborhood Open Space coalition was formally set up in the 1980s. (Fox, Koepfel and Kellam, preface, p. vii)

financially support the increasing number of community gardens in the low-income neighborhoods. To finance some of the residents' redevelopment effort "the U.S. Department of the Interior made a grant in 1978 of \$1.1 million to pay for capital improvements of 15 community open space-projects in the South Bronx".<sup>349</sup> The funds from the U.S. Department for Interior were distributed to "a coalition of community organizations [who, added C.M.] implemented this project with community development, ownership and control as primary goals." In other words, in 1978, there was federal funding made available to the Neighborhood Open Space coalition to install 15 community gardens in the South Bronx, while in 2012 the municipal government under the Mayor's Office's Obesity Task Force initiative spent about \$430,000 to support the city-wide creation of 20 community gardens – an initiative that was implemented by myself in coordinating the participatory design process for GreenThumb.

In 1979, one year after the Operation GreenThumb was set up out of this initiative by the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, "(...) GreenThumb applied for and received its first federal Community Development Block Grant, funding which continues to today. This allowed GreenThumb to hire staff and provide gardeners with materials to develop their gardens - fencing, tools, lumber for growing beds and garden furniture, soil, seeds, shrubs, and bulbs - and with training in how to design, build and plant their gardens".<sup>350</sup> Until today, most public funding for the material and technical assistance of community gardening groups in New York City low-income areas comes from the federal government's Community Development Block Grant supporting the municipal program "GreenThumb". Since 1974 "the Community Development Block Grant (...) program is a flexible federal program to help "(...) local governments tackle serious challenges facing their communities"<sup>351</sup> that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. (...) The CDBG [Community Development Block Grant, added C.M.] program is one of the longest continuously run programs at HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, added C.M.]. The CDBG [Community Development Block Grant, added C.M.] program provides annual grants on a formula basis to 1209 general units of local government and States".<sup>352</sup> In addition to supporting community gardens, "the CDBG [Community Development Block Grant, added C.M.] program works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses".<sup>353</sup> The amount of funding for the grant is determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development "(...) by using a formula comprised of several measures of community need, including the extent of poverty, population, housing overcrowding, age of housing, and population growth lag in relationship to other metropolitan areas".<sup>354 355</sup>

The Community Development Block Grant is meant to support community participation. "A grantee must develop and follow a detailed plan that provides for and encourages citizen participation. This integral process emphasizes participation by persons of low or moderate

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<sup>349</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 8.

<sup>350</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>351</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs).

<sup>352</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs).

<sup>353</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs).

<sup>354</sup> "Entitlement communities are comprised of central cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs); metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000; and qualified urban counties with a population of 200,000 or more (excluding the populations of entitlement cities). States distribute CDBG funds to non-entitlement localities not qualified as entitlement communities". (HUD, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs))

<sup>355</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs).

income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, slum or blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG [Community Development Block Grant, added C.M.] funds”.<sup>356</sup> The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development “(...) also specifies how the community participation needs to be taking place. The plan developed by the grantee “(...) must provide citizens with the following: reasonable and timely access to local meetings; an opportunity to review proposed activities and program performance; provide for timely written answers to written complaints and grievances; and identify how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate”<sup>357</sup>

Even though New York City’s administration under Mayor Edward Koch did not have funds to spend on community open space project, the municipality was lobbied successfully by the Trust for Public Land to lower its real estate taxes on community managed open-space properties.<sup>358</sup> That means in the early 1980s “major policy changes have occurred within the city’s tax commission that now provide for significantly lower property tax assessments on community-owned open-space projects”.<sup>359</sup> In addition, tax exemptions were granted to community groups that used private land for community gardening purposes. Thus while before “(...) community groups that had acquired ownership of their sites through purchase, donation, or restricted auctions had been burdened with major annual property tax payments to the city of New York. Now, through the efforts of The Trust for Public Land, property tax exemptions have been granted to several of the groups so that they are no longer burdened with excessive tax payments”.<sup>360</sup> Later, during the middle of the 1980s, the national organization Trust for Public Land ensured that the auction procedure of public land would be restricted so that community open space groups could have a chance in acquiring the land. “With leadership from The Trust for Public Land, the city’s Division of Real Property has reinstated its restricted auction procedure, which provides for the noncompetitive sale of city-owned real estate for community open-space purposes to qualifying nonprofit neighborhood organizations”.<sup>361</sup> This auction procedure of community garden land by the municipality under Giuliani in the late 1990s though was announced as an unrestricted auction. Next to the Department of General Services, the Department for Housing Preservation and Development remained involved in community open spaces development over the years – paid as well by a Community Development Block Grant by the federal government. Thus in the beginning of the 1980s “(...) HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] ran an Interim Vacant Lot Improvement Program, which has now been replaced by a Permanent Site Improvement Project. HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] provides development dollars using Community Development Block Grant and Capital Development funding”.<sup>362</sup>

In contrast to community gardens on public land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services though, which were maintained voluntarily by resident groups, community gardens on public land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development were maintained by staff. That means, “a local corporate or housing sponsor provides ongoing maintenance for the establishment of a neighborhood resource (Vreeland and Sullivan, 1984)”.<sup>363</sup> In other words, over years “New York City community open-space programs and policies were not coordinated and frequently competed with one another, which often threatened the success of projects with which the city was

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<sup>356</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs).

<sup>357</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs)

<sup>358</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 51.

<sup>359</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 51.

<sup>360</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 51-52.

<sup>361</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 51.

<sup>362</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>363</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

involved”.<sup>364</sup> Due to the lack of communication and regulation conflicting positions on community open space use did not only occur between City agencies, but “conflicting goals and programs also occur within several city agencies”.<sup>365</sup> In the 1980s, “this (...) [was, added C.M.] evident in the Department of Parks and Recreation, whose Capital Improvement Program (which is involved in park renovation) does not develop projects that incorporate the goals of its Volunteers in Parks program (which encourages local groups to maintain city parks)”.<sup>366</sup>

By the middle 1980s more and more local and national organization became involved in supporting the community gardening groups in New York City. Then in 1983, with the ongoing community gardens’ development in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx in 1983, “(...) a Community Open Space Task Force was initiated by the mayor’s office and local groups to coordinate funding and policy to support greening efforts”.<sup>367</sup> The administration under Koch created this Mayor’s Office Community Open Space Task Force. The Community Open Space Task Force was a “(...) 12-member task force (...) composed of representatives from the government, the business sector, and the coalition (...)”, which “(...) is charged with developing an integrated open-space policy for future city planning”.<sup>368</sup> This Mayor’s Office Community Open Task Force of 1983 relates to the Urban Agriculture Task Force of 2012 as it involved various representatives of the government and community gardening coalition to coordinate policy to support greening/urban agriculture.

The creation of the Mayor’s Community Open Space Task Force was an effort by the Koch administration to establish a comprehensive plan for dealing with commonly used public open space as it “(...) marks the city’s first attempt to involve all interested parties in the development of a viable open-space plan that takes into account the plight of the city, resources of the private sector, and local needs”.<sup>369</sup> In addition to setting up the Community Open Space Task Force, the administration hired the Neighborhood Open-Space Coalition to prepare “a 91-page illustrated Park and Garden Maintenance Manual (...)”.<sup>370</sup> This manual was conceptualized as a “(...) practical ‘how-to’ publication [that, added C.M.] covers such pertinent subjects as fundraising, community organization, landscaping, and equipment maintenance, and lists resources available to carry out projects”.<sup>371</sup> In 2012 under Mayor Michael Bloomberg there was another initiative providing funding for the participative installation of community gardens called the Mayor’s Office Obesity Task Force. The funding was \$439,000, which was paid in full in the first year of the three-year initiative and a total of 15 gardens were developed with this funding.<sup>372</sup> On the other hand, GreenThumb remains a program that is funded until today by a Community Development Block Grant, providing materials and technical assistance to gardeners and managing the leases of public land for gardening. Consequently the analysis of actions of the federal and municipal government since 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that federal and municipal as well as Bronx borough officials influenced the creation of community gardens by residents of the South Bronx.

Community gardens were started in the 1970s in bottom-up activities through resident action and not top down from the government, i.e. not in the government’s initiative, but rather due to its neglect since the City of New York had cut down infrastructural services when it was financially bankrupt in 1975 and was not receiving federal support either. This was answered by residents in the South Bronx with the development of community gardens to improve their quality of life while City officials proposed a “planned shrinkage” of the South Bronx and the relocation of residents to new housing developments. In addition burned out buildings were sealed up or demolished and in 1977 the in rem foreclosure law enacted to allow foreclosure on tax delinquent properties after one year of non-payment of property tax, thus turning

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<sup>364</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>365</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>366</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 52.

<sup>367</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 9.

<sup>368</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 50.

<sup>369</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 50.

<sup>370</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 50.

<sup>371</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 50.

<sup>372</sup> Personal experience 2013.

private into public land. In 1977 President Jimmy Carter, as one of the first U.S. presidents in the following years, visited the South Bronx. This was followed by the enactment laws to attract capital and investors back to low-income neighborhoods in New York City like in the South Bronx supported by federal funding.

The federal funding needed to be match by municipal funding, which was done in lack of municipal support by residents groups renovating housing in the South Bronx through sweat equity. At the same time Mayor Edward Koch's ten-year housing plan brought housing re-investment in the South Bronx. The City of New York did not object to the resident's grassroots activism to renovate housing and create community open spaces - both on public land -, but tolerated the voluntary efforts of the local residents as a welcome relief to the city's budget. Financial support and control of the residents' activities came with the creation of the federally funded municipal community garden program "Operation GreenThumb" in 1978 the community gardens program as part of the Department of General Services. The City's budget was improved in the 1980s so that investment and renovation of infrastructural projects and public parks were financially re-funded. Then under President Ronald Reagan the budget for subsidizing of rental housing programs was cut by two thirds, so that the rehabilitation of apartment houses came to a stop, while community garden spaces continued to be created by residents of the South Bronx in sweat equity.

In the early 1990s under Mayor Dinkins, the City began to sell apartment houses on public land to non-profit organizations. Then under Mayor Giuliani municipal services were cut down in an effort to rehabilitate the City's budget further. Giuliani transferred in 1995 the community gardens program Operation GreenThumb, now called "GreenThumb" to the Department of Parks. The development of public land in low-income neighborhoods with housing continued and after transferring most GreenThumb gardens in 1998 to the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. When, in 1999 the administration under Giuliani threatened to auction off about one hundred community gardens for housing development that would improve the City's tax base, the lawsuit by New York State General Attorney Eliot L. Spitzer, blocked on the one hand the sale of the city's remaining 650 community gardens without an environmental impact study and argued on the other hand that gardens in existence for 20 or 30 years have in essence become public parkland - which indicates that community gardens had the right as any other public park to be part of the urban area of New York City. The lawsuit was stopped with the sale of 112 community gardens on public land to the national non-profit organization The Trust for Public Land and the local non-profit organization New York Restoration Project, the City continued to developed housing on community garden land. Regulation and debate of the conflict of housing and community gardens as land use of public land continued. A temporary restraining order by Spitzer of February 2002 to prevent further auctioning off community gardens terminated in the Community Gardens Settlement of 2002 followed by the Community Gardens Regulations of 2010.

#### **4.3.3 Actions of banks**

Banks tried to make as much money from the South Bronx neighborhoods assuming that the houses would be burned down eventually anyway. Consequently banks like the Eastern Savings Bank continued to grant mortgages to persons of whom they assumed that they would be interested only in short time speculating with a building and not in taking care of it as a special property of specific quality and value, i.e. as a long-term investment. In addition if a landlord did not take care of his or her building, the bank "dumped" him with the building. And the Eastern Savings bank had an "(...) alarming record of dumping buildings".<sup>373</sup> This happened even though, at the same time, since 1974, the Community Preservation Corporation as the non-profit representative of the main banks in New York City had been giving out rehabilitation funds to landlords owning small properties in working-class neighborhoods. In response to the so-called "redlining" of banks in 1976 and 1977 protesters regularly squared off the Eastern Savings Bank and North Side Savings Bank. Finally the president of the North Side Savings bank, Darcy Chancery, agreed to meet with the Northwest Bronx Clergy and Community Coalition's Reinvestment Committee when they set up a picket line. Dealing mostly with Bishop Ahern, he was informed that "(...) all institutions,

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<sup>373</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 358.

including the church, could expect outside scrutiny<sup>374</sup> and that his institution was threatened by investigation from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation<sup>375</sup>. A week later Chancery informed the committee that the bank's mortgage policies were being overhauled. This was a major success for the coalition, since a bank had given way to the demands of a group of residents coming from diverse working backgrounds, including a postman, a student, a teacher, a messenger, as well being of a variety of different ages and were therefore representative of society.<sup>376</sup> But still the bankers had dealt mostly with Bishop Ahern and had not officially acknowledged the Committee's existence.

In 1978 the Dollar Savings Bank's headquarters at the Grand Concourse was targeted by a picket line. The chairman of this bank, Henry Waltemade, was furious since he had given money to help the foundation of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition four years ago. He delegated a top manager to correspond with the Bishop only, i.e. ignoring the committee as well. Consequently to make the protest more forceful the Northwest Bronx Clergy and Community Coalition's Reinvestment Committee collected pledge cards from the banks depositors, "(...) promising to withdraw more than \$1 if Dollar didn't invest more in the Bronx".<sup>377</sup> When the set up of a new branch of the Eastern Savings Bank in Hauppauge, Long Island, was denied in 1977 by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation based on the investigation of its financial history and management, other banks began to realize that the Reinvestment Committee's threats had become reality and started to be more cooperative. Through the Community Reinvestment Act issued by the federal government in 1977 banks were enticed to invest again in inner city low-income neighborhoods. Consequently "between 1977 and 1997 the total annual lending by banks to low-income communities rose from \$3 billion a year to \$43 billion a year".<sup>378</sup> The Community Reinvestment Act also set up regulations to ensure that banks took on the responsibility to lend money where they collected deposits. At the time those regulation came into effect in 1979, it became easier for the acting community groups to counter the redlining of banks and bring reinvestment into their neighborhoods. In the 1980s banks had returned to the South Bronx – not only forced by the Community Reinvestment Act, but also actions of community organization such as the Northwest Bronx Clergy and Community Coalition over the years.

Consequently the analysis of actions of banks since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the "redlining" of banks in the South Bronx in the 1970s supported the lack of quality of life in the area by stopping to give mortgages to South Bronx residents. The creation of community gardens provided residents with a sense of ownership of their neighborhood and helped to improve their quality of life. Then in 1979, re-investment was brought back into the South Bronx, when banks moved back to the area pushed by community groups as well as new federal regulations that ensured that banks took on the responsibility to lend money where they collected deposits. This indicates

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<sup>374</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 361.

<sup>375</sup> The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) is an independent agency of the federal government, "(...) created in 1933 in response to the thousands of bank failures that occurred in the 1920s and early 1930s". (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, [www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html](http://www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html)) It "(...) preserves and promotes public confidence in the U.S. financial system by insuring deposits in banks and thrift institutions for at least \$250,000; by identifying, monitoring and addressing risks to the deposit insurance funds; and by limiting the effect on the economy and the financial system when a bank or thrift institution fails". (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, [www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html](http://www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html)) Generally the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation "(...) examines and supervises (...) banks and savings banks for operational safety and soundness (...)". (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, [www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html](http://www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html)) In addition "the FDIC is managed by a five-person Board of Directors, all of whom are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, with no more than three being from the same political party". (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, [www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html](http://www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/index.html)) To this institution as well as to the New York State Banking Department, the Northwest Bronx Clergy and Community Coalition presented in the middle of the 1970s what they had found out about the redlining of banks in the South Bronx. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation was perplexed by the group of people, non-bankers, who gave them the responsibility for the situation, agreed to investigate and launched an investigation. (Jonnes 1986, p. 360)

<sup>376</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 361.

<sup>377</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 362.

<sup>378</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 397.

that investment was brought back to the South Bronx through the organizational effort and the support of the federal government triggered by community restructuring through residents' groups creation of community gardens.

#### **4.3.4 Actions of insurance companies**

The two traditional insurance companies of the Bronx changed their guidelines to be stricter with under-writing and claims-paying procedures, became more eager to challenge and to litigate and were soon hit by recriminations and lawsuits. Owners had for a long period of time destroyed their buildings, which were worth hundreds of thousands dollars, in order to collect about ten thousands dollars worth in exchange. Now the City decided to give out small loans and created low-interest rehabilitation and tax incentive programs to push landlords into investing in their properties again. In the 1970s insurance companies, which were more affordable for homeowners, did not want to provide coverage for buildings in the South Bronx or close to areas of the 'South Bronx' in fear of the spreading effects. The insurances of apartment houses in the area were withdrawn and owners were forced to pay higher premiums for government-backed coverage at Lloyd's of London. The arson of buildings played a role in insurance companies withdrawing from the South Bronx, since many landlords had their buildings gutted from valuables and then burned down to collect insurance money. "There was arson commissioned by landlords out for their insurance. (A Lloyd's of London syndicate was to lose \$45 million on fire insurance written in the South Bronx)".<sup>379</sup>

In 1978 a meeting was set up by the National People's Action group from Chicago with the insurance company's Aetna Life and Casualty chairman, William O. Bailey.<sup>380</sup> But his memo did not have much affect on the local agents, who feared to be canceled by the company as soon as they would start to write out insurance policies in the Bronx. The Northwest Community and Clergy Coalition's Insurance Committee proposed that brokers and the Aetna Life and Casualty insurance company could share the responsibilities, when insurance policies in the Bronx would be submitted to both, designated local brokers and the company, at the same time. The ten Aetna brokers, who went to work in the spring of 1979<sup>381</sup> discovered that the Bronx was profitable and wrote hundreds of policies. This development stopped successfully more regular insurance companies to flee the situation. Additionally the coalition encouraged Aetna to invest further in the northwest Bronx by giving out loans for moderate rehabilitation of apartment buildings and called upon other insurance companies to follow their example. At the same time they met with officials of the state insurance department to stop the insurance redlining altogether.

The Northwest Community and Clergy Coalition addressed the board of directors of the Chase Manhattan Bank, which included twenty-five chairmen and chief officers of Exxon, General Foods Corporation, Macy's, Xerox, the Rockefeller Foundation, Dartmouth College, Standard Oil Company, and Bethlehem Steel, at a shareholders meeting<sup>382</sup> to press for loans that would help them and their landlords to weatherize their buildings.<sup>383</sup> A fund of \$10 million for weatherization loans were made available through the cooperation of the Chase Manhattan Bank with the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development.<sup>384</sup> In the 1980s insurance companies returned to the South Bronx providing again insurance for apartment buildings in the area— forced by community organization such as the Northwest Bronx Clergy and Community Coalition.

Consequently the analysis of actions of insurance companies since the 1970s in with context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that homeownership in the South Bronx in the 1970s was restricted since insurance companies stopped to provide coverage for buildings with the ongoing arson. Insurances policies for apartment houses in the area were withdrawn and owners were forced to pay higher premiums for government-

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<sup>379</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>380</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 366.

<sup>381</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 366.

<sup>382</sup> The coalition was able to get into the Chase Manhattan Bank's shareholder meeting because the Sisters of Charity were stockholders at the bank and the rest of the coalition members were allowed to enter with their proxies. (Jonnes, South Bronx Rising, p. 371)

<sup>383</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 371.

<sup>384</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 371.

backed coverage. The creation of community gardens provided residents in the South Bronx with a sense of ownership of their neighborhood, while community organizations worked to change this practice, which was successful in 1980s when the insurance companies returned to do their jobs in the South Bronx.

#### 4.3.5 Actions of landlords

In the 1970s landlords in the South Bronx were hit by the global economic depression as well as the devaluation of the land value of the area, due to the fact that since the South Bronx had become less attractive as a residential district the value of the land there as well as the properties on it had declined. In addition tenants, who had been able to pay their rent had moved there so that there was no rental money coming in for the landlords. Sale of the buildings to get back the investment was in most cases not possible. Most of the apartment buildings in the South Bronx in the 1970s were over 30 years old and consequently in need of major maintenance like the overhaul of boilers, heating and roofs. This situation meant for the landlord that he had to invest without being sure that his money would be returned in a timely manner. Additionally the in rem foreclosure law in New York City was changed in 1977: While the city had only been take over a property if the owner did not pay his property taxes for three years, now this time period was shortened to one year. Consequently many landlords considered, in order to cash in on what was left of their original investment, to have their building gutted from its valuables and to have it burned down in order to collect at least the insurance money.

Landlords were generally interested in what would happen to the tenants living in their properties but often only that far that they warned them before the building was torched. Apartment buildings in the South Bronx were thus “abandoned” by their owners, became subject to arson and the land fell into the ownership of the city, which had not enough money to provide for renovation of the buildings either. Consequently the remaining residents of the South Bronx were left to themselves to provide for some quality of life or even to struggle for survival. During this time, the first community gardens were created in the South Bronx in the newly created public open space. Apartment buildings became unprofitable to invest in, and owners often arranged the arson of their buildings to collect insurance money rather than maintaining the property to collect low rents. “Many fires were deliberately set by junkies – and by that new breed of professional, the strippers of buildings, who wanted to clear a building so they could ransack the valuable copper and brass pipes, fixtures, and hardware”.<sup>385</sup> Some of them got also paid by the landlord to burn down the building when they were finished “stripping it”. And, “a roaring fire in an already-vacant building made their job much easier”.<sup>386</sup> The energy crisis of 1974 had tripled the oil prices and as the landlords could not come up with the costs anymore more buildings were deserted. The anti-arson campaign intensified, but arson continued to be lucrative while neither the insurance companies, nor the welfare department changed their strategies, while banks sold foreclosed mortgages to anybody interested for minimal sums and while empty buildings were stripped for valuables.<sup>387</sup>

Rent control laws that applied to apartment houses built before 1947 were to be blamed partly for the development, which made it more profitable to abandon a property than to collect rent through its apartments. It was difficult even for landlords with good intentions to keep up the maintenance in these aging big apartment buildings with a limited rent roll and the community organization continued to remind the involved institutions of their responsibility in Bronx. “That City’s landlords would abandon their properties, en masse, to be burned and gutted was nothing less than unthinkable”.<sup>388</sup> An abandoned property, with un-occupied apartments, in a city where affordable housing is scarce, was until then an absurdum, an impossibility in itself and was labeled when it first appeared in a neighborhood’s street “a disinvestment”. Housing shortage and empty buildings hit the Bedford-Stuyvesant’s neighborhood before it occurred in the South Bronx, which was at that point still filled with people and activity. But more and more landlords, merchants and residents were moving out of the South Bronx as well, leaving

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<sup>385</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>386</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>387</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 232-233.

<sup>388</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 199.

behind abandoned apartments, stores and buildings. "The unseen truth was that the great changes- political, social and economic- that had convulsed New York City in the twenty years since World War II had finally seeped all the way down to the basic unit of city life, the neighborhood and the block".<sup>389</sup>

In the 1980s the city stopped providing emergency services for buildings, which were owned by a landlord, who owed property taxes. If the case would be brought before the judge in the Bronx County Court, there was a chance that an administrator would be appointed to run the building, but still there was no money to make the necessary repairs. During that time, landlords interested to improve their buildings' conditions were supported by the Northwest Community and Clergy Coalition. In addition, in 1980 landlords started, encouraged through a Capital Improvements program, to install new windows and boilers or to take care of other necessary repairs. Consequently they raised the rent, because a lot of times before these improvements were done the houses were refinanced by the landlords in order to receive higher mortgages and the price of the higher mortgage was laid upon the rents of the apartments of the building. Starting in the 1980s the rents throughout the Bronx were hiking, even though many times the renovations were of poor quality or the new installations made were actually salvaged, i.e. their life-span was less long, and therefore the money of the mortgage was neither used in the way it was intended, nor did the tenants receive what they paid for.

Consequently the analysis of actions of landlords since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that landlords lacking financial means during the global economic crisis of the 1970s were neglecting the apartment buildings in the South Bronx during that time, which they had bought for investment purposes and that were lacking rental income due to rent control laws while the aging buildings called for renovation and maintenance. When in 1977 the City changed the in rem fore closure law's time period of paying property taxes from three to one year, many landlords in the South Bronx had their building gutted from valuables burned down in order to collect insurance money. Subsequently the property was turned over into public ownership, but the City could not afford renovation of the buildings either. Consequently the remaining residents of the South Bronx were left to themselves to provide for their own quality of life and began to create community gardens on the newly created open land.

#### **4.3.6 Actions of tenants**

Since the inner city districts with low-income population, like the South Bronx, in the late 1970s had little political power, they were hardest hit by the infrastructural cut downs since it needs an interest group to lobby the political officials in power to improve quality of life in specific neighborhoods. "Then the supermarket burned down and it was a problem for people to even shop for food".<sup>390</sup> In lack of basic services and infrastructure, residents, who could afford it, moved out of the South Bronx and the area became even more impoverished, crime ridden and drug infested. The residents, who could not afford to move, had to remain living in buildings of declining standard standing in neighborhoods lacking supermarkets, banks and stores as well as a regular service system, like the U.S. post delivery. The South Bronx had been turned into a non-urban area comparable to the countryside except it was equipped with vacated apartment buildings instead of farm buildings, vacant lots filled with trash and rubble instead of wild natural areas. Low-income residents, the tenants of the remaining apartment buildings, continued to try to leave the South Bronx, but it was especially difficult for welfare tenants to relocate. "Welfare recipients living in decaying city-owned buildings naturally wanted to find a better alternative, but regulations forbade payment of moving expenses to anyone who had not lived in same place for at least two years".<sup>391</sup> But arson was a way to get out of a building if you were on welfare, so that some tenants supported their landlords in burning down the very buildings they lived in. "Any tenant burned out of his or her building automatically became eligible for a grant--usually about \$1,000 but sometimes as much as

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<sup>389</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 200.

<sup>390</sup> Father John Jenik, 4/18/83, referenced in: Jonnes 1986, p. 450.

<sup>391</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

\$3,500--to cover the cost of new clothing, furniture, and moving.” And in addition, “ burned-out families went to the top of the waiting list for public housing projects”.<sup>392</sup>

Encouraging arson among the welfare population of the South Bronx were “Large signs in the welfare centers stated very clearly in Spanish and English, THE ONLY WAY TO GET HOUSING PRIORITY IS IF YOU ARE BURNED OUT BY A FIRE”.<sup>393</sup> Consequently, “arson was set by welfare recipients who wanted out of their apartments and into something better (preferably public housing), but knew they could do so only if they got onto a priority list”.<sup>394</sup> To counteract against this practice of arson, tenants set up tenant association to organize the remaining residents of an apartment building, so that the group of residents could improve the condition of their building together – much in the same way as residents organized themselves in groups to improve the condition of the open spaces next to their apartment by creating community gardens. Tenement associations were for example organized by the Northwest Bronx Church Coalition, which in its first year of operation in 1975, “(...) organized tenants associations in 350 buildings, got 12,165 housing violations removed, and security in 123 buildings improved”.<sup>395</sup>

Consequently the analysis of actions of tenants since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that in the 1970s residents who could afford it had moved out of the South Bronx and the remaining residents were low-income tenants of aging apartment buildings in an area that lacked general infrastructural services. Since arson was a reason for the welfare department to move persons to another apartment in addition to a lump sum payment, tenants supported their landlords in burning down the buildings they lived in. Residents organized themselves in tenant organizations to go against this practice of arson in the same way as residents’ groups to improve the condition of the open spaces next to their apartment by creating community gardens.

#### **4.3.7 Actions of private businessmen**

The South Bronx was run down in the late 1970s, because of the global as well as the local economic crisis of New York City that was based in part on disinvestment and in part on ways that the job market had been moved out of the city. “At the same time, individuals and private corporations added to the problem of abandonment through disinvestment, the collapse of the second-mortgage market, and regional job shifts”.<sup>396</sup> Since the federal government under President Ronald Reagan scaled back on governmental programs, in the late 1970s the Northwest Community and Church Coalition encouraged the private sector to take action in the South Bronx and to support the rebuilding. They developed strategies to convince the corporation Fortune 500<sup>397</sup>, the Chase Manhattan Bank and the Exxon Corporation to lend money to the northwest Bronx. Exxon Corporation for example sent a twenty-five thousand dollar check.<sup>398</sup> But the Exxon Corporation was targeted for way more money, for another \$10 million for weatherization loans<sup>399</sup>. Later, in the summer of 1982 the Northwest Community and Clergy Coalition set up an “adopt-an executive program” had been set up to create a possibility for oil executives the chance to visit the Bronx and to meet its residents, in order to add a personal component to the previously deprived relationship.<sup>400</sup>

In 1986 the federal government stepped up and passed the Low Income Housing Tax Credit that allowed corporations and private businessmen, who invested in affordable housing, to write off taxes.<sup>401</sup> When in this manner the money was finally diverted to neighborhoods,

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<sup>392</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>393</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>394</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 232.

<sup>395</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 354.

<sup>396</sup> Francis, Cashdan, Paxson 1984, p. 43.

<sup>397</sup> The Fortune Magazine ranks the top 500 public and private U.S. corporations according to their gross revenue.

<sup>398</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 352.

<sup>399</sup> The Exxon Corporation was sent a birthday card to their hundredth anniversary as well as other greeting cards including the statement that the companies current profit rate was about \$12 million as well as the proposal to meet. (Jonnes, South Bronx Rising, p. 372)

<sup>400</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 397.

<sup>401</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 397.

which the investors had previously ignored for a long time. When in addition the banks returned to these neighborhoods the results were highly visible next to the thousands of City-owned buildings that had been restored since the middle of the 1980s and new buildings and community gardens that had been created in the South Bronx.

Consequently the analysis of actions of private businessmen since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that in the late 1970s, early 1980s South Bronx residents organized in community organizations in the same way as community garden groups to lobby the private sector to invest into the rebuilding of the area. Then in 1986 the federal government enacted Low Income Tax Credits that enticed private corporations and private businessmen with tax deductions to invest in affordable housing in the area.

#### **4.4 Open space land use for community gardens and organization in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of open space land use for community gardens and organization in the South Bronx since the 1970s by investigating the aspect of organizations supporting community-developed public open space projects with focus on local community gardening organizations, national community gardening organizations as well as on the critic on organizations supporting community-developed public open space projects. Then I will discuss the topic of community-planning by looking at community-planning before the creation of community boards, at community boards as well as the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure and 197-a plans. Subsequently I will analyze the organization of community gardens with focus on the community garden license and community garden insurance. Then I will elaborate on the aspects of community garden groups' organization, the topic of public attention organized by gardeners. Finally I will investigate the relation of housing, community gardens and public support.

##### **4.4.1 Local organizations and community gardens**

While in the 1970s the South Bronx' enclosed and open spaces were re-created by resident groups over time the management of public open space used for community gardening was not always taken on by voluntary residents' groups alone, but was also supported by local, staffed organization like that had their own interests, but provided support and often funding to the residents' rebuilding effort. Over time, "(...) quasi-public, private, and voluntary agencies provide a substantial and important dimension of the recreation opportunity for low-income inner-city residents. (...) These agencies have (...) full-time, year-round personnel and more volunteer leaders in the study areas than do public agencies".<sup>402</sup>

The South Bronx was rebuilt since the 1970s by residents' groups voluntarily renovating the buildings they were living in and also establishing commonly used gardens on the public land next to them. Because there were in some cases no more active landlords and because many apartment buildings belonged to the city, resident groups were squatting in the apartments that they used to rent. In addition residents' groups had started to create gardens on the public open land next to their apartment buildings, so that they were illegally in many cases renovating buildings with gardens, often with the materials they found on the street. The motivation of the residents to renovate their buildings stems from their lack of financial means to leave the South Bronx, so that they organized themselves to have more power to rid the places from crime, prostitution, illegal dumping, and rats. That means residents from the late 1970s on were beautifying the neighborhood, living in an apartment of their own and reviving their neighborhood in social and economic terms.

Groups of voluntarily active residents or religious groups were working with private foundations in the South Bronx to rebuild their neighborhoods. Since private and government funding was limited, sweat activity of these community groups made the redevelopment possible. "The community development corporations (CDCs) would purchase properties and disused buildings, combine their own funds with limited amounts of city funding and obtain

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<sup>402</sup> National Recreation and Park Association 1974, p. 11.

commercial loans to develop the properties. The CDCs thus had a commercial risk".<sup>403</sup> Still there was public funding, but since it was not " (...) not the traditional large amounts of outright grant money (...)" it attracted "(...)" the attention of special interests, groups and operators who emerge as recipients and leave little, if any, trail of accomplishment".<sup>404</sup> Even though New York City was famous for its corruption, the South Bronx revived - possibly due to various interest groups and politicians focusing on the objective of reviving the neighborhoods.

Part of the urban redevelopment in the South Bronx were voluntarily active community groups that rebuild their open and enclosed spaces in combination with the other support by government and private sector. South Bronx residents might have been used to this way of social organization structure well, since until the 1940s, community organization had been taken on in the South Bronx by the Democratic Party, which set up clubhouses as meeting spaces for residents groups of registered voters.<sup>405</sup> But in the 1980s the number of Bronx residents registered as Democrats was reduced to almost a third in the 40 years to 1980. The registered voters of the Democratic Party were down in number to "268,139 registered Democrats in 1983, compared to the machine's 1940 heyday of 650,688"<sup>406, 407</sup>. This might have been due to the fact that In the 1940s the Bronx Democratic Party used to be powerful and had delivered favors to its South Bronx voters' community, which was in the middle of the 1980s not to be expected from governmental representatives at any scale<sup>408, 409</sup>.

In the rebuilding process of the South Bronx the 1980s "(...)" the local Community Development Corporations (...) made an enormous difference. But they've been around for decades. In fact, they were there when the Bronx was burning in the '70s, and if they had been the only heroes in the story, there might not be anything left in the Bronx to celebrate".<sup>410</sup> There were resident groups that focused on renovating their building block and improving the immediate neighborhood around it. Other groups focused on the rebuilding large areas in the South Bronx. Even though the CDCs [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.], i.e. the residents of the South Bronx working collectively, were responsible for keeping the South Bronx they needed financial support. In other words, "yet for all their heroism, the CDCs [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.] were too small and too poor to turn the tide in the South Bronx. The city helped keep them alive, but a financial crisis lasting through the '70s prevented it from doing more".<sup>411</sup> For tax and liability reasons the City could not hand the money to the Community Development Corporations active in the South Bronx directly, but that a non-profit had to put in place between the city and the residents' groups. "For all the good will and experience of the CDC's [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.], handing them the money and asking them to fix the South Bronx would have been a disaster. Like any local group, they weren't used to dealing with large quantities of money, and their construction experience was often narrow. In most of its renovations the city relied on a nonprofit intermediary such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (...) or the Enterprise Foundation to help out".<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Demographia, City on a Hill. The South Bronx: From Urban Planning Victim to Victory. [www.demographia.com/db-sbrx-txt.htm](http://www.demographia.com/db-sbrx-txt.htm)

<sup>404</sup> Demographia, City on a Hill. The South Bronx: From Urban Planning Victim to Victory. [www.demographia.com/db-sbrx-txt.htm](http://www.demographia.com/db-sbrx-txt.htm).

<sup>405</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 45.

<sup>406</sup> In 2000, in the South Bronx "The 16th gave an astounding 94 percent of its vote to Clinton in 1996, his highest percentage in the nation. But like many districts with large minority and immigrant populations, voter turnout is low". (Washington Post 1999, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16))

<sup>407</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 354.

<sup>408</sup> In 2000, in the South Bronx "The 16th gave an astounding 94 percent of its vote to Clinton in 1996, his highest percentage in the nation. But like many districts with large minority and immigrant populations, voter turnout is low". (Washington Post 1999, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/ny/house/ny16))

<sup>409</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 354.

<sup>410</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>411</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>412</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

Since the administration of New York City could not finance the provision of infrastructure service, especially in the low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx, it worked with “(...) the CDC's [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.] to provide new residents with child care, job referrals, and other services”.<sup>413</sup> That means the South Bronx was organized on many levels in terms of infrastructural services, open space use and housing by residents groups that had formed Community Development Corporations. To revive the housing stock of the South Bronx, which had become mainly owned by the City, local community groups were central since they were living in the neighborhood and were able to take on the roles of landlords for the City. “In the Bronx, the CDCs [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.] were always right around the corner--or even down the hall--and they kept an iron hand on the buildings they managed. All of them screen applicants for their buildings, usually with home visits as well as credit checks. They also monitor their tenants after they've moved in”.<sup>414</sup> That means, the CDCs [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.], that had renovated public apartment buildings on public land became also responsible for maintaining these buildings since the administration did not have funds to take care of the maintenance either – a development that was new in terms of urban planning and public housing in New York City.

New in the field of urban planning was that at the time “the city (...) relied on the CDCs [Community Development Corporations, added C.M.] to maintain the buildings it renovated day to day, rather than managing them from a distance. This may sound like mere common sense, but from the perspective of urban planning it was a quantum leap. If you've ever walked through a low-income housing project, you've probably been struck by the impression that no one seems to be taking care of the place--the graffiti, the litter, the broken windows, the suggestion of crime on top of poverty. That's partly because the city officials responsible for it are too far away, or simply don't care what happens in the building; after all, they don't live here”.<sup>415</sup> In addition, residents had been living isolated in the remaining apartment buildings and to create a community living in “their” neighborhood once again, organization was needed. Next to the public housing there was new public open space that had become accessible in the South Bronx due to a large amount of building stock having been destroyed by fires and demolition. Residents worked together voluntarily to clean up these public lots from trash that had accumulated over the years, to remove or reuse the rubble and build an open space according to their individual preferences and the neighborhoods needs. Again, the City tolerated the community groups' activities and began to support their sweat equity with public funding as well as to control these activities via the municipal program GreenThumb.

The public housing and the public open redevelopment through community groups in the South Bronx worked hand in hand – with sweat equity and public funding resulting in common management. “Since the '70s, the community garden movement has worked in tandem with the community-development movement to generate significant private and public neighborhood investment — as well as countless hours of ‘sweat equity’”.<sup>416</sup> Beginning with the 1970s “(...)”, as the vacant lots were converted to gardens and parks, technical assistance groups funded by the public and private sector ran programs providing everything from seeds and materials to construction, horticultural and real estate advice for local community organizations. By 1983 there were nine technical assistance organizations investing \$2.6 million annually and employing over 40 individuals”.<sup>417</sup>

Residents' groups volunteering to develop public open spaces that received supported by non-profit organizations included “(...) such organizations as the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, Green Guerillas, Council on the Environment, Trust for Public Land, and Citizens Committee for New York City, which together provide everything from seeds and materials to legal advice and funding (...)”.<sup>418</sup> But, as Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action

<sup>413</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>414</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>415</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>416</sup> Enterprise Foundation 2002, p. VI.

<sup>417</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 5.

<sup>418</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 44-45.

and Land Conservation” of 1984 “(...) while many technical assistance organizations provided materials, they often stopped short of participating in labor”.<sup>419</sup> The involvement of the municipal government in supporting community group projects was complicated since in “New York City community open-space programs and policies were not coordinated and frequently competed with one another, which often threatened the success of projects with which the city was involved”.<sup>420</sup> Thus for example, activities by “(...) the Department of General Services’ Operation Green Thumb program, (...) interested in neighborhood improvement through the use of vacant lots as community gardens, (...) [could, added C.M.] be quickly undone by the Division of Real Estate’s public auction process, which can sell a lot out from under the GreenThumb group”.<sup>421</sup>

Community groups working in sweat equity to restore or create public open spaces resented this lack of permanence in this land-use. The short-term leases of public open spaces used for community gardens did not provide additional security either. “A further problem frequently identified in the interviews [by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in 1984, added C.M.] was that most city programs, such as Operation Green Thumb and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development’s Interim Site Program, provide only temporary leasing of city land by neighborhood groups. As the result, the long-range future of these projects is seriously threatened especially in neighborhoods where land values and speculation are increasing. For a lot to be taken back by the city – after it has been developed through hard work and considerable effort by local residents – can quickly reverse a group’s interest and willingness to improve a neighborhood. Groups we interviewed clearly resented the city casing in on their efforts to revitalize their neighborhoods”.<sup>422</sup> When local community groups successfully had renovated a community open space, the municipal government asked them to pay taxes for this project. This was another example of “(...) city policies have negative impacts on the success of local groups. For example, the city encourages neighborhood groups to improve vacant lots as open spaces; however, once a group has created a successful project with its own funds and hard work, the city then requires the group to pay property taxes (...)”.<sup>423</sup>

When a community group bought the public open land on which they had created a garden on in order to transform it into a land trust, i.e. to privatize the public land, they no longer received support by the City through Operation GreenThumb. Later these gardens were organized under the Trust for Public Land so that they could apply easier for grants for financial funding. “(...) Once a group purchased a lot from the city, it became ineligible for support from city agencies such as Operation Green Thumb. Currently, only groups leasing city-owned property (...) were eligible for city support, which groups feel is inequitable and unfair if the city is sincerely interested in neighborhood revitalization”.<sup>424</sup> Until today community gardens that are part of the Trust for Public Land do not receive support in form of large items such as soil, fencing or lumber from GreenThumb. When more and more housing and public open spaces were restored and the neighborhood’s began to revive with responsibility and identity of the area restored due to residents’ organization and new people moving in, community groups began to concentrate on providing the neighborhood with other services like for example a retail center, a credit union and job training. By the middle of the 1980s some of the neighborhood groups had developed from groups of squatting residents that were renovating their neighborhood to corporate groups and through this development the perception of the Bronx changed as well. Nevertheless there were still community activists in the South Bronx belonging to institutions like the church, day-care centers, or a housing company while others were trying to fight the lost of civic control or even of a minimum of stability in their own community.

#### **4.4.2 National organizations and community gardens**

Local organizations supporting community gardening citywide in New York City have been “(...) working singly and cooperatively (...)”. “(...) These organizations eagerly offer materials

<sup>419</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 199.

<sup>420</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 182.

<sup>421</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 182.

<sup>422</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 182.

<sup>423</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 182.

<sup>424</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 182.

and advice. The resources they provide are more than matched by the resources every neighborhood can supply in abundance - the people who live there".<sup>425</sup>

Next to these local community organizations, national non-profit organizations active in supporting the redevelopment of commonly used public open space in the South Bronx. In the middle of the 1980s, "(...) federal and local programs have been initiated to demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based solutions to these problems".<sup>426</sup> Community involvement in the redevelopment of the public open space in the South Bronx was thus regarded as central by national organizations as well as local organizations in order to achieve a transfer of responsibilities. In other words "(...) there is a growing interest at the local, state, and federal levels of government to legitimize the role community involvement can play in the transfer of responsibilities of open-space amenities from government to the community".<sup>427</sup> That means in the United States in the middle of the 1980s "(...) public agencies (...) [were, added C.M.] recognizing the wisdom of involving users of open-space resources in the design, development, ownership, and control as primary goals (...)".<sup>428</sup>

#### **4.4.3 Critic on organizations supporting community-developed public open space projects**

According to the 1984 report by Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation," what is missing in support by community gardens organizations are assistance in design and planning, community participation and long-term maintenance and funding. They state, "(...) Several forms of technical assistance are not sufficiently provided by existing organizations. Three specific needs identified include: (1) design and planning assistance, while several organizations currently provide assistance (the Council on the Environment, Pratt Center for Community Development, etc.), only one provides, as their primary function, comprehensive open-space design services, (2) community organization assistance on how to initiate new projects or broaden participation, and (3) long-term maintenance, management, and funding advice".<sup>429</sup>

For gardeners it was difficult to navigate through the services available by organizations, because "(...) some existing technical assistance organizations had conflicting goals or duplicate services, which can affect the quality of advice a local group receives. For example, if community group members contact Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, they may be encouraged to develop a vegetable garden, while the Council on the Environment may advise them to develop an ornamental garden. While duplication of assistance may not be a problem in itself, it can add to the difficulty a local group has in determining the assistance best suited to their needs".<sup>430</sup> In addition top-down approach and staffed support by some local community garden organizations jeopardized the voluntary maintenance by resident groups, which were to use the garden space. "A further problem relates to the potential dominance of a project by a technical assistance organization. A project may be initiated by a technical assistance organization rather than in response to a request from a local group, which can potentially affect the long-term community involvement in and commitment to a project. This problem also relates to the fact that most technical assistants are paid, while most community people are unpaid volunteers. We found that the implications of this situation are not always fully understood by technical assistance representatives".<sup>431</sup> Edie Stone states in this regard in her article "The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City" of 2009 that "volunteers asked to help maintain traditional parks or gardens operated by groups with paid maintenance staff have no need to develop (...) [problem-solving, added C.M.] skills, and in my experience seldom do".<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>426</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 7-8.

<sup>427</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 8.

<sup>428</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 8.

<sup>429</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 184.

<sup>430</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 184.

<sup>431</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 184.

<sup>432</sup> Stone 2009, p. 128.

To get away from the top-down approach of supporting community gardening, Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in the book “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 propose, “Existing technical assistance organizations should more actively seek to transfer skills and build leadership in local groups. They should clearly define their role as assisting, training, and educating people so that groups do not become dependent on technical assistance”.<sup>433</sup> Even though community gardens are financially supported by GreenThumb depending on the budget of this federally funded program, “funding is a critical problem for the current and future success of community-developed open-space projects”.<sup>434</sup> Especially in gardens on private land not registered with GreenThumb funding is the main issue that the garden groups needs to take care of to maintain their gardens since “funding sources often place unrealistic expectations on local groups, and fundraising to meet ongoing maintenance and management needs can become a major burden for volunteer residents”.<sup>435</sup> In addition, “(...) the time spent in fundraising can seriously deflect a group from its original goal of developing and maintaining open space”.<sup>436</sup> Still, community gardens have existed as a land use for more than 30 years and residents’ groups have managed to fund their projects over this time.

Consequently the analysis of organizations supporting community-developed public open space projects since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that often on the one hand community organizations did not provide residents’ groups with assistance in design and planning, long-term maintenance and funding nor did they allow community participation, but rather dominated the outcome and direction of development of the community project. On the other hand gardens are community managed and maintained projects that were developed in a participative effort by the low-income residents themselves that are now offered support by community organizations.

#### 4.4.4 Community-planning

In general, “participatory planning started with community organizing”<sup>437</sup> – like for example in New York City with community organizing by tenants<sup>438</sup> to keep the rents down or as discussed in my thesis, with community organizing for common use and maintenance of public open spaces for community gardens.

As Thomas Angotti states in his 1999 article “Race, Place and Waste: Community Planning in New York City”, in the late 1990s one of “(...) the most important contributions to community planning come from efforts to improve the environment in communities that have the most serious public health and environmental problems”.<sup>439</sup> At the end of the 1990s, according to Angotti, “the central issue feeding demands for community planning in New York City (...) [was, added C.M.] waste disposal.” At the time, “several of the city’s poorest neighborhoods (...) [were, added C.M.] saturated with waste transfer stations, which (...) [brought, added C.M.] with them unsanitary conditions, heavy truck traffic, air pollution, and odor pollution”.<sup>440</sup> Until today, “many of these neighborhoods are on the Brooklyn and Bronx waterfronts, where garbage is being shipped out”.<sup>441</sup> That means the interest of residents to stop the placement of the waste treatment plants in their neighborhood has been one of the reasons for community organizing in New York City. “Out of this struggle, and similar ones against waste

<sup>433</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 189.

<sup>434</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 184.

<sup>435</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 184.

<sup>436</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 184.

<sup>437</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>438</sup> “In the 1930’s, New York City was the site of militant tenant actions linked with the unemployed and labor movements. When marshals evicted tenants and moved all their furniture onto the streets, neighbors organized to move it back in again. After the War, tenants were able to secure the continuation of wartime rent controls. Highlights of militancy in the post-War era include the Harlem rent strike in the 1950s and the Coop City rent strike in the 1970s, and extensive squatting and homesteading”. (Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html)) Thus “A strong housing movement has helped make New York the U.S. city with the largest stock of rental housing, limited-equity coops, public housing, and the largest stock of municipally-owned housing”. (Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html))

<sup>439</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>440</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>441</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

transfer stations, polluting industries and heavy truck traffic in the city's poor neighborhoods and communities of color, has arisen the environmental justice movement in New York City. This movement is as critical to urban justice as the housing movement was in the 1960s and 1970s".<sup>442</sup> Thus for example air quality in the South Bronx was very low due to waste transfer stations among other reasons, which has been used for example by the non-profit organization More Gardens! to argue for more community gardens in the area in their community planning effort that determined in their Home and Gardens plan.

#### **4.4.4.1 Community-planning before the creation of community boards**

Community boards have developed out of community planning tools since 1951, when Robert F. Wagner II in his position as Manhattan Borough President - later in 1954 Wagner was elected Mayor of New York - "(...) established twelve 'Community Planning Councils' consisting of 15 to 20 members each".<sup>443</sup> Wagner set up these Community Planning Councils to break down the administration of New York by having the Community Planning Councils advise him "(...) on planning and budgetary matters. (...) Wagner's experiment was a prescient response to a well-articulated postwar fear that, to an ever increasing extent, people's lives were controlled by large, faceless bureaucracies".<sup>444</sup> His intention was to gain further knowledge from local people in order to understand the specific neighborhoods' needs and thus to govern the overall city more effectively. "As a solution, Jacobs recommended 'administrative districts,' to be run by a 'district administrator' which would represent the primary, basic subdivision within city agencies. Her recommendations were taken up in the 1963 New York City Charter, adopted during Wagner's third term as Mayor. In 1965 John V. Lindsay was elected as Mayor of New York City.

In 1970, Mayor Lindsay declared "the year of the neighborhood" and opened the Office of Neighborhood Government, which was "(...) aimed at reducing the lack of coordination among city agencies and improving service-level responsiveness at the community level (...)".<sup>445</sup> This office established "Little City Halls" in eight of community districts in New York City headed by district managers "(...) appointed by the Mayor to oversee the delivery of services in the district".<sup>446</sup> Thus Mayor Lindsay broke down administrative tasks further to the neighborhood level. "Within these 'Little City Halls,' managers were assigned to encourage more local planning and to improve service delivery through 'service cabinets.' Service cabinets were made up of officers of city agencies".<sup>447</sup> In May 1972 the Office of Neighborhood Government was closed, when "(...) City Comptroller Abe Beame released a report charging misuse of funds by the Office of Neighborhood Government. That, combined with agency resistance to decentralization spelled the demise of that office when Beame became Mayor".<sup>448</sup>

#### **4.4.4.2 Community boards**

In 1975 the City Charter of New York was revised and merged the tasks of Wagner's Community Planning Boards and Lindsay's Little City Halls and "(...) the neighborhood-governance concept [was extended, added C.M.] to the other boroughs, establishing 'Community Planning Boards' with advisory powers throughout the city. These boards eventually became known simply as 'Community boards'".<sup>449</sup> With the 1975 New York City Charter revisions, 59 Community Planning Boards, known later as Community Boards, were established in New York City.<sup>450</sup> The members of the Community Board work voluntarily to support their neighborhoods. Each of New York City's Community Boards "(...) consists of up to 50 unsalaried members appointed by the Borough President, with half nominated by the City Council members who represent that district. Board members must reside, work in, or

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<sup>442</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>443</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>444</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>445</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>446</sup> Community Board, Brooklyn No 2, New York, [www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml)

<sup>447</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>448</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>449</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>450</sup> Community Board, Brooklyn No 2, New York, [www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml).

have some other significant interest in the community”.<sup>451</sup> That means since half of the Community Board members were City Council members, the City Council was very much involved in the decision-making process of the Community Boards.

In terms of organization, “each community board is led by a District Manager who establishes an office, hires staff, and implements procedures to improve the delivery of City services to the district. While the main responsibility of the board office is to receive complaints from community residents, they also maintain other duties, such as processing permits for block parties and street fairs. Many boards choose to provide additional services and manage special projects that cater to specific community needs, including organizing tenants associations, coordinating neighborhood cleanup programs, and more”.<sup>452</sup> A flaw of the set up of the organization of Community Boards is that they tend to do better in wealthier neighborhoods that are ethnically homogenous. “The community boards vary widely in their effectiveness. In his study ‘Community Control and Decentralization,’ David Rogers found that boards in communities with higher median household income tend to do better at getting their proposals implemented by city agencies than Boards in communities with lower median household income. This is probably because Board members in wealthier communities tend to bring higher levels of skill, leisure time, and contacts than those in poorer communities. Comparative case studies of districts have also found that districts with more homogenous Boards in terms of board members’ backgrounds are more effective than those that are ethnically diverse. Ethnically homogenous Boards tend to be more unified and less factionalized than ethnically diverse Boards”.<sup>453</sup> In addition “(...) while community boards serve as advocates for their neighborhood, they do not have the ability to order any City agency or official to perform any task”.<sup>454</sup>

Until 1986, New York City Community Boards were mainly involved in police patrols and after that in the maintenance of public parks. That means in the middle of the 1980s for “(...) the first time park maintenance replaced police patrols as the number one priority of the city’s 59 Community Boards. Out of 70 services provided by 22 city agencies, the maintenance and improvement of the city’s parks and playgrounds were given first priority—even over uniformed services such as fire and police”.<sup>455</sup> This fact expresses the importance of public open spaces to the communities in the middle of the 1980s as is reflected in the community garden movement at the time. With the New York City Charter Revision of 1989, voters approved and reaffirmed also the role of community boards.<sup>456</sup> “New Yorkers elect the Mayor, Borough Presidents, City Council Members, Public Advocate, and Comptroller. These officials are collectively responsible for overseeing City government, either directly or through their appointees. The City Charter defines the authority of each official or body, including community boards, and the relationships among them”.<sup>457</sup>

Generally, “community boards have a variety of responsibilities, including but not limited to (...) assessing the needs of their own neighborhoods. (...) Any issue that affects part or all of a community, from a traffic problem to deteriorating housing, is a proper concern of community boards”.<sup>458</sup> That means the “three major responsibilities are most frequently associated with community boards; review of land use applications, participation in the City’s budget process, and monitoring and evaluating municipal service delivery. In addition, community boards increasingly participate in the review of a variety of applications submitted to City and State agencies”.<sup>459</sup> In regard to land use “community boards review applications to acquire, dispose of, or significantly change the use of City-owned property. They also review

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<sup>451</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>452</sup> New York City Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, [www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml).

<sup>453</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>454</sup> New York City Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, [www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml).

<sup>455</sup> New York Department of Parks and Recreation, [www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration](http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/rediscovery-restoration).

<sup>456</sup> Community Board, Brooklyn No 2, New York, [www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml).

<sup>457</sup> New York City Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, [www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml).

<sup>458</sup> New York City Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, [www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml).

<sup>459</sup> Community Board, Brooklyn No 2, New York, [www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml).

applications to develop private property in a way not allowed by the zoning designation. In addition, community boards review some applications to alter individual landmarks or property in a historic district. Some projects are required to undergo an environmental review and boards may engage in that process as well”.<sup>460</sup>

Since the middle of 1980s, the main task of community boards in the middle of the 1980s was park maintenance, which indirectly includes community gardening as public open spaces that were maintained by the community as well. When reviewing the benefits of a community garden on public land to the community, “local Community Boards made up of volunteer residents can be expected to be more flexible and knowledgeable about cultural differences and needs than citywide bureaucratic institutions”.<sup>461</sup>

In 1997 the approval of community boards was necessary to determine whether a site was a better use for the community as a housing site in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development or as a community garden site in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation. “Community boards were required to conduct a formal review of the gardens and to determine two things: that the land was no longer a priority housing site and that it would better serve the community as permanent open space”.<sup>462</sup> The decision-making process of the Community Boards on the suitability of land for housing or gardening depended not only on the constituency of the board itself, but also on the proposal made by the gardening group. Thus for example, as Edie Stone<sup>463</sup> states in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000 “at one Community Board hearing in Brooklyn where the fate of a garden named ‘Prospect Heights Community Farm’ was being discussed, testimony was provided by teachers and children from the local public school, predominantly black longtime residents of the neighborhood and white newcomers who had recently bought houses, immigrants from Latin America and Japan, all of whom spoke passionately about how the garden had helped them to learn about each other and overcome differences. Not surprisingly, the Community Board voted to pass a resolution recommending permanent preservation of the garden. Although the ultimate fate of the garden is unclear, the developer proposing to build on it at that particular hearing has since dropped the garden from his plans”.<sup>464</sup>

The transfer of public land from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to the Department of Parks and Recreation upon review by community boards did not happen often, since affordable housing was in low-income neighborhoods the main long-term objective of the administration and communities. “Only a handful of gardens in Manhattan CB 3 and in Brooklyn CB [Community Board, added C.M.] 6 - had been approved for transfer to Parks when, in May 1998, a reversal in City policy regarding its community gardens nearly dealt a death blow to them. In order to grant HPD quicker access to properties for which it had administrative holds the management of all gardens on DCAS [Department of Citywide Administrative Services, added C.M.] land was transferred to HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.]. (Although these gardens were under DCAS [Department of Citywide Administrative Services, added C.M.] jurisdiction, they had been, since 1995, managed by Parks)”.<sup>465</sup>

In New York City zoning maps, community gardens are not marked since they are not an official land use category. Thus “because community gardens as a ‘temporary use’ are not recognized as an official land use category under New York law, garden sites in development plans are referred to only as ‘vacant lots’ designated by their tax block and lot numbers in public documents”.<sup>466</sup> Consequently, as Edie Stone stated in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000, “when public hearings regarding plans for these lots are held, community gardeners are not routinely notified.

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<sup>460</sup> Community Board, Brooklyn No 2, New York, [www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/bkncb2/html/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtml).

<sup>461</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>462</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>463</sup> Edith (Edie) Stone was the director of GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013.

<sup>464</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>465</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>466</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

Unless the gardeners know their tax block and lot number and constantly review the text of dense and difficult to obtain city government publications, it is unlikely that they will know to be present to represent their gardens”.<sup>467</sup> This has changed with the creation of the Open Accessible Space Information System with the webpage [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net) that is until today guided by “(...) a collaborative partnership of private and public sector representatives (...)”<sup>468</sup>, which allows gardeners to collect a broad range of information on their garden – like block and lot numbers or community board data. Even though community gardens are mapped even on Google Maps today, they have not been categorized under the status of a specific land use and consequently community gardens are neither part of zoning maps nor – since parks are not part of the zoning of New York City- parkland maps showing traditional parkland by the Parks Department.

Community gardeners need to speak up publicly to protect their gardens – that is something that the community gardeners learned while organizing themselves over the years -, because “without the input of their constituents, City Council members often approve projects without knowing that a community garden was involved”.<sup>469</sup> Council members in their role as part of the community boards were especially before the auction of public land with community gardens of 1999 in the conflict to decide whether housing or community gardens were needed more. Edie Stone explains in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000 “Council members understandably find it difficult to vote against these projects in the context of the continuing housing crisis New York City faces”.<sup>470</sup> It becomes especially difficult to stop housing development on public land since at the time a community garden that was to be auctioned off was “(...) often one lot in a development plan comprising several city blocks and hundreds of housing units.”<sup>471</sup> This was for example the case with the garden El Batey Borincano in the South Bronx. But the garden group organized and managed to prove that the garden was necessary for the community as a land use so that the new housing development had to be built around the garden.<sup>472</sup>

The South Bronx with its vast acres of public land available until was especially interesting to developers. “Developers including the New York City Partnership are offered groups of lots to develop by HPD as a part of ‘Requests for Proposals’ (RFPs), which are competitive bidding documents issued by the agency”.<sup>473</sup> Even though the approval of the community boards is necessary to develop tracts of public land since community boards have to conduct “(...) the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure”<sup>474</sup> (...) which mandated a community board review and vote on all land use applications, including zoning actions, special permits, acquisition and disposition of city property, and urban renewal plans”<sup>475</sup>, it is often the case \ that this approval does not exist. That means community representatives are often not aware of the housing development plans on public land in their neighborhood, since “developers are routinely told that Community Boards have approved these housing sites, although under UDAAP [Urban Development Action Area Program<sup>476</sup>, added C.M.] often no presentation to the Community Board has been made”.<sup>477</sup> In other words, “by the time the Council is presented the development proposal, plans have been drawn, financing has been secured,

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<sup>467</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>468</sup> Open Accessible Space Information System. [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net).

<sup>469</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>470</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>471</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>472</sup> Personal experience 2012.

<sup>473</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>474</sup> New York City Department of City Planning, [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ap/step5\\_ulurp.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ap/step5_ulurp.shtml)

<sup>475</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>476</sup> The Urban Development Action Area Program is a “(...) tax incentive program is for developers and future or current property owners”. (New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, [www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/developers/udaap.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/developers/udaap.shtml)) The program was for “rehabilitation or new construction of housing on formerly city-owned land, including properties that were transferred to a third party through Local Law 37, in an area which the City Council determines to be in need of urban renewal”. (New York City Department of Housing, Preservation and Development, [www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/developers/udaap.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/developers/udaap.shtml))

<sup>477</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

and many thousands of dollars of developers' money has been invested in the completion of the project".<sup>478</sup>

Community gardening groups, even when they united into a citywide organization, had rarely enough power to go against the interest groups planning to develop housing on a community garden. Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001-2013, explains in her article "Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement" published in 2000. "The political pressure exerted by a relatively small group of however strongly committed garden advocates is seldom sufficient to overcome the overwhelming influence of the developers and HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] at this late stage in the process".<sup>479</sup> She continues, "Clearly the deliberate inclusion of community garden sites in HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] RFPs [Request for Proposals, added C.M.] is at the root of the problem".<sup>480</sup> Thus even with the gardeners organizing themselves and protesting the development of community garden land, "the City was able to approve these lands for sale without the approval of the Council members representing local interests because all of the properties had been approved for sale in prior years by a now defunct<sup>481</sup> city agency, the Board of Estimate. All that was required for the sale to proceed was a series of hearings at which the public was allowed to voice their objections".<sup>482</sup>

#### 4.4.4.3 The Uniform Land Use Review Procedure and 197-a plans

Community planning in New York City improved with the 1975 charter revisions. These revisions "(...) gave the Community boards the power to draft master plans".<sup>483</sup> These charter revisions resulted for example in "(...) the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (...) which mandated a community board review and vote on all land use applications, including zoning actions, special permits, acquisition and disposition of city property, and urban renewal plans".<sup>484</sup> That means, "ULURP [the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, added C.M.] is a standardized procedure whereby applications affecting the land use of the city would be publicly reviewed".<sup>485</sup> The review of these land use applications is done by the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission, Community Boards, the Borough Presidents, the Borough Boards, the City Council and the Mayor as key participants.<sup>486</sup> In contrast to 197-a plans, "the land use review process tends to be short-term and focused on individual projects".<sup>487</sup>

In 1990 Community Boards received the chance to prepare so called 197-a plans and submit them to the City Council for approval – rather than the common, other way around. "In 1990, another Charter revision<sup>488</sup> established, in section 197-a, a process for reviewing Community board master plans. Prior to this change, plans affecting communities were prepared by the Department of City Planning and presented to the City Planning Commission for approval".<sup>489</sup> With the Charter revision, "Section 197-a gave the Boards explicit authority to prepare plans and submit them to the Planning Commission and City Council for approval".<sup>490</sup> Since the authority for 197-a plans comes of the City Charter's Section 197a, these plans are long-term - in contrast for example to the ULURP process".<sup>491</sup> Still few Community Boards actually

<sup>478</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>479</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>480</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>481</sup> In 1989 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the Board of Estimate was against the constitution since the borough with the highest number of population, which was Brooklyn at the time, had as much power as the least populated borough Staten Island.

<sup>482</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>483</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>484</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>485</sup> New York City Department of City Planning, [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ap/step5\\_ulurp.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ap/step5_ulurp.shtml).

<sup>486</sup> New York City Department of City Planning, [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ap/step5\\_ulurp.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ap/step5_ulurp.shtml).

<sup>487</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>488</sup> "After extensive pressure from community activists, a 1990 Charter revision gave the boards explicit authority to prepare plans and submit them to the Planning Commission and City Council for approval". (Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html))

<sup>489</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>490</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>491</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

prepared plans because, “according to Thomas Angotti, chair of the Pratt Institute's Planning Department, (...) few have any knowledge of planning.”

It is a long process to develop a 197-a plan in New York and ultimately “(...) like all plans, ‘197-a’ plans are advisory policy statements. But at the very least, section 197-a obligates city agencies to consider the plan in making future decisions”.<sup>492</sup> And since “all plans are advisory to some extent, and plans that are specific and mandate narrow actions can also be ignored or changed”<sup>493</sup> this is according to Thomas Angotti in not the main problem with 197-a plans. The main problem is according to Angotti in his article “Race, Place and Waste: Community Planning in New York City” of 1999, “(...) the lack of promotion of 197-a plans, the lack of community board staff, funding and planning assistance.” He adds, “(...) City government does not support or promote community planning in general, and 197-a plans in particular. The average community board covers an area of 100,000 people with a staff of two or three people who spend most of their time dealing with minor complaints ranging from potholes to traffic lights. They receive no funds for planning. The City Planning Department does not provide planners to work for them. And when the few communities that complete plans send them to City Planning for approval, they find themselves subjected to extensive scrutiny and may have changes imposed on them without community review”.<sup>494</sup> In the beginning of the 1990s, Community Board 3 in the South Bronx called for the development of new, high-density housing, which led to the development of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. “A 1992 plan by Community Board 3 in the South Bronx urged new housing development at higher densities than those being developed at the time by city housing programs. The plan provided the basis for amendments to a large urban renewal area, Melrose Commons”.<sup>495</sup>

Consequently the analysis of community-planning since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community-planning is participatory planning of neighborhoods that started with community organizing as in the case of community gardens started by residents’ groups in the South Bronx in the 1970s to improve their quality of life. This participatory planning effort by the residents’ groups was answered by the local government by setting up participatory planning tools such as Community Planning Councils and Little City Halls that led to the enactment of New York City’s 59 Community Boards and of 197-a plans that allowed residents to have a greater impact on their local interests.

#### **4.4.5 Organization of community gardens**

In the following I will introduce open space land use for community gardens in the South Bronx and organization since the 1970s in regard to organization of community gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx.

In the South Bronx in the 1970s there were vast tracts of open space available and “land acquisition techniques used by groups (...) range[d, added C.M.] from ‘squatting’ on a privately or publicly owned lot to acquiring land and incorporating as a nonprofit community land trust”.<sup>496</sup> Even though GreenThumb only supports community gardens in Community Development Block Grant eligible areas as the municipal program is funded by this grant until today, public land available for community gardening is today not necessarily located in low-income neighborhoods any longer since some areas underwent the gentrification process.

As Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in their report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1999, “Community-developed open-space projects can be found in many different types of neighborhoods. They are developed in declining low-income neighborhoods (...) and in transitional neighborhoods (...)”.<sup>497</sup> The design and development of the formerly under-used open space depend on the interest of the residents groups and the needs of the neighborhood surrounding the site.

<sup>492</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>493</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>494</sup> Angotti 1999, [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1angotti.html).

<sup>495</sup> Forman, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

<sup>496</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 17-18.

<sup>497</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

“Sites are often developed in response to conditions in the neighborhood. Some are developed due to increasing abandonment and vacant properties in the neighborhood (...), and many are developed because a vacant lot ‘is just there’ (...) and residents want to put it to better use”.<sup>498</sup>

#### 4.4.5.1 Community garden license

In the 1990s in the same way as today, to start a community garden on public land that is available for gardening purposes, New York City residents have to get together as a gardening group and have to present a support letter by the community board to GreenThumb in order to attain a license and registration for gardening on this land. But while in the middle of the 1990s the land use of community gardens was clearly temporary without any long-term protection against sudden eviction as is expressed by a statement in a letter<sup>499</sup> of the Community Board declaring that the gardening group would have to get off the land in case housing development would be scheduled, community gardens - at least those situated on land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, i.e. the majority - are protected for a term of one- to four years by the Community Garden Rules of 2010. Since 1978 the GreenThumb license for public land to be used for community gardening represents the general guidelines for the land use and has been adjusted since it was first issued. “The general guidelines for the creation and operation of a GreenThumb community garden are outlined in a license document that is issued by the City of New York to the group of volunteers operating the garden”.<sup>500</sup> According to Stone in her article ‘The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City’ of 2000 “(...) these guidelines (...) focus primarily on public access and very general standards of maintenance aimed at preventing hazardous conditions (...)”.<sup>501</sup>

The term of the GreenThumb license is one aspect that has been adjusted over the years depending on the agency that had jurisdiction over the public community garden land. Still in 1996 there was a one-dollar annual fee for the use of public land for gardening land but this fee was waived.<sup>502</sup> With the Community Garden Rules issued in October 2010 the license terms for public land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation was set to four years and for public land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to one year. The use and maintenance of this land is not further defined in the license, but more in the GreenThumb Gardener’s Handbook that was issued in 2009.<sup>503</sup> Still there has been adjustment in the language of the license in regard to the activity level of a community gardening group. While in 1996 “(...) the GreenThumb lease specifies that the lot is to be used as an ‘incidental passive recreational space and for no other purposes’”.<sup>504</sup> today the active use of community gardening land is emphasized – as mentioned for example in the Community Garden Rules that were enacted in October 2010. GreenThumb license agreements demanded until 2007 that gardens were to be open 10 hours a week. But due to the discussion about privatization of public land via community gardening that were started in context with the in the previous year issued regulation for the construction of structures in GreenThumb gardens, the opening hours were changed to 20 hours a week. Even though this caused protest by gardeners and the New York City Community Gardening Coalition, since some gardeners argued that it was a lot to ask especially during the wintertime, community gardens today have to be open 20 hours per week.

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<sup>498</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

<sup>499</sup> Sciorra explains in his article “We’re not just here to plant. We have culture.” An Ethnography of the South Bronx Casita” of 1994 that “community gardeners are expendable. When it becomes profitable to construct in low-income neighborhoods, the city will simply repossess the land. This is witnessed in the pro forma letter that must be submitted by a member of an applying organization’s community board, stating that the applicants are aware that their GreenThumb lease will be terminated if the land were to be slated for development”. (Sciorra 1994, p. 28)

<sup>500</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>501</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>502</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 73-75.

<sup>503</sup> GreenThumb, [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org).

<sup>504</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 30.

#### 4.4.5.2 Community garden insurance

Since in the late 1970s community gardeners were using public land for community gardening and thus did not own the land, they were not able to get insurance for it, but were liable for the use of the public land anyhow. Consequently at the time the "(...) Neighborhood Open Space coalition created a low-cost liability program that gardeners could buy into".<sup>505</sup>

Through this low-cost liability program "for years, NOSC [(Neighborhood Open Space Coalition), added C.M.] provided insurance to each garden at the cost of \$250 per year. However, after a series of manmade and natural disasters, the cost per garden rose to \$425 per year".<sup>506</sup> Until August 2005, "according to the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, only seven claims have ever been filed, and only three have resulted in payments to injured parties".<sup>507</sup> Then starting in "(...) August 2005, the City (...) explored alternatives to the group insurance provided by the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition".<sup>508</sup> Finally after the New York City Community Gardening Coalition pushed for a solution in 2006 the Department of Parks and Recreation took on for GreenThumb the costs of insurances by establishing one insurance policy for all community gardens.

In March 2006 The Department of Parks and Recreation "(...) Commissioner Adrian Benepe announced (...) that the City would now extend municipal liability protection to community gardeners, thereby no longer requiring garden organizations to pay for private insurance policies. Previously gardeners were provided with affordable group insurance by the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition (...), but, after years of rising costs, NOSC [Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, added C.M.] could no longer bear the financial and administrative burden".<sup>509</sup> Consequently as per this announcement from 2006 on "(...) claims against the City resulting from injuries suffered in gardens will be treated the same as claims arising from incidents on all other City land. The City is self-insured and pays valid claims out of current tax revenue".<sup>510</sup> But there were further issues to the insurance of community gardens as the current and ongoing discussion about Membership Agreement forms to waive liability of gardeners proves.<sup>511</sup>

Consequently the analysis of organization of community gardens since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that residents' groups in the South Bronx in the 1970s started community gardens in response to the needs of the neighborhoods which is reflected in the design and development of the gardens. But since most of the open space land used for community gardening was leased to the garden group through GreenThumb, the organization of the community garden land use and the term of the land use was regulated by GreenThumb through the garden lease. This provides until today the City with a regulating mechanism and keeps community gardening a temporary land use.

#### 4.4.6 Organization of community garden groups

A community garden maintenance and design as well as the organization depend on a specific residents group using the site according to the demand of the neighborhood. This was supported by GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013, since Edie Stone director of GreenThumb during that time was convinced that "garden volunteers in New York clearly value their independence and latitude they are given to govern their own licensed spaces. Recognizing this independent spirit, I have deliberately taken a hands-off policy regarding the physical and organizational development of individual community gardens".<sup>512</sup> Generally "people get involved in groups for various reasons, frequently in combination 'they are community minded; like to garden (...); want to save money (...); or want social interaction,

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<sup>505</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>506</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2006, [www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761](http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761).

<sup>507</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2006, [www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761](http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761).

<sup>508</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2006, [www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761](http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761).

<sup>509</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2006, [www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761](http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761).

<sup>510</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2006, [www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761](http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=19761).

<sup>511</sup> Personal experience 2013.

<sup>512</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

such as ‘a common ground to talk’, a ‘way to know your neighbors,’ and an ‘excuse for getting together’ (...).<sup>513</sup>

Community garden groups – even though they have to have ten members to register a site with GreenThumb - are usually run by, “core groups [that, added C.M.] tend to be small. Usually fewer than ten people make up the central decision-making group and do the major work. The entire group of people involved in the project can be much larger”.<sup>514</sup> When a group of residents wants to start a community garden, organization within the group is necessary. “Community open-space development begins with the expressed need and desire for open space by community residents and frequently involves several critical stages, including initiation, conceptualization, and negotiation”.<sup>515</sup> A group gets organized and functions by being “either informally organized around a division of responsibility, interests, and skills (such as one person doing legal work, another accounting, another gardening (...)) or more formally organized around a committee system divided by tasks (such as gardening committee, tot lot committee, etc. (...)). Most groups quickly realize the unique individual skills of members and use them to their advantage”.<sup>516</sup>

Residents organize community garden groups in various ways depending on other resident organization already existent in a neighborhood or on their objective. “(1) They can be an existing organization that expands its focus to open-space projects (such as an existing block association (...)). (2) They can be a group formed only to do the open-space project (...). (3) The group can be formed as a coalition of existing organizations, constituted to do the open-space project (such as a group of block associations near a project (...))”.<sup>517</sup> There are different formal forms in which groups can organize themselves to have a legal status such as land trust or non-profit organization that helps in the financial funding of the development garden site. Community garden groups can for example be organized as a land trust. Land trusts have a federal tax-exempt status and have thus to comply with the requirements connected with this status. This includes prohibitions on private benefits, but allows to apply for grants that need a fiscal conduit. Land trusts have a board and the members are the one’s responsible for fund raising. This makes a land trust at the same time accountable to donors, who may in return claim a federal or state income tax deduction or state credit. A group that organizes themselves in a land trust can become the private owner of a public site under The Trust for Public Land<sup>518</sup> and can thus permanently secure the site, while at the same time loosing support of larger items from GreenThumb.

Some garden groups organize found non-profit organizations, so called 501 (c) (3) organizations to be tax exempted and thus are able to apply for grants and financial funding. In the same way as the land trust a non-profit organization may not be used for private benefits of interests: “A section 501(c)(3) organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests, such as the creator or the creator’s family, shareholders of the organization, other designated individuals, or persons controlled directly or indirectly by such private interests. No part of the net earnings of a section 501(c)(3) organization may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. A private shareholder or individual is a person having a personal and private interest in the activities of the organization”.<sup>519</sup>

Consequently the analysis of community garden groups’ organization since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community garden that has been designed, created and is maintained by a residents’ group needs also to be organized independently and democratically by this group. A fact that was supported by GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013. Still organization within the group is necessary due to the variety of tasks that need to be taken on and the variety of individuals active in the garden. In addition formal organization of community garden groups in land trusts or non-profit

<sup>513</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 193.

<sup>514</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>515</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 17.

<sup>516</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 193-194.

<sup>517</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>518</sup> Trust for Public Land, Community Gardens. [www.tpl.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/new-york/community-gardens.html](http://www.tpl.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/new-york/community-gardens.html).

<sup>519</sup> Internal Revenue Service, [www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=123297,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=123297,00.html).

organizations provides legal status that helps in the financial funding of the development garden site.

#### **4.4.7 Public attention organized by gardeners**

Beginning in the late 1960's the decay of the southern part of Bronx in terms of social, economic and urban structure was featured in the press, flashing up in the face of New Yorkers in stories and headlines. Consequently a negative image of the South Bronx was spread through the news throughout the city with the consequence that even more residents moved out of the borough and that private real estate developers and businessmen shunned away. Politicians, community development organizations as well as resident groups starting community gardens soon took advantage of the press' interest in the South Bronx and its community development movement.

By the middle of the 1970s the officials had come to accept the arson and the destruction of the housing stock in the South Bronx. Many did not feel that the cause of the situation fell into their area of responsibility, so they did not see that they could do something to change the outcome. Internal animosity strengthened the refusal to take action and left it to the group of Catholic priest to force at least the press to recognize the situation. The Bronx Borough President Robert Abrams, the Bronx District Attorney Mario Merola and representatives of the police, the fire, the welfare and the housing department met with the church coalition. The clergy presented the facts about Government policies that encouraged what was going on in the South Bronx, like for example "the Housing Department Agency's well-known preference for awarding rehab monies to already- vacant buildings meant that an owner could look forward to fire insurance and, once having emptied the building, to receiving a government-backed renovation of the damaged apartment house".<sup>520</sup>

At the time, the welfare department's attitude of actually rewarding clients that had to leave a burned out apartment, as well as the failing response of the fire and police department were criticized by the coalition as well. Where the fire and safety group around Geenie Brooks had failed the authority of the clergy helped and the Bronx District Attorney Mario Merola declared that a new Bronx Task Force would be formed, when he agreed on the correctness on the presented facts. He took the chance to inform the press and declared war on arson. "(...) From that moment forward the Bronx was constantly in the news".<sup>521</sup> Support by New York State Senator Jacob Javits in the middle of the 1970s helped community groups to force the City to notice what was going on in the South Bronx. His support of regular residents, who were concerned about the downwind of their neighborhood and who came up with concrete ideas how to better the situation, helped a few accomplishments on the way and brought him personal attachment to the South Bronx. Through the connection to Jacob Javits a group of a few people, the fire and safety group received the power to put pressure on the fire department and to demand the reduction of the number of fires in their area by the employment of more fire marshals. The fire and safety group, around the active resident Geenie Brooks, went on to attract the publics attention by documenting the ongoing devastation, by creating surveys of it, and by inviting everyone of influence possible to visit the Bronx. The result of the survey stated "in one two-week period in August 1973 the blocks immediately around Charlotte Street had fifty-six fires in twenty-two buildings".<sup>522</sup>

On February 25, 1974 two hundred of the invited guest, among them the Congressman Herman Badillo, Planning Commissioner John Zuccotti, the press, the bankers, the real estate men, the fire department's and the police department's officials as well as the insurance industry were brought on a walking tour to let them experience for themselves the devastating loss of housing and commerce in the neighborhood that could hardly be called one anymore. But not even the press was interested in what was going. They either cared more about Herman Badillo's running for Mayor or took it as another minority neighborhood's problem, the problem of addicts and families on welfare. A poster campaign tried to educate the community about the ongoing fires in the South Bronx and to raise awareness that something had to be done to regain power and control. But even the Fire and Safety group

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<sup>520</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 260.

<sup>521</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 261.

<sup>522</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 251.

did not explicitly mention that the buildings burned down due to arson, i.e. due to action out of the community.

When the development of the South Bronx became interesting for the media, public pressure for results increased. Federal authorities including the FBI were asked for assistance to deal with the fires, but refused to get involved.<sup>523</sup> In the beginning of the 1970s the Green Guerillas began to garden on public open land in New York City and “although the Guerillas initially got permission to clean the lots, the City later accused them of trespassing and threatened to boot them off the land”.<sup>524</sup> Liz Christy and her group fought back though by documenting their development of community gardens for the media. Thus “(...) after a media blitz, when Christy and her compadres brought in TV cameras to show how they transformed the lot — creating soil with nothing but sifted rubble and compost — the City backed down and offered them a lease in 1974”.<sup>525</sup>

In 1977, almost ten years after President Richard Nixon had made a visit after the riots of 1968 to an impoverished neighborhood of Washington, President Jimmy Carter followed his example and visited the South Bronx - and the public took notice. “The president of the United States, the most powerful man in the world had come to the South Bronx”.<sup>526</sup> The New York Times draw the drastic comparison that a visit to the South Bronx was as “(...) crucial to an understanding of American urban lie as a visit to Auschwitz is crucial to an understanding of Nazism”.<sup>527</sup> A week after the President Carter’s visit to the South Bronx, during a World Series game at Yankee Stadium the ABC Sports cameras showed fire lighting up the sky next to the ballpark and the reporter Howard Cosell told the audience that “The Bronx is burning.” While people in the United States and the world watched the Yankees an elementary school in the South Bronx was on fire. The national and global press printed stories on the decay of the Bronx raising national and international awareness of what had happened in the South Bronx so that the area became a synonym for urban failure in the United States – the “(...) worst place in America, maybe the whole Western World”.<sup>528</sup> In the middle of the 1990s, there was still coverage of the South Bronx urban revival in terms of housing and public open space, social and economic aspects, in the press. Thus for example declared “Ted Koppel declared in a 1996 Nightline segment (...) that “the citizens of the South Bronx set an example that can serve a hundred other slums around the country, (...)”.<sup>529</sup>

At the time the struggle of community gardeners to preserve their garden sites against the development plans of the City administration under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, received a lot of press as well. The interest group behind the gardeners was large with a constituency deriving from about 850 gardens<sup>530</sup> established citywide, so that when the community gardeners began to organize themselves and called in the press, it became a powerful group. To attract the press, community gardeners dressed up and stage protests in locations that attracted the attention of the media.<sup>531</sup> Thus for example “inspired by the destruction of Adam Purple’s world-renowned Garden of Eden, in 1991 (...) [a, added C.M.] Lower East Side woman named Felicia Young began hosting pageants to dramatize the plight of the area’s green spaces”.<sup>532</sup>

About a year after community gardeners had formed the New York City Community Gardens Coalition to organize citywide against the demolition of gardens under the City administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, “On February 13, 1997, they organized the first citywide garden rally. Led by giant puppets, more than 300 gardeners and supporters marched from City Hall Park delivering ‘valentines’ of flowers and herbs to city officials, along with petitions

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<sup>523</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 264.

<sup>524</sup> Ferguson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html).

<sup>525</sup> Ferguson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1briefgreening.html).

<sup>526</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 316.

<sup>527</sup> Editorial New York Times, 10/6/1977 in: Worth 1999,

[www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>528</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 317.

<sup>529</sup> Worth 1999, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9904.worth.bronx.html).

<sup>530</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>531</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>532</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

demanding that the city recognize the validity of their green spaces. The street tactics clashed with non-profit greening groups, including Green Guerillas and the Trust For Public Land, which had privately taken the position that all gardens could not be saved. Instead, TPL [(The Trust for Public Land), added C.M.] worked with Green Thumb to get the more established gardens preserved as park land<sup>533</sup>.<sup>534</sup> But the struggle of community garden groups to preserve their sites continued, as Mayor Giuliani was re-elected. "In January 1998, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's second inauguration was interrupted by protestors<sup>535</sup> shouting "Save the Gardens!" Giuliani whacked the gardens!" and wild howling as the protestors were dragged away".<sup>536</sup>

In 1998 "East Village gardeners and activists joined to construct a bulldozer blockade at another garden site. The encampment was equipped with lockdown boxes, elevated sitting tripods and other civil disobedience devices, including a huge frog on stilts over the gate large enough to house four protestors. The frog or Coqui as it is referred to in Spanish, is a symbol of strength in Puerto Rico where it is revered for the huge voice it displays despite its small size. The Esperanza garden's Coqui held off bulldozers for several hours as police sawed through steel bicycle locks to remove the protestors inside. Hundreds of other police were required to hold back enraged crowds outside the garden gates, and dozens of protestors were arrested".<sup>537</sup> When the majority of community gardens were transferred in May 1998 to the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing and Development, gardeners acted right away and reached out to the press. "Although this transfer was made quietly, (under the laws of New York City transfer of land between City agencies does not require public review) garden supporters leaked the news of the transfer to grassroots activist groups who quickly telephoned hundreds of gardeners citywide and effectively lobbied the press to report the story".<sup>538</sup> Next "gardeners and supporters (...) called their elected officials, resulting in HPD agreeing that the GreenThumb program would continue, managed by the Parks Department, although no new leases would be issued for the land. At the same time, HPD agreed to preserve 36 gardens deemed to be exceptional examples of community gardens by the Parks Department as permanent parkland".<sup>539</sup>

On May 5th 1998, "(...) at a (...) 'pre-auction seminar' designed to educate potential buyers about the sale procedures. Garden advocates staged an extremely organized and well-planned protest outside the pre-auction seminar. Serenaded by a marching band and showered with hundreds of cut flowers tossed by supporters, sixty protestors were arrested for blocking a major street. The civil disobedience was monitored by volunteer lawyers and accompanied by a permitted demonstration attended by nearly a thousand gardeners and their supporters".<sup>540</sup> Only six days later, on May 11, 1998, the State Attorney General, Elliott Spitzer, filed suit to stop the sale resulting in a temporary restraining order that hindered the city from selling any community garden lots.<sup>541</sup>

In 1999 gardeners came together for a two-day conference organized by the New York City Garden Coalition. This conference, called "Standing Our Ground Conference and Rally attracted politicians and gardeners from across the country which broadened the support for preserving the gardens".<sup>542</sup> The gardeners staged more protests to attract the press since the

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<sup>533</sup> "In 1996, the 6th Street and Avenue B garden — a large corner lot known for its bizarre, Watts-like tower of plastic toys and stuffed animals — was granted parks status [(correction: was transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation), added C.M.]. Eight other Lower-East Side gardens (54 citywide) have been transferred or are in the process of being transferred to the Parks Department". (Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html))

<sup>534</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>535</sup> "The protestors were members of the Chico Mendez Mural garden, a community garden created by a group of artists in Manhattan's East Village. As the neighborhood rapidly gentrified starting in the early 1990's several community gardens had been razed to make way for new housing construction". (Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html))

<sup>536</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>537</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>538</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>539</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>540</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>541</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>542</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 8.

preservation of their gardens was still pending the outcome of the temporary restraining order. "Activists took part in rallies and disruptive protests and many were arrested".<sup>543</sup> A large group of gardeners came to the hearings before the auction, which attracted the media. "At each of the four hearings held in the winter of 1999, hundreds of gardeners and their supporters testified in favor of removing the gardens from the auction block. Following the final hearing on February 4th, gardeners staged a sit-in in City Hall. Newspaper coverage was sympathetic to the gardens and made much of the absurd confrontation that erupted as police dressed in riot gear arrested singing garden activists dressed as flowers and bees".<sup>544</sup>

Despite the large turn out of community gardeners at the hearings and "despite the protests, arrests, and a last minute unsuccessful attempt by supportive City Council members to pass new legislation blocking the sale, plans for the garden auction continued (...)".<sup>545</sup> Then, yet another demonstration took place on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999, about a week before the auction date. "With performance art, musical medleys and a sit-in, hundreds of demonstrators closed down a one-block stretch of Chambers Street in lower Manhattan [close to City Hall, added C.M.] yesterday evening to protest the impending auction of more than 100 city properties now being used as community gardens. Police officers struggled to contain the motley but peaceful crowd, which included some people dressed as flowers and plants, and arrested 62 of the demonstrators after they sat down in the road and blocked traffic during the evening rush, said Detective Joseph Pentangelo, a spokesman for the Police Department. They were all charged with disorderly conduct, issued summonses and released, he said".<sup>546</sup>

The demonstrations and arrests of community gardeners brought public attention to the auctioning off of community garden land and eventually the auction was stopped when The Trust for Public Land and the New York Restoration Project bought community garden land. Only here years later in 2002, further protests were staged by the New York City Community Garden Coalition in front of City Hall to press for the community garden settlement and in 2010 to call for the preservation of gardens through the Community Garden Rules and for the continuation of GreenThumb.<sup>547</sup>

#### **4.4.8 Housing, community gardens and public support**

The funding that the City was putting into housing development in the South Bronx over the years varied considerably over the years. "In the 1970s New York State sponsored 125,000 middle-income apartments, but none since. During the Koch administration from 1987-1989, \$800 million in City dollars were spent on housing however Giuliani has spent only \$200 million. By comparison, \$255 million dollars in City funds were recently awarded to relocate the New York City Stock Exchange to larger headquarters".<sup>548</sup> Planners have been favoring the development of housing over the development of community gardens in the late 1980s and 1990s and are often still doing that today. Stone states in 2000 in her article "Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement", "when planners misunderstand community gardens to be temporary beautification projects, it is easy to see why they choose housing as the priority use for city owned sites"<sup>549</sup> – that is in the case of community gardens not located on public land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Stone states in 2000 in the same article that "the majority of the housing constructed in New York City in the last ten years [i.e. since 1990, added C.M.] has been subsidized, owner occupied, low density townhouses. These projects, funded by public resources and private non-profit organizations such as the New York City Partnership, typically result in sale costs of between \$117,000 and \$234,000 for a two to four family home. Although down payments are subsidized by the government, purchasers typically must earn at least \$43,000 in order to qualify for a loan".<sup>550</sup> This is more than twice the median annual family income of South Bronx residents in 2000, which was about \$17,000. In other words the support of the public for low-

<sup>543</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 8.

<sup>544</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>545</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>546</sup> Herszenhorn 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html).

<sup>547</sup> Personal experience 2002.

<sup>548</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>549</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>550</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

income housing was held in such away that it seemed to be affordable to low-income people, since the price was below the market rate, but it still was not affordable in relation to the actual income.

Even if the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure requires a public review before the land use is determined to be for example housing or community gardens there is an exemption if the lot is located in an Urban Development Action Area. "A local law crafted in and approved by the State Legislature allows construction of one to four family subsidized owner-occupied housing (the low density, high profit margin townhouse construction typically favored by Partnership developers) to proceed without the approval or public review by Community Boards, the neighborhood advisory boards made up of volunteer citizens which usually review municipal projects. This special exemption of the normal land use review process is granted to projects that have been designated as Urban Development Action Area Projects. These Urban Development Action Area Projects are granted almost exclusively for Partnership financed developments and senior citizen's housing".<sup>551</sup>

The Urban Development Action Area is defined as a low-income area that has a negative influence on other urban areas. "Section 691 of the General Municipal Law that created Urban Development Action Area Projects requires that properties eligible for the accelerated process must be 'slum or blighted areas...the existence [of which] constitutes a serious and growing menace, is injurious to the public safety, health, morals and welfare, contributes increasingly to the spread of crime, juvenile delinquency, and disease, necessitates excessive and disproportionate expenditures of funds for all forms of public services and maintenance, and constitutes a negative influence on the adjacent properties, impairing their economic soundness and stability...'".<sup>552</sup> (...) "<sup>553</sup> Since this description is for a neighborhood rather than a property lot a community garden situated in this area can be effected by the plans for housing development that included community gardens for example in the late 1990s only when the community demanded it as in the case of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. To ensure access to open space and housing for low-income population, it is necessary that" (...) "successful comprehensive planning [is, added C.M.] taking into account the needs for both housing and open space".<sup>554</sup>

Until the mid-1990's, a minimum of housing was developed in New York City, because of the ongoing financial crisis and "during that time, the number of GreenThumb community gardens grew to approximately 750 (...)".<sup>555</sup> Then economy picked up and the city began to develop housing on public land – demolishing gardens if they were in the way of residential development. The protests of community gardeners against the bulldozing of their gardens in the middle of the 1990s received much media attention as well and the mainly good-humored protests won over the general public and residents of New York City. In reaction to the City's announcement to auction off 112 community gardens in May 1999 "even the normally staid New York Times called the prospect of bulldozing well-used gardens 'an act of neighborhood violence.' (Jan. 14, 1999)".<sup>556</sup>

In the late 1990s community garden groups called for legislation for the preservation of public open space for community gardens during to the redevelopment of housing in low-income neighborhoods of New York City. Thus "(...) garden advocates (...) worked in collaboration with gardeners and supportive elected officials to craft legislation".<sup>557</sup> As Edie Stone mentions in her article Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement of 2000, this "(...) legislation, (...) introduced to the City Council and co-sponsored by many Council members, lays out a process by which community gardens can be reviewed for potential permanent preservation, either by transfer to the parks department or sale for a nominal fee to private Land Trusts".<sup>558</sup> Approval and support by the public would be necessary if

<sup>551</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>552</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/11littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/11littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>553</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>554</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>555</sup> TreeBranch Network, [http://treebranch.org/community\\_gardens.htm](http://treebranch.org/community_gardens.htm).

<sup>556</sup> Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/11littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/11littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>557</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>558</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

community gardens on public land were to be preserved, so that a review process was proposed as part of the new legislation. “Under the proposed legislation, this review would have to take place at all levels of government, including the local Community Boards, whose approval would be required. This will provide the maximum number of public hearings allowed under law, giving garden supporters a better chance of influencing the process in their favor”.<sup>559</sup>

Stone points to the fact that, if legislation would be enacted, community gardens citywide would be preserved according to the decisions of the public. That means, “any garden currently registered in the GreenThumb program and meeting GreenThumb requirements as to maintenance, public accessibility, and management will be eligible for preservation through this process. In this way, it is the local community who will set the standards of what constitutes a garden worthy of preservation, rather than a City agency or private organization”.<sup>560</sup> At the same time, public hearings would also take place before the development of housing on public land. In other words, “developers wishing to build on leased community garden sites will also have to go through a full land use review process and Community Board approval of the development project will be required (...)”.<sup>561</sup> Edie Stone was hoping at the time of the article, i.e. in 2000, that “the complexity of this process should dissuade many developers from selecting community garden sites, and may cause HPD [Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added C.M.] to eliminate garden sites from RFPs [Request for Proposals, added C.M.] altogether”.<sup>562</sup> Still, to enable the public to make decisions on whether community gardens or housing on public land are more beneficial to their community, “(...) community gardens will have to be designated as such in all City documents and hearing notices”.<sup>563</sup> Eventually, the proposed legislation did not pass, but was replaced by the community gardens settlement of 2002, which includes a review process by the public.

A study by the Design Trust for Public Land of 2000 resulting in the report “Achieving a Balance: Housing and Open Space in Bronx Community District 3” dealt with the distribution of land for housing and public open space in the South Bronx’ Community Board 3. This study area encompasses the neighborhood Morrisania, part of Melrose and Claremont as well as Crotona Park and Crotona Park East with about 20 community gardens. The argument made in the study is “(...) that higher-density housing would not only supply more affordable housing but leave more room for gardens and parks”.<sup>564</sup> The study looks at the sites of two community gardens, one at Chisholm and Freeman Streets and another at Bristow Streets, which had originally been “(...) approved for preservation by their community board, but the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (...) [was, added C.M.] asking Mr. Smith, Ms. Guilford [, i.e. members of those gardens, added C.M.] and members of eight other gardens in Morrisania to move to a 50,000-square-foot space behind an elementary school on Bristow Street”.<sup>565</sup> That means, HPD asked members of those ten sites to give up their gardens and to continue gardening together on a new site, which “(...) is hidden behind the school” and will require “for some (...) a mile walk”.<sup>566 567</sup>

The New York City Housing Partnership built three-story affordable housing on the ten former garden sites, which was in line with Mayor Edward Koch’s New Market Housing Plan of 1985. The Design Trust of Public Land’s study criticized the density of the new housing suggesting

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<sup>559</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>560</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>561</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>562</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>563</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>564</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>565</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>566</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>567</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

“(…) that higher-density housing -- 60 to 120 units an acre in five- or six-story buildings -- would not only create a stronger tax base and more commercial development, but save space for the community's best gardens and much needed parks”.<sup>568</sup> In comparing the new housing to earlier residential development in the South Bronx the study adds “(…) that early projects that lured homeowners back to the South Bronx, like Charlotte Gardens, with 16 suburban-style ranch houses to an acre, privatized too much open space”.<sup>569</sup> The Design Trust for Public Space's study concludes with the suggestion to “(…) changing the zoning of vast lots now earmarked for industry to mixed use, which could include more housing and open space”.<sup>570</sup> Until today, community gardens are not designated as a specific land use in all City documents and public hearing notices, and the discussion in community boards is still whether community gardens or housing is more appropriate for the future development of the community. But at the same time, community gardens have been understood as a community asset by developers and architects, who have started integrating commonly used gardens into affordable housing project.

Consequently the analysis of housing, community gardens and public support since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that city planners have been favoring the development of housing over the development of community gardens in the late 1980s and 1990s and are often still doing that today, since community gardens are classified by their GreenThumb license as temporary land uses and housing developments on public land are favored by City agencies. This take place despite the fact that there has been a continued struggle for more than 30 years by residents' groups gardening on public land to permanently preserve their gardens.

#### **4.5 Open space land use for community gardens and specific land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of open space land use for community gardens and specific land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s by investigating the topic of city planning influenced by community gardens on the one hand and the topic of housing and community gardens development influenced by city planning on the other hand. Then I will look at the aspect of neighborhood maintenance through community gardens and finally at the topic of neighborhood maintenance and gentrification.

##### **4.5.1 City planning influenced by community gardens**

In general, parks – which are not a zone in the zoning code of New York City -are allowed in most residential and commercial districts, but only in one type of manufacturing zoning<sup>571</sup>. Community gardens on the other hand are found mostly in residential areas, since they are created voluntarily by a residents group in the vicinity of their home. In residential areas, as anywhere else in the inner city, community gardens contribute to the open space ratio of a neighborhood, which is the ratio of the amount of open and enclosed space in the city. In 1995, the New York City Department of Environmental Conservation and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, “Conserving Open Space Plan” identified that “two thirds of the Community Planning Districts fall below the New York City open space standard of 2.5 acres per 1000 persons and are thus underserved by public open space. Approximately one half of the City's Community Planning Districts (29 of 59) have less than 1.5 acres per 1000 persons (...). [Conserving Open Space 1995, p. 73]”.<sup>572</sup> That means the Conserving Open Space Plan stated indirectly that the preservation of community gardens could provide the low-income population of New York City, underserved by accessible open space, with the appropriate open spaces.

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<sup>568</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>569</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>570</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>571</sup> According to the zoning resolution, appendix A, parks are attributed the use group 4 and are allowed in districts R1to R10, C1 to C8, and M1.

<sup>572</sup> Nemore ?, [www.cityfarmer.org/NYcomgardens.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/NYcomgardens.html).

The Conserving Open Space Plan of 1995 gave the gardeners at the time an argument in their struggle in preserving their gardens against development plans of the City administration under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013, confirms this by stating that “In a city with less open space per capita than any other major city in the country, where 59% of Community Boards do not meet the State’s minimum requirement of 2.5 acres per thousand residents, community gardens are a source of open space and recreational opportunity that is nearly free to New York”.<sup>573</sup> The open space ratio required by code differs in the diverse zoning districts. The amount of open space depends on the floor area of a building, the yard regulations or is set by limiting development of maximum lot coverage.<sup>574</sup> In addition community gardens in terms of accessible small open spaces are to be valued higher for the urban environment than inaccessible large tract of open space. One argument for community gardens is their accessibility, i.e. that “small parcels of open space that are easily accessible to large numbers of people will have a greater value to the urban dweller than many acres of land that are not accessible. Lands, which in an urban area can be used for community gardens or neighborhood parks and open spaces, are as significant to the environmental health of city residents as areas in pristine environmental condition are to people in rural areas”.<sup>575</sup>

The value of community gardens also depends on their common management that stands in contrast to the management of other public open spaces. Thus, already in the middle of the 1980s, “developers of new, large –scale mixed-used projects (...) are turning to community management and development of public open spaces in their projects”<sup>576</sup>, while “City planning departments and redevelopment agencies are beginning to recognize the value of open space in improving neighborhoods”.<sup>577</sup> Despite the open space value of gardens to a neighborhood, land with community gardens is leased for a specific number of years only depending on the agency that has jurisdiction over the land. That means, gardens, are and “(...) were on loan from the city with the understanding that the land might be used for low-income housing”.<sup>578</sup>

The provision of affordable housing was valued higher by the city than an increase in accessible open space, which was called out by the New York Times in January 1999, four month before the announced auction of community gardens, stating that “(...) The city should re-examine the lots, parcel by parcel, looking at the need for open space and possibly running some gardens as community projects”.<sup>579</sup> With the community gardens settlement of 2002 the positions of about community gardens as an open space use was confirmed when gardens with the preservation of about 115 community gardens and the establishment of a garden review process for gardens which was value as an open space was in question. The settlement was replaced in 2010 by the Community Garden Rules, which established a new understanding of community garden protection in New York City. PlaNYC 2030, a comprehensive, guiding development plan for New York City’s agencies was revised in 2011, four years after its creation, to include community gardens and urban agriculture, thus confirming the importance of these open spaces to the City of New York.<sup>580</sup>

Consequently the analysis of city planning influenced by community gardens since the 1970s in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardens contribute to the open space ratio of a neighborhood, which is the ratio of the amount of open and enclosed space in the city. Their value to the inner city depends on their accessibility as much as their common management that stands in contrast to the management of other public open spaces. Even though community gardens are leased for a specific number of years only, they have been existed as a land use form in New York City for

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<sup>573</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>574</sup> New York City Department of City Planning, Zoning Text, [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zonetext.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zonetext.shtml) [accessed March 23, 2014]

<sup>575</sup> Nemore ?, [www.cityfarmer.org/NYcomgardens.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/NYcomgardens.html).

<sup>576</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 19.

<sup>577</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 19.

<sup>578</sup> New York Times 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html).

<sup>579</sup> New York Times 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html).

<sup>580</sup> PlaNYC 2030. [www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml).

more than 30 years and have thus influenced city planning and consequently should be included in future city planning.

#### **4.5.2 Housing and community gardens development influenced by city planning**

Parallel to the effort of community redevelopment corporations and residents' groups creating community gardens and renovating apartment buildings, neighborhoods in the South Bronx were revived in the middle of the 1980s and commercial, office buildings, public institutions as well as public parks of the Bronx were renovated due to private and public investment. Thus in October 1984, when the neighborhood along Fordham Road and the Concourse had been started to being rebuild, the construction on Fordham Plaza, a major office building, was started. Along the Grand Concourse the restoration of the abandoned, formerly impressive apartment houses that included open spaces in their courtyards was helped by local and federal rent-subsidy programs and low-interest improvement loans. The Lewis Morris Building was being rehabilitated after years of vacancy. The Roosevelt Gardens reopened in 1984 after massive renovation. The former Concourse Plaza Hotel finally reopened as senior housing. The Bronx Museum of the Arts moved into the building that was previously the Temple Emmanuel. Some of the privately owned apartment buildings along the Grand Concourse were never abandoned. But still, today many of the buildings along the Grand Concourse need renovation, because of the old age of their construction, but not because of the destruction through landlords or tenants.

With the revival of the housing stock along the Grand Concourse, also the Joyce Kilmer Park at the Grand Concourse was renovated with new wooden benches installed and the Lorelei Fountain was moved to a more visible place. This determined and concentrated renovation effort of reinvestment into open and enclosed spaces put a lot of the existing run-down structures in the area along the Concourse to new use.<sup>581</sup> That city planning was not only effected by the resident's creation of community gardens, but then in turn the subsequent city planning development effected housing and community gardens in the South Bronx can be seen for example at the redevelopment of the Charlotte Street neighborhood. In the effort to attract new residents by beautifying the neighborhood in 1983 the non-profit Bronx Frontier Development Corporation, among other activities, prepared city-owned lots in the Charlotte Street's neighborhood with compost and grew planted fields of wildflowers.

Figure 14: Land that used to be built-up with apartment buildings turned into open space. A wildflower meadow along Charlotte Street in 1983; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.

Figure 15: One-family housing with private garden at Charlotte Gardens, South Bronx, N.Y., in 1984; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.

In 1984, real estate developers, attracted by community renewal effort, had constructed new housing in the Charlotte Street neighborhood and residents had moved into the new housing build on the site: 90 low-density, owner-occupied bungalows, situated on a lawn. These buildings were modeled after the one-family buildings, standing singled out surrounded by a private garden. Subsequently two- and three-story, owner-occupied row houses were erected in the South Bronx like for example in the Melrose neighborhood that consequently endangered community gardens. This triggered a discussion among city planners and community groups such as Nos Quedamos about the proposed housing density, which led to the creation of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. In the same way other community developed open spaces such as community gardens pushed the redevelopment of the South Bronx. While the community gardens were created in the area, "between 1985 and 2000, 3,600 vacant apartments in hundreds of abandoned buildings in Community District 3 (...) were completely renovated and brought back to life".<sup>582</sup> In addition, "(...) from 1987 to 2000, the Bronx gained 57,361 new units in rehabbed apartment buildings and 9,557 units in new two- and three-family townhouses".<sup>583</sup> Consequently the acres of open space used for community garden was reduced.

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<sup>581</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 410.

<sup>582</sup> Jonnes 1986, pp. 397-398.

<sup>583</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 398.



Figure 14: Land that used to be built-up with apartment buildings turned into open space. A wildflower meadow along Charlotte Street in 1983; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.



Figure 15: One-family housing with private garden at Charlotte Gardens, South Bronx, N.Y., in 1984; © 2014 Lisa Kahane, NYC.



After the development of Charlotte Street bungalows, the buildings constructed in the South Bronx were built in higher density, i.e. they were no longer only one- family building placed in ranch style on a lawn, but they featured one or two more units next to the apartment of the owner. This did not only increase the density of the available apartments in the area while reducing private garden space, but it also provided a possibility for the owner to help pay the mortgage. In addition the higher density could allow for providing for community gardens, as proposed in the Home and Gardens plan by More Gardens! and the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan. Thus almost 3,000 new two- and three-family buildings were constructed in the neighborhood of the Southeast Bronx around Charlotte Street in an area of 100 acres. Before the wave of abandonment, i.e. before around 1985, in this area buildings had been standing of 5 to 6 stories in height. Therefore, even though the density was increased in contrast to the bungalow buildings of Charlotte Street, the building density is today is considerably lower than it used to be.

Jill Jonnes states for example in her book "South Bronx Rising" of 1986, "there may be as many people living in one block-long section of six-story apartment house near Charlotte Street- perhaps several thousand- as there are in block after block of the new houses".<sup>584</sup> Private real estate developers were attracted to the South Bronx like for example to the Melrose neighborhood. Jonnes explains that the Jackson Development Group Ltd., under Neil Jeffrey Weissman, has been building and selling 75 houses without housing subsidies, i.e. at a market rate of \$310,000 a building. These houses are laid out with a three-bedroom apartment on the second floor, usually reserved for the owner, and a separate unit with two bedrooms on the first floor to help pay the mortgage. The properties' open space is used in the front yard is used in many cases for private car parking and the small backyard behind the house in many cases remains an untended lawn or is used as a storage space.<sup>585</sup> That means new city planning development were influenced by the creation of community gardens such as the development of one-family buildings with private gardens in the Charlotte Street neighborhood in 1984. This city planning development then effected housing and community gardens development in the South Bronx, when the construction of two- and three-story, owner-occupied row houses in the Melrose neighborhood endangered community gardens, which led to the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan in 1992 developed by city planners with participation of low-income resident groups. Thus the very open space that the community of the South Bronx had created was endangered and gardens had to relocate to allow the development of housing according to the 2002 Community Gardens Settlement. "It's either gardens and no housing or housing and no gardens," said Councilman A. Gifford Miller of Manhattan. "It's a false choice. We need both housing and open space. H.P.D. doesn't want to protect any gardens".<sup>586</sup>

Even though there was an economic return of the South Bronx, the development also demonstrates the dependence of the economic situation in a district on the interest of the real estate market investors. "But as The Times noted in a March 2006 article, the economic boom in the Bronx may have a downside. Residents are fearful that the borough, one of the last redoubts of affordable housing for working- and middle-class families, is getting more and more expensive to live in".<sup>587</sup> In 2007 the New York Times reported "Walk on Charlotte Street now and you will find suburban-style ranch houses worth \$500,000".<sup>588</sup> In recent years real estate investors and architects there was construction of new apartment buildings that had to be laid out around community gardens as in the case of El Batey Borincano or to design new housing with community gardens as in the case of Via Verde or to renovate existing housing and add on community gardens as in the case with Kelly Gardens. The later development took place after discussing affordable housing contra community garden space in the South Bronx in 1999, gardeners and housing advocates had "all agreed that the larger issue was forcing the city, especially the Housing Preservation and Development Department, to provide

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<sup>584</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 430.

<sup>585</sup> Personal experience 2005-2013.

<sup>586</sup> Stewart 2000, [www.nytimes.com/2000/12/15/nyregion/officials-back-housing-over-bronx-gardens.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/15/nyregion/officials-back-housing-over-bronx-gardens.html).

<sup>587</sup> Fernandez 2007, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/when-presidents-visited-the-south-bronx/>.

<sup>588</sup> Fernandez 2007, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/when-presidents-visited-the-south-bronx/>.

open, green space in its housing projects”.<sup>589</sup> Today there are a couple new housing developments or renovations in the South Bronx that include so called a garden that is used by the tenants collectively.

South Bronx and specific land use since the 1970s in regard to city planning development effecting housing and community gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that parallel to the effort of community redevelopment corporations and residents’ groups creating community gardens and renovating apartment buildings, neighborhood enclosed and open space in the South Bronx were revived in the middle of the 1980s. At the same time new city planning developments were influenced by the creation of community gardens such as the development of one-family buildings with private gardens in the Charlotte Street neighborhood in 1984. This city planning development then effected housing and community gardens development in the South Bronx, when the construction of two- and three-story, owner-occupied row houses in the Melrose neighborhood endangered community gardens, which led to the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan developed by city planners with participation of low-income resident groups. Today there are several new affordable housing developments in the South Bronx that include so called community gardens on site and are thus prove that city planners have continued to discuss the topic of affordable housing versus community gardens.

#### **4.5.3 Neighborhood maintenance through community gardens**

Community open-space projects such as community gardens contribute to neighborhood maintenance by encouraging residents to organize themselves. This is according to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 due to the fact that community open-space projects are “(...) appreciated, used frequently, and perceived positively by the local residents. Therefore, the projects may contribute to an overall feeling of attachment and commitment to the community that could help to organize people to fight against displacement”.<sup>590</sup> In the 1970s residents of the South Bronx started community gardens to improve the open spaces surrounding their buildings and to maintain their neighborhoods because the local government did not stand up to do so. Thus “community open spaces are the resulting expression of neighborhood people who decide to act to improve their environment rather than waiting for others or local government to do it for them”.<sup>591</sup>

But even though neighborhood maintenance through community gardens had been proven over years, “despite proven benefits and the movement’s documented successes, the community open-space movement is not without problems”.<sup>592</sup> The long-term participation of residents in community gardens is depended on their interest in neighborhood maintenance and is one issue that brings community open space projects like community gardens to a stop. Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 that “local participation in community projects is an ongoing and critical issue. In the vast majority of projects that fail to last more than a few years, the principal cause of failure has been a lack of long-term commitment by members of the local community. As projects grow older, it becomes increasingly necessary for a dedicated group of local residents to continue assuming maintenance and programming responsibilities. Continued participation by the rest of the community can best be maintained by incorporating the open-space project into broader community improvement efforts”.<sup>593</sup>

The creation and the demolition of community gardens should according to Edie Stone in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement “ of 2000 be dependent on the residents living in a neighborhood. She states that “ just as the decision to build a community park that is to be maintained by volunteers cannot be made in the absence of those volunteers and be successful, the decision whether or not to destroy a neighborhood

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<sup>589</sup> Stewart 2000, [www.nytimes.com/2000/12/15/nyregion/officials-back-housing-over-bronx-gardens.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/15/nyregion/officials-back-housing-over-bronx-gardens.html).

<sup>590</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 196.

<sup>591</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 209.

<sup>592</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 210.

<sup>593</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 210.

garden must be made by its neighbors”.<sup>594</sup> Stone continues, “A legislative process for the selection of those sites to be preserved must be based largely on community input for these decisions to have meaningful benefits for the neighborhoods involved”.<sup>595</sup> My thesis proves that there needs to be a comprehensive plan in place, that is based on community input and that preserves public open created and maintained by residents spaces as well as public housing co-created and maintained by residents in each neighborhood.

#### **4.5.4 Neighborhood maintenance and gentrification**

In the middle of the 1980s the housing redevelopment in the Charlotte Street neighborhood facilitated by community corporations and residents groups interested in maintaining their neighborhood proved to real estate developers that the urban revival of the inner city was possible. Consequently the real estate market in the South Bronx was jump-started with constructing housing on the vast tract of public land available. The new housing developments were of higher density than the Charlotte Street neighborhood with its bungalows. Still the community gardens remained that had been created over the years remained due to the organized struggle of the residents gardening there themselves. Residents of the South Bronx neighborhoods were invested in their enclosed and open spaces.

Residents, who had remained living in the South Bronx had a stake in the neighborhood after renovating the buildings were the apartments they had rented once were located in and after starting community gardens with neighbors. And, residents of the new owner-occupied housing developments had also a stake in the neighborhood and a sense of community. Thus for example during the first fifteen years of existence of the Charlotte Street bungalows their owners and residents received mail in a collective box at the end of the street instead of in their own mail boxes, which created a meeting point between the neighbors that encouraged exchange in the same way a community garden did in a larger scale. In lack of infrastructural services all residents took care of maintaining parts of the accessible open spaces such as street trees and sidewalks in front of their buildings.

With the redevelopment of the South Bronx enclosed and open spaces through community corporations and residents’ groups creating community gardens, the real estate market was booming, land value increased and rent prices hiked. With the subsequent construction of new residential buildings, new residents were coming into the neighborhoods and a gentrification process was started that jeopardized neighborhood maintenance since former residents, who were maintaining community gardens were priced out of their apartments and thus had to abandon their gardens.

Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 that in terms of the relation of neighborhood maintenance and gentrification, “open-space projects may have the effect (...) of building a strong local organization that owns land in the neighborhood and may help to keep speculators out of the neighborhood”.<sup>596</sup> The word “own” can be here understood as “ownership through care taking and maintenance”. Still, community gardens with the local organization among residents created through these public open spaces might be too weak to stop the gentrification of a neighborhood without control has been taken by residents over the housing development as well. In other words, so the cooperation between the interests of enclosed and open space advocates might become necessary. As Francis, Cashdan and Paxson explain in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984, “Yet, the forces of gentrification, at least in some neighborhoods, may be too strong to be checked by small-scale open-space projects. In these cases, it may be necessary for groups to forge a relationship between their efforts to control land with other local groups’ efforts to control housing”.<sup>597</sup> This means to maintain a neighborhood through community gardens it is

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<sup>594</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>595</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>596</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 196.

<sup>597</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 196.

necessary to counteract the gentrification process by ensuring the affordability of housing to low income residents.

Eddie Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013 demands that in face of gentrification forces and growing urban population of New York City as well as other cities, urban population should acknowledge the value of community gardens and preserve them for future neighborhood maintenance. She states in this context in her article "Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement" of 2000 that "community gardeners and supporters in rapidly developing urban areas around the world should likewise act quickly to preserve community open spaces in their cities. Although gentrification and new building construction in America is particularly rampant due to the booming economy, the worldwide trend towards urbanization will threaten most urban agriculture projects just at the time when they are most needed. In spite of the fact that locally grown produce is more nutritious, more energy efficient due to the elimination of transportation costs, and more affordable, urban planners often fail to see the need for incorporating these 'rural' elements into the framework of cities".<sup>598</sup>

Consequently the analysis of neighborhood maintenance since the 1970s through community gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardens provides a group residents with an attachment and commitment to their residential location since the garden is an expression of the needs of the group and the surrounding urban environment, creates community and thus makes the residential location into a neighborhood. These community open spaces are thus expression of neighborhood people improving their quality of life and environment while maintaining open spaces rather than waiting for the local government to maintain those spaces for them. The neighborhood maintenance of open spaces with community gardens increases property values by starting a gentrification process and thus prices residents that started the gardens out of their apartments, gardens and neighborhood. To maintain a neighborhood through community gardens it is thus necessary to counteract the gentrification process by ensuring the affordability of housing to low-income residents.

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<sup>598</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

## **Chapter 5: Community gardening development in the South Bronx since the 1970s: The Case Study “From Casita to Gardenhaus”**

### **5.1 Community gardening land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of community gardening land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s by looking at the economic situation of gardeners, the aspect of equity and sweat equity, the aspect of investment in tools and improvements as well as the topic of community gardening influence on quality of life. Then I will investigate the construction of casitas with focus on the construction of casitas at the example of Puerto Rico as well as on the context of building material of casitas and the economic situation of gardeners.

#### **5.1.1 Economic situation of gardeners**

In the 1970s, residents of low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx became involved in community gardening to improve their quality of life, which was accompanied by economic consequences for themselves and their neighborhoods. This is still the case today. A community garden used by a group of residents participating in the garden and the community surrounding garden, i.e. the general public, improves the economic situation of individual gardeners as well as of the neighborhood that surrounding the community garden. That means, “An active community garden does more than renew residential vitality and make people happier and safer: it produces economic benefits for the community and the city at large”.<sup>1</sup>

Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in the study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 that the overall desperate economic situation of a neighborhood is one of the reasons why community gardening becomes an activity among residents, i.e. that “many [community-developed open-space, added C.M.] projects are initiated in response to neighborhood deterioration (...). Participants do not have money or the desire to move to another neighborhood, so they take it upon themselves to improve their neighborhood by developing an open-space project”.<sup>2</sup> Thus community gardening has been taking place since the 1970s because residents of the South Bronx could not afford to move out of their neighborhood, when the quality of life was deteriorating without counter measurements taken by the City and thus took it upon themselves to improve the quality of life themselves by investing sweat equity. Subsequent to this activity of community gardening that derived out of monetary necessity, the values of properties that are surrounding a garden - that are actively used and well maintained - increase. This has for example been proven in the study “The Effect of Community Gardens on Neighboring Property Values” by Been and Voicu of 2008.

Especially the middle and late 1990s, when a community garden was situated in a low-income neighborhood is demolished to make way for affordable housing development, but if then the property lot is neither build upon nor actively used for another purpose, property values in the area could go down or at least stagnate, since the quality of life in the area will decrease with the lack of community gardening activity. When at the end of the 1990s, public land with community gardens were auctioned off, some of these property lots were turned in the un-maintained, inaccessible open spaces that they were before the residents had started community gardening on them. Sarah Fergusson states in her article “The Death of Little Puerto Rico” of 1999, “(...) In the less market-driven neighborhoods outside of Manhattan, many of the gardens auctioned could remain vacant for years”.<sup>3</sup> For example “according to a (...) report by Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden, 96 percent of the 440 vacant lots sold in Brooklyn at previous auctions remained vacant lots for years following the sales. More than half of those lots have remained garbage-strewn eyesores; the others were turned into parking lots or ad-hoc auto repair shops, generally in violation of city zoning rules”.<sup>4</sup>

After the Community Gardens Settlement of 2002 some real estate developers began to include so-called community gardens in some new so-called affordable housing development

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<sup>1</sup> Englander 2001, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> Fergusson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1/littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1/littlepuertorico.html).

<sup>4</sup> Fergusson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1/littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1/littlepuertorico.html).

in the South Bronx like for example in the design of the new affordable housing complex Via Verde. This residential building was developed by the real estate investor Jonathan Rose starting in 2004, who has been cited already in 2001 in The Trust for Public Land's report "New York's Community Gardens – A resource at Risk" stating that community gardens "(...) 'amenities by their very nature, and (...) make the surrounding property more valuable'"<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, it should economically be better for the City to set aside and preserve public land for community gardening especially in low-income neighborhoods, in order to maintain not only the quality of life, but also increase the economic value and there the tax revenue of the properties surrounding the garden. Before the auction of community gardens scheduled for May 1999 for example, the public land with community gardens was in its "(...) economic value (...) minuscule in the context of a 1998 city budget of \$34 billion, which included a \$2 billion surplus. And since the ultimate productive use of the land (...) [was, added C.M.] not guaranteed, new uses may or may not offer continuing contributions to the tax base"<sup>6</sup>. Since "(...) most gardens are in areas of the city where property values and tax rates are low. The money the city might gain in auctioning gardens is (...) negligible compared to the value they bring as open space"<sup>7</sup>. Even the \$4.2 million paid by the New York Restoration Project and The Trust for Public Land to buy public land with 112 community gardens<sup>8</sup> to stop the auction in May 1999 is little when considering the land value in New York City.

Low-income urban areas like the South Bronx, where residents lived below the poverty line of \$12,649<sup>9</sup> per year, had in the 1970s as well as today few supermarkets and thus lacked access to fresh produce, so that these areas are called "food deserts" today. Consequently especially for residents in these low-income areas one of the objective to start community gardening was to improve their own and their families' health by growing food while at the same time saving money on food, which is commonly called "food dollars". The surplus of produce from the garden was and is still today sold at farmers' markets if possible as well as distributed to neighbors and friends. Though it is notable here that for example the diet of South Bronx gardeners with Caribbean and Latin American cultural background does include very little vegetables.

Growing food and vegetables locally is saving food dollars. In lack of accessible open space, the low-income residents of New York City has been able to do so only since the community gardening movement started in the late 1970s until today. Thus community gardening is influencing the economic situation of low-income residents as far as it is saving food dollars for individuals or families concentrating on growing food on their garden plot.

Francis, Cashdan and Paxson write in 1984 that a study of 1977 called "U.S. Department of Agriculture Nationwide Food Consumption Survey (USDA, 1977) of 3,500 households (...) shows an overall increase in household food production (...)".<sup>10</sup> They continue, "(...) the USDA survey shows that this trend is remaining strong in most income groups, most regions, and in both central-city and non-urbanized areas. Thirty percent of 'central-city' respondents reported that they grow some of their own food, a figure that supports the demand for community open space in which to garden. Fifty percent of 'suburban' and 60 percent of

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<sup>5</sup> Englander 2001, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Englander 2001, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Englander 2001, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> As with other numbers of community gardens in New York City, this number varies from 119 gardens up for auction (Ferguson 1999 (a), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1littlepuertorico.html)) to 118 gardens ([www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/14/opinion/for-sale-the-garden-of-eden.html)) to 114 gardens (Gittleman, Librizzi, Stone, 2009/2010 Community Garden Survey and Report, p. 8) to 112 gardens (Herszenhorn, Protesters Fight Auctioning Of Community Garden Sites) sold to TPL and NYRP. But the number of 112 gardens seems to be correct since, "(...) two gardens were removed from the auction list by the Giuliani administration in response to community pressure -- one in Park Slope, Brooklyn, that is across the street from a church and is used by local schoolchildren, and one in Corona, Queens, that is next to a day care center". (Herszenhorn 1999, [www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/06/nyregion/protesters-fight-auctioning-of-community-garden-sites.html))

<sup>9</sup> In 2005, in the United States more than 40 percent of the residents were living in poverty, with a poverty threshold in the United States the for a two persons householder under 65 years at \$12,649 per year. (Leonhardt 2005, [www.nytimes.com/2005/08/30/world/americas/30iht-census.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/30/world/americas/30iht-census.html))

<sup>10</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 19-21.

'nonmetropolitan' residents were involved in growing part of their own food".<sup>11</sup> Even though community gardeners invested in their gardens through sweat equity as well as through investment for tools and improvements, they still saved money on buying food and vegetables in supermarkets – if there were supermarkets in their neighborhood – and even more from buying food in corner stores or bodegas. Thus "in 1982, 44 million (53 percent) of American families grew their own food on about 1.7 million acres, totaling \$18 billion of fruits and vegetables. Gardeners each invested an average of \$20 in their gardens, which yielded a reported \$470 per garden in food value".<sup>12</sup>

In 2010, according to a survey by Mara Gittleman for GreenThumb and GrowNYC of 2010, "approximately 80% of community gardens in NYC grow food".<sup>13</sup> The ongoing farming concrete project by Mara Gittleman has been collecting numbers on food production per square foot in community gardens in New York City since 2010.<sup>14</sup> Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb states in 2010 that it is important to have those numbers since they allow usage by municipal agencies, which are usually arguing with the help of numbers. In addition the numbers can be used by community gardens to support effort to include urban gardening and urban agriculture in municipal urban planning guidelines such as PlaNYC 2030 and to argue in other initiatives such as the Urban Agriculture Task Force in New York City February 2012.<sup>15</sup>

The food grown in a community garden does not only save food dollars, but can also be sold at farmers markets to make a small revenue that can then be reinvested in the garden. Thus individual gardeners can increase their economic situation by selling their produce at farmers' markets. The gardeners' initiative to sell their produce on farmers markets has been supported by the non-profit organization has been supported since 1976 by the Council on the Environment of New York City, called today GrowNYC, through its "Greenmarket" program and by the non-profit organization Just Food. Since then these markets provide a way for community gardeners to turn their produce into dollars and also for residents to get access to locally grown, fresh produce. As of 2013 there are 37 community gardens in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development and 288 community gardens in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation<sup>16</sup> and of these community gardens 30 gardens have farmers markets. Today there are 54 farmers markets in all boroughs of New York City and five farmers markets in the area I call South Bronx in this thesis.<sup>17</sup>

GreenThumb allows community gardeners to sell produce at farmers markets as long as this production is not turned into a larger-scale for-profit business and as long as the profit is reinvested in the garden.<sup>18</sup> Lately access has even been granted to a gardening group involved in food production on a short-term leased lot called "A Small Patch of Green" in Brooklyn, i.e. food production in bags on a lot that was leased for one year only, producing vegetables that are strictly to be sold to restaurants.<sup>19</sup> This trend has been ongoing and more and more gardeners are interested in intensive food production by hired staff and in selling produce for profit.<sup>20</sup>

### **5.1.2 Equity and sweat equity**

The funding for community gardening on public land comes from various sources and is often made up entirely in sweat equity. When in the 1970s residents improved their quality of life by creating community gardens, i.e. improving the public open spaces, as well as by renovating the apartment buildings, which their landlord had failed to maintain, their labor increased the value of these properties. In other words, the sweat of the residents increased the equity of

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<sup>11</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 19-21.

<sup>12</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> farming concrete, <http://farmingconcrete.org/>.

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, April 11, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> GrowNYC, [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org).

<sup>18</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Personal experience June 28, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Personal experience, 2013.

properties that did not belong to them and thus the residents invested “sweat equity” in the improvement of their neighborhood. Sweat equity is measured the “(...) hours of time and sweat (...)” put into a community garden by its members.<sup>21</sup> For example, in 1977 members of the People’s Development Corporation<sup>22</sup> renovated apartments in the South Bronx and then wanted to move into those apartments and own the building as a cooperative as equity for the work done. Thus they would come to own an apartment of their own by sweat equity<sup>23</sup>, often in the vicinity of a community garden that they themselves or friends and neighbors had created. The renovation of the apartment building and the creation of the community garden would increase the value of property in the neighborhood, but nevertheless “the contribution these projects make to displacement of existing residents is unclear. Some projects were initiated by the new ‘gentry’ entering the neighborhood, while others were started by native, long-term residents”.<sup>24</sup>

In the late 1970s residents and thus community gardeners in the South Bronx were of low-income, since gardens were created in this as well as in other inner city districts of New York, where mainly low-income residents had remained. Today, most gardeners are still not wealthy, since the creation of community gardens was and still is supported via GreenThumb through a federal Community Development Block Grant, which is awarded to projects improving low-income neighborhoods that are situated in a Community Development Block Grant area. Consequently, even though citywide there are also gardens in now gentrified neighborhoods such as the Lower East Side that have more wealthy members, until today most of the gardeners are still of lower income.

When looking at the contribution of the efforts of the low income gardeners to their neighborhoods, “when all the resources contributed to one project are considered, such as technical assistance, scrounged or donated materials, and hours of time and sweat, the total amount of funding can total \$10,000-\$100,000. When evaluated this way, these small open-space groups are making substantial contributions to the economic development of their communities”.<sup>25</sup> This relation of public and private equity functions as a public-private partnership – similar to the same way as business improvement districts (BIDs) are functioning, but without the protection in regard to the real estate market and city policy. “As another kind of public-private partnership, a community garden or casita functions in much the same way. The city ‘supplies’ the land in the form of unused lots, the residents supply the time and labor to cultivate the land, to render it an asset for the neighborhood. The members of Rincon Criollo [for example, added C.M.] spend their own money (a self-assessment) on improvements, repairs, plantings, performances, and community events. Unlike the BIDs however, their cultural center is continually vulnerable to the real estate market and most recently, to changes in city policy directly affecting these sites”.<sup>26</sup>

Next to the provision of public land use, the City of New York supported community gardeners financially through the municipal community program GreenThumb. But besides funding for materials through GreenThumb or non-profit organizations such as Green Guerillas or New York Restoration Project, community gardeners raise money according to different strategies as Francis, Cashdan, Paxson in the report “Community Open Spaces. Greening

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<sup>21</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>22</sup> The People’s Development Corporation was founded by Ramon Rueda and a few workers in 1974 with the objective to do homesteading, i.e. to build themselves a home of their own. (Jonnes 1986, p. 303) They worked in the free time after their other jobs and began to clean a deserted apartment building on 1186 Washington Street in the Charlotte Street neighborhood. With the New York City fiscal crisis of 1975, the construction loan and the council grant to the People’s Development Corporation were frozen, so that the group had to keep moving forward with their projects with only the Consumer-Farmer loan. They laid out together with the Pratt Institute Center a plan to redevelop the sector of nine blocks around Venice Hall, which envisioned a residential area where ten thousand people would live provided with jobs, parks, child care, and health services. The idea was to create a “village” that was as self-sufficient as possible, including that some of the food needed grown on the vacant lots around the residential buildings. (Jonnes 1986, p. 305) According to Ramon Rueda’s ideas the village was to be made possible through job-training, economic development and energy development.

<sup>23</sup> Jonnes 1986, p. 305

<sup>24</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, April 11, 2013.

Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984. They state that community garden “groups raise money in various ways, including one or more of the following strategies:

1. Local fundraising by the group through door-to-door collections, bake sales, white elephant sales, and so on (...).
2. Donations to the group from local people (...).
3. Membership in the park or group (...).
4. Small awards made to the group such as Molly Parnis awards for \$100 (...).
5. City or federal government allocations, such as community development of Department of Interior funding (...).
6. Grants from foundations or private individuals (...).
7. Local corporate or merchant donations (...).<sup>27</sup>

Generally, community garden groups need funding especially, when they start a garden. Thus, “when funding occurs is also an important factor in the success of projects. Seed money at early stages of a project can provide critical incentive for a group to get started and feel they are accomplishing something. Most funding comes in spurts and does not assist groups with their need for continuous support”.<sup>28</sup> The raising of funds for the community garden generally depends on the skills and activity of individual gardeners. “Fundraising is usually coordinated by one person in the group with the appropriate interest and skills. In some groups, an official treasurer is responsible for managing the group’s funding (...); however, the entire group is involved in developing overall fundraising strategies and decisions”.<sup>29</sup> The fact that locally produced food is sold at farmers markets since the 1970s, is not only an indicator for the gardeners’ economic actions and the necessity of gardeners to generate income or general difficulties to access food, but also of the fact that consumers do not have access to qualitatively high produce which contributes again to the quality of life of the consumers who are the producers in this case at the same time. Francis, Cashdan and Paxson statement of 1984 confirms this: “The increasing amount of produce sold at farmers’ markets is an indicator of consumer preference for quality food (Sommer, Stumph, and Bennet, 1981)”.<sup>30</sup>

There a various grants available, but the funding in some cases depends on the influence the funding group wants to have on a project. Francis, Cashdan, Paxson state that both “Large- and small-scale funding of projects can have (...) advantage and disadvantages (middle-scale funding [\$5,000-\$20,000] was not commonly found in the projects studied [for the report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson, added C.M.] (...).<sup>31</sup> Especially large-scale funding often comes with requirements attached that can be interfering with the interests of the community garden groups and can require a lot of effort on the side of the community gardeners.

Since community gardening is a “grass-roots” activity, i.e. since the decision-making on the community gardening process has been taken on by the group of gardeners that created and then manage the garden collectively, the top-down interference by a funding organization is often not wanted or cannot be managed. In other words, “a problem raised by outside funding is that the funding organizations want to take credit for the project and highlight it as “their” project. This is a concern for local groups when funding or technical assistance organizations want to put their sign on the project. This also has the effect of diluting the message that the project is community developed and managed”.<sup>32</sup> Still these large-scale grants “(...) (\$20,000-\$200,000) can be helpful if the group wants to develop expensive facilities (...), can provide better quality materials, and can result in more visual impact for the project.” But again, as Francis, Cashdan and Paxson point out “(...) large-scale funding (...) does not guarantee a better project. Such funding often comes with strings attached, many rules, and can be a

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<sup>27</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>29</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 201.

<sup>30</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>32</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

burden for a small group to manage”.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, community gardening is often supported by small-scale funding. “Small-scale funding (\$500-\$5,000) can go a long way for a small project. Since these projects evolve over time, a small amount of money can nourish this process, while large funding can overwhelm it. Receiving small funding (...) can also give a group a psychological boost – a feeling that they are recognized by established institutions”.<sup>34</sup>

Not only large-scale, but also “(...) small-scale funding often requires enormous effort from the group to raise and can overburden a volunteer group”.<sup>35</sup> In addition, when looking at the long-term needs of community gardens, “(...) there is a need for long-term funding to support the management and maintenance of these small-scale projects (...)”.<sup>36</sup> The funding raised per garden for example in 1984, when Francis, Cashdan, Paxson published the study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation”, depended on the grants available for community gardening purposes, so that “the total number of dollars (...) [was, added C.M.] relatively small, usually involving only \$500-\$5,000”.<sup>37</sup>

### 5.1.3 Investment in tools and improvements

In 2009 Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013, explains in regard to financial support of community gardens that “most of the gardens we [i.e., GreenThumb, added C.M.] work with receive less than \$600 per year in material support”.<sup>38</sup> This is depended on the budget of GreenThumb, which is for example in 2013 only \$100,000 including staff positions, so that the provision of material to the about 500 community gardens at that time was considerably less.<sup>39</sup> Still, until today, “GreenThumb provides gardeners with access to basic materials necessary to the gardens functioning: access to basic water, soil, plants and tools”.<sup>40</sup>

To set up a fence against vandalism and to have soil to grow produce and flowers are the two basic materials necessary to start growing plants on public land. GreenThumb provides the garden’s fence: a 8-feet-high chain link fencing and a double hung 12’wide and 8’ high gate, which is erected by paid contractors at a community gardens perimeter with a drive-through gate. The fence is intended to keep vandalism at low levels, but also contributes to the discussion on whether community gardens are privatizations of urban public spaces. In the case of community gardens on public land, fencing material is mandated and paid for by the city agency that has jurisdiction over the land or by GreenThumb if the budget allows it.<sup>41</sup> Soil is provided by GreenThumb as well, but it is expensive and thus composting has been part of community gardening from the beginning. In 2010 “65.6% of community gardens in NYC compost, and 20 of these gardens will accept organic waste from the public”.<sup>42</sup>

Other materials used in a community garden are usually recycled materials or low-cost materials such as for example lumber to construct raised beds or garden structures such as casitas. Thus casitas are built often from material found on the street, at demolished buildings or that are affordable at a building material store such as Home Depot or Lowes. The construction of casitas demands very little tools, since tools are expensive and often unavailable. Such for example the Gardenhaus can be constructed from materials that cost \$1000 in total that are assembled by using a saw and a hammer and nails and possibly a screw gun.

Consequently the analysis of introduce community gardening land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to economic aspects in context with community gardens

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<sup>33</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>34</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>35</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>36</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>37</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 202.

<sup>38</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>39</sup> Personal experience 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>41</sup> Personal experience 2012-2013.

<sup>42</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 5.

development in the South Bronx shows that a community garden produces economic benefits for the community and the city at large. Thus residents investing sweat equity in a community open garden improved their quality of life by producing food to save “food dollars” or to sell for reinvestment in their community open space while at the same time increasing the value of property surrounding the garden and thus the tax income for City. Financial funding for community gardens is provided by GreenThumb and through grants depending on the residents’ groups using the space or organizations supporting the community open space use.

#### **5.1.4 Community gardening influence on quality of life**

The quality of life of a city is important for a variety of reasons, among them for economic reasons. The urban population, i.e., “residents, politicians, and businesspeople all stress the importance of a city’s ‘quality of life.’ A city enjoys obvious benefits from such indicators as low crime rates, clean streets, and attractive surroundings. Evidence is also accumulating that quality of life contributes to a city’s economy by boosting tourism and by generating a welcoming climate for businesses and workers”.<sup>43</sup> In economic terms, “(...) quality of life for employees is the third most important factor in deciding where to locate a business, ranking behind only access to domestic markets and availability of skilled labor. And one 1998 real estate industry report<sup>44</sup> calls livability ‘a litmus test for determining the strength of the real estate investment market (...)’.<sup>45</sup> In short, “if people want to live in a place, companies, stores, hotels, and apartments will follow”.<sup>46</sup>

In the urban environment, not only the standard of affordable housing, but also “Parks and other open spaces make important contributions to quality of life. A 1995 Regional Plan Association poll of individuals nationwide<sup>47</sup> found that the major components of a satisfactory quality of life are safe streets and access to greenery and open spaces”.<sup>48</sup> As a TPL report of 2001 states, the quality of life in New York City has improved over the years, even though the amount of open space in New York City was still not sufficient. “While New York City scores high on many of the quality-of-life criteria—crime rates have dropped, streets are cleaner than in recent memory, new industries are attracting skilled workers, and culture is thriving—it has not done so well in offering open space to its citizens. Nearly half of the city’s 59 community board districts provide less than 1.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, the lowest standard typically applied by cities around the country”.<sup>49</sup> This lack of open space for a better quality of life could be improved though, as the TPL report of 2001 states, if more community gardens would be provided, since “(...) Gardens clean the air, serve as wind-breaks, dull street noise, and cool the heat of summer—all benefits to peace of mind and physical well-being”.<sup>50</sup>

As recognized in the April 2011 update to PlaNYC<sup>51</sup>, the municipality’s support of community gardening improves the provision of open space and the quality of life of New York City’s residents while improving the overall local economic situation. “Fortunately, New York’s city-owned vacant lots and established community gardens offer the city an opportunity to address this inadequacy in the very inner-city neighborhoods where green space is in shortest supply. Using these resources to create open space should be a matter of public policy in New York, as it is in many other cities, including Boston, Seattle, Chicago, and Philadelphia”.<sup>52</sup> The 2012-2015 Mayor’s Office Obesity Task Force initiative to financially support the grass-roots creation of 15 community gardens is a step towards providing more accessible open spaces in low-income neighborhoods.

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<sup>43</sup> Englander 2001, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Real Estate Research Corporation, *Defining New Limits: Emerging Trends in Real Estate*, 1998, p. 15. ERE Yarmouth and Real Estate Research Corporation 1998, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> Englander 2001, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Englander 2001, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Real Estate Research Corporation, *Defining New Limits: Emerging Trends in Real Estate*, 1998, p. 15. ERE Yarmouth and Real Estate Research Corporation 1998, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Englander 2001, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Englander 2001, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Englander 2001, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> PlaNYC 2030. [www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/about/about.shtml).

<sup>52</sup> Englander 2001, p. 3.

Since the 1970s residents of low-income urban areas like the South Bronx residents improved their quality of life and that of the entire neighborhood. In detail residents create community gardens to improve their quality of life for example by beautifying the immediate neighborhood next to the location of their apartment and by creating a safe place for their children or to meet with friends and neighbors in the open space. In economic terms, Sarah Fergueson states in this context in her article "The Death of Little Puerto Rico" of 1999, "There's no question the garden had a profound impact on the block. Folks from the community staged weddings, funeral services, baptisms, weekly prayer meetings, block parties, and birthday celebrations for children whose parents could not afford to rent a hall for such events".<sup>53</sup> That means to garden in order to improve their quality of life is partially motivated out of economic aspects. This does not only include the economic actions that directly effect the quality of life through more income, but also the improvement of gardener's self-esteem and their self-empowerment through the learning of skills both of which allows under-educated and untrained residents to find employment.

Edie Stone, director from GreenThumb from 2001-2013, points out in her article "The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City" of 2009 that "as gardeners strive to find creative, low-cost and culturally appropriate ways to meet the community garden's operational needs, they gain valuable problem-solving skills and create a network of contacts among garden-supporting individuals, businesses, and institutions in their neighborhoods".<sup>54</sup> In addition, the limitations of material that can be provided by GreenThumb to registered community gardens, creates according to Stone "(...) challenges to the garden group that may ultimately strengthen both group dynamics and individuals' skills".<sup>55</sup> The improvement of individual skills and of self-esteem might in turn help gardeners to find employment.

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to community gardening influence on quality of life in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardens improves in economic terms the quality of life of the residents' group that participates in the garden due to the option to improvement of individual skills and self-esteem, which might finding employment, as well as the quality life of the surrounding neighborhood by beautification and crime reduction which contributes then to New York City's overall economy.

#### **5.1.5 Construction of casitas**

In urban areas, low-income residents have been constructing structures for shelter on under-used public open spaces since the beginning of the urbanization due to their lack of financial means to pay rent or buy land. Thus for example, after the stock market crash in October 1929 shantytowns, i.e. self-constructed small structures built out of found material, were created in underused open space throughout New York City. These housing settlements have also been categories as squatters housing or slums. The construction of structures for shelter in community gardens could be seen as a continuation of this, but community gardening is taking place in groups, i.e. the private use of a structure by an individual alone is uncommon, and community gardening as well as the construction of shelter structures is a legal activity on public land used for community gardens today.

In the same way as community gardening, the construction of shelter structures - also called "casitas" by the Caribbean and Latin American, i.e. native Spanish speaking community gardeners - has an influence on the economic situation of the gardeners participating. On the one hand, community gardeners are improving their quality of life by constructing a shelter structure in their open space themselves while saving money on buying prefabricated structure by building this structure themselves with the materials that they can afford or that they find in their neighborhood. On the other hand gardeners learn construction and design skills as well as to be part of a team effort and can make use of these skills in a different setting for income generation or to save money in terms of sweat equity. Joseph Sciorra

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<sup>53</sup> Fergueson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html).

<sup>54</sup> Stone 2009, p. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Stone 2009, p. 128.

reports in his article “Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City” of 1994 that in terms of the construction of casitas “the work (...) is most often donated, undertaken as a gift to the casita membership and the community at large, and as such constitutes a source of non-alienating labor”.<sup>56</sup>

#### **5.1.5.1 Construction of casitas at the example of Puerto Rico**

The context of economic situation of the casita builders with the construction and design of the casita in New York is based on its Caribbean roots and has a long tradition. In New York City casitas became a symbol of poverty, as José Manuel ‘Chema’ Soto, former resident of Rio Piedras in Puerto Rico and builder of several casitas in the South Bronx, explained on 18 August 1990 according to Sciorra in his article “Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City” of 1996: “The casitas are a symbol of poverty, of what we went through”.<sup>57</sup>

In Puerto Rico, for example, landless low- or no-income urban residents have been taken over marginal public land on the urban periphery since the 1950s to create a garden and constructed a wooden “casita” in it. The situation of the landless low- or no-income urban residents derives out of a two-step historical development of the economy of Puerto Rico: In Puerto Rico, in 1850s the rural population was industrialized in a first step by US investment. “During the first quarter of the twentieth century, absentee US corporations purchased huge tracts of land along the coastal plains to form technologically-advanced, mechanized sugar plantations, effectively restructuring Puerto Rico into a monocultural sugar economy in the service of the North American market. Foreign investment succeeded in gaining control of the local economy from the nascent Puerto Rican bourgeoisie thus securing the economic integration of the island into that of the United States and establishing the economic basis for colonial rule”.<sup>58</sup>

In the 1950s, the agricultural economy of Puerto Rico was transformed into an industrial economy and consequently the rural population was pushed to urban centers. “After the second World War, US capital shifted away from agriculturally-based sugar production to an urban-centered industrial economy consisting of export-oriented factories”.<sup>59</sup> Due to this two stage economic development of the Puerto Rican Society with the “disinvestment in coffee production at the turn of the century and in the general agricultural economy in the post-World War II era”<sup>60</sup> workers were pushed in search of housing, work and food “(...) first from the highlands to the coast, and later from the countryside to the cities”.<sup>61</sup> That means from the 1950s on in the urban centers of Puerto Rico there was “(...) a surplus of laborers who were trapped in the new order’s structural unemployment”.<sup>62</sup>

The impoverished urban population did not receive support to improve their quality of life by the local government, since “this internal migration [had, added C.M.] strained local services, which were unequipped to handle the mass influx of people, especially acutely in the area of housing”.<sup>63</sup> In need of housing and food, the impoverished, landless urban population began to take over parcels of land to create gardens and erect shelters in the urban periphery – in the same way it had happened in the beginning of Germany’s Kleingarten movement. In Puerto Rico the former urban residents constructed small wooden houses, the casitas, next to each other on under-used public land. That means, “relying on a vibrant squatter tradition harkening back to Spanish colonialism. Landless workers established arrabales, or squatter settlements, on marginal public lands located on the urban periphery where they organized to obtain electricity sanitation, roads, etc., from the insular government”.<sup>64</sup> But with the ongoing urbanization, “(...) these wooden structures have slowly been replaced (...) by reinforced

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<sup>56</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>57</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 78.

<sup>58</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 66-68.

<sup>59</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>60</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>61</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>62</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>63</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>64</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

concrete houses and highrise apartment buildings for a predominantly urban population”.<sup>65</sup> In other words, “arrabales were systematically destroyed by the insular government in a campaign of slum clearance when once marginal lands acquired new value in the sprawling metropolis that is San Juan”.<sup>66</sup> But in the late 1980s, early 1990s, in Puerto Rico as well “as in New York, the casita (...) made a surprising comeback (...)”<sup>67</sup> in the form of“(...) prefabricated structures resembling casitas de madera (...) sold and assembled as second storeys to suburban homes in an architectural layering of past and present social lives”.<sup>68</sup>

Working-class residents of Puerto Rico brought the tradition of casita building with them when they immigrated to New York City in search of employment. Immigration from Puerto Rico “(...) was facilitated by the imposition of US citizenship to puertorriquenos in 1917 (...)”.<sup>69</sup> New York City was “(...) the primary point of entry and settlement for puertorriquenos (...)”.<sup>70</sup> This immigration was triggered by the global economic situation in general and the economy of Puerto Rico in specific. Thus “this massive movement of labor corresponds to the economic conditions in the homeland and took place primarily in three stages; from 1900-45, aggravated, in part, by the Great Depression of the 1930; 1946-64, when the largest influx of Puerto Ricans arrived in the city; and 1964 to the present [, i.e. 1996, added C.M.], again exacerbated by the 1970s recession”.<sup>71</sup> But it was rather a migration than an immigration what was happening between Puerto Rico to New York, since it was taking place in a two-way direction that kept traditions such as the construction of casitas alive. “Facilitated by US citizenship and relatively inexpensive air travel, the Puerto Rican experience in the United States has been characterized by a circular migration between the colony and metropolis”.<sup>72</sup>

#### **5.1.5.2 Building material of casitas and economic situation of community gardeners**

In Puerto Rico, according to Joseph Sciorra in his book “Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City. In Re-Presenting the City” of 1996, “Bohios, post and beam huts constructed out of wood with bamboo and cane walls, and with thatched able roof, were used as housing in Puerto Rico as late as the 1940s”.<sup>73</sup> Sciorra elaborates further on the history of the bohio: “In the first half of the sixteenth century, Spanish chronicler Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo wrote a detailed description of the rectangular bohio and the polygonal caney, two types of Native American dwellings he encountered among the Taino in neighboring Hispaniola”.<sup>74</sup> Sciorra continues, “It has been suggested by twentieth century scholar Seven Lowen that while the caney was a truly pre-conquest house type, the bohio was in fact a syncretic blend of native building technology and a European house form”.<sup>75</sup> The bohios’ construction evolved over time and “more durable materials such as ironwood and mahogany cut into boards came to used in the construction of such housing”.<sup>76</sup> Eventually, “in time the bohio became the housing type of the island’s black, white and mestizo laborers for well over four centuries after the annihilation of the island’s original inhabitants, the Tainos”.<sup>77</sup>

In New York City’s Latin American or Caribbean neighborhoods, the word casita, “small house” in Spanish, is used to describe the site of a community garden by residents by referring to the small house within it as it is the central commonly used feature of the garden, the social gathering space within the social gathering space of the community garden. A quote of a Rincon Criollo gardener in the New York Times article “In Bronx, Little Houses That Evoke Puerto Rico” by C.J. Hughes of 2009 indicates this use of the terms and understanding: “And we used to have another casita next door, too, but then they built those

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<sup>65</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 76.

<sup>66</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 76.

<sup>68</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 76.

<sup>69</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>70</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>71</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 68-69.

<sup>72</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 69.

<sup>73</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 66.

<sup>74</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 66.

<sup>75</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 66.

<sup>76</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 66.

<sup>77</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 66.

homes (...)"<sup>78</sup> In this regard Winterbottom states in his article *Hopeless Future For Gardens Of Hope? Casitas: Gardens Of Reclamation* of 1998, "It is ironic that casitas, which have helped stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods, have unwittingly contributed to another wave of Puerto Rican displacement. Like most powerful landscapes, casitas are fragile ecologies susceptible to disruption".<sup>79</sup>

In community gardens that are situated in neighborhoods with a Latin American or Caribbean population, casitas are used by a group of gardeners throughout the year as shelter and social gathering places. Casita's are built in a group effort and gardeners collect salvaged materials to construct the casita with what they found and can afford.<sup>80</sup> "A major source of building material for Rincon Criollo was recycled scrap lumber and other found objects culled from dilapidated buildings".<sup>81</sup> Depending on the economic situation, the materials found and the time available to the gardeners, the design of casitas like that of the South Bronx community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo (Rincon Criollo) – and as the design of the community garden itself - is not a finished product, but rather evolves in time, with the changing membership and due to changing demands of the neighborhood.<sup>82</sup> Thus, "like Puerto Rican arrabal homes, Rincon Criollo is constantly being transformed and renewed, and must be seen as unfinished, that is continually becoming".<sup>83</sup> For example, at the casita at the second of the three sites that Rincon Criollo was created at, "the extension of the veranda and the addition of a kitchen (complete with refrigerator, running water, and stove) occurred after the initial construction of the casita".<sup>84</sup>

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to the construction of casitas in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that since the beginning of the urbanization low-income residents have been constructing shelter structures on public open spaces due to lack of financial means to afford to pay rent or buy land. The construction of shelter structures in community gardens in the South Bronx called "casitas" by the Hispanic population are built in the tradition of their native country such as Puerto Rico and influences the economic situation of the gardeners participating. Residents improve their quality of life by constructing a sheltering structure or casita in the case of the South Bronx themselves from affordable material or by recycling material found in their neighborhood, i.e. without investing into a prefabricated structure or expensive construction material. Casitas' construction reflects the tradition of the residents' native country in Latin America or the Caribbean and provides residents with the option to show and teach traditional design and construction skills of which they and other residents can make use of for income generation.

## **5.2 Community gardening land use and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will look at the context of community gardening land use and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s by analyzing the topic of community gardening activities in regard to participation and permanence. Then I will investigate the aspects of community gardening groups and neighborhood context as well as of community gardening, criminal activities and social control. Subsequently I will introduce the context of cultural and social meaning of community gardening and finally focus on the cultural and social meaning of casitas.

### **5.2.1 Community gardening activities**

The context to the neighborhood in which community gardens are located is central to the community gardening group creating them. "Projects can be inspired by other open-space projects in the community (...) or can be an inspiration for other groups to start projects (...)"<sup>85</sup> According to the study "2009/2010 Community Garden Survey and Report" by Gittleman, Librizzi, Stone of 2009/ 2010 "43% of community gardens in NYC partner at least

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<sup>78</sup> Tony Inle quoted in Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>79</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>80</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>81</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 25.

<sup>82</sup> Personal experience 2005-2013.

<sup>83</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 196.

with one school, and another 39% would like to".<sup>86</sup> In general community open space "projects are frequently inspired by other projects in the neighborhood (...)" and are "(...)" frequently initiated to solve a problem (such as cleaning trash – 'tired of looking at garbage'); in response to lack of nature; to take care of hazardous conditions –'rats in lots'; or to make something beautiful in the neighborhood (such as claiming a vacant lot to make community green space (...)).<sup>87</sup> Thus urban residents become involved in community gardening for various reasons. "The reasons people reported for being involved in (...) [community open space, added C.M.] projects may explain why so many projects have been initiated".<sup>88</sup>

In the end of the 1970s, the early 1980s, according to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in the study "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 "the most important motivation was 'sanitation', or cleaning up the neighborhood, followed by recreation, education, a place for social activities, and economic factors".<sup>89</sup> Yet another reason to start a community-open space project was, according to Francis, Cashdan, Paxson, "(...) To make a place for children in the community – 'a place to see things growing'".<sup>90</sup> Then there is the aspect of providing contact to nature that urban residents are missing and are thus re-creating with community gardens, since according to "common belief and empirical studies point to the need for people to have contact with nature (Kaplan, 1973, Lewis, 1979a,b)".<sup>91</sup> This is especially the case in low income neighborhoods where "the following conditions also influence local groups to develop open space: people do not have access to back yards and want a place to plant and so on (...); people have private gardens but want a place to socialize (...); people want to beautify an ugly spot in the neighborhood (...); people have no other space available (...); or people want to improve the neighborhood (...)".<sup>92</sup> Generally, according to Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson, residents participate in community garden due to their impatience with the lack of government action.<sup>93</sup> They state that, "impatient with the lack of government action, residents are taking the initiative to develop, maintain, and use local open spaces designed to address the unique recreational needs of their neighborhoods".<sup>94</sup>

Residents participating in community gardens that are close to their home are neighbors who "(...) meet casually as part of their daily lives, and forge bonds of trust and interdependence".<sup>95</sup> Generally, "gardens (...) create community, by giving residents an active role in the neighborhood and a sense of control over an important aspect of their lives—an advantage that traditional parks don't generally confer. Neighbors come together in gardens both to work the land and to socialize".<sup>96</sup> Neighborliness strengthens the community and the quality of life of the individuals, as "the inviting settings of neighborhood commons enrich lives, and as in a small village, residents get to know each other well and become tolerant of one another's idiosyncrasies".<sup>97</sup> The strengthening of social ties within a neighborhood through community gardening can have effect on the organization of the larger community. "Workshops, lectures, and information exchanges that take place in neighborhood commons raise political awareness, deepen understanding, and can lead to the establishment of community boards comprised of women, men and teenagers, all of whom represent the multicultural and economically diverse constituency of the neighborhood".<sup>98</sup>

Community gardens are public open spaces used by a group of residents for a variety of social activities depending on the interests of the group and the neighborhood. In a

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<sup>86</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 192.

<sup>88</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 190.

<sup>91</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp.195-196.

<sup>93</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Linn 2007, p. 203.

<sup>96</sup> Englander 2001, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Linn 2007, p. 203.

<sup>98</sup> Linn 2007, p. 203.

GreenThumb survey of 2003<sup>99</sup> the activity that is most interesting to residents to get involved in community gardening is unstructured recreation activities, because in contrast to parks, “community gardening may provide a uniquely beneficial type of recreation, (...) because it is unstructured and contains more opportunity for creativity and novel experiences”.<sup>100</sup> In other words, “unlike traditional parks containing playground equipment or fields designed for organized sports, community gardens encourage creative play and risk-taking in an unstructured, natural environment”.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to unstructured activities like individual recreational activities, there are also collective, structured activities taking place in New York City’s community gardens. For example, some “community gardens (...) provide free public programming and services including arts classes, informal childcare, and performance for thousands of New Yorkers”.<sup>102</sup> Other gardens provide space for “weddings, block parties, crime-watch meetings, music classes, after-school tutoring—all take place in gardens simply for the joy of the surroundings”.<sup>103</sup> Some community gardens “(...) became bona fide day care centers”<sup>104</sup> used by children “(...) too old for a baby sitter and too young to be left alone, so the parents allow them to come here (...)”.<sup>105</sup>

The cultural background of the specific community gardening group is part of the decision-making process on the social activities are taking place in the garden. “The importance of ‘culture’ to community garden groups is illustrated in the 2003 survey results, with over 40 percent of groups reporting holding cultural events”.<sup>106</sup> Community gardens in the South Bronx with garden groups of predominantly Latin American and Caribbean cultural background for example feature the festival “(...) lechon asado (roast pig) is the festival for food. Cooking the whole pig on a spit is a daylong performance and presentation which begins as early as five o’clock in the morning and ends when the roast pig is divided and served in the late afternoon”.<sup>107</sup> In the South Bronx, in many gardens, “the central part of all festivities is the informal jam session which takes place on the veranda and in the front and back yards”.<sup>108</sup>

When looking at the example of the South Bronx community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo it becomes clear, that the garden with its social activities becomes a community center or as the name states a “cultural center” which translates to “centro cultural” in Spanish. In the neighborhood of Melrose, where the garden is located, “Rincon Criollo is recognized as benefitting the larger ‘community’ by offering a host of social services to neighborhood residents”.<sup>109</sup> Social activities taking place at Rincon Criollo include music making, after-school tutoring or the hosting of a food kitchen. That means not only “the harvest from the garden is shared amongst those who frequent the casita [but also, added C.M.] (...) leftover food from another community center is brought to Rincon Criollo, where it is distributed to the destitute and elderly alcohol-dependent denizens who congregate outside the casita fence”.<sup>110</sup> In addition the garden functions as welfare center when “the casita is a place where the unemployed can find clothing, help in locating work, and assistance in filing out job applications”.<sup>111</sup> Next to staging social activities within the garden, community gardening groups also participate in community events outside of their garden. The 2003 GreenThumb

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<sup>99</sup> “(...) GreenThumb, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station, undertook a study of 324 community garden groups registered with GreenThumb in 2003” (Stone 2009, p. 128), focusing among other aspects on the benefits of community gardening.

<sup>100</sup> Stone 2009, p. 129.

<sup>101</sup> Stone 2009, p. 129.

<sup>102</sup> Stone 2000, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>103</sup> Englander 2001, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>105</sup> Mr. Smith in: Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>106</sup> Stone 2009, p. 135.

<sup>107</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 30.

<sup>108</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 31.

<sup>109</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 35.

<sup>110</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 35.

<sup>111</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 36.

garden survey indicates that the most common community events in which garden groups participate are Block Associations and, only a little less often, Community Boards – both to over 50 % of the 324 gardeners asked.<sup>112</sup> In addition “volunteer gardeners surveyed in 2003 (...) reported participation in community-improvement, political, and social activities not related to the garden”.<sup>113</sup>

### **5.2.1.1 Community gardening activities and participation**

Community gardening in New York involves all groups of age and gardeners of a variety of cultural background. Consequently social activities and programs in community gardens are covering a variety of interests. Teaching other gardeners or neighbors something is part of the motivation to start coordinated, structured group activities in a garden. “The fact that over 50 percent of garden groups reporting [as of the 2003 survey by GreenThumb and the U.S. Forestry Northern Research Station, added C.M.] holding educational activities as well as events for youth and school groups, demonstrates the important role that teaching plays in the lives of community garden volunteers”.<sup>114</sup>

Edie Stone’s, director of GreenThumb from 2001 to 2013, states in her article “The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City” of 2009, “for community gardeners, the act of instructing visiting children and adults about the natural world, cultural traditions in agriculture, and gardening techniques also benefits the teacher by providing a sense of expertise and pride. This appears to lead to increased self-esteem and sense of identity for many community gardeners (...)”.<sup>115</sup> In other words, there is a specific social activities focusing on teaching children and the youth. Thus, for example “high school kids who might otherwise be unoccupied after school can be found in the garden helping to lay brick paths”.<sup>116</sup> In the case of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo in the South Bronx, “(...) neighborhood children are formally taught to play and dance bomba and plena at Rincon Criollo in a conscious attempt to provide alternatives to the prolific drug and violent street life entrenched in the South Bronx”.<sup>117</sup>

But not only specific programs for children and youth are taking place at community gardens, but also for seniors. The 2003 GreenThumb garden survey states “(...) 43 percent of gardening groups reported having events for seniors”.<sup>118</sup> Since, “many gardeners in New York City hail from Puerto Rico or the American South where they were actively engaged in farming for their livelihood”.<sup>119</sup> Thus, “many seniors participate in gardening in New York City as a nostalgic reflection of an agricultural background in childhood as well as to fulfill a desire or economic necessity to grow fresh food”.<sup>120</sup> And “though their agricultural memories are not always positive, aging gardeners often express an interest in educating their city-raised neighbors about ‘what it was like’”.<sup>121</sup>

When the interest in community open spaces increased in the 1970s and residents began to create their own public open spaces, “considerable research (...) [was, added C.M.] undertaken to assess the relationship of open spaces such as parks, playgrounds, and gardens to their users (Clay, 1971; Kaplan, 1973; Brower and Williamson, 1974; Hayward, Rothenberg, and Beasley, 1974; Cooper, 1975; Nager and Wentworth, 1976) [referenced in Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson, Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation, p. 5, added C.M.]”.<sup>122</sup> Participation in designing and maintaining public open spaces was seen for example in 1984 by Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” as the reason why there was a lack of satisfaction

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<sup>112</sup> Stone 2009, p. 134.

<sup>113</sup> Stone 2009, p. 135.

<sup>114</sup> Stone 2009, p. 132.

<sup>115</sup> Stone 2009, p. 132.

<sup>116</sup> Englander 2001, p. 7.

<sup>117</sup> Sciorra 1994, pp. 35-36.

<sup>118</sup> Stone 2009, p. 132.

<sup>119</sup> Stone 2009, p. 133.

<sup>120</sup> Stone 2009, p. 132.

<sup>121</sup> Stone 2009, p. 133.

<sup>122</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

by the residents in their “traditional” public parks. They made it clear that “a point of failure in many traditional parks is the lack of users’ direct involvement in their design or management.”<sup>123</sup> But still, according to Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson in the late 1970s, early 1980s, “many neighborhood parks developed by city parks departments and designed by professionals are misused or not used at all”.<sup>124</sup> Since these “(...) professionally designed and publicly managed parks and playgrounds often do not satisfy the needs of their users”.<sup>125</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson conclude that alternate approaches to park development were needed, implying that participation of users/ residents in the design was necessary: “There is now broad consensus on the part of park designers and managers that alternative approaches are needed to create open spaces that are socially successful, less costly to develop, and easier to maintain and manage”.<sup>126</sup>

The access to community garden and thus to the casita is open to the general public all at least 20 hours a week - as required by the GreenThumb license. But the residents participating in the garden as members organize themselves on their own terms as a group and then determine the participation of others at a garden. Community gardens are commonly maintained by the group of gardeners using the land for gardening and depending on the size of the garden – next to the minimum of ten gardeners necessary to register the garden with GreenThumb – more persons are needed for maintenance. In addition, the number of members participating in the garden has an effect on the design of the garden, since all members bring in their interests, and also on the permanency or sustainability of a garden in urban development context. Thus Community gardening groups are often interested in increasing the size of their group, i.e. they are looking to enhance garden membership and participation.

Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in the study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 “(...) local groups involved in developing community open spaces frequently want to expand participation in the projects. Yet participants do not know how they can effectively open up their groups to increase participation. This may be due in part to the group’s dynamics, limited goals, or conflicting interests within the community”.<sup>127</sup> Since programming is a way to open up to the community and a possibility to focus on goals, programming of social activities in a garden like for example the teaching of musical classes at Rincon Criollo in the South Bronx could be a way to attract neighbors that often become interested in participating in the garden. But there are also community gardening groups that have more persons interested in participating in the garden than there is space, since the garden is part of the community partially because the group has conducted a lot of programming for community outreach. That means structured social activities could also attract too much interest, so that the group needs to “(...) manage increased participation (...)”.<sup>128</sup>

#### **5.2.1.2 Community garden activities and garden permanence**

An active community garden group with a larger number of participants is better able to ensure the long-term use and maintenance of the garden, i.e. to ensure a garden’s longer-term existence – which is often called “permanence” even though the term cannot be applied to a land use in New York City due to the option to change laws and rules when the administration changes. Consequently it appears to be common sense that community gardening groups are interested in increasing participation at their community garden site through garden programs and garden activities, but gardening groups are also interested in controlling who is able to join even though they are interested in long-term use of their garden. Residents participating in community gardening for a longer term are interested in exerting control on their own and their neighborhood’s quality of life. In turn, when looking to increase the membership of a community garden group, the prospective to be able to exert control on the community can attract new members. Francis, Cashdan and Paxson found in their report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action

<sup>123</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>124</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 5.

<sup>127</sup> Francis, Cashdan, and Paxson 1984, p. 185.

<sup>128</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 186.

and Land Conservation” of 1984 that control was “(...) important to groups throughout all the various stages of their projects (i.e., initiation, site acquisition, design, development, use, management, maintenance, etc.)”.<sup>129</sup>

In community gardens on public land, i.e. in collectively managed and used open spaces, “community control of the decision-making and development processes is common, to varying degrees (...)”.<sup>130</sup> When analyzing the positive and negative aspects of control over community gardening projects, Francis, Cashdan and Paxson added that on the one hand the “control of the process (...) has several benefits for community open-space projects: (1) it increases the sense of attachment to the site for those involved (...); (2) it helps with maintenance, because users respect the site as belonging to someone (...); (3) it helps to show that ‘someone cares for the site’; and (4) it helps groups develop their own management skills and leadership”.<sup>131</sup> But on the other hand they were convinced that control of the decision-making and development processes of community gardens through community gardening group has also negative aspects, “(...) most notably in terms of access and use of these projects”.<sup>132</sup> That means, community gardening groups do not only seek to increase the membership of their garden, but also try to regulate who can participate in gardening at their site. In some community gardens “(...) access is limited by the group involved in developing and managing the site. Therefore, these projects are generally not public spaces but rather public/private spaces. Although locks and gates may give the impression of severely limited public access to these projects, most projects have a delicate ‘carrying capacity’ and could be easily destroyed with unlimited access or public use. Local initiators have decided that these community open-space projects can provide no more than limited public access. However, all are designed to have unlimited public visual appeal”.<sup>133</sup>

Next to a secure funding, the ownership of a site – i.e., again, the long-term use - is according to Francis, Cashdan, Paxson, in their report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 important to community gardening group. They state, “(...) Groups feel that ownership of the site can contribute to a feeling of ‘local empowerment,’ thereby strengthening their sense of power and commitment to the project”.<sup>134</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson add that “for the sites owned by the local groups, it was reported that ownership: (1) gives a feeling of permanence and control; (2) gives a sense of the future – ‘something you can leave for your kids’; (3) gives a sense of power, because you can ‘do whatever you want’ with the project; (4) helps the group maintain the project, because ‘you take care of what’s yours’; and (5) helps promote a sense of sharing (e.g., giving away extra vegetables, etc.)”.<sup>135</sup> In addition, according to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in the report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 “permanency was not reported as a concern by those groups who own their sites (...). Members of these groups also stated that perception of permanency had the following benefits: (1) they make longer-term commitment to the project, and (2) they feel there is a future for the project (e.g., ‘we planted trees’).”<sup>136</sup>

To have a feeling of ownership of a community garden, the community gardening group does not have to form a land trust to own the site or does not have to use other means to turn a public into a private lot used for gardening – which could also be a difficult process<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>130</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>131</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>132</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>133</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>134</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>135</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 204.

<sup>136</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 205.

<sup>137</sup> “Groups reported [in the report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson of 1984, added C.M.] the following problems with owning their sites: (1) high cost of purchasing site from private owner or in a restricted auction; (2) property taxes that groups are forced to pay by the city once they own the land; and (3) the long, uncertain process of acquiring the property, especially if it is city owned, due to the ‘bureaucratic’ restricted auction process”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 204)

“Groups who do not own their projects reported [in the report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson of 1984, added C.M.] several reasons for deciding not to own their sites: (1) several reported they feel they control their projects without owning them, because they have enough political power to keep the city from taking them back (...); (2) one group reported that they were homeowners and did not feel the need to own other property in their neighborhood (...); (3) the group only has a short-term goal of using the site for one year or so (...); and (4) the group does not want the added responsibility that they perceive comes with owning the property (...).<sup>138</sup>

When New York City Community gardens in were targeted for demolition in order to make way housing in the end of the 1990s their longer-term existence as a land-use was endangered: The pending demolition of a community garden in some cases “(...) negatively affect[ed], added C.M.] the commitment of local residents to long-range community improvement”.<sup>139</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson found in their report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 that “a lack of a sense of permanency and land control (...) can: (1) result in anger and frustration for the participants; (2) raise false expectations; and (3) make participants reluctant to give time to the project”.<sup>140</sup> But on the other hand Francis, Cashdan and Paxson also pointed to some – I assume short – incidents in which the lack of permanency could be an incentive to fight for a community garden. They observed the following “(...) positive effects of lack of permanency (...): (1) the threat of losing the project can be a rallying point to get more people involved (...); (2) it can provide incentive for participants to go off and develop other projects”.<sup>141</sup> Generally though, the guarantee of long-term land use is since the beginning a main concern to community gardening groups. Until the establishment of the Community Gardens Settlement in 2002 and then the Community Garden Rules of 2010 for community gardens situated on public land “(...) permanency was a particular problem with city-owned property, because the city’s current policy is to retain ownership or sell the land to the highest bidder at public auction. The city is clearly not actively involved in protecting the interests of community residents who have developed open-space projects”.<sup>142</sup>

Even though today, gardens are almost permanent when on the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks as long the garden group is actively maintaining the garden, there is still no guarantee. Especially for gardens on land of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, which is leased for one year with an addition that a four-year term is the objective<sup>143</sup>, long-term land use remains uncertain. And “while the future ownership of some projects is unclear, so is the permanency of the groups that initiate them”.<sup>144</sup> With the permanence of a garden not guaranteed, it is complicated to establish “(...) groups that continue to manage and maintain projects (...)”.<sup>145</sup> Consequently, “some answer to the permanency problem is needed in order to create a sense of commitment and ‘belonging’ to both to the project itself and the community group”.<sup>146</sup>

Community garden groups in New York City have been offering more or less structured workshops and public programs for the neighborhood since the beginning in order to ensure the membership and maintenance of their garden. Today, the license agreement states that at least one workshop has to be provided annually. Thus all of the community gardens in New York City, registered with GreenThumb, are holding workshops on a variety of topics that is as broad as the interest of the community gardeners. “The numerous public programs envisioned, designed, and operated by garden volunteers are implemented with almost no input from GreenThumb staff”.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 204.

<sup>139</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 186.

<sup>140</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 204.

<sup>141</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 204-205.

<sup>142</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 186.

<sup>143</sup> Personal experience 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 186.

<sup>145</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 186.

<sup>146</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 186.

<sup>147</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

GreenThumb provides support for the garden programming and coordinates in the background. “By employing outreach staff to work with garden groups and organize workshops and events, GreenThumb also provides a human network, someone to call when you have a problem or want to connect with other gardeners”.<sup>148</sup> Edie Stone, director from GreenThumb from 2001 to 2013, is convinced that GreenThumb needs to remain in the background “(...) because the benefits provided by community gardening to the neighborhood – and in particular the benefits provided to the individuals running garden programs – depend, in part, on the gardeners’ autonomy from the GreenThumb program”.<sup>149</sup> Stone adds that, “the fact that GreenThumb does not in any way instruct or require volunteer gardeners to provide educational events also indicates that engaging in teaching and learning is a satisfying pastime for many volunteers”.<sup>150</sup> She describes her own role, as director of GreenThumb, as that of a civil servant supporting the efforts of voluntary residents groups maintaining public land, stating, “As a civil servant I am committed to ensuring that the gardens, as public lands, provide a public benefit. I am not, however, convinced that anyone other than the garden volunteers themselves can determine which benefit is most needed in their communities”.<sup>151</sup>

But if increased gardening programming and activities are increasing the membership, it does not necessarily mean that these gardens have then a secured long-term maintenance. In the middle of the 1980s, according to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in the report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984, “most projects face long-term maintenance problems. Government programs rarely provide support for maintenance. (...) Groups feel it is irresponsible for government agencies to fund development of community open-space projects without supporting their maintenance”.<sup>152</sup> Even though GreenThumb is such a government support program that has existed since 1978, it has also only provided support for the maintenance of community gardening groups in the long-term through their staff and with the provision of material. One reason is that the City regarded and still regards community gardening as an “(...) innovative use of public land not as long-term improvements of inner city neighborhoods but as a form of temporary custodianship of their neglected property”.<sup>153</sup> That means also, that “for the city government, GreenThumb is an interim program established to deal with the period between ‘demolition and development’”.<sup>154</sup>

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use in the South Bronx and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to community gardening activities in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the context to the neighborhood in which community gardens are located and its demand is central to the community gardening group creating them. Community gardens give residents an active role in the creation of neighborhood and a sense of control of their quality of life. They become active together to use available open space for unstructured and structured recreation activities that answer to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood in regard to cultural tradition or the needs of specific residents’ groups. In contrast to “traditional” public parks, community gardens are designed to answer those needs of the neighborhood and are maintained to ensure that those changing needs are met. The activities taking place in community gardens depend also on financial funding and the guarantee to use of the land over a longer period of time, which is guaranteed in part and to a certain degree by the GreenThumb license.

### **5.2.2 Community gardening groups and neighborhood context**

Community garden members usually are long-term residents of the neighborhood, part of a specific community and interested to improve the neighborhood.<sup>155</sup> Especially “the

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<sup>148</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>149</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>150</sup> Stone 2009, p. 132.

<sup>151</sup> Stone 2009, p. 127.

<sup>152</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 200.

<sup>153</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 83-84.

<sup>154</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>155</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

composition of the [garden's, added C.M.] core group tends to be relatively homogeneous, formed of people with similar backgrounds that are not always completely representative of the entire neighborhood".<sup>156</sup> Neighborhood improvement in the sense of control was also according to Francis, Cashdan, Paxson in their report "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 a reason to get involved in community gardening and to continue to participate over time. They state, "Control was an important incentive for people to get initially involved in the project and to continue to work on the project over time".<sup>157</sup> Community gardeners group together according to a specific cultural background, which is dependent on the neighborhood that the garden is situated in, i.e. on the residents participating at the community garden. For example in the South Bronx, the majority of residents – and gardeners - comes since decades from Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and Latin America. About 50% of the gardeners interviewed in a GreenThumb survey of 2003<sup>158</sup> stated that they were African American. In the end of the 1970s, early 1980s according to the study "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" by Francis, Cashdan, Paxson of 1984, residents participating in community gardens "(...) are frequently 'movers and shakers' in the neighborhoods, and have time to volunteer (such as retired people, nonworking people, etc.)".<sup>159</sup> Still, "most groups are made up of a particular segment of the community in terms of age, income, ethnicity, or sex".<sup>160</sup>

Community gardeners vary in age since "individuals of all ages who are engaged in the creation and implementation of garden programs designed to help others are likely to benefit through the contribution such activities make to their sense of identity and self-importance".<sup>161</sup> Many of New York City's community gardens are in 2001, according to Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb from 2001 until 2013, "(...) still being operated by the original founding volunteers who are now in their 60s and 70s".<sup>162</sup> The average age of community gardeners in New York City was according to a GreenThumb survey of 2003<sup>163</sup>, between 50 and 59 years of age (answered by more than 60 persons). Depending on the gardens membership structure the number of children coming to the garden varies. But the accessibility of the garden to all residents is taken serious by some garden groups, such as for example in the case of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo in the South Bronx, where "in summer of 1989, a brick-and concrete ramp was made for visiting children in wheelchairs, making this building the only wheelchair-accessible casita in the city".<sup>164</sup>

In the end of the 1970s, early 1980s, according to the same study of 1984, community garden groups were "(...) frequently made up of more women than men".<sup>165</sup> This could reflect that open space access for socializing in the city is according to Sciorra in his article of 1994 "We're not just here to plant. We have culture" is gender specific and favors men. He states, "In contrast to men, working-class women have rarely had the opportunity to socialize in locations outside of the home and workplace".<sup>166</sup> But Hughes disagrees in a New York Times article "In Bronx, Little Houses That Evoke Puerto Rico" of 2009, stating that men are more often seen at community gardens stating that, "at most casitas, men seem to dominate among the regulars who show up, and many of them are retired".<sup>167</sup> At the time, in the middle of the 1990s, according to Sciorra in his article "We're not just here to plant. We have culture" of 1994, the South Bronx community garden Rincon Criollo was an exception, with both

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<sup>156</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

<sup>157</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 203.

<sup>158</sup> Of 217 gardeners citywide asked in a GreenThumb survey of 2003 about their age, about 100 responded that they were African American. (GreenThumb 2003 garden survey, courtesy to GreenThumb) This survey was updated in 2009. (GreenThumb 2009 garden survey, courtesy to GreenThumb)

<sup>159</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

<sup>160</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

<sup>161</sup> Stone 2009, p. 135.

<sup>162</sup> Stone 2009, pp. 132-133.

<sup>163</sup> 230 community gardeners citywide answered a question about their age in a 2003 survey by GreenThumb. (GreenThumb 2003 garden survey, courtesy to GreenThumb)

<sup>164</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>165</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

<sup>166</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 34.

<sup>167</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

women as well as men participating in the garden. He states, "(...) Women (...) [were playing even, added C.M.] a central role in the organizational and ceremonial life of Rincon Criollo (...)"<sup>168</sup> But Sciorra explained that Rincon Criollo was an exception in this regard since in general "(...) the majority of the city's man-dominated casitas (...)"<sup>169</sup> In the beginning of the twenty-first century, according to a question in a GreenThumb survey of 2003<sup>170</sup>, there were almost equally as many women as men gardening: 56% of the total number of gardeners (153 gardeners) were female and 44% of the total number of gardeners (121 gardeners) were male.<sup>171</sup>

Residents creating a community garden form a group that maintains the public land over time. This group is made up of individuals of various backgrounds who work together to improve the neighborhood. Stone states in her article "The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City" of 2009, "(...) It is the experience of having decision-making control over the garden space and the ability to make significant and visible changes there that gives garden volunteers the sense of empowerment they need to participate in leadership activities outside the garden".<sup>172</sup> She adds, "By creating a space that has improved their neighborhood in a tangible, concrete way, volunteer gardeners are able to see a beneficial transformation for which they were largely responsible as individuals and groups".<sup>173</sup> According to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in their report "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 "almost all groups (...) have regular meetings. In the off season (winter), they may only meet once a month in someone's home. During the regular season, they meet more frequently, often informally on the sites (...)".<sup>174</sup> In addition "(...) most groups have a membership that requires dues (either a \$1 a month membership for the block association (...) or informal membership through a 'Friends of the Greening' (...)"<sup>175</sup>

Within the group, tasks are taken on according to different skills of the members. Some garden groups set up by-laws to organize the group structure and thus form a club such as in the case of the Kleingarten colonies in Germany for example. For example the raising of funds to sustain the garden as well as managing the funds are the main tasks in the development of a community garden. "The biggest threat is often that the responsibility for keeping the project going (fundraising etc.) can become a major burden over a long period of time".<sup>176</sup> Consequently, "fundraising is usually coordinated by one person in the group with the appropriate interest and skills. In some groups, an official treasurer is responsible for managing the group's funding (...); however, the entire group is involved in developing overall fundraising strategies and decisions".<sup>177</sup>

Sciorra states in his article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996 that in regard to garden expenses and group efforts for example the "Bronx-resident Carlos Padilla discovered that the simple act of cleaning a refuse-filled lot at private expense, that is burying decomposing animals and haling 200 bags of garbage plus a refrigerator and sofa, left him vulnerable to city fines and arrest. Municipal attempts to collect back taxes on 'continuous use' of city-owned property as in the case of Felicia Hernandez who was fined \$18 796 for her seven-year-old Lower East Side garden is another form of official harassment".<sup>178</sup> The creation of a group of gardeners has also an effect on the larger community as a group. For example, the "(...) participation in the creation and management

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<sup>168</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 24.

<sup>169</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 24.

<sup>170</sup> 274 community gardeners citywide answered a question about their gender in a 2003 survey by GreenThumb. (GreenThumb 2003 garden survey, courtesy to GreenThumb)

<sup>171</sup> GreenThumb 2003 garden survey, courtesy to GreenThumb.

<sup>172</sup> Stone 2009, p. 135.

<sup>173</sup> Stone 2009, pp. 135-136.

<sup>174</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>175</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>176</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>177</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 201.

<sup>178</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

of community gardens (...) gives urban seniors a platform to demonstrate their cultural knowledge and history, and to act and be seen as 'respected elders' in their communities".<sup>179</sup>

The fact that "unlike traditional municipal parks and community gardens in some other programs, gardens managed by GreenThumb are true community-managed spaces"<sup>180</sup> expresses that it is important that there is a community group maintaining the garden. This can be seen for example when community gardeners organized themselves to fight for the preservation of their gardens starting in the middle of the 1990s. They participated as a group in "(...) the political struggle to preserve the gardens in the late 1990s, when gardeners banded together citywide to challenge the mayoral administration's plans to develop or sell the properties".<sup>181</sup> The development, management and design of a community garden over time depend on the gardening group and its changing participants' interests. "One aspect that distinguishes community-inspired and developed projects from more traditional approaches is that the development and management steps are often done in combination and may be repeated throughout the life of the project. While traditional parks are designed, built, and then maintained in a linear process, community-developed projects frequently change and evolve in response to the changing needs of participants".<sup>182</sup> The design of the community garden that a community garden group created collectively is an expression of its identity. "The cultural production of vernacular horticulture and architecture creates a local landscape of empowerment that serves as a center of collective action, where people provide indigenous solutions to the area's exigency and engage in modes of expressivity that are alternatives to those imposed by the dominant culture".<sup>183</sup>

Looking at the organization of the gardening group at the South Bronx community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo, Sciorra states in his article "We're not just here to plant. We have culture" of 1994 that, "as a form of social club, it is difficult to speak of 'Rincon Criollo's 'membership.' One does not fill out an application for membership; instead one is allowed through the gates by being introduced by a friend. An appreciation of and adherence to group standards regarding proper behavior are the prerequisites for being allowed back to the lot, that is, maintaining one's 'membership.' Nonetheless, Rincon Criollo is represented by a president, vice-president, and treasurer who are elected annually"<sup>184</sup> Rincon Criollo is organized in the same way as other community gardens as a non-profit organization, also called a 501(c) organization. This status means that the organization is exempted from taxes and allows applying for specific grants. For Rincon Criollo therefore gardeners take on the positions of a president, a treasurer and board members. Chema, who started the garden first, remains the official leader of the site. "A hand-painted wooden sign posted on the grounds during the summer of 1988 recognized Chema as the 'autor' (autor) of Rincon Criollo. Members attribute Chema's commanding presence, gregarious personality, and the respectful manner in which he leads as major factors in the creation and maintenance of both the physical site and the social entity that is Rincon Criollo".<sup>185</sup>

Community gardening is helping participants to become aware of the needs of the neighborhood they live in. Even though they use public land to garden on collectively, even though they might not own property in the vicinity of this garden and live in rental apartments instead, they maintain and improve a property and have thus 'a stake' in the neighborhood. This does not only increase the value of properties in the vicinity of the garden, but can also reduce crime rates. As, "(...) Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said in his January 2000 State of the City address, the more people 'who have a real stake in the community, the better off a city is (...) in terms of crime'". Community gardens are social public spaces, which, in the same way as other "commons", "(...) people have personalized to meet the needs of their community". Community gardening creates thus not only a relationship within the gardening group, but with the larger neighborhood. "When neighbors participate in envisioning, building, and using a shared communal space, they simultaneously build relationships with one another". That

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<sup>179</sup> Stone 2009, p. 135.

<sup>180</sup> Stone 2009, p. 123.

<sup>181</sup> Stone 2009, p. 125.

<sup>182</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 18.

<sup>183</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 30.

<sup>184</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 23.

<sup>185</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 24.

means community gardening prepares the participants to become active in a larger social context. Linn describes in the book “Building commons and community” of that “Accustomed to a competitive society and isolated nuclear families, people often feel burdened when they take on communal responsibility. Community garden commons provide a training ground to cultivate interaction based on collaboration and mutual support”. Community gardening increases neighborhood identity, strengthen social ties as “community-developed sites promote an increased sense of local pride and discourage crime and vandalism”.

Consequently the analysis of community garden land use in the South Bronx and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to the social aspects of community gardening in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardeners in are usually long-term residents of the neighborhood, part of a specific community that is often specified by similar cultural background, interested to improve the neighborhood and long-time participation. Even though community gardeners vary in age and used to be more men than women in the middle of the 1980s, the average age of gardeners in 2003 is between 50 and 59 years and equally as many women as men participate in the garden. This is reflected in the development, management and design of a community garden, which depend on the gardening group and its changing participants’ interests. Since the design of the community garden is collectively and participatively created by a residents’ garden group it is an expression of its identity and influenced by the needs of the surrounding neighborhood accessing the public open space.

### **5.2.3 Community gardening, criminal activities and social control of residents**

In the following I will look at community garden land use in the South Bronx and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to community gardening, criminal activities and social control of residents in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx.

Community gardening is an activity that reduces criminal activities in a neighborhood, because it stabilizes this neighborhood by improving the quality of life. This is confirmed by a report by the Trust of Public Land of 2001 stating, “Community gardens (...) help reduce crime by serving as centers of activity at all times of day, and by encouraging bonds and recognition among neighbors”.<sup>186</sup> In addition, the report continues, the reduction of crime not only derives from the fact that community gardens are activity centers, but also from their development over time through community activity. “Abandoned areas that served as venues for drug dealers or provided cover for muggers are transformed into constructive and cheerful enterprises”.<sup>187</sup> It is fundamental for crime reduction that residents have a perception of their neighborhood being in order. Thus “gardens (...) serve as symbols of order and neighborhood commitment, and (...) crime tends to decrease when people feel a sense of order in their communities [(cited in Trust for Public Land, *Healing America’s Cities: How urban parks can make cities safe and healthy*, Green Cities Initiative, 1994, p. 16), added C.M.]”.<sup>188</sup>

A study by Gorham, Waliczek, Snelgrove, and Zajicek of 2009 called “The Impact of Community Gardens on Numbers of Property Crimes in Urban Houston”, focusing on 11 community gardens in Houston, Texas, proves that if community gardeners have the perception that a neighborhood is safe, it does not mean that the crime rate is actually low. As. It states, “The presence of a community garden was not a predictor of a lower crime rate for a neighborhood”<sup>189</sup> but only of the perception of crime. Thus, as “(...) interviews conducted with community garden representatives showed (...) community gardens appeared to have a positive influence on neighborhoods, with residents reporting (...) perceived immunity from crime”.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Englander 2001, p. 13.

<sup>187</sup> Englander 2001, p. 13.

<sup>188</sup> Englander 2001, p. 13.

<sup>189</sup> Gorham, Waliczek, Snelgrove, and Zajicek 2009, p. 291.

<sup>190</sup> Gorham, Waliczek, Snelgrove, and Zajicek 2009, p. 291.

Another study of 2012 by Herod, called “Cultivating Community: Connecting community gardens and crime prevention”, adds the aspect that it is not a matter of perception, but rather a matter of empowerment of residents and physical beautification that prevents crime. “(...) Community gardens are a preventative measure and through creating a sense of community, empowering individuals and physically beautifying vacant areas acting as venues for illicit behaviour, community gardens are a way to address criminal behaviour in disadvantaged neighbourhoods”.<sup>191</sup> Community gardening reduces crime through the creation of social ties among neighborhood residents. “(...) People who would not normally associate have the opportunity to form relationships. In addition to this, the presence of individuals working in the garden creates an informal neighbourhood watch, which is valuable for preventing crime and responding to problems that arise within a community”.<sup>192</sup> In addition though, the study confirms that aspects are necessary if crime is actually to be reduced in a neighborhood. Thus, “community gardens are often one in a series of other steps that are implemented to prevent crime in a community”.<sup>193</sup>

The collective physical work on developing a public space into a community garden is an important part of neighborhood crime reduction. That means not only through the creation of social ties, but also through the collective development of a community garden and management by a group of neighbors, crime can be reduced in a neighborhood. That means the garden “(...) the potential to prevent and reduce crime comes from the combination of the physical and social characteristics of a garden”.<sup>194</sup> The study agrees with the report by the Trust of Public Land of 2001 mentioned early in stating, “This is not to say that the social act of coming together and building the garden did not influence crime, but the physical transformation of the vacant land into a garden was an important part of the success of this garden”.<sup>195</sup> In short, community gardens “(...) overall, improve safety within a community by strengthening the community of which they are a part”.<sup>196</sup> The crime reduction stems from an increase in social control, as “(...) the presence of individuals working in the garden creates an informal neighbourhood watch, which is valuable for preventing crime and responding to problems that arise within a community”.<sup>197</sup>

Community gardening keeps public open spaces safe from vandalism through creating a sense of ownership. This is confirmed in Francis, Cashdan and Paxson, who found in their study “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 that there was “(...) very little vandalism across community-developed open-space projects”.<sup>198</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson explain that “this happens for several reasons: (1) access is restricted to certain times by a gate and lock; (2) the projects communicate that they belong to someone, and people seem to respect that; (3) the projects are often self-policed with users providing strong peer pressure to keep them maintained; and (4) when something is broken it is quickly repaired”.<sup>199</sup>

With creating community garden in the late 1970s, residents took on responsibility for the location in the neighborhood where the garden was situated. Gerald Lanausse, gardener of El Batey de Dona Provi, East Tremont, South Bronx, explains, “We try to push the drugs out of the immediate neighborhood. You can only push them so far, but at least they respect this

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<sup>191</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 44.

<sup>192</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 45.

<sup>193</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 44.

<sup>194</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 46.

<sup>195</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 46.

<sup>196</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 47.

<sup>197</sup> Herod 2012, [www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention](http://www.cityfarmer.info/2012/06/02/cultivating-community-connecting-community-gardens-and-crime-prevention), p. 45.

<sup>198</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 199-200.

<sup>199</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 200.

area”.<sup>200</sup> Public land with community garden developed into protected areas in crime ridden neighborhoods because neighbors maintained those sites and take over social control. For example the community garden “Rincon Criollo is (...) [today, added C.M.] a testament to [Jane, added C.M.] Jacobs’ ‘eyes on the street’”.<sup>201</sup> The community gardening group socially stabilizes and controls the neighborhood through their activity transforming the public land into a community garden. “Community control results in neighborhood stability because residents feel a sense of ownership over their neighborhood open spaces”.<sup>202</sup> Through community gardening residents protect and socially stabilize neighborhoods – a role that for example the South Bronx’ community garden Rincon Criollo has been taken on. “Because Rincón Criollo functions as a social and cultural center for the entire neighborhood, it is a protected restful place where children can safely play, community members garden, converse and play dominoes away from the sounds and bustle of the city, just outside its margins”.<sup>203</sup>

Consequently the analysis of open space land use for community gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to changes in the number of gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardens help to reduce criminal activities by encouraging social bonds. Community open spaces are centers of social activity that provide a sense of order and social control in their neighborhood that leads to a reduction in criminal activities. Even though community gardens are often one in a series of other steps that are implemented to prevent crime in a community and are thus not actually reducing the crime rate, residents have the perception that a neighborhood is safe through the social network and physical beautification. They feel empowered through the creation of the community garden and able to take on control over their neighborhood by creating a sense of ownership thus socially stabilizing the surrounding of their enclosed and open spaces.

#### **5.2.4 Cultural and social meaning of community gardening**

The collective and private use of public land for community gardening activities is determined by participating residents, who bring to the garden development their individual design ideas that are based on their cultural background and their interests to the social activities demanded by the neighborhood. Often individual gardeners on the one hand design and plant for example their garden beds a way that accommodates their cultural needs, but on the other hand they participate participating in the design of commonly used areas for social activities taking place. Thus for example community gardeners grow food, in individual or common beds, according to their cultural background, i.e., vegetables, herbs and fruits that are a lot of times not available in supermarkets or corner stores in their neighborhood.

Food production does not only meet individual interest, but also creates a group feeling when for example the same cultural background is discovered. Food grown in the gardens often unites gardeners coming as it presents a topic of conversation to persons that might not have much in common otherwise. As the report by the Trust of Public Land of 2001 states, “but as diverse as they are, many community gardeners share a cultural heritage in agriculture. Perhaps they gardened as children with their grandparents, or they grew up on farms. Others garden to supply missing ingredients in their native cuisine. Growing the foods of their culture, using distinctive horticultural techniques, they share this heritage with younger gardeners and with their peers from other backgrounds. With their hands in the soil, people who might otherwise find little in common come together without friction”.<sup>204</sup>

The cultural context to Puerto Rico of South Bronx gardens also is expressed by Gerald Lanausse, gardener of El Batey de Dona Provi, East Tremont, South Bronx, stating, “We grow some things from Puerto Rico - tomatoes, eggplant, okra and corn, peppers - but many things from the island can't survive the cold”.<sup>205</sup> In addition there are other plants expressing

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<sup>200</sup> Gerald Lanausse, gardener of El Batey de Dona Provi, East Tremont, South Bronx, in: Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>201</sup> Hansen, Zeitlin 1998, [www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/news/nlfw98/greensp.html](http://www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/news/nlfw98/greensp.html)

<sup>202</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

<sup>203</sup> Torres, <http://nylatinojournal.com/home/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=22>.

<sup>204</sup> Englander 2001, p. 12.

<sup>205</sup> Gerald Lanausse, gardener of El Batey de Dona Provi, East Tremont, South Bronx, in: Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

Puerto Rican culture like “corn, beans, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, eggplant, cucumbers and squash [that, added C.M.] are widely grown. Most gardens contain fruit trees - apple, peach, apricot and mulberry - as well as grapes and strawberries. Although few trees and shrubs are indigenous to Puerto Rico, some such as ailanthus, weeping willow and hibiscus visually resemble plants growing there. The leaf, color and pod of the Russian Olive are so similar to one native bean tree that passersby often wonder when it will bear fruit. Roses flourish in Puerto Rico and gardeners grow many varieties that remind them of home. Sunflowers, too, are popular annuals. (...) A wide variety of herbs are found in most gardens. Culinary herbs include parsley, oregano and cilantro or coriander. Mint, rue and yerba buena are used as medicinal teas and healing baths”.<sup>206</sup>

Consequently the analysis of community garden land use in the South Bronx and population in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to cultural and social meaning of community gardening in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardening is determined by participating residents, who bring to the garden development their individual design ideas that are based on their cultural background and their interests to the social activities demanded by the neighborhood.

### **5.2.5 Cultural and social meaning of casitas**

The construction of casitas is in the same way as the design of the overall garden an expression of the gardeners’ culture and a reflection of the garden groups’ and the neighborhoods’ needs. In the South Bronx, “drawing on Caribbean agricultural and architectural traditions, the gardeners not only cultivate vegetables, fruit, and medicinal as well as culinary herbs, but also construct one- and two-room wood frame structures known as casitas or little houses”.<sup>207</sup>

GreenThumb allows most uses of casitas, except using casitas for entrepreneurial ventures indicating individual profit-making with revenue not returned as an investment into the garden and except using the structures as a homeless shelter, indicating privatization of public land. Especially because of the use of casita’s as a small house, a private shelter, a privately used community facility, the regulations of structures in community gardens were discussed over the years – a discussion that terminated in 2007 in the Parks Department’s guidelines for structures. Stone states in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000, before becoming director of GreenThumb in 2001, “to a housing department official, however, casitas appear to be dangerous shacks, built without regard to building and fire codes. While problems of illegal occupants in these structures do occur, they are the exception”.<sup>208</sup> The use of casitas reflects the needs that neighborhood has and that the City fails to address “The casita’s active role in providing sorely needed social services to neighborhood residents is a poignant commentary on the city’s failure to meet the basic needs of poor working-class communities”.<sup>209</sup> In some community gardens, before election, “the casita as a base for potential political organization is publicly announced by signs (...)”.<sup>210</sup>

From the perspective of the gardening group, generally, casita functions as the clubhouse, as a collectively, but privately used shelter. “Casita members maintain that their little houses serve the larger community as mutual-aid societies or benevolent associations. Unlike the social clubs founded during the great migration of the 1940s and 1950s, whose memberships were based on hometown affiliations, casitas are instead rooted in local, neighborhood concern”.<sup>211</sup> But casitas are used for a variety of purposes depending on the gardening group’s interests and neighborhood’s needs. In 1994 by Sciorra explained in his article “We’re not just here to plant. We have culture. An Ethnography of the South Bronx Casita” that casitas “today [i.e. in 1994, added C.M.], (...) serve as shelter for homeless, social clubs, block associations, cultural centers, summer retreats, horticultural centers, and entrepreneurial ventures”.<sup>212</sup> This is confirmed by Stone in her article “Community Gardening

<sup>206</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>207</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>208</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>209</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 81.

<sup>210</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 81.

<sup>211</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 81.

<sup>212</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 20.

in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000 stating that “gardeners from the Caribbean, particularly Puerto Rico, commonly construct small houses called ‘casitas’ in their garden sites. These casitas are used as public gathering spaces and are often the focus of communal activities in the neighborhood, from birthday parties to memorial services”.<sup>213</sup> In addition the use and atmosphere of a casita is according to the New York Times of 2009 proving the Caribbean cultural background of the builders. This atmosphere is apparent even in Winter when “(...) few casitas are open regularly when it is cold because of their thin walls”.<sup>214</sup> Then “(...) inside the Rincon Criollo, a lime-hued wooden clubhouse in a community garden at East 157th Street and Brook Avenue in Melrose, in the South Bronx, a summertime vibe ruled”.<sup>215</sup>

The social function of the casita is based on the fact that it is - in a similar way as a recreational facility in a park -, a social center surrounded by horticulture. Daniel Winterbottom explains in his article “Hopeless Future For Gardens Of Hope? Casitas: Gardens Of Reclamation” of 1998, “Functioning as social centers for the entire neighborhood, casitas are protected places where children can safely play (...). They are welcoming and restful places where adults garden, converse and play dominoes away from the sounds and bustle of the city”.<sup>216</sup> Placed in community gardens, casitas are used by a group of gardeners throughout the year as social gathering places but they also reflect the culture of the gardeners who built it together. For example the casita in the South Bronx community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo was built by gardeners’ of Puerto Rican cultural background, leading among them Jose Manuel “Chema” Soto. In 2010 the New York Daily News quotes Chema about his reasons to design and build the casita in the Rincon Criollo garden: “I was inspired by the casita where I was born, the house of my grandmother, Doa Angela Clemente, at 457 Espaa St. in Hato Rey, (...) referring to a neighborhood of San Juan”.<sup>217</sup> Sciorra remembers a different statement of Chema in his article “We’re not just here to plant. We have culture” of 1994 stating that, “Chema was inspired to construct a casita after seeing one in El Barrio (East Harlem). Manhattan”.<sup>218</sup>

David Gonzales quotes in a New York Times article “‘Las Casitas’: Oases or Illegal Shacks?” of 1990 Jose (Chema) Soto talking about how differently the South Bronx looked to his home country Puerto Rico, before he started to construct the casita and design Rincon Criollo: “There were so many Puerto Ricans in this area, but you had nothing that looked like the place where you were born, except for your fellow countrymen on either side of you (...)”.<sup>219</sup> Chema is convinced that his casita was the first in the South Bronx and that it started casita construction as part of the community gardening movement as a quote in the New York Daily News (Junico, 2010) indicates, “It was the first in the Bronx,” said Soto. “From there everyone started making casitas”.<sup>220</sup> C.J. Hughes quotes in the New York Times article “In Bronx, Little Houses That Evoke Puerto Rico” of 2009 the urban planner, Bernd Zimmermann, “(...) a former planner in the Bronx borough office (...)” on the cultural meaning of casitas and community gardens to immigrants living now in the South Bronx: “Puerto Ricans wanted to recreate their villages to stabilize themselves while adjusting to society and they were doing it in a place that was an absolute wasteland’ because of crime, abandonment and decay, he added”.<sup>221</sup>

Community gardeners create community gardens and built casitas to express their cultural background that in the case of Puerto Rican population is expressed also in music and celebrations. “Casitas [and community gardens, added C.M.] allow for cultural expression through music, dance and art. Gardeners host secular and religious celebrations

<sup>213</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>214</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>215</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>216</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>217</sup> Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum).

<sup>218</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 24.

<sup>219</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>220</sup> Chema in: Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum).

<sup>221</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

characterized by Puerto Rican food, bomba and plena music, and dancing”.<sup>222</sup> That means, in the case of the community garden Rincon Criollo that “more than a sentimental backdrop for the garden, the casita [of Rincon Criollo, added C.M.] is a workshop where craftsmen carve drums and speckled carnival masks and where local children learn dance steps to rhythms that first came to this hemisphere aboard slave ships. Thumping drumbeats are common at Rincon Criollo, which is the city's unofficial center for the traditional percussive Puerto Rican music styles known as bomba and plena and a regular stop for visiting musical stars from Puerto Rico”.<sup>223</sup> The New York Daily News states in 2010 that “(...) La Casita de Chema, officially known as the Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo, on Brook Ave. at 157th St., [in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx, added C.M.] is one of the oldest casitas in the city with a thriving community garden and a legendary music scene”.<sup>224</sup> The casita in the community garden Rincon Criollo is renown as a musical center until today. “For two generations, La Casita de Chema has been a breeding ground for Puerto Rican musicians. A plenero himself, Soto, invited artists to perform and opened the space for community members to practice and share in the music”.<sup>225 226</sup>

In 2001, about 30 years after the original gardening group began to create the garden on the first garden site, Raver describes Rincon Criollo still as a open space representing authentically Puerto Rican culture: “Rincon Criollo, a garden carved out of rubble on 158th Street more than 20 years ago, is a little piece of Puerto Rico. A rooster crows outside the casita, or little garden house; a map of Puerto Rico, complete with mountains and rivers, has been poured in concrete and painted green and blue. People flock here to learn how to make and play the panderetas, traditional drums. “The governor of Puerto Rico sends people here,” said Pedro Figueroa, a gardener who reconnected with his own roots at the garden. “They stand at the fence and cry. Because it brings back their own home before concrete came to our island””.<sup>227</sup>

Playing the table game “dominoes” is also part of Puerto Rican culture. C.J. Hughes quoted in the New York Times article “In Bronx, Little Houses That Evoke Puerto Rico” of 2009 Pedro Cintron (age 33 in 2009), a gardener at United We Stand Garden about this tradition: “In Puerto Rico, you would be playing outside, but we have to adjust a bit (...)”<sup>228</sup> – referring to the climate that makes it necessary to sit inside the casita rather than in front of it. Another quote of a different gardener, Aida Rosa, in the same New York Times article further adds why playing at a community garden is so important to the gardeners: “We could meet in our apartments, but you wouldn’t have these views’, (...) gesturing toward a pair of pine trees. “And we need room for spectators””.<sup>229</sup> To immigrants from Latin American and the Caribbean, casitas are culturally important, as the New York Times indicated 2009 in a quote of Carmelo Diaz (age 55 in 2009), a gardener of Rincon Criollo: “This is an important place for the community because it helps it to remember its roots (...)”<sup>230</sup>.

The use of a community garden with casita reflects also strongly the cultural background in regard to the way gardeners interact. In New York City and the South Bronx the same way as “in the Caribbean, the house-and-yard complex is the shared domain of women and men, a place where the forces of respectability and the family are upheld and maintained in contrast to the disruptive, outside forces of the street”.<sup>231</sup> For example, “in New York, Rincon Criollo is

<sup>222</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>223</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>224</sup> Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum).

<sup>225</sup> Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum).

<sup>226</sup> In some South Bronx community gardens casitas are used as public spaces to make music and perform as part of a cultural tradition, both of which as “popular forms of music, dance and related religious practices, often African-derived, were violently suppressed by civil and religious authorities throughout the new world”. (Scierra 1994, p. 65)

<sup>227</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>228</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>229</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>230</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>231</sup> Scierra 1994, p. 33.

a place where those values associated with the traditional home are transplanted and displayed publicly in the streets at the same time that plena 'street' culture is reconstituted within the confines of the casita's 'domestic' space".<sup>232</sup>

In addition to the provision of cultural experience to garden members and the general public, casitas ensure indirectly that the cultural tradition is understood by the next generation. "Through their casitas, gardeners demonstrate pride in their heritage and carry on cultural traditions, thus ensuring their continuation to the next generation".<sup>233</sup> In addition, "for many Puerto Ricans whose immigrant experience has been one of displacement rather than assimilation, casitas - with their garden, house and yard - are a conscious attempt to recreate their homeland and, in so doing, bolster cultural identity and pride. For the gardeners and their guests, casitas offer a place for refuge, recreation, cultivation, celebration and expression".<sup>234</sup> For example one gardener at Rincon Criollo, Tato Torres, is convinced<sup>235</sup> that "for Puerto Ricans, whose immigrant experience has been one of displacement rather than assimilation, the creation of casitas (literally: 'little houses') like the one at Rincón Criollo, has enabled us to take control of our immediate environment and, in the process, to rediscover and reconnect with our cultural heritage".<sup>236</sup>

To build casitas has a social meaning as it states to the passersby and general public that this outdoor space is collectively used by a group of residents with cultural roots in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean or Latin America. Casitas are "(...) meant to evoke the Puerto Rican countryside, where low-roofed buildings surrounded by gardens, known as casitas, 'little houses,' are a common sight".<sup>237</sup> Thus casitas are symbols of a home country and a cultural context that produces identity for the gardeners. For example, "for Puerto Ricans of a certain age, the gardens triggered memories of rural birthplaces, before their homeland was industrialized in the 1950's".<sup>238</sup> That means the casita represents the home to gardeners living in small apartments close by. "For New York puertorriquenos, the casita is a metaphor of home that is both the domestic dwelling space and the national homeland. This is apparent in the names given these sites in keeping with the arrabal tradition".<sup>239</sup> Community garden names are chosen in "direct reference to the island and its place in the Greater Antilles is witnessed in names like Villa Puerto Rico, Villa Boriquen, or La Brisa del Caribe".<sup>240</sup> Sciorra quotes in the article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996 Chema, who was asked in August 1990 on the casita's message, "When I grew up, we lived in a little house just like this one. All of us did. This reminds me of my childhood. There's still some houses, even poorer than this, in Puerto Rico. The casitas are a symbol of poverty, of what we went through".<sup>241</sup> That means, "reproduced in literature and the visual arts, the casita is a key symbol for contemporary puertorriquenos, summing up in an emotionally powerful way a host of often conflicting ideas and sentiments regarding history, culture, and identity".<sup>242</sup>

The casita of the South Bronx community garden Rincon Criollo, was reconstructed at the Smithsonian in 1991 as a display of Puerto Rican Culture. Edie Stone explains that this happened because "some casitas like the one in the well-known Rincon Criollo garden in the South Bronx, which was recreated in the Smithsonian Institution as an example of Carib culture, serve as folklore centers where traditional skills such as drumming and dancing are taught".<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 33.

<sup>233</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>234</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>235</sup> There is no date for this statement in the reference.

<sup>236</sup> Torres, <http://nylatinojournal.com/home/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=22>.

<sup>237</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>238</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>239</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 77.

<sup>240</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 77.

<sup>241</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 78.

<sup>242</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 76.

<sup>243</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

The design of Puerto Rican and Caribbean community gardens in New York and the South Bronx sets them apart from gardens that have been designed by gardening groups of different cultures in New York City. "Although all community gardens reflect, to some extent, the ethnic and cultural traditions of the people who create them, the gardens in Puerto Rican neighborhoods actively draw on Caribbean agricultural and architectural traditions".<sup>244</sup> In New York City, there are small garden houses on a great number of community gardens, especially on those where a majority of the members a garden group has a cultural background in the Caribbean, Latin America or Puerto Rico. They call the garden houses "casitas" and use them according to the cultural tradition in the way as the word implies, i.e. translated, as little houses. "Structural tradition found in New York City's community gardens to reveal the cultural background of community gardeners: Casitas are usually to be found in community gardens with a Puerto Rican or Caribbean gardening group – i.e. mainly in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx".<sup>245</sup>

In terms of cultural meaning, "the New York casita and batey are an attempt to evoke a specific place and time, that is, Puerto Rico of the recent past. The recreation of a tropical, pre-industrial landscape in the northern, urban environment is achieved through close attention to detail".<sup>246</sup> Sciorra explains in his article "We're not just here to plant. We have culture." An Ethnography of the South Bronx Casita Rincon Criollo" of 1994 "(...) the casita and batey have come to form part of Puerto Rico's repertoire of political symbols, encapsulating aspects of the island's history and cultural identity".<sup>247</sup> That means the construction of garden huts such as casitas in community gardens reveals the cultural background of community gardeners. Garden huts are built according to a cultural tradition of gardeners' native countries. For example, casitas are usually to be found in community gardens with a Puerto Rican or Caribbean gardening group – i.e. mainly in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx while in contrast gardening groups with mainly African Americans do not have casitas but instead gazebos.<sup>248</sup>

The design of the casita, as well as the placement of the structure within a garden has a cultural meaning to the gardening group of residents. The culturally shaped landscape is a "(...) constellation of culturally significant objects [like the keeping of chickens and the construction of a casita with a batey and garden, added C.M.] that gives people a sense of home".<sup>249</sup> For example, in 1996, Rincon Criollo, "one of New York City's smaller but nonetheless important cultural institutions (...)" featured "(...) an aquamarine, two-room casita (...)"<sup>250</sup> The cultural meaning of the casita, the surrounding courtyard, called batey, and the garden to the participating residents is enhanced by the name they gave their collectively used outdoor and indoor space: The name Rincon Criollo translates into 'Creole Corner' or "Downhome Corner".<sup>251</sup>

Consequently the analysis of open space land use for community gardens in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to changes in the number of gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the construction of casitas is in the same way as the design of the overall garden an expression of the gardeners' culture and a reflection of the garden groups' and the neighborhoods' needs. In the South Bronx community gardens as in the case of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo casitas are social gathering spaces used for a variety of social activities as well as to demonstrate the cultural background of the gardening group by becoming cultural symbols.

### **5.3 Community gardening land use and interest groups in the South Bronx since 1970**

In the following I will analyze the context of community gardening land use and interest groups in the South Bronx since the 1970s by investigating the action of city officials in regard

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<sup>244</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>245</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 70-71.

<sup>246</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 26.

<sup>247</sup> Sciorra 1994, pp. 25-26.

<sup>248</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, 2007.

<sup>249</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 26.

<sup>250</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 20.

<sup>251</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 20.

to community gardening, the action of individuals in regard to community gardening as well as the reaction of officials to community gardening and casitas.

### 5.3.1 Action of city officials in regard to community gardening

With the ongoing community garden movement New York City's administration under Mayor Edward I. Koch took actions in regard to the community gardening activity on public land in the late 1970s with the establishment of GreenThumb. "GreenThumb was established in 1978 [ , at the time under the name Operation GreenThumb, added C.M.] as a means for the City to manage and assist the growing number of gardening groups that had taken over abandoned property".<sup>252</sup> The purpose of the municipal community garden program GreenThumb, as it has been called since 1995, was thus control and support of residents using inner city open spaces for gardening. The specialty of GreenThumb was that it was a program regarded by community gardeners as beneficial to their activity since it had a mediating function between their interests and the interests of City agencies. From the gardeners' perspective "from its conception, the program was designed to be demand-driven, to provide material resources, training, and legitimacy to citizen volunteer groups who chose to clean up their neighborhoods themselves rather than wait for municipal intervention (Von Hassel, 2002)".<sup>253</sup>

Even though GreenThumb was to be demand-driven, it was still installed by Koch as an interim program to control and regulate the community gardening activity on public land and not with the intention to make community gardening a permanent land use activity. That means the city regarded GreenThumb in the same way as the land use of community gardens as interim as Sciorra confirms in his article "'We're not just here to plant. We have culture.' An Ethnography of the South Bronx" of 1994: "The municipality views the innovative use of public land for community gardens not as long-term improvement of inner city neighborhoods but as a form of temporary custodianship of its neglected property".<sup>254</sup>

During the middle of the 1980s, municipal and federal government agencies were interfering with community gardening efforts placing "(...) demands placed on community groups developing open-space projects because of bureaucratic requirements and outdated codes".<sup>255</sup> These "(...) city requirements contributed to increased time delays and higher costs for the local groups".<sup>256</sup> Even though community-developed projects like community gardens, were different from traditional city parks, they were still judged in regard to their design, use and maintenance by City officials according to standards of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Francis, Cashdan, Paxson state in their article "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984, "(...) Small-scale community-developed projects (...) are considerably different from traditional city parks. Yet some city agencies continually fail to recognize these differences and frequently place demands on community-initiated projects that undermine their success. One simple example (...) was the original requirement that the South Bronx Open Space Task Force projects be designed to exist for 25 years without maintenance".<sup>257</sup>

The municipality under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani threatened to close down GreenThumb in 1995 and to demolish a great number of community gardens in order to built so called affordable housing. Even though, GreenThumb continued after being transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation in 1995<sup>258</sup> GreenThumb continued to be regarded by the City as an interim program. This was confirmed even by the director of GreenThumb at the time, Jane Weissman, who stated according to Sciorra in his article "We're not just here to plant. We have culture" of 1994 that GreenThumb was "(...) an interim program established to deal with the period between 'demolition and development'".<sup>259</sup> During that time, i.e. during

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<sup>252</sup> Stone 2009, p. 125.

<sup>253</sup> Stone 2009, p. 125.

<sup>254</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

<sup>255</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 182-183.

<sup>256</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 182-183.

<sup>257</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 183.

<sup>258</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>259</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

the mid-1990s, when the administration discussed which community gardens to demolish and which to preserve, the design of gardens rather than benefits to the community or the active use of the gardens was a mayor factor when the City had to decide which gardens to preserve.

Edith Stone explains in her article “Community Gardening in New York City Becomes a Political Movement” of 2000 the activities of City officials in 1995 stating that, “when Parks Department officials were asked to decide which community gardens should be preserved as permanent Parks, they judged the gardens partially based on a set of esthetic standards that excluded most vegetable gardens and casita style gardens”.<sup>260</sup> She explains that, “parks, it was assumed, should be primarily flowers and trees, an English Cottage garden type of planting, with few raised planting beds which were deemed unattractive”.<sup>261</sup> Consequently, “gardeners who had little space for flowers due to maximized food production were largely excluded. Casitas also were problematic for Parks officials because of varying maintenance and aesthetic standards. As a result, most of the gardens preserved through Parks transfer were gardens in relatively more affluent areas or which had received significant institutional support from one or more non-profit organizations. The majority of these gardens were started and managed by white middle class people”.<sup>262</sup> This indicates that those gardens were more likely to be preserved if the design and use of the gardens pleased the Parks Department esthetically, i.e. that those gardens had a chance of preservation that were without or with little food production, that did not have casitas that were managed by white middle class residents – i.e. that were consequently not gardens in low-income neighborhoods such as the South Bronx.

Due to the publicly supported, successful protests of the gardeners during Mayor Giuliani’s administration, the next mayor, Michael Bloomberg, needed to be pro community gardening to gain the confidence of as many voters as possible. Thus Bloomberg supported the enactment of the community garden settlement in September 2002 – despite being interested in creating affordable housing to deal with the housing crisis under the New Housing market plan to increase the city’s tax base. Then in 2006 the administration under Bloomberg created citywide regulations for the development of structures in community gardens, and one year later enacted the first edition of PlaNYC 2030 announcing the objective of adding accessible public space in a 10-mile radius of any neighborhood, established in 2010 community garden rules for the preservation of gardens on land of the Department of Parks Recreation as well as of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. In addition the City updated the PlaNYC 2030 in 2011 to include the objective of creating more community gardens and urban agriculture projects. This indicates that the pressure on the municipality to preserve public land for community gardening had increased and that the municipality had thus installed rules to regulate the design, use and maintenance of public community gardens.

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and interest groups in the South Bronx since 1970 in regard to the action of city officials in regard to community gardening in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the City’s administration under Mayor Edward Koch installed the municipal community garden program “Operation GreenThumb” in 1978 to control and support the community gardening activity of residents on public and private land that had started in the late 1970s. Even though Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in 1995 threatened to close down GreenThumb, as it was called then, and to demolish a great number of community gardens in order to built so called affordable housing and even though the budget of GreenThumb has been cut down several times and even though the use, maintenance and aesthetic standards of community gardens differ from public parks this municipal community garden program as well as the land use community gardens exists until today.

### **5.3.2 Action of individuals in regard to community gardening**

Individual residents often started community gardens on open spaces in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx in New York City in the 1970s and then attracted groups

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<sup>260</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>261</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>262</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

of residents to the gardens and continued to coordinate the development over time. That individuals became active, was as Edie Stone explains in her article “The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City” of 2000 “the spirit of the New York City community gardening movement [which was, added C.M.] (...) very much based in the activist agenda of the late 1970s and early 1980s when citizen actors decided to take matters into their own hands to reclaim their decaying neighborhoods”.<sup>263</sup> Those individuals, who start a community garden, are the first decision-makers in its development process and it often also depends on them to include others and organize the group for maintenance of the garden over time. “The initiating group often realizes they need more people to share their goal and help do the work”.<sup>264</sup> That means, “the initiating person often realizes he or she cannot do it alone and builds a core group<sup>265</sup> to ‘get things done.’ Successful groups next reach initial agreement and consensus that something needs to be done”.<sup>266</sup>

The person or group of residents who started the garden is important for a gardens’ continuation over time can be seen when this person leaves the garden. This is confirmed by Stone in 2000, stating that “it has always been the case that many community gardens cease to exist when community volunteer organizers lose interest or move away”.<sup>267</sup> In turn, if the founding members remain at the garden, active use of the garden site is guaranteed. “Sustaining participation is usually not a problem for groups, because most do not lose core members and have little turnover. Generally the members are extremely committed – problems tend to pull together, and fighting through crisis helps the group keep its members”.<sup>268</sup>

Individuals starting the garden as well as “most members have a community spirit, are frequently ‘movers and shakers’ in the neighborhoods, and have time to volunteer (such as retired people, nonworking people, etc.)”.<sup>269</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in 1984 that in New York City’s community gardening movement, “(...) many groups have a strong charismatic leader”.<sup>270</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson state in 1984 that in New York City’s community gardening movement, “(...) many groups have a strong charismatic leader” – like for example Liz Christy of the GreenGuerillas, who not only started for example the Bowery Farm in the Lower East Side, but also GreenGuerillas and was also the director the Council on the Environment of New York City, both non-profit organizations supporting community gardening.

During the development of the garden, individual members then take on different tasks and are thus for example responsible for fundraising or the construction of casitas. As for example in the case of the casita of community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo that was built by Jose “Chema” Soto, “in a few instances, a single individual is responsible for constructing a casita entirely on his own. In most cases, a group of men organize themselves to raise abuilding collectively. These concerted efforts are usually under the supervision of a skilled carpenter or craftsmen versed in the tradition of casita building”.<sup>271</sup>

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and interest groups in the South Bronx since 1970 in respect to the action of individuals in regard to community gardening in the larger context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that individual residents often started community gardens on open spaces in New York City in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx in the 1970s to improve their neighborhood’s quality of life. These individuals attracted groups of residents to the help with the effort to

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<sup>263</sup> Stone 2009, p. 125.

<sup>264</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 193.

<sup>265</sup> “Core groups tend to be small. Usually fewer than ten people make up the central decision-making group and do the major work. The entire group of people involved in the project can be much larger”. (Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194)

<sup>266</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 192.

<sup>267</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>268</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>269</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 195.

<sup>270</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>271</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

create a garden in the open space, continued to coordinate the development over time and took on responsible tasks such as fundraising or the construction of casitas. The initiating group often realized that they need more people to support their effort and thus the garden becomes a place used in the interests of the larger community.

### 5.3.3 Reaction of officials to community gardening and casitas

Even though community gardeners understand community gardening as the voluntary management of public land and the construction of casitas as a cultural expression, city officials often regard both as an expression of the privatization of public land. Tato Torres, gardener at Rincon Criollo, complains [date not published, but assumed to be in the 1990s, added C.M.], "At a time of diminishing government and philanthropic support, the city needs to support communities' efforts to take control of their own environment and provide for their own cultural expressions".<sup>272</sup> In the late 1960s, early 1970s at the beginning of the community gardening movement New York City officials became aware that the illegal use of public land for community gardening included the pending privatization of this public land. Consequently the municipal community garden program Operation GreenThumb was established in 1978 by the administration under Mayor Edward Koch in an effort to support, but also to control this movement and the use of public land. The construction of self-built casitas, of little houses used for a wide-range of purposes, was seen as an expression of this privatization of public land – as the continued discussion about casitas proves.

In 1990, under the administration of Mayor David Dinkins, casitas were destroyed by the City for the reason to go against the privatization of public land as Gonzales observes in the New York Times article "Las Casitas: Oases or Illegal Shacks" of 1990. "Many casitas violate building codes and, in turn, their lease agreement with the city, while others are squatting illegally on city property".<sup>273</sup> In short, "the city could demolish the houses, and has done so in a few cases where homeless people have been found living in them".<sup>274</sup> In the same article Gonzales quoted John Beckman, "(...) a spokesman for the Department of General Services (...)", asked about the legality of casitas: "Most casitas are illegally erected on lots where no lease has been issued, and (...) the leases that do exist bar construction of enclosed structures".<sup>275</sup>

Since Operation GreenThumb was in 1990s was a program of the Department of General Services, it can be assumed that John Beckman reflected on the way that the program handled leases and the construction - and demolition - of casitas during this time. Beckman does not only state that casitas were illegal on community garden lots that are leased to GreenThumb as well as on those garden lots without leases with GreenThumb, but adds in the article that "(...) a city panel that has yet to meet would develop a policy to deal with the casitas. He said the options being considered include legalizing the houses, issuing structural guidelines for a prototype or possibly relocating the activities to a neighborhood center - an alternative that vexes supporters of the houses".<sup>276</sup> In 1991 a prototype for a casita was developed by GreenThumb. "As a result of increased media attention, city hall pressured GreenThumb to develop an officially-sanctioned, standardized open-air structure in 1991".<sup>277</sup> But according to Jane Weissman the city lost interest in the topic and therefore this open-air structure was never build.<sup>278</sup> The development of a prototype for a casita was discussed again 15 years later after the enactment of citywide structural guidelines for gardens registered with GreenThumb in 2006. The result was the self-built design handbook for the Gardenhaus that showed a way of constructing a casita that conformed to the guidelines.

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<sup>272</sup> Torres, <http://nylatinojournal.com/home/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=22>

<sup>273</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>274</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>275</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>276</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

<sup>277</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>278</sup> Personal interview with Jane Weissman, 2008.

In the mid 1990s, under the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, there was a lot of pressure on officials to retake public land for community gardens and consequently the argument of casita construction as an expression of the community gardeners' privatization of public land was made use of. Thus the GreenThumb, in the same way as in 1990, community garden lease of the mid 1990s, according to Sciorra in his article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996, specified that the lease "(...) will be terminated if there is an 'illegal structure' on the property, an ambiguous term defines as 'any enclosed structure'".<sup>279</sup> For example, as Hansen and Steve Zeitlin state in their article "With Greenspace for All" of 1998, "Both the casita and Bryant Park embody public life and the sense of community that well-planned spaces inspire; but while the city considers the midtown park a jewel in its crown, the casita is a thorn in its side, which the Giuliani administration is taking steps to painfully remove".<sup>280</sup> But even though the construction of casitas was illegal in 1996 according to GreenThumb's lease agreement, Jane Weissman, the director of GreenThumb states at the time that she understood why casitas were important to the community gardeners as an expression of their culture. "The director has expressed sympathy with the garden/casita's role in community life and realizes that any attempt to do away with it would drastically reduce Puerto Rican involvement in municipal-sponsored gardening".<sup>281</sup>

In the middle of the 1990s community gardening groups that held leases with GreenThumb argued that the GreenThumb lease was "(...) a step towards legitimization (...)"<sup>282</sup> not only of their gardens, but also of the casitas they had built in those gardens. In addition, "casita builders (...) occasionally attempted to legitimize their presence by requesting services such as electricity from Con Edison (unsuccessful) [, until today electricity has to come from a different source, added C.M.] or mail delivery from the Post Office (successful)".<sup>283</sup> If a service was granted this would prove that the casita had an address and was consequently as lawfully established as any New York City residence. But the demolition of casitas continued and the especially those casitas with addresses that were used as housing were targeted. In 1996 Sciorra explains in his article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996, "(...) The city's Housing Preservation and Development department regularly demolishes non-GreenThumb casitas, especially those erected as housing".<sup>284</sup> Another argument of the City for the demolition of casitas was the threat these structures and their use posed to the surrounding buildings and to the neighborhood. Thus for example "arson, attributed to vindictive drug dealers or 'envious' neighbors consume a number of 'little houses'".<sup>285</sup>

Since community gardening groups were not organized much citywide in the middle of the 1990s and thus their gardens and casitas were more vulnerable when the City wanted to demolish them. An argument to counteract against the demolition of casitas could have been the reference to other temporary structures built in the city – structures that complied to the building code in the same way that casitas could. "(...) Casita builders (...) [were, added C.M.] aware of similar structures in the city but they have not organized to collectively fight on behalf of their mutual interest".<sup>286</sup> Next to the missing organization among community gardening groups to foster themselves as an interest group there was also a lack of neighborhood leaders that would speak up for their interests. That means at the time "(...) middle-class politicians and ethnic leaders for whom the casita evokes a nostalgic revelry for a romantic rural past or repulsion of the casita's obvious arrabel referent, (...) failed to champion the casitas' cause politically".<sup>287</sup> Nevertheless, during this time, community gardeners and casita builders formed interest groups with other groups with their own special interests such as the homeless, homesteaders and squatters. "Casita builder's join a chorus of citizens who demand fair access to use and development of public land. Together with the

<sup>279</sup> Sciorra, 1996, p. 83.

<sup>280</sup> Hansen and Zeitlin 1998, [www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/news/nfw98/greensp.html](http://www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/news/nfw98/greensp.html).

<sup>281</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>282</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>283</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>284</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>285</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 84.

<sup>286</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 84.

<sup>287</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 84.

homeless who erect tents and cardboard lean-tos in Tompkins Square Park and in sprouting 'Dinkinsvilles', the urban homesteaders and squatters battling city police in the Lower East Side and the South Bronx for the right to occupy abandoned apartment buildings, as well as the coalition of churches and grass roots organizations planning and building low-income, owner-occupied 'Nehemia' houses, casita pioneers reveal the bankrupt housing policy of a visionless government unable or unwilling to provide decent affordable housing in a city that has been dubbed 'New Calcutta'.<sup>288</sup>

From the end of the 1990s onward, starting with the prevention of the auction of community gardening land in 1998, organization among community gardeners proved to be a way to secure the use of community garden land and the construction of casitas on this land for a longer term. The City became aware of the political power the large group of community gardeners had when calling public attention to their interest. This applies to the preservation of casitas due to the fact that "(...) most casitas are local gathering spots and centers of neighborhood social life. City officials fear[ed, added C.M.] that abiding by the letter of the law and destroying the structures would enrage a community that has seen itself as on the fringe of the city's life for years".<sup>289</sup> During the late 1990s and early 2000s, community gardeners in New York City successfully fought for the longer-term preservation of many of their gardens citywide, so that the administration under Mayor Bloomberg had to deal with this social group interested in community gardening on public land on a different level than under Mayor Giuliani. With the Community Garden Settlement of 2002 Bloomberg complied with the community gardening groups interest for longer-term preservation of a great number of community gardens through the transfer to the Parks Department while making land free for the construction of affordable housing at the same time.

The argument that community gardening was privatizing public land, demonstrated in particular by the construction of casitas, came into the front of the official discussion about community gardening again in 2006 leading to the enactment of the structural guidelines and the development of the GreenThumb Gardenhaus guidebook. Then in 2010 Mayor Bloomberg in his third term as a Mayor supported the enactment of Community Garden Rules for public land with community gardens in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and interest groups in the South Bronx since 1970 in regard to reaction of officials to community gardening and casitas in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that city officials have been regarding community gardening and the construction of casitas as an privatization of public land instead of a cultural expression and the voluntary management of public open spaces. This was expressed in the installation of the municipal community gardens program GreenThumb by the City administration under Mayor Edward Koch in 1978, by the demolition of casitas by the administration of Mayor David Dinkins in 1990 that triggered the discussion of developing a prototype of casita for GreenThumb. This was followed by the demolition of community gardens by the administration under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the middle of the 1990s. In contrast the administration of Mayor Michael Bloomberg provided longer-term preservation for community gardens and casitas with Community Garden Settlement of 2002, the development of citywide structural guidelines for community gardens and the development of the GreenThumb Gardenhaus guidebook in 2006 that provided design guidelines based on casita construction in community gardens as well as the enactment of Community Garden Rules in 2010.

#### **5.4 Community gardening land use and city planning in the South Bronx since the 1970s**

In the following I will analyze the context of community gardening land use and city planning in the South Bronx since the 1970s by looking at the aspect of community gardening groups' influence on city planning with focus on the topic of Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan, Nos Quedamos and participatory city planning as well as city planning, the Community

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<sup>288</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 84-86.

<sup>289</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

Gardens Settlement and Community Gardens Regulations. Then I will investigate city planning and the example of the community garden Rincon Criollo. Finally I will elaborate on the regulation of casita construction in community gardens.

#### **5.4.1 Community gardening groups' influence on city planning**

Community gardening, i.e. the development, use and maintenance of public land by a group of voluntary residents according to their collective and individual preferences, is an expression of a residents' groups participation in city planning decisions. The first step in this participation in city planning is the creation of a community garden on public land with the participation of voluntarily active members of the community. This "community participation 'solves' the problem of limited city resources for open-space development and maintenance by transferring management responsibility from the city to local residents".<sup>290</sup>

When a community garden group continues to actively use public land for gardening in the long-term and when the same community gardening group organizes itself with other community gardening groups citywide to stand up for their interests to continue gardening on lots throughout the city, a network of public open spaces used for community gardening is created. This again is an expression of the community gardening groups participation in city planning. Next to the citywide organization, a community gardening group can also organize themselves together with their community board or other community groups interested in the development of the quality of life of their community such as in the development of housing for the community.

Figure 16: The open space in the center of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan has not been developed by 2014. Courtesy: City of New York Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Office of Development, June 15, 2010.

Figure 17: New apartment building in the area of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan at East 158th Street and 3rd Avenue in 2005. Photo: Carolin Mees.

##### **5.4.1.1 Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan, Nos Quedamos and participatory city planning**

After Mayor Edward I. Koch had announced in 1986 a citywide "Ten Year Plan" for the development of affordable housing, urban planners from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development publicized in the late 1980s an urban renewal plan for a 63-block area in the Melrose section in the center of the South Bronx, where many parcels of public and privately owned land seemed underused at the time, but where residents had developed community gardens and renovated their apartment buildings since the late 1960s, early 1970s. The redevelopment proposal called for large site assemblages of land requiring the displacement of long-time residents and businesses in the area and the demolition of community gardens. The plan did endanger the existence of 6,000 residents and business owners, who had remained in the neighborhood, as well as the community gardens that they had been created in the area. This plan was further developed in the beginning of the 1990s, when Community Board 3 created a 197-a plan calling for the development of new, high-density housing, which then led to the development of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. "A 1992 plan by Community Board 3 in the South Bronx urged new housing development at higher densities than those being developed at the time by city housing programs. The plan provided the basis for amendments to a large urban renewal area, Melrose Commons".<sup>291</sup>

Residents of the Melrose neighborhood were determined to fight for their community and interests in preserving collectively usable public open space, i.e. their community gardens, and in preserving and creating affordable housing. A group of residents formed the Nos Quedamos (Nos Quedamos is Spanish for "We Stay") Committee to organize themselves and their neighborhood against the call for displacement and the development of market rate, low density housing and instead to come up with an urban development proposal themselves that was based on the participatory planning effort of the community and neighborhood. Nos

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<sup>290</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

<sup>291</sup> Forman, Community Boards, [www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml](http://www.gothamgazette.com/lessons/boards.shtml).

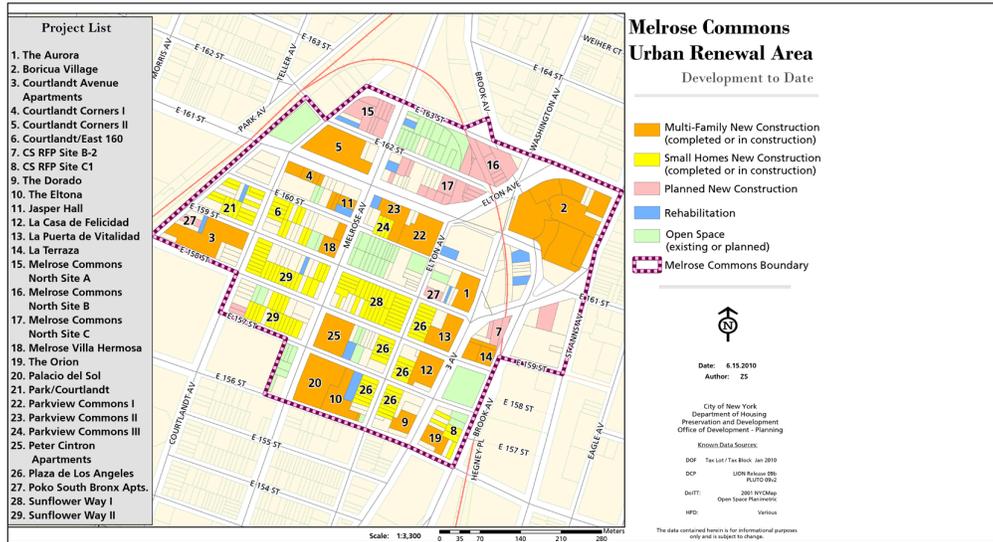


Figure 16: The Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan' central open space was not developed by 2014. Courtesy: HPD, Office of Development, June 15, 2010.



Figure 17: New apartment building in the area of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan at East 158th Street and 3rd Avenue in 2005. Photo: Carolin Mees.



Quedamos with the assistance from urban planners and community organizers held weekly open community meetings in a storefront in the Melrose neighborhood and invited city officials and politicians to eventually force them to revise the original plan.

The original Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan was revised to minimize displacement of residents, to increase the affordability and density of the proposed housing, and provide for public open space and community facilities. But, when in 1993, the revised Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan was submitted to the New York City Planning Commission for public review, developers opposed, so that the City Planning Commission started adding further amendments. Consequently the non-profit organization New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) organized a citywide meeting of community boards, planners, and activists engaged in local planning and convinced them that an assault on the plan's integrity jeopardized the future of all community plans unpopular with City Hall.

When community boards and community development groups across New York City expressed support for the revised version of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan, the City Council approved the plan in 1994 without adding the amendments that the City Planning Commission had proposed a year earlier. That means Nos Quedamos "(...) persuaded the City Planning Commission to forge a new plan with local residents".<sup>292</sup> But the plan did not include the preservation of the 16 community gardens – this number is based on the statement of Anne Raver in her article "Human Nature; New Hope for Community Gardeners" of 2001.<sup>293</sup> Hansen and Zeitlin mentioned in their article "With Greenspace for All" of 1998 the demolition of 16 community gardens as well<sup>294</sup> - that were situated in the area. "Now, with \$80 million to develop a plan for 1,700 housing units and an ambitious vision for commercial and community space including four acres of open space, Nos Quedamos wants to displace 16 gardens".<sup>295</sup> By 1998 the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal plan, the "(...) 33-square-block revitalization initiative (...)" was not yet realized. The number of units had changed to 1,500 and the price had risen to "(...) an approximate cost of \$500 million".<sup>296</sup>

The Melrose Commons Urban Renewal plan that was revised after residents' participation in urban planning was approved in 1994, but nevertheless community gardens in the area were in danger of being demolished for housing development while a new central public open space was proposed<sup>297</sup>. This shows that not a representative group of residents had participated in the revision of the original plan, but rather a group of residents focused on housing development. Consequently Community garden coalitions and citywide working non-profit organization became active to protect the community gardens in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx.

Subsequently the non-profit organization More Gardens! created with input of the neighborhood residents a plan, the so called Homes and Garden Plan, to show how community gardens could be preserved - most of them in the original location, but some also moved together to an alternate site - when the building density of the new housing was increased. In addition they developed a concept for the new central green public open space that was to be developed according to the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan and proposed that it should include a community garden. They argued that more and not less public open space was needed in the South Bronx, an area with a small open space ratio and low air quality due to highways and waste transfer stations.

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<sup>292</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>293</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>294</sup> Hansen and Zeitlin 1998, [www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/news/nlfw98/greensp.html](http://www.nyfolklore.org/pubs/news/nlfw98/greensp.html)

<sup>295</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>296</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

<sup>297</sup> Even though most of the housing proposed in the Melrose Urban Renewal plan has been developed as I write this as of December 28, 2013, the proposed central public green open space has not been developed yet. (Personal experience 2013)

The community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo was to be moved to an alternate site according to the revised Melrose Urban Renewal Plan – a garden that was actively used by neighborhood residents since the early 1970s, which proves again that not a representative group of residents had participated in the revision of the original plan, but rather a group of residents focused on housing development. The director of Nos Quedamos, Yolanda Garcia, explained, “Rincon Criollo has to move,’ (...) .’We need that block for housing”<sup>298</sup> Nos Quedamos explained, “The group’s plan would move Rincon Criollo one block, to 157th Street, behind Ms. Garcia’s family carpet store. ‘If we don’t take out the garden,’ Ms. Garcia said, ‘we cannot take out the methadone clinic,’ which is just down the block”<sup>299</sup> But this argument was not made by the community gardeners of Rincon Criollo, “(...) who have lived peaceably with the methadone clients, even helping some get jobs (...)”<sup>300</sup> That the community garden Rincon Criollo was to be moved to a different site came to a surprise to the community gardeners, as Chema reported: “(...)’We supported her, and now she’s turning her back on us”<sup>301</sup>.

#### **5.4.1.2 City planning, the Community Gardens Settlement and Community Gardens Rules**

Even before the Community Gardens Settlement was enacted in September 2002, community gardeners had influenced city planning via lobbying the General State Attorney Elliot Spitzer in 1999 to file a lawsuit against the City and in February 2002 to file a restraining order, in both cases to bring the demolition of gardens and the construction of housing on garden sites on a hold. With the Community Garden Settlement of September 2002 that was drafted due to the continued protest of gardening groups such as for example More Gardens! and with the involvement of GreenThumb and the New York City Community Garden Coalition’s, city planning in New York was influenced by community gardening interest groups in so far as that some garden sites were opened up for construction while others were preserved. The decision on which garden was to be preserved was made case by case dependent on the activity of the gardening group and the garden’s benefits to the neighborhood as well as to the size, condition, shape and location of the site making it suitable for housing development or not. This decision-making process did not follow any guidelines or comprehensive master plan.<sup>302</sup>

Since 2007 though PlaNYC 2030 has been the urban planning guideline of the administration under Mayor Bloomberg and as such it has been enforcing the existence of open space ten minutes from every residential neighborhood. In 2007 the plan was updated to include more community gardens and urban agriculture projects in future urban development of New York City – but again without clarifying the perimeter of this inclusion.

The Community Garden Rules in October 2010, drafted again with support by GreenThumb and the New York City Community Gardens Coalition, i.e. “NYCCGC [New York City Community Garden Coalition, added C.M.] was sitting at the table”<sup>303</sup>, protect community gardens in the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks Department for a longer-term since the license of gardens was extended to four years instead of two years. But the New York City Community Garden Coalition, asking for longer-term protection of their community gardens, questioned the Community Garden Rules definition of a gardening group in “default” that could mean that they have to give up their garden within 30 days if, for example, a health or safety threat to the community in which the lot and garden are located was proven. In addition New York City Community Garden Coalition was aware of the dependence of the continuation of the Community Garden Rules on the mayor in office, and thus pushed successfully for an inclusion of community gardens in the update of PlaNYC

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<sup>298</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>299</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>300</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>301</sup> Raver 2001, [www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/29/garden/human-nature-new-hope-for-community-gardeners.html).

<sup>302</sup> Personal experience 2002.

<sup>303</sup> Personal interview Edie Stone, 2010.

2030 in April 2011 as well as in 2012 for the Local Law 48 requiring agencies to display vacant public land suitable for community garden and urban agriculture at an online platform.

Consequently community gardens are mentioned in the context with urban agriculture in PlaNYC 2030, which is a comprehensive guidelines for a future development of New York City that are as guidelines binding for all agencies under the administration of Mayor Bloomberg. But PlaNYC 2030 represents is non-binding for private investors and might also be overturned by the next mayor in office – in the same way as possibly the Community Garden Rules. Thus there is no guarantee that community gardens will be included in the future comprehensive city planning of New York City.

#### **5.4.1.3 City planning and the example of the community garden of Rincon Criollo**

Community gardening groups from specific garden sites organized themselves and became active in influencing city planning targeting their garden site. I will introduce exemplarily the development of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo situated in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx since its community gardening group actively influenced city planning during the over 30 year development of their garden at two locations always featuring a casita. In 1974<sup>304</sup> <sup>305</sup> a group of residents of the Melrose neighborhood began to clear a trash filled public lot at the corner of 156<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue<sup>306</sup> to be able to meet outside. Here they started the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo was started under the name El Batey Borincano. “Before Rincón Criollo was created, the site where it is located was a lot filled with abandoned cars and garbage, another victim of the widespread disinvestment and rampant arson in the South Bronx in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, Chema and some friends cleared enough space for some folding chairs”.<sup>307</sup> Over the next years the group began under the leadership of Chema to construct a casita according to the cultural tradition of his home country Puerto Rico and to develop a garden.

In the early 1980s the community gardening group applied for a GreenThumb lease for their public garden land – which was granted under the condition that the casita - which was regarded as an illegal structure - was taken down by the group. “On 22 December 1982, the ‘cultural organization’ El Batey Borincano submitted an application for a GreenThumb lease which was approved in early 1983. The association was ‘interested in using the space for gardening and the projection of Puerto Rican culture.’ A ‘site inspection report’ dated 20 October 1983 noted that the lot was ‘used as [a] private club – with club house, parking lot, etc.’ (It is not clear whether a casita was standing at the time the lease was issued, since there is no record of the lot being inspected during the review process.) The report’s ‘comment’ simply read, ‘cancel-illegal house’ and a cancellation notice was subsequently issued on 16 November”.<sup>308</sup> That means that GreenThumb leased the lot to the gardening group, but at the time the “(...) three-page lease specifies that the contract will be terminated if there is an ‘illegal structure’ on the property”.<sup>309</sup> Since the garden always had a casita, I assume that the GreenThumb lease for the garden site was not renewed or was revoked.

In 1987 the garden group of El Batey Borincano applied again for a lease with GreenThumb and received a one-year lease, the maximum term given by GreenThumb at the time. GreenThumb renewed this lease, despite the casita, in the following years. “On 11 May 1987, GreenThumb received a new application for the South Bronx lot [i.e. the lot where the community garden El Batey Borincano used to be situated, added C.M.] under the new name Rincon Criollo. A one-year lease was issued on 17 July [1987, added C.M.] and subsequently renewed each year”.<sup>310</sup> That means that the community garden Rincon Criollo exists as a

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<sup>304</sup> The “(...) site, which the city owns and seeks to develop, was a junk-strewn lot in 1974 when Jose Soto, who is known as Chema, led the effort to construct a casita”. (Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html))

<sup>305</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>306</sup> I assume that this is the first address of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo - then under the name El Batey Borincano - since this is where the site of Rincon Criollo was located before the relocation to the recent site at 157<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue.

<sup>307</sup> Torres, <http://nylatinojournal.com/home/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=22>.

<sup>308</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

<sup>309</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

<sup>310</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

community garden with a casita since 1974 and has its name since 1987. Another community garden called El Batey Borincano was started in 1990 at Eagle Avenue between East 158 Street and East 159 Street in Melrose, up the hill from the old location of Rincon Criollo – featuring again a casita. The public land of this site became valuable ten years later since it was “(...) one lot in a development plan comprising several city blocks and hundreds of housing units.”<sup>311</sup> But the garden group organized and managed to convince the city that the garden was a necessary land use for the community so that the new housing development had to be built around the garden site. When the site was partially demolished during construction the gardeners received compensation to recreate their garden.<sup>312</sup>

The casita at the original garden site of El Batey, called Rincon Criollo since 1987, had survived over the years even though it was an illegal structure in city planning terms, because the gardening groups had made the space into a social center renown for the demonstration of Puerto Rican culture - as reflected by the garden’s full name Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo - and fought for its survival.

Figure 18: Casita of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo at East 158th Street and Brook Avenue, 2005. Courtesy: GreenThumb.

Rincon Criollo’s casita received even more publicity due to the “The participation of Rincon Criollo members in the documentation and presentation of New York casitas for the Bronx Council on the Arts’ 1990 exhibition and subsequent video provided publicity and official validation that translated into political currency in their struggle to protect the casita”.<sup>313</sup> The casita of Rincon Criollo was even featured in a televised advertisement for the Banco Popular.<sup>314</sup> To further increase the publicity of Rincon Criollo and the gardening groups struggle to preserve their casita, in the following year, in 1991, the casita of Rincon Criollo community garden was exhibited as a 1:1 scale model, built by the gardening group, at the Smithsonian Museum at the exhibition “Las Casitas: An Urban Cultural Alternative”<sup>315</sup> and later in the same year at the Bronx Museum of Art.<sup>316</sup> “Chema Soto, Jose Rivera and his brother Ramon ‘Papo’ Rivera, and Dimas Cepeda designed and constructed the casita featured in the exhibit ‘Las Casitas: An urban Cultural Alternative’ that opened at the Experimental Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., and traveled to the Bronx Museum of Art. The casita received sympathetic coverage from the print (The New York Times), radio (National Public Radio), and television media. Representatives of the Bronx Council of the Arts and City Lore, as well as other culture specialists, wrote letters of support and advocated on behalf of the casitas with city officials”.<sup>317</sup>

When the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan that had been revised with the participation of Nos Quedamos was approved in 1994, the public land used by community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo was scheduled for housing development while the gardening group was offered a replacement site comprised of two lots at 157<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue, one block away from the original site. The non-profit organization Nos Quedamos that was pushing for the realization of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan provided, according to the New York Times article “In Bronx, Little Houses That Evoke Puerto Rico” by C.J. Hughes of 2009, “(...) \$15,000 for the move”.<sup>318</sup> The same article also

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<sup>311</sup> Stone, [userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/garten/Texte.html).

<sup>312</sup> Personal experience 2007-2013.

<sup>313</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 29.

<sup>314</sup> Personal interview with Chema in 2008

<sup>315</sup> In 2010, the exhibition was updated and shown together with parts of the first exhibition – “(...) to mark its 20th anniversary (...)” (Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum)) at the Longwood Art Gallery at the Bronx’ Hostos Community College under the title “Las Casitas Revisited”. (Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum)) For this show, a new casita was built especially for this show. (Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum))

<sup>316</sup> Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum).

<sup>317</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 29.

<sup>318</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).



Figure 18: Casita of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo at East 158th Street and Brook Avenue, 2005. Courtesy: GreenThumb.



states that Nos Quedamos “(...) helped the club buy its lot (...)”<sup>319</sup> to turn it into a land trust - which did actually not happen yet. The replacement site was offered to the gardening group of Rincon Criollo under the premise that they would build a new structure that conformed to the City’s building code, i.e. a structure that complied to the code in size, height and in distance to the lot lines and was no fire or health hazard to the community. In 1994 Sciorra explained, “The current proposal provides Rincon Criollo members with a lot located on the southwest corner of 157th Street and Brook Avenue. But the plan calls for changing the nature of the cultural institution and its relationship to the community; a structure, which conforms to city building codes (no wood), will serve as the ‘culture center’ and a ‘casita’ will be displayed in the back yard as a static artifact of the past, a mummified piece of quaint ‘folklore’”.<sup>320</sup>

The construction of a large cultural center built according to the building code was to be more costly than the self-built construction of a small casita built out of found or recycled material. But there was no financial support for this construction by the City nor Nos Quedamos and the members were “(...) expected to raise an estimated \$225,000 needed to construct a brick or concrete culture center”.<sup>321</sup> Eventually in order to be able to maintain their community garden in a close-by location, “Rincon Criollo’s members (...) reluctantly accepted the plan but there (...) [was, added C.M.] considerable discussion about and disagreement with the proposal”.<sup>322</sup> In the following years though, with the pending housing development of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan, the group continued to garden on the original lot at 158<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue. In September 2002, when the Community Gardens Agreement was announced, the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan was reflected in the announcement and the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo garden showed up on the list of the 110 community gardens that were subject to development after the Garden Review process. The discussion about the alternative site for Rincon Criollo began and alternative designs of the gardens were discussed.

Figure 19: Casita of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo after relocation to the new site at East 157th Street and Brook Avenue, 2007. Photo: Carolin Mees.

Finally in 2007 with the help of GreenThumb and More Gardens! the gardeners of Rincon Criollo moved whatever was movable of their original garden site to the new location at 157<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue. The gardeners had the intention to found a land trust to buy the land in order to avoid further relocation in the future, but were not follow through until today. The casita at the new Rincon Criollo had to comply to the Citywide regulations for structures in community gardens registered with GreenThumb issued by the Technical Affairs and Borough Commissioners in February 2006 as an addition to the Department of Building’s regulations for temporary structures and thus Chema and the gardening group of Rincon Criollo designed the new casita built to be a maximum of 150 S.F. in size and with larger windows than in the traditional design.

In 2009, in another effort to preserve Rincon Criollo for the long-term, the Bronx Borough President at the time, Adolfo Carrión Jr. - possibly due to pressure by the gardening group and by other residents supporting them - “(...) urged the New York’s Landmarks Preservation Commission in a report issued last month to declare Rincon Criollo, along with other casitas, as city landmarks”.<sup>323</sup> The landmark status in the United States does not mean permanent preservation either but makes the development of a site for example more complicated. “National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be nationally significant in American history and culture”.<sup>324</sup> That means Carrion set in a surprising move community gardens featuring casitas in comparison to other city landmarks such as formally designed historic courtyards. “Many of the sites proposed in the report, which is the culmination of a nine-month block-by-block survey, are in line with other city landmarks and bear notable

<sup>319</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>320</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 29.

<sup>321</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 29.

<sup>322</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 29.

<sup>323</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>324</sup> National Historic Landmarks Program, [www.nps.gov/nhl/qa.htm#1](http://www.nps.gov/nhl/qa.htm#1).





Figure 19: Casita of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo after relocation to the new site at East 157th Street and Brook Avenue, 2007. Photo: Carolin Mees.



architecture, like corbeled brick cornices and Art Deco courtyards”.<sup>325</sup> Other Officials state that it was unusual to propose culturally significant sites such as the community garden Rincon Criollo’s casita for landmark status as shown by a quote in the New York Times of Bernd Zimmermann, “(...) a former planner in the Bronx borough office who headed the task force that created the list (...)”. Zimmermann explains that it “(...) is very, very different from how we normally have done things, but it is important to broaden the definition’ (...)”.<sup>326</sup>

After the settlement of 2002, Rincon Criollo was moved to its alternative site and a new casita built. The new casita was thus not the structure that has been used by the same gardening group when they first started gardening at the original site in 1974, which made it even more unusual to set Rincon Criollo under a landmark status. C.J. Hughes explains in the New York Times article “In Bronx, Little Houses That Evoke Puerto Rico” of 2009, “Whether the landmarks commission agrees to protect Rincon Criollo is unclear; it typically frowns upon buildings whose exteriors have been significantly renovated. And the only pieces to survive its move two years ago were roof beams (...)”.<sup>327</sup> In any case, the publicity that came out of the discussion about the landmark status for casitas was according to the same New York Times article of 2009 beneficial for the construction of casitas in community gardens. “No matter what happens, though, the attention will benefit casitas in general, even if it’s as simple as educating a broader audience that they exist”.<sup>328</sup> The same article adds a quote of Yolanda Gonzales, director of the non-profit group Nos Quedamos at the time: “It brings a light to what culture is to a community, why people came together and why they stayed where they were,’ Ms. Gonzalez said. ‘This is history that is not taught in textbooks’”.<sup>329</sup>

The discussion about the landmark status of casitas came up again in 2012, when an inquiry was sent to GreenThumb by a member of the American Folklore Society, collaborating with Citylore and Placematters to form the American Folklore Society historic preservation task force, via email about the possibility to secure the status of “NYC Puerto Rican casitas” by nominating them for the National Register of Historic Places, i.e. to nominate them for consideration of land mark status.<sup>330</sup> In the further email conversation with the same member of this task force explained that one of their goals was “(...) to expand the use of the National Register’s ‘traditional cultural properties’ designation”.<sup>331</sup> This task force member was focusing “(...) efforts on the Casita Rincon Criollo in the Bronx, rather than casitas in general, since it is one of the oldest and largest and is associated with a particularly strong and active community. Puerto Rican properties are, in general, under-represented in historic preservation terms in the US and the Casita Rincon Criollo meets the criteria of being a traditional cultural property in many ways, so it would be a valuable addition to the National Register”.<sup>332</sup>

Today the community gardening group Rincon Criollo is a non-profit organization. Even though the site was offered after the settlement for transfer from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to the Department of Parks and Recreation, which would have meant a longer lease for the gardeners, the gardeners denied: They are intending to construct a building for a cultural center on the site, which would not be allowed when the land was in the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Consequently, they intended to buy the land in order to make it into a land trust under the Trust for Public Land. According to Edie Stone, Department of Housing Preservation and Development had difficulties to figure out how to follow the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure to transfer city land to private ownership, i.e. in this case Rincon Criollo to the Trust for Public Land.<sup>333</sup> To figure out this transfer was also a problem for the Trust for Public Land because it costs a lot of money for legal fees and a city agency has to sponsor it. Finally the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the City’s agency for economic development, declared

<sup>325</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>326</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>327</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>328</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>329</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>330</sup> Personal experience. Email to GreenThumb on May 15, 2012.

<sup>331</sup> Personal email conversation, June 3, 2012.

<sup>332</sup> Personal email conversation, June 3, 2012.

<sup>333</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, 2012

that it could be the city agency to sponsor the transfer of Rincon Criollo. But the Trust for Public Land continues to hesitate, because they were not interested to get invested for just one site.<sup>334</sup> At Rincon Criollo's original site at 158<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue nothing has been built until today.

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and city planning in the South Bronx since 1970 in regard to community gardening groups' influence on city planning in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardening is resident's participation in city planning decisions, first through the creation of the community garden and thus providing an open space resource to the neighborhood. Then community gardening groups continue participating in city planning by becoming active in other areas of interest to the neighborhood such as housing which led for example to the development of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan between 1992 and 1998 with participation of the community organization Nos Quedamos for the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx. Finally community gardening groups are participating in city planning by continuing to garden urban open spaces as in the case of the development of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo in the South Bronx and by organizing themselves in the neighborhood and city wide to continue to protect their interests to use open spaces in the city for gardening purposes, i.e. as a citywide network of public open spaces that responds to local neighborhood needs.

#### **5.4.2 Regulation of casita construction in community gardens**

The City of New York has regulated community gardening on public land since 1978, continually through the licensing process of the municipal community gardens program GreenThumb and since 2010 through the establishment of additional Community Garden Rules for community garden land in the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Department of Parks and Recreation. The construction of structures such as casitas as a specific community gardens element has in addition been regulated since 2006 as by GreenThumb's citywide regulations for the construction of structures in garden.

When Jane Weissman was director of GreenThumb, i.e. from 1984 until 1997<sup>335</sup>, the construction of casitas on community garden land in New York City was called "illegal", when the structure was "enclosed", which was interpreted at the time as a sign of private use of the structure. "Jane Weissman, the program's director, defined this ambiguous term as meaning 'any enclosed structure,'<sup>336</sup> a stipulation she attributes to the municipality's attempt to curtail squatting on city property, by New York's homeless".<sup>337</sup> That means many structures in community gardens registered with GreenThumb were rendered illegal in the late 1980s, but without much consequence as demolition or reconstruction. "Weissman admits that, under her tenure (...), the program has been 'lax' in enforcing the rules regarding 'illegal structures.' She realizes that casitas are 'entrenched' in New York and any attempt to do away with them would drastically reduce Puerto Rican involvement in the community garden program".<sup>338</sup>

In 1991, due to "(...) increased media attention, city hall pressured GreenThumb to develop an officially-sanctioned, standardized open-air structure (...)"<sup>339</sup> Consequently a prototype of a GreenThumb garden structure was developed, but according to Jane Weissman the city lost interest in the topic and therefore this structure was never build.<sup>340</sup> In 2006 the issue of regulating the construction of casitas on community gardening land came up again with the City's and the Department of Parks and Recreation's argument that it was necessary to install rules for structures in order to provide for public safety, by making sure for example that the fire-hazards that go along with persons sleeping in winter in small wooden houses, heated by electric heaters or even wood burners, were curbed.

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<sup>334</sup> Personal interview with Edie Stone, 2013

<sup>335</sup> After Jane Weissman (1997-2001), Erika Svendsen was the director of GreenThumb, followed by Edie Stone (2001-2013).

<sup>336</sup> Weissman confirmed this definition in a personal interview I conducted with her in 2008.

<sup>337</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

<sup>338</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 28.

<sup>339</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 83.

<sup>340</sup> Personal interview, 2008.

On February 4, 2006 - 15 years after the first development of a prototype structure in model and discussion of regulations for the construction of casitas - citywide guidelines for structures in GreenThumb registered community gardens were issued by Technical Affairs and Borough Commissioners. These guidelines were announced as an addition to the guidelines of the Department of Buildings, New York City Building Code Article 4, Section 27-297 (d) and it was added also that the final decision on structures built in community gardens registered with GreenThumb - even if they were in accordance with the new guidelines were issued by Technical Affairs and Borough Commissioners as well as the DOB guidelines - remained with GreenThumb.

Figure 20: The gardeners of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo built the casita in 2007 with large windows to provide inside into the interior in an effort to comply with the rules and to counter the argument of privatization of public space. Photo: Carolin Mees.

The New York City Building Code describes under Article 4, "Limitations inside Fire Districts" and Section 27-297(d) "Accessory buildings for open parking lots (...)" that "(...) parking lot offices and similar accessory buildings not more than ten feet high and not more than one hundred fifty square feet in area may be constructed of combustible materials when on the same lot or accessory to a lot used for motor vehicle parking and when located at least six feet from any lot line".<sup>341</sup> The guidelines of Technical Affairs and Borough Commissioners of February 4, 2006 add to these standard Department of Buildings building code rules that "regardless of Zoning District, sheds, greenhouses or gazebos constructed by the Parks Department, or other authorized agent, on city-owned land used as 'vest pocket' gardens<sup>342</sup> may be treated similar to accessory buildings for open parking lots as outlined in NYCBC S.27-297 (d)".<sup>343</sup>

In order for gardeners to continue to be able to construct casitas and other structures themselves out of combustible material without obtaining a Department of Buildings building permit – and thereby the clause that the structure needs to be "(...) constructed by the Parks Department, or other authorized agent (...)" – the design of the structure has to fulfill the additional requirements. "Such structures may be constructed with combustible material and work permits shall not be required if such structures are:

- not more than one story
- not more than 10 feet in height
- not more than 150 square feet in area
- at least six feet from the lot line
- non-occupiable spaces only, such as storage if the structure is enclosed; and occupiable spaces for resting with seating if the structure is open on all sides (similar to bench seating in gazebos)".<sup>344</sup> In other words, the citywide garden structure guidelines specify that in order to avoid to obtain a DOB permit the roofed area of a structure has to be a maximum of 150 S.F., the height is restricted to a maximum height of 10 Feet and that a distance of 6 feet has to be kept from the structure to all lot lines. In addition, the enclosure has to be optically permeable. The last decision on the approval of the design of the structure lies with GreenThumb.

In 2006, community gardening groups, whose structures were "(...) out of compliance with the above guidelines must obtain building permits from the Department of Buildings or modify their structures as necessary to meet the above guidelines".<sup>345</sup> This meant that in the same year community gardeners in New York had to invest time and money to adapt their structures to the new guidelines. To alleviate the financial burden on gardeners the GreenThumb Gardener's Handbook also offered, "Structures out of compliance (...) may also be replaced with an authorized shed or gazebo kit provided by GreenThumb, where

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<sup>341</sup> New York City Department of Buildings. [www.nyc.gov/html/dob/downloads/bldgs\\_code/bc27s4.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dob/downloads/bldgs_code/bc27s4.pdf).

<sup>342</sup> Note that community gardens are called here "vest pocket gardens", which is a term that relates to the definition used by the administration under Mayor Koch, which called community gardens "vest pocket parks".

<sup>343</sup> GreenThumb Gardener's Handbook. [www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners_handbook.pdf).

<sup>344</sup> GreenThumb Gardener's Handbook. [www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners_handbook.pdf).

<sup>345</sup> GreenThumb Gardener's Handbook. [www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners_handbook.pdf).





Figure 20: The gardeners of the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo built the casita in 2007 with large windows to provide inside into the interior in an effort to comply with the rules and to counter the argument of privatization of public space. Photo: Carolin Mees.



feasible”.<sup>346</sup> The same handbook states further that “in order to request a shed or gazebo kit, gardens must be registered and in good standing with GreenThumb and have made arrangements through GreenThumb to have any existing non-compliant structures removed. GreenThumb maintains a list of requests and fulfills them as our budget allows. We have been able to purchase an average of 10-12 sheds per fiscal year”.<sup>347</sup> But due to funding restrictions, GreenThumb has not been able to provide many metal sheds or gazebo kits to existing community gardens in recent years. In order to deal with the interior design of structures and casitas in community gardens as well the GreenThumb Gardener’s handbook are additional guidelines to those issued by DOB and Technical Affairs and Borough Commissioners in regard to items that cannot be kept in garden structures like for example space heaters, kerosene stoves or any other heating unit, household furniture such as couches, televisions or non-portable electronic devices like stereo equipment, barbecue grills and refrigerators permanently connected to electric power – i.e., any item that indicates possible use of the structure as a dwelling space.

In 2007 to avoid the use of prefabricated, standardized garden sheds in community gardens and to allow self-built and self-designed casita-type structures to remain a part of the urban landscape of New York City, GreenThumb developed hired me as an architecture consultant to develop in team with community gardeners<sup>348</sup> a handbook for a low-cost self-built structure that was based on traditional casita construction and was built out of standard material according to the citywide structure guidelines for gardens registered with GreenThumb. The design for this structure was named “Gardenhaus”, in order to avoid the word “casita”, which was according to Edie Stone, director of GreenThumb, stigmatized by city officials. Subsequently the “Gardenhaus” was designed not only according to the new guidelines and the requirements of low-cost, self-buildability, use of standard materials, in line with casita construction tradition, but to allow a maximum adaptation to various sites and individualization by the gardeners. The design of the Gardenhaus was then documented in the GreenThumb Gardener’s handbook with the construction of a prototype in the South Bronx’ Vogue garden presented step by step with photos as a way of constructing a casita out of affordable material that conformed to the guidelines, including drawings and a material list.

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and city planning in the South Bronx since the 1970s in regard to the regulation of casita construction in community gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that the construction of casitas in community gardens has been regulated since 1978, continually through the municipal community gardens program GreenThumb. During the middle of the 1980s until the late 1990s, rules regarding illegal structures were based on the level of enclosure a structure provided was interpreted at the time as a sign of private use of the structure, but rarely enforced. A prototype of a GreenThumb garden structure developed in 1991 was not built due to city officials losing interest, but in 2006 after the enactment of GreenThumb’s citywide regulations for the structures in gardens the GreenThumb Gardenhaus guidebook was developed based on the construction of a prototype in the Vogue Garden in the South Bronx. The citywide regulations for the structures in gardens as well as the development of the Gardenhaus design kit allowed community gardeners to continue to construct affordable, self-build structures such as casitas as residents’ group have done in community gardens in New York City’s low income neighborhoods like the South Bronx since over 30 years.

### **5.5 Community gardening land use and specific land use in the South Bronx since 1970**

In the following I will look at the context of community gardening land use and specific land use in the South Bronx since 1970 by analyzing the topic of community gardening elements and the casita by focusing on the casita in regard to its design and construction as well as the casita, the bately and other community gardening elements. Then I will introduce the casita of

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<sup>346</sup> GreenThumb Gardener’s Handbook. [www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners_handbook.pdf).

<sup>347</sup> GreenThumb Gardener’s Handbook. [www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org/pdf/gardeners_handbook.pdf).

<sup>348</sup> The design team included Jose (Chema) Soto of the South Bronx community garden Rincon Criollo and Fernando Rodriguez of the South Bronx community garden El Flamboyán, a German architect colleague of mine Andreas Weis and myself.

the community garden Rincon Criollo as well as the Gardenhaus. Subsequently I will investigate the topic of the participatory design of community gardens by looking at design perimeter and community garden development, at the involvement of planners in the participatory design process as well as the construction of a community garden.

### 5.5.1 Community gardening elements and the casita

A community garden is used by the gardening group according to the individuals' and the groups' preferences as well as according to the demands of the surrounding neighborhood. Consequently the use of a community garden space varies from garden group to garden group and neighborhood to neighborhood since one garden needs for example to accommodate the neighborhood's after-school programs in a sheltered situation and another garden needs to provide an open space for the neighborhood's theatre group. With the alteration in the neighborhood surrounding a specific community garden and participating members over time, the use and the design of community garden sites changes as well since community gardens are "(...)" self-governed spaces which are continually changed and modified by their collaborative user groups (...)"<sup>349</sup> But these changes in the a community gardens layout and in the type of garden elements are according to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in their report "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 not drastic, since gardening groups, "(...)" plan to keep their projects the same and do not plan major physical or functional modifications for the future".<sup>350</sup> Still over time "many of the projects reflect the changing character of the neighborhood they are in".<sup>351</sup>

Despite the changes within a garden's design, a common denominator over time remains the fact that a community garden is a the participative, collective use of land by a group of residents, which is expressed in collectively used open spaces as well as for example in individual garden beds. A garden's commonly used spaces – an enclosed and/or an open space like the casita and the batey for example – are responsible for the sustainability of the garden in the same way that the garden serves as a "commons" for the neighborhood, by providing an area for discussion of land use and management and also cultural and social exchange.

Community gardens' design varies, depending on the neighborhood and the group of residents that created the garden. In general, the elements of the landscape disclose that the space is commonly used: a small sheltering structure, a barbecue, benches and tables – all next to small, individual gardening beds. "The 'furniture' of community gardens reflects these varied uses. In addition to plants and trees, a New York community garden may offer a playground, water feature, stage, barbecue pit, picnic tables, beehives, veterans' monuments, gazebo, or birdhouses".<sup>352</sup> Since most garden elements are self-built they and since most community gardens are or at least used to be situated in low-income areas – as the Community Development Block Grant funding of GreenThumb implies – the material of the garden elements is either found on the street, i.e. recycled, or it is building material from building supply markets that is affordable to low-income gardeners who cannot or are not interested in investing in a temporary land-use.

The material used to construct garden elements is determining also a garden's overall aesthetic. "People frequently used scrounged materials, such as railroad ties, metal grating for fences, etc. These materials are cheaper and more accessible than if they are purchased. However, scrounged materials are frequently of poor quality and can contribute to creating a 'junky' image for the site".<sup>353</sup> The source of funding for materials targeted to gardening groups also determines, which material is bought. "Frequently, groups have materials donated by technical assistance groups or purchase materials themselves. While these materials are of good quality, they may give the group less flexibility, because the group must spend more time doing fundraising or must accept only available materials".<sup>354</sup> Today as assumingly also

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<sup>349</sup> Stone 2009, p. 123.

<sup>350</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 205.

<sup>351</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 194.

<sup>352</sup> Englander 2001, p. 7.

<sup>353</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 199.

<sup>354</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 199.

in the 1970s at the beginning of the community gardening movement, to start a garden most important on public land in New York is to have a fence around the lot and soil. Both soil and fencing are rather costly garden elements, but there are other garden elements that can be built by the gardeners themselves with the use of only a few tools.

A fence around a community garden is regarded necessary in New York City to protect the lot against vandalism – and otherwise, GreenThumb will not grant permission to start gardening today. “The chain link fence surrounding the lot not only protects the casita from vandals, it also delineates a ‘spatial articulation of values’.”<sup>355</sup> In addition it is necessary to have new topsoil and compost to start planting, since GreenThumb will only allow planting in raised beds in order to avoid issues with soil contamination that could for example derive from the lead in the paint of residential buildings that used to stand before the 1970s on the community gardening sites. “In order to help determine the extent of contamination and the efficacy of using raised beds to counter potential exposure to contaminants, GreenThumb has participated since March 2010 in a four year National Institute of Health (...) funded study to assess the extent and effects of soil contamination in urban gardens. The goal of the ‘Healthy Soils Healthy Communities’ study is to provide programmes [original spelling, C.M.] and resources to more fully address the questions and concerns that gardeners and others have about interpreting soil test results, managing gardens and soils, and protecting public health (Healthy Soils Healthy Communities, 2010). Beds are usually built to be no more than four feet (1.2 m) wide to facilitate access to plants from the sides without stepping into the planted area. At a length of between eight and twelve feet (2.4-3.6 m) a typical gardening bed allows one person to produce (when applying an intensive method of cultivation), a high amount of produce in a relatively short time. Before starting cultivation, the soil should be amended with compost or manure, collectable at a garden site, to increase its organic matter content for improved fertility to produce more food during a season (...). Research has also demonstrated that increasing organic matters can bind heavy metal particles and reduce uptake of contaminants into food plants (Puschenreiter et al., 2005). Initial results of the NIH study indicate that utilisation of raised beds can significantly reduce exposure to lead (Lang, 2010).”<sup>356</sup>

In addition raised beds minimize the need for top soil to garden on former demolition sites, where the soil of the site is contaminated and where it is costly to bring in enough top soil “(...) to cover all the rubble left behind. Each truckload of soil costs GreenThumb \$600 to \$800.”<sup>357</sup> If raised beds are to be used by people with limited physical abilities and/or wheelchairs, raised beds need to be three to five feet apart on all sides. “The purpose of raised beds in a garden is to give the gardeners definite walkways through the raised vegetable and flower beds. They also help handicapped and senior citizen gardeners because they don’t have to bend to do their gardening.”<sup>358</sup> Next to raised beds for food production, there are also plants such shrubs and trees grown in the “regular” soil of the lot. To mark these beds, gardeners often use the bricks from the demolished, former residential buildings. “Circles of brick and stone frequently protect shrubs indicating their significance as individual objects.”<sup>359</sup> Not only the bricks from the demolished residential buildings are re-used as construction material for community garden elements, but also other parts and trash found on the lot - partially because the gardeners are of low-income or are not interested in investing in a temporarily leased gardening lot and partially because it is expensive to rent a dumpster to get rid off these materials. If materials are bought, they are usually the least expensive, standard sized building materials found in building material markets such as Home Depot or Lowes.

Community gardeners construct a variety of structures in a community gardens in New York City. According to the “2009/2010 Community Garden Survey and Report” by GreenThumb and GrowNYC, “the most common garden structure is a seating area (82,2% of question respondent) followed by pathways (72.1%) and tables (70.7%). These structures make the

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<sup>355</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 30.

<sup>356</sup> Mees and Stone 2012 (b) in: Viljoen, Andre and Johannes S.C. Wiskerke (eds.), p. 436.

<sup>357</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 31.

<sup>358</sup> Fox, Koepfel and Kellam 1984, p. 31.

<sup>359</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

garden fundamentally conducive to visitors, exploration, and general use of the space, whether for leisure, events, or meetings. Likewise, the use of casitas and gazebos (40.4%) create a social space within the garden, as well as a connection to heritage for many of NYC's cultures and backgrounds".<sup>360</sup> In addition, "most gardens also have tool sheds (69.7%), which aid the garden enormously in their ability to maintain the grounds and cultivate crops without borrowing tools or risking getting their tools stolen. Tool sheds are critical for a garden to be able to maintain the grounds, rather than having to borrow tools or hire landscapers and allowing gardeners and garden members the means to build, create, and cultivate for themselves".<sup>361</sup>

In New York's community gardens there also structures that enhance the sustainability of the garden and the city. "Several gardens enhance their positive effects on the environment through the use of structures such as rainwater catchment systems, which approximately a third of the gardens employ, greenhouses and/ or hoop houses, and composting toilets (...). Rainwater harvesting systems capture water from rooftops and garden structures such as casitas and gazebos as a source of water for the garden. This has the added benefits of preventing stormwater runoff, which collects pollutants as it flows from rooftop to street to sewer, from entering the rivers, the city".<sup>362</sup>

#### **5.5.1.1 The casita: design and construction**

Casitas are most often found in neighborhoods with Latin American or Caribbean population such as the South Bronx. There "(...) a casita, literally small house, is a reminder to Puerto Rican people of their Taino ancestral indigenous tradition – it is an expression of the bohío or communal house usually found in Taino or communal gathering places in Puerto Rico. They often represent the town center (plaza) that appears in many Latin American communities, and thus act as social and cultural community centers for the neighborhood".<sup>363</sup>

Often in "typical (...) traditional Latin gardens, they built a casita (little house) in the center of the lot and salvaged bricks to make a pathway from the street. On either side, they planted beds of tomatoes, cabbage, beans, garlic, and cilantro. Next to the casita, they erected a shrine to Santa Clara on a mound of mint and rose bushes, and near the street, they dug a goldfish pond, which was presided over by an assortment of icons — Buddha, the Virgin Mary, a statuette of a Native American, and a carved African deity — all scavenged from the street. Later, a second casita was added in the rear, as Garcia and others began clearing the remaining lots on the 11th Street side for farming".<sup>364</sup>

South Bronx' casitas are self-constructed wooden structures, built out of affordable or found materials with the help of a few tools only. The tradition of building casitas goes back to the construction of the "bohío" in Puerto Rico, "(...) the round or polygonal thatched huts originally built by the Taino"<sup>365</sup> Indians, Puerto Rico's native inhabitants".<sup>366</sup> This Puerto Rican tradition of casita construction stems from the late fifteenth century, when "in 1493, the Spaniards conquered the island and, later, brought in African slaves. Influenced by the Spanish, the bohío evolved into a rectilinear structure; verandas and porches were added on and functioned as reception and entry areas. Originally, bohíos had separate kitchen facilities and were grouped around an open space used by the Taino for ceremonial events. Influenced by

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<sup>360</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 25.

<sup>361</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 25.

<sup>362</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 25.

<sup>363</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 25.

<sup>364</sup> Ferguson 1999 (b), [www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html](http://www.newvillage.net/Journal/Issue1/1sacredcommon.html).

<sup>365</sup> The Taino population was a part of the population of Puerto Rico that can be described as the landless and impoverished ever since they were forced by the Spanish' introducing small pox to move out of their villages to the mountains. "Decimated by the introduction of small pox, the surviving Taino population fled to the mountains and intermarried with deserting Spanish soldiers and escaped slaves. Known as the Jibaro, they practiced subsistence farming and became adept at salvaging and recycling discarded materials. A colorful folk tradition grew up around them, and today's Puerto Ricans attribute their love of nature and gardening as well as their ingenious use of found materials in building casitas to their Jibaro roots". (Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html))

<sup>366</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

the Africans, the kitchen moved indoors and the batey evolved into a plaza or 'commons' where social and political activities took place".<sup>367</sup>

In New York City's Latin American and Caribbean neighborhoods there is usually one casita per community gardening group. "Regardless of the existing lot size, rarely is more than one [casita, added C.M.] constructed on an individual plot of land".<sup>368</sup> But this one casitas usually constructed collectively and is then extended over time according to the needs of the users. "Like their arrabal counterparts, New York casitas are gradually improved over time".<sup>369</sup> Thus, "the addition of a veranda or second room is often made after initial construction".<sup>370</sup> This reminds of the "Kernhaus" that Leberecht Mlgge mentioned, built on a parcel of land, surrounded by a garden and then expanded when the occupant's budget and time allows it. Sciorra explains in his article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996, "the openness of architectural activity illustrates that the casita is viewed as an unfinished entity (...)".<sup>371</sup> In terms of construction, casitas (...) are usually raised off the ground like their counterparts in Puerto Rico which were often constructed on posts for protection from seasonal inundations".<sup>372</sup>

The most common form of casita construction is a one-story casita built in post-and-beam construction covered with plywood, even though "hybridizations that defy conventional typographies abound in New York City".<sup>373</sup> Since GreenThumb enacted the guidelines for citywide structure in gardens registered with GreenThumb though, casitas have to be a maximum of 150 S.F. in enclosed area and a maximum of 10 feet in height. The entrance of New York City's casitas is situated usually (...) at the gable end (...), but in a few cases one enters at the long end of the building".<sup>374</sup> The materials used for the construction of casitas are – in the same way as material used for the design of the surrounding garden – often taken from the trash found on the garden site or on the streets. "In New York, as in Puerto Rico, a major source of building materials, as well as exterior decoration, is recycled scrap lumber and other found objects culled from the scoria of arson and abandonment".<sup>375</sup> That means casitas were and are built (...) in bricolage fashion from imported North American products, often recycling junk and other found objects; discarded kerosene cans and corrugated metal sheets ultimately replaced thatched roofs; balloon framing using packing crates and pre-cut lumber became the primary method of construction; and exterior decoration was augmented by the use of brilliant hues of paint".<sup>376</sup>

In the same way as in Puerto Rico, casitas in New York City feature a veranda in front of the entrance so that to Sciorra in his article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996, "the balcon, or veranda, a dominant feature of Caribbean popular housing, is the most recurring architectural element of New York casitas. While a few buildings have a half balcon, usually an internal one, most casitas are constructed with a full-width veranda running the length of the building's façade. On occasion the veranda may also run along one or both sides of the building".<sup>377</sup> He explains further, "Railings, in a good number of cases are [for reason of structural stability, added C.M.] finished with X's between the balusters".<sup>378</sup> This is confirmed by Gonzales in his article "Las Casitas: Oases or Illegal Shacks?" of 1990: "The wooden porches with railings supported by crossbeams, the shutters made from wood panels and the open space in front of the houses can be traced to the shanties that once dotted Puerto Rico's mountains and seashores (...)"<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>368</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 75.

<sup>369</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>370</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>371</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 72.

<sup>372</sup> Sciorra 1996, pp. 70-71.

<sup>373</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>374</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 70.

<sup>375</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>376</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 68.

<sup>377</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>378</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 71.

<sup>379</sup> Gonzales 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/20/nyregion/las-casitas-oases-or-illegal-shacks.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm).

The South Bronx community gardens' casitas are as colorfully painted as the Caribbean and Latin American counterparts and thus attract attention to this culture in the neighborhoods dominated by Caribbean and Latin American population due to their specific color-scheme. The New York Times noted in 2009 that, for example Rincon Criollo's casita, "the yellow-trimmed version on East 157th Street, between Melrose and Elton Avenues, (...) with a symmetrical four-columned porch, is notable among its older brick neighbors".<sup>380</sup> In the same way as in private homes – residential buildings or apartments - "decoration is a contributing component to the overall casita aesthetic. The vibrant colors of the Caribbean are one of the most common methods employed in embellishing the exterior. In addition a host of found objects such as posters, advertisements, salvaged oil paintings and completed puzzles are tacked onto the outside wall".<sup>381</sup> Thus for example, "the prominence of national heroes and heroines such as baseball player Roberto Clemente, singer Ismael Rivera, and patriot Lolita Lebron, as well as the ubiquitous Puerto Rican flag and accompanying silhouette of the island, articulate and involvement and commitment to sports, the arts, and politics as it pertains to Puerto Rican history and culture despite nearly a century of North American colonialism".<sup>382</sup>

In the same way as in private homes – residential buildings or apartments - "casita interior space is furnished with many of the comforts of home; a table and chairs, a couch, and even a television. A number are outfitted with a small but fully operational kitchen complete with a refrigerator, running water and working stove. Gas is supplied from a refillable tank and the water is obtained from either a rain barrel or a nearby spigot. Electricity may be illegally tapped from a nearby lamppost, or in other cases an agreement is worked out with the superintendent of a neighboring building to whom casita members pay a monthly fee for the use of electricity. An adaption to New York's potentially harsh winters is the installation of electric heaters, wall insulation, and in one case, a working fireplace".<sup>383</sup>

#### **5.5.1.2 The casita, the batey and other community gardening elements**

Casitas are surrounded traditionally by a "batey", translated "the courtyard". The casita and the batey are traditionally to be seen as a unit of an enclosed and open space. This is confirmed by Sciorra in his article "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" of 1996, who states, "Historically the batey was not considered a separate entity from the house but was in fact its spatial extension".<sup>384</sup> In many cases according to my observation as well as Winterbottom's in his article "Hopeless Future For Gardens Of Hope? Casitas: Gardens Of Reclamation" of 1998 in many gardens, "the batey or open yard links the casita (...) with (...) [a, added C.M.] garden's entrance".<sup>385</sup> Consequently, the batey is a space in the South Bronx community gardens that is a passing-through and meeting space and that is not planted in the same way as the "the non-vegetated yard surrounding the Puerto Rican home, especially in the central mountain are (...)".<sup>386</sup>

The batey is a "(...) cleared open space [that, added C.M.] is usually carpeted, composed of raked or hardened earth, paved with salvaged bricks or lined with concrete slabs. Here, children play, adults relax, and secular and religious celebrations take place".<sup>387</sup> In some community gardens according to Sciorra in his article "We're not just here to plant. We have culture.' An Ethnography of the South Bronx Casita Rincon Criollo" of 1994, in New York City's community gardens "as in Puerto Rico, the small dooryard garden is fenced in to separate it from the clean-swept and raked yard. (In 1990, the packed-dirt batey was inlaid with a pattern of used brick)".<sup>388</sup> This is confirmed by Winterbottom, who states in his article "Hopeless Future For Gardens Of Hope? Casitas: Gardens Of Reclamation" of 1998, "surrounding the casita and separated from the garden area is a non-vegetated and clean-

<sup>380</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>381</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 72.

<sup>382</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 73.

<sup>383</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 72.

<sup>384</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 75.

<sup>385</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>386</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>387</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>388</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

swept yard known as the batey”.<sup>389</sup> Gerald Lanausse, gardener of El Batey de Dona Provi, East Tremont, South Bronx, specifies the use of a batey in his community garden in 1998 further, stating, “The batey is a gathering area, with planted areas around it and places where you have pigs and chickens. Here, I have a rooster and some chickens, and the whole neighborhood likes it”.<sup>390</sup>

Surrounding casita and batey in South Bronx community garden various other garden elements to be found that are typical for South Bronx community gardens. Winterbottom explains in the article “Hopeless Future For Gardens Of Hope? Casitas: Gardens Of Reclamation” of 1998, “Surrounding the batey and casita are activity areas that can be considered a series of outdoor rooms - vegetable and herb gardens, eating and domino areas, and children’s play spaces. Extending the vocabulary of the casita into the yard, painted wood fences often divide these areas. Stones, too, are painted and used to demarcate space. Work and storage areas, outdoor kitchens and pig roasters, drums for storing water, and covered patios are usually located to the side or rear of the casita. Movement through these spaces is fluid as it is in Puerto Rico where the tropical climate offers little distinction between outside and inside”.<sup>391</sup>

The pig roaster is usually for example one of the elements found next to a casita, since to roast a pig at both the religious and secular celebrations is part of the Puerto Rican and Caribbean tradition. Winterbottom describes the pig roasters in the article “Hopeless Future For Gardens Of Hope? Casitas: Gardens Of Reclamation” of 1998: “Usually located close to the casita’s kitchen, pig roasters are often permanent structures, many having masonry walls. Some roasters are driven by a motor; others by hand. Manually turning the driving wheels mounted on the steel tubular spits takes great effort”.<sup>392</sup> Next to the pig roaster New York City residents with cultural backgrounds in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, or other places in the Caribbean as well as from the Southern part of the United States traditionally kept chickens in their gardens for reasons of subsistence and food security.<sup>393 394</sup> It is part of Puerto Rican and Caribbean culture to have pigs, chickens and roosters next to the house or the casita. Still in out of 208 community gardens surveyed in 2009 in the New York metropolitan area, only 3.8 percent have chicken coops.<sup>395</sup>

“Keeping chickens in the City of New York is legal. According to the Health Code of the City of New York roosters, ducks, geese and turkeys are not allowed in any built-up portion of the city (New York Health Code § 161.01b[11] and 161.19)<sup>396</sup> – hens, however, are classified as pets and can be kept. For community gardeners adding chickens requires obtaining the consent of GreenThumb and the garden’s neighbours before constructing the coops, which must be located more than 25 feet from an inhabited building. By law chicken coops have to be kept clean and are to be whitewashed or otherwise treated in a manner approved by the Department of Health at least once a year (New York Health Code § 161.01b[11] and 161.19). New York State and Federal Department of Agriculture laws apply to the sale of eggs and meat. The number of chickens that can be kept in New York City is almost unlimited – only producers with 3,000 birds or more, or anyone packing eggs from hens other than their own for sale have to register with the Federal government (U.S. Code Title 21, Chapter 15: Egg Products Inspection Act Section 1044, 1970). Still, the more chickens that are raised in a garden the more likely it is that flies and vermin are attracted, foul smells or excessive noise created, i.e. ‘nuisance conditions’, which again are illegal (New York Health Code § 161.11 Prevention of nuisances; cleaning). In general in residential districts and commercial districts

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<sup>389</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>390</sup> Gerald Lanausse, gardener of El Batey de Dona Provi, East Tremont, South Bronx in: Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>391</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>392</sup> Winterbottom 1998, [www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/casitas.html).

<sup>393</sup> Today many community gardeners are attending workshops provided by GreenThumb to learn how to build chicken coops and how to keep chickens. (City Chicken Project, [www.justfood.org/urban-agriculture-and-markets/city-chicken-project](http://www.justfood.org/urban-agriculture-and-markets/city-chicken-project))

<sup>394</sup> Personal interview with Jose Soto, 2010.

<sup>395</sup> Gittleman, Librizzi and Stone 2010, p. 26.

<sup>396</sup> New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

[www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/notice/article-161-amend-1209.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/notice/article-161-amend-1209.pdf).

sale of agricultural products that were produced on your lot is permitted (New York City Zoning Resolution Sections 22-14, 32-13, 42-11). According to regulations outlined in the community garden license issued by New York City agencies through GreenThumb, sale of eggs and other agricultural products directly to consumers from the garden site is allowed as long as profits from sales are reinvested in garden maintenance. Because of State and Federal requirements that meat for sale must be processed in licensed slaughterhouses, however, meat from community garden raised chickens may be consumed by the gardeners but not sold. To make keeping chickens in New York City easier, the non-profit organisation Just Food set up a 'City Chicken Project' to provide training in raising chickens and in building coops (Just Food, 2010: <http://www.justfood.org>). Still, out of 208 community gardens surveyed in 2009, only 3.8% have chicken coops (Gittleman et al., 2010). The construction of a chicken coop in a community garden is again regulated by the New York City Building Department's guidelines concerning the construction of structures in community gardens (GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook, 2011). Thus a chicken coop can be built without obtaining a building permit as long as it is a temporary structure and complies with the rules in regard to dimensions and distance from lot lines. In addition coops should be covered on top to protect against wild animals, contamination with avian flu by wild birds, and vandalism. Healthy chickens however require access to the outside. Construction should provide for ventilation, should be equipped with perches and nesting boxes and has to be easy to walk into and clean. The coop needs to be cleaned and water, food and bedding changed about once a week (Just Food, 2010).<sup>397</sup>

### 5.5.1.3 The casita of the community garden Rincon Criollo

The main garden element of the South Bronx community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo is its casita – in its first location at 158<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue as well after its relocation the corner of 157<sup>th</sup> Street and Brook Avenue in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx of New York City. The community garden was even at first named after its casita, since the garden "(...) on the lot before Rincon Criollo was named El Batey Borincano or The Puerto Rican Yard".<sup>398</sup> Even though Chema was the gardener leading the construction of the first casita and even "though the initial vision for Rincon Criollo was his, Chema maintains that the actual construction of the building (...) was a "(...) result from a collective effort on the part of casita members".<sup>399</sup> And Jose (Chema) Soto (age 65 in 2010) built more than one casita together with the gardeners of El Batey Borincano / Rincon Criollo. "His first two efforts to build a casita - a small wooden house like the ones once popular in rural Puerto Rico - on an empty lot were burned down. But the third stuck".<sup>400</sup>

The casitas at the first location of Rincon Criollo was painted light green while "(...) the bottom halves of tree trunks are painted white, in keeping with practices and aesthetics common throughout the Afro-Caribbean".<sup>401</sup> After the construction of the casita, "the extension of the veranda and the addition of a kitchen (complete with refrigerator, running water, and stove) occurred (...)".<sup>402</sup> In addition "change in furnishings and modification of interior and exterior decorations occurs from year to year as well as during the summer months when the casita is most actively used".<sup>403</sup> The first site of Rincon Criollo featured next to the casita according to Sciorra in his article "We're not just here to plant. We have culture." An Ethnography of the South Bronx Casita Rincon Criollo" of 1994 "a functioning outhouse, once common to poor people's homes on the island, (...) behind the casita in a yard where chickens, ducks, rabbits and (until it was confiscated by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) a goat, are kept".<sup>404</sup>

Today, neither the ducks nor the goat would be legal under the terms of the GreenThumb license. Even though the outhouse is illegal as well, it is still found at many community gardens since it costs the gardeners money to have a port-a-sans delivered each month.

<sup>397</sup> Mees and Stone 2012 (b) in: Viljoen, Andre and Johannes S.C. Wiskerke (eds.), pp. 443-444.

<sup>398</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>399</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 24.

<sup>400</sup> Junico 2010, [articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754\\_1\\_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-06/news/29441754_1_la-casita-soto-bronx-museum).

<sup>401</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 26.

<sup>402</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>403</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 25.

<sup>404</sup> Sciorra 1994, p. 26.

After relocating to its current location, the gardeners rebuild the casita in similar style as the first one, but larger as a “(...) 16-by-16-foot clubhouse (...)”<sup>405</sup> and then adapted it to the 2007 guidelines by reducing the size to 150 S.F. and by placing larger windows in the side facades. Today Rincon Criollo features not only the casita, but also “(...) an open-air stage, some grills [that is a pig roaster, added C.M.] and a shrine to the Virgin Mary (...)”.<sup>406</sup> Behind and next to the casita there are raised beds that are fenced in and in the far back corner is a stage.

#### 5.5.1.4 The Gardenhaus

In 2007 the tradition that casita's in South Bronx community gardens are built in a group effort and that gardeners collect salvaged materials to construct this casita with what they found and can afford was translated into a concept for the design of a new wooden structure for GreenThumb. This structure, the “Gardenhaus”, was designed by myself supported by a design and construction team.<sup>407</sup> The objective was to develop an affordable self-built structure, constructed with standardized materials at a cost of a maximum of \$1000 if all material would be bought anew. The Gardenhaus design was developed as a design kit based on the tradition of casita construction in South Bronx's community gardens that can be built from affordable or recycled materials. The support by the municipal garden program GreenThumb to maintain the tradition of casita construction in community gardens in the South Bronx and to maintain this expression of cultural tradition in the gardens as well as to continue the self-construction effort and participative design initiatives among community garden groups.

“The new wooden shed or ‘Gardenhaus’ is designed according to the new guidelines, but to allow a maximum adaptation to various sites and individualization by the gardeners. The building typology of the Gardenhaus is based on the structural traditions found in New York City's community gardens and reveals the cultural background of community gardeners: casitas are usually to be found in community gardens with a Puerto Rican or Caribbean gardening group – i.e. mainly in low-income neighborhoods like the South Bronx. (...) Other building typologies incorporated into the Gardenhaus' design are the stage and the gazebo, which are both common elements in a community gardens' public landscape”.<sup>408</sup> The Gardenhaus was designed to allow adaptation to various sites and individualization by the gardeners. To maximize the use of covered space, the porch can be optionally covered by raised doors or by a foil adjusted temporarily to beams running across it. A guidebook instructing gardeners how to build acceptable structures by depicting the process of a Gardenhaus' construction, by showing drawings as well as a material list can be downloaded off GreenThumb's webpage.<sup>409</sup>

Figures 21, 22 and 23: Prototype construction of the Gardenhaus at Vogue Community Garden at East 156th Street and Elton Avenue in the South Bronx, 2007. Photo: Carolin Mees.

The Gardenhaus design makes it possible in a 1:1 realization or as a guideline for a construction principle to avoid the use of prefabricated, standardized garden sheds, and allows self-built casita-type structures to remain a part of the urban landscape of New York City. Like José Manuel ‘Chema’ Soto, former resident of Rio Piedras in Puerto Rico and builder of several casitas in the South Bronx, explains, “[casitas are] a symbol of poverty, of what we went through”.<sup>410</sup> The design of the Gardenhaus was then documented in the GreenThumb Gardener's Handbook with the construction of a prototype in the South Bronx' Vogue garden presented step by step with photos as a way of constructing a casita out of affordable material that conformed to the guidelines, including drawings and a material list. GreenThumb Gardener's Handbook can be downloaded on GreenThumb's webpage.<sup>411</sup>

<sup>405</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>406</sup> Hughes 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html).

<sup>407</sup> The supporting design team included Andreas Weis and Jose (Chema) Soto of the South Bronx community garden Rincon Criollo as well as Fernando Rodriguez of the South Bronx community garden El Flamboyan.

<sup>408</sup> Mees and Stone 2012 (b) in: Viljoen, Andre and Johannes S.C. Wiskerke (eds.), p. 440.

<sup>409</sup> GreenThumb, [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org)

<sup>410</sup> Sciorra 1996, p. 76.

<sup>411</sup> GreenThumb, [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org).





Figure 21, 22, 23: Prototype construction of the Gardenhaus at Vogue Community Garden at East 156th Street and Elton Avenue in the South Bronx, 2007. Photo: Carolin Mees.



Figure 24: The plans of the Gardenhaus are to be found in the Gardenhaus guidebook on GreenThumb's webpage, [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org). [accessed March 14, 2014]

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and specific land use in the South Bronx since 1970 in regard to community gardening elements, the casita and the Gardenhaus in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that residents' groups develop and design community gardens with specific elements according to the individuals' and the groups preferences as well as according to the demands of the surrounding neighborhood. Thus the design and use of community garden spaces varies depending on the neighborhood and, when looking at an individual space, also over time with changes in the gardening group's membership.

### 5.5.2 Participatory design of community gardens

Community gardens are developed in a participatory design process and thus, in contrast to the design of other public open spaces, community gardens are participatively designed public open spaces. Participatively designed public open spaces in densely built up inner city neighborhoods are a response to the basic need of human beings to design and organize their living space according to their individual preferences. This is confirmed by Gröning in his article "Tendenzen im Kleingartenwesen – dargestellt am Beispiel einer Großstadt" of 1974 stating that the creation of community gardens on vacant inner city lots in the 1970s represents the basic need of human being to design and organize their living space according to their individual preferences. The private use of interior and exterior spaces – of enclosed and open spaces – allows residents to improve their own quality of life.<sup>412</sup>

"In New York City community gardens on public land are registered mainly through GreenThumb at the Department of Parks and Recreation, but are managed by any group of a minimum of ten residents. That means the gardeners decide themselves on how to make use of the land, on the garden's design and set-up. The placement of different modules in a garden thereby determines the intensity of its spatial use for social and agricultural purposes, i.e., the benefits and the effectiveness of this garden for the neighborhood and the city in general. But the gardeners are not only interested in the effective food production and social context, but also in expressing their individual and cultural identity through the creation of their garden. The design of community gardens is consequently a participatory design process".<sup>413</sup>

Participatively design public open spaces such as community gardens are a specific open space land use that differs from "traditional" public parks. This is confirmed by Francis, Cashdan, Paxson in the article "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 in which they state that "community open spaces are usually low cost, small scale, locally controlled, and user-oriented, in contrast to traditional open spaces, which tend to be high cost, large scale, publicly controlled, and maintained by professionals or corporations".<sup>414</sup> According to Stone in her article "The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City" of 2009 it is necessary that City agencies refrain from a top-down design approach when dealing with community gardens. She states that "by resisting the bureaucratic temptation to over-design community spaces or engage in regulatory micromanagement, support organizations also will increase the mental health and social cohesion benefits community gardening projects provide to individual residents and neighborhoods".<sup>415</sup>

That participatory design is an integral part of community gardens is confirmed by Stone in her article "The Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space: Community Gardening in New York City" of 2009 stating that "community gardening (...) [has, added C.M.] the ability to provide participants with opportunities to be actively involved in decision-making about the

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<sup>412</sup> Gröning 1974.

<sup>413</sup> Mees and Stone 2012 (b) in: Viljoen, Andre and Johannes S.C. Wiskerke (eds.), p. 446.

<sup>414</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 10-11.

<sup>415</sup> Stone 2009, p. 136.

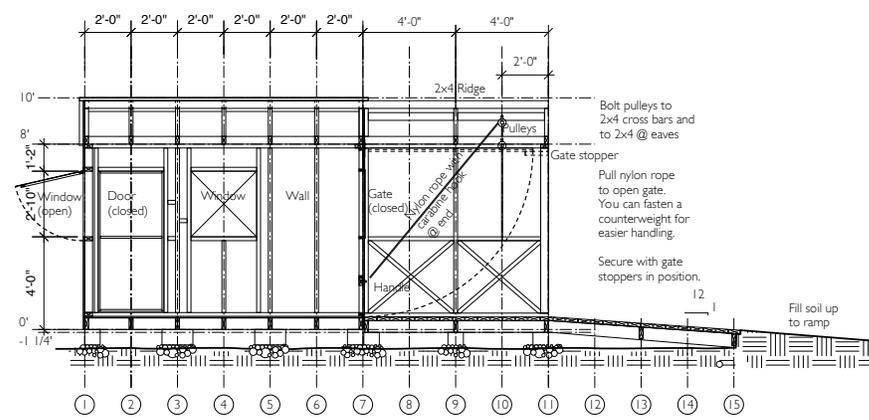
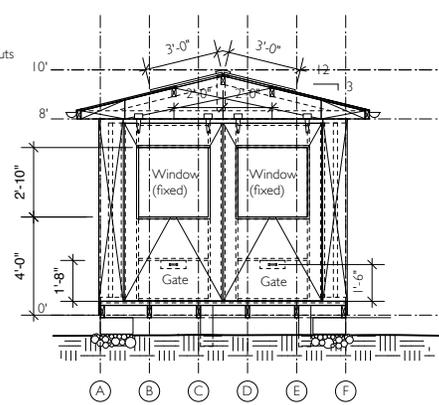
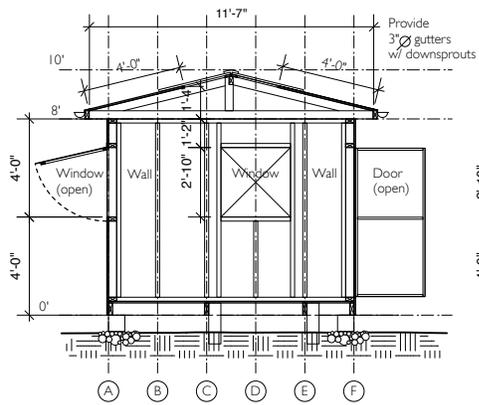
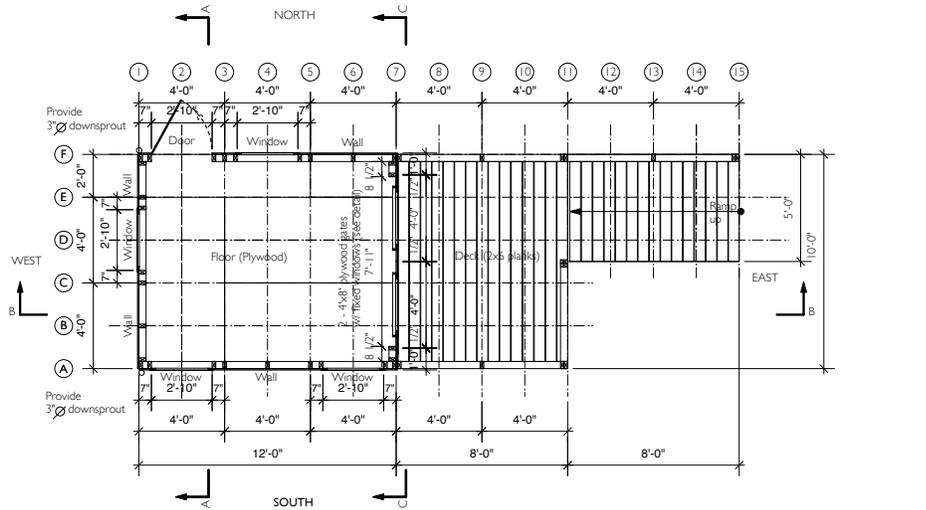


Figure 24: The plans of the Gardenhaus are to be found in the Gardenhaus guidebook on GreenThumb's webpage, [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org). [accessed March 14, 2014]



use and development of the community garden space”.<sup>416</sup> When residents groups start new community gardens as for example in the case of the new Mayor Office’s Obesity Task Force gardens – or when they redevelop existing gardens the design process of the garden can be organized for an outcome that guarantees participation, maintenance and use. For this purpose a design charette can be organized to discuss the interest of the individual gardeners in terms of garden activities that transform into garden elements and then how those interests transform into a group interest and into an arrangement on site.

The community gardening group needs to be part of organization of the design charette – as well as of the realization of the design that was participatively created. Linn states in his book “Building commons and community” of 2007 that “the design and building of a permanent commons cannot be carried out by outsiders who bring preconceived ideas about what residents want or ought to want. At each stage of the process in brainstorming, in designing, in barnraising, and in animating the finished space – the people who will use the commons must be involved”.<sup>417</sup> According to him it is important that a broad spectrum of community members participates in the design process. “Fundamental to the concept of a commons is that no one be left out. At community meetings it is important to ask: Who is missing?”.<sup>418</sup> He adds, “The process of building community begins at the earliest stages of shared envisioning and design of a commons. Once a design has evolved that satisfies the future users of a commons, self-help construction can begin”.<sup>419</sup> The design process is ongoing though since “groups normally adopt and refine the designs as they are developing the sites”.<sup>420</sup> That means “(...) designs for community-developed projects (...) [are, added C.M.] constantly evolving and changing to fit the needs of the groups: a garden plot one year became a sitting area the next, or the group decides a shelter is needed and a shed is erected (...)”.<sup>421</sup>

The group of gardeners participating in the garden’s development decides about the design of a community garden. Consequently “there (...) [is, added C.M.] a strong relationship between why people had built their garden and what types of things were found in the garden”.

<sup>422</sup>Francis, Cashdan, Paxson explain in their report “Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation” of 1984 that “the factors that contributed to a site being developed in one way or another (e.g., as a garden versus a sitting area) are: (1) goal of the initiating group; (2) constraints of the site, such as size, soil conditions, and so on; (3) available technical assistance; and (4) development and maintenance costs”.<sup>423</sup>

#### **5.5.2.1 Design perimeter and community garden elements**

The various interests of individual gardeners in activities to take place in the community garden are reflected in the design of a garden’s elements. Next to individually used spaces such as raised beds, common spaces can be of interest in response to the gardening group and the neighborhood’s needs – for example “(...) benches, chairs, picnic tables, barbecues, and vine-covered arbors provide comfortable sociability settings”.<sup>424</sup> Thus for example “a comprehensive space might consist of a sitting area, a playground and a performance space. A network of common spaces interspersed in a community garden offers opportunities for gardeners, their families, and friends to socialize”.<sup>425</sup> Finally, when the group has decided which elements they would like to include into their garden, they can begin to discuss how these modules can be arranged on their garden lot in accordance with site specific conditions such as direction of the sun, adjacent buildings, water access and site conditions such as slopes, rock, trees or sinkholes. For example the garden plots assigned to each community

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<sup>416</sup> Stone 2009, p. 123.

<sup>417</sup> Linn 2007, p. 198.

<sup>418</sup> Linn 2007, p. 198.

<sup>419</sup> Linn 2007, p. 202.

<sup>420</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

<sup>421</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

<sup>422</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, p. 65.

<sup>423</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 200-201.

<sup>424</sup> Linn 2007, p. 205.

<sup>425</sup> Linn 2007, p. 201.

gardener should be placed in the sunniest part of the garden. Pathways between beds and plots - raised bed plots are about 4 feet wide and between 8 and 12 feet long or inground plots from 10 x 10 up to 20 x 20 feet - should be least 3 to 4 feet wide to allow space for wheelbarrows.

The neighborhood needs and demands determine the elements of community gardens such as for example raised beds, a casita, a chicken coops, a pig roaster, beehives, rainwater harvest systems or compost bins. By applying these various elements a community garden and the neighborhood around it increases its sustainability. The arrangement of a community garden's elements determines the intensity of spatial use for communal and agricultural purposes and thus the effectiveness of the garden for the neighborhood and the city. In GreenThumb registered public community gardens the gardeners decide on how to make use of the land, i.e. on the planning, design, and set-up of their garden. But at the same time effectiveness is not everything that counts to the gardeners but also the individual and cultural expression of their garden as a part of their neighborhood's identity.

At community gardens "the actual activities that take place on (...) sites are more diverse and complicated"<sup>426</sup> than just to categorize them as "vegetable gardens", "vegetable gardens with sitting area", "ornamental 'viewing' garden", "passive sitting parks", or "mixed-use parks with ball playing, gardening, children's play etc."<sup>427</sup> "For example, even at sites designed primarily as gardens (...), many forms of socializing, such as hanging out and talking, take place".<sup>428</sup>

"When a group of residents starts a community garden, first the site should be measured in order to make a simple, to-scale site map as a basis for discussion. Usually two or three garden design meetings should be held to generate ideas and to visualize the design by defining zones for placement of different garden modules. During the meetings these zones can be moved around on the map as the group discusses various possibilities to start their garden's layout. When the group's decisions are recorded it is ensured that decisions made can be communicated to others, so that the progress will not be slowed. In general a garden plot is assigned to each community gardener and placed in the sunniest area of the garden. But the placement of the other modules is part of a design process. With the changing members of a gardening group the design preferences of the group are altered over time, so that the placement of a module will be discussed several times in different group constellations, before its actual construction begins. In addition the economic situation of the neighbourhood alters over time, so that the demand for space for the production of food or for recreation and regeneration is more or less strong over the years. Consequently a community garden has to be and remain flexible in its layout in order to provide a privately usable public open space for diverse groups of residents over time, i.e., for gardeners of various cultural backgrounds and preferences as well as for different social and economic requirements".<sup>429</sup>

#### **5.5.2.2 Involvement of planners in the participatory design process**

Participatively designed open spaces do not need a designer or planner to be developed, but in turn landscape architects, architects and planners asked to develop public open spaces have introduced the participatory design process to design with participation of residents' groups community open spaces that respond to the needs of a neighborhood. Thus for example "user involvement in design and planning has been used as a tool by some playground designers and landscape architects".<sup>430</sup>

According to the report by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson "Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation" of 1984 "many groups decide early on that they need outside planning and design assistance. They usually contact one of the technical assistance organizations who help groups develop open-space projects (...), such as Council on the Environment (...), Cornell Cooperative Extension Service (...), and the Horticultural Society (...)"<sup>431</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson found, "The

<sup>426</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 200.

<sup>427</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 200.

<sup>428</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 200.

<sup>429</sup> Mees and Stone 2012 (b) in: Viljoen, Andre and Johannes S.C. Wiskerke (eds.), pp. 446-447.

<sup>430</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 11.

<sup>431</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

design assistance is provided primarily by horticulturalists who have experience and have developed expertise with community-developed open-space projects. Normally, these people are not trained as landscape architects, and rarely do local groups solicit the assistance of registered landscape architects".<sup>432</sup> In the rare occasion a designer was involved in the participatory design process of community open spaces and "in projects where groups [interviewed for the case studies in the report by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson of 1984, added C.M.] felt they received good design assistance, the designer played a facilitator role, provided options for the group to choose from, communicated the implications of each design decision, and became an advocate for the group. The designers that were less successful tended to try to dominate and control the design process".<sup>433</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson blame the lack of professional designers involved on the training provided by design schools and the constantly development in the design of community gardens. "The evolutionary nature of these projects may explain why professional designers are rarely involved, because their training and practice involves projects that are constructed by professional contractors and rarely changed by their clients".<sup>434</sup>

When involving a designer in the participatory design process of a community garden, according to Francis, Cashdan and Paxson in their report of 1984, "the designer should consider the overall image presented. Projects that incorporate design elements common to city parks experienced the greatest vandalism problems (...). Projects that clearly communicate that they are community developed and controlled (...) are better treated by their users and experience less vandalism".<sup>435</sup> In addition the designer can make sure that the participatively designed community garden as well as the garden modules are conform with building codes and design standards. "The problem of design standards and codes was common to many projects. The success of several projects (...) was clearly constrained by the city of New York (Parks Department and Department of Housing Preservation and Development) design review and regulations. These codes often require construction technology and maintenance beyond what a local group can manage".<sup>436</sup> Finally, in order to anticipate aesthetic complains by City agencies having the jurisdiction over the public land where a community garden is situated on, the designer could "(...) consider the changing seasons and their effect on the use and appearance of the site".<sup>437</sup>

To further improve the participatory design process for the future, design schools can be involved so that students could be trained in field and so that "(...) design schools and professional organizations in the design process, for the benefit of both the community and the design profession".<sup>438</sup> Next to the design process, the "community involvement in construction is (...) [a, added C.M.] technique used to give control over open space to residents. One example is Karl Linn's work in Philadelphia and more recently in Newark, where he involved neighborhood residents and university students in the construction of 'neighborhood commons' projects (Linn, 1968)".<sup>439</sup>

### **5.5.2.3 The construction of the community garden**

When the gardening group as agreed upon a design for their community garden, the construction can be started – again with the participation of the gardening group acting as the "developers" of the community open space project. As a first step, the larger community needs to be made aware of the development of the community garden. "Developers of successful projects usually first try to show a presence on the site and communicate to the larger community that something is happening – that the site is 'belonging to someone.' This sometimes is done by first erecting a fence or by organizing a work party that commonly includes food and music"<sup>440</sup>. Next, "the execution of major site work, such as site preparation, clearing, and subsurface drainage is a critical stage (...). Some groups [in the report

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<sup>432</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

<sup>433</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

<sup>434</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

<sup>435</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 198.

<sup>436</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 198.

<sup>437</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 198.

<sup>438</sup> Fox, Koeppel and Kellam 1984, pp. 76-77.

<sup>439</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 13.

<sup>440</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 198.

“Community Open Spaces. Greening Neighborhoods through Community Action and Land Conservation“ by Francis, Cashdan and Paxson of 1984, added C.M.] successfully overcame this problem by raising enough money to have the major site work done by professional landscape contractors (e.g., site grading and drainage (...). Others were successful in getting cooperation from the city in providing assistance at this stage (...).<sup>441</sup>

The materials used for the design of the garden elements are often found on site, i.e. are pieces of trash or remains of former buildings that are recycled into new design elements. “To keep building costs low, incorporate found objects and salvaged building materials”.<sup>442</sup> To Linn in his book “Building commons and community” of 2007, the re-use of building materials in community gardens adds to the community gardens’ aesthetic. He explains that “a living city needs the presence of elements from its past in its streets, sidewalks, and public places. ‘Historic’ and ‘repurposed’ local building materials are integral parts of the urban experience and give us air of familiarity to new constructions. They prevent commons from succumbing to a depersonalized aesthetic of mass construction”.<sup>443</sup>

Even though most community gardening groups construct the garden elements themselves, they need to make sure that residents with special skills are involved or that they receive support for more specialized tasks. “Projects are primarily constructed by local volunteers. This requires specialized technology and detailing that can easily be constructed by neighborhood residents”.<sup>444</sup> For support, gardening groups can engage for example “environmental designers, artists, craftspeople, amateurs, social scientists, lawyers, and many others (...), depending on the needs and complexity of the project”.<sup>445</sup> From the perspective of the City agency that has jurisdiction over the land “active citizens eager to participate in construction not public amenities provide a mixed blessing for city governments, as the citizens often lack skill and experience. Volunteer professionals, recruited to work side by side with residents, add rigor to self-help construction projects”.<sup>446 447</sup> That means, “(...) Most projects are constructed by local residents with specialized skills. Work is done by organized work parties and frequently involves the specialized skills of the larger group and neighborhood (...). At times, work is done by summer youth employment workers requested by the group (...). Other groups with larger funding available to them, have also involved paid landscape contractors in construction (...).<sup>448</sup>

Since the design and development of a community garden is an ongoing process, a collective maintenance process needs to be installed by the gardening group. Linn reports in the book “Building commons and community” of 2007 that “after exhausting work of creating the commons, especially in low-income areas, neighbors hoped municipal recreation departments would provide upkeep and repairs. Unfortunately, these agencies refused to maintain open spaces that they had not built themselves”.<sup>449</sup> But “community use and satisfaction are greater in settings that residents develop and manage themselves than in publicly provided and controlled open spaces”.<sup>450</sup> In the longer term, according to Linn, “commons management provides a new challenge to neighborhood residents unaccustomed to taking on shared responsibilities. Usually a core group of people take the initiative to maintain and administer the commons, so it is essential to the success of the commons to

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<sup>441</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 198.

<sup>442</sup> Linn 2007, p. 199.

<sup>443</sup> Linn 2007, p. 200.

<sup>444</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 197.

<sup>445</sup> Linn 2007, p. 199.

<sup>446</sup> Linn 2007, p. 199.

<sup>447</sup> Volunteer groups supporting residents’ groups in constructing their community gardens are for example “(...) AmeriCorps, Scouts, students religious groups, and nonprofit groups [as they, added C.M.] are motivated by a sense of service to their community”. (Linn 2007, p. 199) If financial support is needed, “financial aid and administrative support is often available from nonprofit corporations concerned with environmental and social issues. Such organizations welcome the opportunity to sponsor grassroots efforts, and funding for environmental improvement projects, funneled through nonprofit corporations, can come from private foundations, businesses, and governmental agencies”. (Linn 2007, p. 15)

<sup>448</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 199.

<sup>449</sup> Linn 2007, p. 15.

<sup>450</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, p. 14.

discover and nurture potential leaders, both those who have administrative ability and those who can inspire others to participate”.<sup>451</sup> In addition, the collective maintenance process can already be considered when initially designing and designing the community garden – i.e. “the project needs to be designed for maintenance by local residents”.<sup>452</sup> The common management and the participative design process ensure that the community garden will be changed and developed over time to continue to meet the needs of the neighborhood.

Consequently the analysis of community gardening land use and specific land use in the South Bronx since 1970 in regard to participatory design of community gardens in context with community gardens development in the South Bronx shows that community gardens are participatively designed public open spaces in densely built up inner city neighborhoods that are a response to the basic need of human beings to design and organize their living space according to their individual preferences. Due to their participative design community gardens respond to the needs of a neighborhood and thus differ from “traditional” the design of public parks. The participatory design process is based on design perimeters and proceeds with the means of a design charette resulting in a specific design and arrangement of garden elements that the gardening group has agreed on.

From the perspective of the community garden group involvement of planners in the participatory design process is not necessary, but on the other hand landscape architects, architects and planners, who were hired to develop public open spaces have introduced the participatory design process to design with participation of residents’ groups community open spaces that respond to the needs of a neighborhood. For the realization of a participative design on a community garden site materials provided by GreenThumb or recycled materials are used while the construction itself is taken care of by the community garden group often led by garden members with specialized skills and supported by volunteer groups. The common management and the participative design process that is part of the land use community garden ensure that the community garden will be changed and developed over time to continue to meet the needs of the neighborhood.

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<sup>451</sup> Linn 2007, p. 203

<sup>452</sup> Francis, Cashdan and Paxson 1984, pp. 197-198.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Aim of work**

My thesis is a contribution to an historical understanding of the development of open space for urban gardening and a the contribution to change in the urban development with the help of the analysis of the development of community gardens in the South Bronx from 1970s to the 21st century.

In the following conclusion I will summarize the findings that ground my hypothesis that people are longing for and are committed to a common urban open space land use form in the inner city. Then I will provide recommendations that include (1) the creation of zoning of public open spaces used for urban gardening, (2) the inclusion of participatory planning in the decision making process of urban planning, and (3) the creation of a public agency that coordinates the urban land use for privately used public gardens in order to foster communication among the various public and private interest groups. Ultimately, these recommendations are grounded within a framework that the human right to garden is first, a fundamental human right based on human rights principle of rights holders' participatory role in public policy development and their right to self-determination, and second, given that since it is the demonstrated will of the people to have privately accessible open spaces next to privately accessible enclosed open spaces. This right to garden needs to be anchored in legislation to include public gardens as urban institutions in comprehensive land use plans. Subsequently I will discuss the contribution of my dissertation to existing research as well its planned extension in the future.

### **6.2 Summary Findings**

In my thesis that leads ultimately to three recommendations for future urban development I discuss the development of open space use in the low-income area South Bronx of New York City that led to the land use form community garden since the 1970s in terms of economic, social, political, city planning and special land use aspects. For this analysis I focused on the study area "South Bronx" – i.e. the low-income area South Bronx, located at the southern tip of the borough of the Bronx encompassing the neighborhoods in an area enclosed by three highways, the Cross Bronx Expressway, the Major Deegan Expressway and the Bruckner Expressway. Within this area I bring examples from the common open space land use developments in the South Bronx' central neighborhood Melrose, the community garden Centro Cultural Rincon Criollo and the construction of a garden structure called "casita" as a community gardening activity and the casita itself as an element of a community garden. While focusing on the open space development within this study area I analyzed the (A) economic, (B) social, (C) political, (D) city planning and (E) special land use aspects of this development in context with secondary research, between the 1920s and the 1970s, since the 1970s and for the case study "From Casita to Gardenhaus" since the 1970s.

#### **6.2.1 Summary Findings: Economic aspects**

In my thesis I looked at the relation of common urban land use for privately accessible open space and economic aspects from the perspective of different public and private interest groups. Until the turn of the eighteenth century cities provided access to public open spaces for private common use by the low-income class, the so-called "commons", but with the industrialization and urbanization at the beginning of the nineteenth century this land was privatized, when housing construction in inner cities expanded urban centers expanded without regulation by governments. Next to the government actions, the provision of enclosed and open private spaces for the urban low-income class was influenced by the interests of charity organizations, professional business organizations, unions and political parties as well as banks and private businessmen.

Private businessmen for example advantage of the urban low- population's situation by moving their factories outside of the urban centers and attracted workers by providing housing with gardens next to their factories. For the factory workers access to a private garden was an option to recreate after work and a means to improve their own quality of life through food production, while for the factory owner, the garden was a means to improve mental and physical health of their workers. In reaction to the urban low-income housing situation a discussion among intellectuals and interest groups developed followed by reform movements. For example at the turn of the nineteenth century the garden city movement involved private investors interested in improving urban living through planned new settlements outside of the city, while the Kleingarten movement was initiated by inner city low-income residents aimed at improving their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the urban centers and at the urban periphery.

In the inner city, low-income residents remained living in small, densely occupied, and overpriced apartments that lacked access to privately usable open spaces. In addition, through the construction of new housing and the location of industrial businesses real estate values in specific inner city districts as well as outside of the city were manipulated, they were forced to move between urban districts.

With the economic crisis of the middle of 1970s the City of New York was financially bankrupt and cut down infrastructural services, while apartment buildings in low-income districts like in the South Bronx became less lucrative for private investment and consequently lacked maintenance. In lack of private and public investment between the late 1960s and the 1980s, the South Bronx lost about 40 percent of its housing stock due to arson while almost half of the population moved out leaving burned out, unoccupied buildings and open spaces filled with rubble. City officials proposed the “planned shrinkage” of the South Bronx and the relocation of residents to new housing developments. Burned out buildings were sealed up or demolished and in 1977 the in rem foreclosure law enacted to allow foreclosure on tax delinquent properties after one year of non-payment of property tax, thus turning private into public land.

In the 1980s the city’s budget recovered, but according to the 1980 census the South Bronx was poorest place in the United States since the median family income in the area amounted to only \$7,800 per year at the time. In the middle of the 1980s, the average median household in New York City had an income of \$33,000 whereas in the South Bronx this average median income of a household was between \$12,000 and \$15,000. Additionally half of the households in the South Bronx were on welfare regulations. At the late 1970s, early 1980s, in lack of support, low-income inner city residents in the South Bronx began to improve their quality of life by accessing, privately using and maintaining enclosed and open spaces. This attracted reinvestment in housing and open spaces in the area, but the population in the South Bronx remained low-income. In 2000 the South Bronx was still the poorest congressional district in the United States, had more than 40 percent of its residents living in poverty in 2005 and was again in 2010 called out as the poorest congressional district.

Major finding: Despite various interest groups acting against the people’s need to privately use public open spaces in the city these spaces prevailed. Consequently I recommend that the establishment of a human right to garden will be useful aspirational and practical tool to curb market forces and to provide all residents of the inner city with open space for private use as it is their will.

### **6.2.2 Summary Findings: Social aspects**

In my thesis I looked at the relation of common urban land use for privately accessible open space and social aspects.

New housing construction in old residential districts reduced privately accessible open spaces, increased rents and forced long-term residents to move causing a disruption of social networks and of neighborhood community. Thus social control reduced and criminality increased. In the Bronx, the crime rate was on the rise in the 1970s with a murder rate of 18 murders in 1961 increasing to 102 murders by 1971. During the financial crisis that had its peak in the middle of the 1970s, the quality of housing and infrastructural elements in the South Bronx decreased due to lack of maintenance and investment. By the middle of 1980 the number of population in the South Bronx of 1970 was cut almost in half, from 383,000 in 1970 to 166,000 in 1980. When the neighborhood was revived through residents’ redevelopment efforts and reinvestment, in the middle of the 1990s crime rate in the South Bronx dropped by over two-thirds and the number of robberies and assaults in the area by over half.

The decline in the number population, the increase of criminality and the destruction of the housing stock was answered by the creation of community gardens on the newly accessible open spaces by residents in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s. From 1983 to 1999 the number of residents participating in community open spaces almost doubled while the number of community open spaces only increased by about a third. Consequently the district became attractive again to residents and by 2000 the South Bronx population was up to 1.3 million residents, while new building construction again endangered privately accessible open spaces as well as now also the community gardens. Residents organized, demonstrated their interest in continuing to privately use enclosed and open spaces in the South Bronx and participated in urban planning in the area by revising the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal plan.

Major finding: Despite cultural change in population structure and social conflict the people will to privately use public open spaces in the city these spaces prevailed. Consequently I recommend that

the establishment of a human right to garden will be useful to reduce social conflict by providing all residents of the inner city with open space for private use according to their claim.

### **6.2.3 Summary Findings: Political aspects**

In my thesis I looked at the relation of urban land use and politics in regard to common land use for privately accessible open space.

In lack of public and private investment in inner city low-income districts, in the 1970s inner city residents organized and began to improve their quality of life by renovating the apartment buildings they lived in and by creating commonly used gardens on the public land next to them. Their effort became financially supported by a variety of local organization, which had local interests of their own as well as by citywide community organizations interested in a citywide context. In addition the community gardening activity attracted media attention and organizations with nationwide interests as well as political attention to the South Bronx, which was followed by the enactment of laws to attract capital and investors back to low-income neighborhoods in New York City and support by federal funding. Since the federal funding needed to be matched by municipal funding and since New York City was close to bankruptcy at the time, residents groups organized to renovate housing in the South Bronx and matched the funds through sweat equity. The City of New York did not object to the resident's grassroots activism to renovate housing and create community open spaces, but tolerated the voluntary efforts of the local residents as a welcome relief to the city's budget. In 1978 the federally funded municipal community garden program "Operation GreenThumb" was installed as part of the Department of General Services to control and support the community gardening activity through leasing public and private land to residents' groups.

In 1985 Mayor Edward Koch's ten-year housing plan attracted reinvestment in low-income inner city neighborhoods. The residents' enclosed and open space redevelopment effort was answered in 1986 by the federal government's enactment of Low Income Tax Credits that enticed private corporations and private businessmen with tax deductions to invest in affordable housing in the area. Under President Ronald Reagan the budget for subsidizing of rental housing programs was cut by two thirds, so that the rehabilitation of apartment houses in the South Bronx came to a stop, while community garden spaces continued to be created by residents of the South Bronx in sweat equity. In the early 1990s under Mayor Dinkins, the City began to sell public land with apartment houses to non-profit organizations. Then under Mayor Giuliani municipal services were cut down in an effort to rehabilitate the City's budget further. Giuliani transferred in 1995 Operation GreenThumb, then renamed to "GreenThumb", to the Department of Parks and Recreation and in 1998 most community gardens to the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development threatening to auction off public land with community gardens for residential development and to close down GreenThumb. But community gardeners began to organize citywide, gained political power as a group and called through various actions for the enactment of the Community Gardens Regulations of 2010, i.e. successfully demanded the continuation of their use of community garden land as an open space land use until today.

Major finding: Despite the political power game of housing and open space use in the inner city there is the will of the people to privately use public open spaces in the city these spaces prevailed. Consequently I recommend the creation of an independent public agency that coordinates the urban land use for privately used public gardens in order to foster communication among the various public and private interest groups.

### **6.2.4 Summary Findings: City planning aspects**

In my thesis I looked at the relation of urban land use and city planning in regard to common land use for privately accessible open space.

At the end of the nineteenth century, in answer to the New York City's increasing number of population the New Parks Movement proposed to preserve large open spaces for development of public parks that would increase the City's tax income. But while Central Park was constructed, large cemeteries landscaped, and promenades like the South Bronx' planted, public parks, land in the South Bronx, which was at the periphery of the city at the time, was subdivided in preparation for new housing construction without setting aside land for small neighborhood public parks next to the housing as for example proposed unsuccessfully by the landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmsted in 1887. This shows that the negligence of the issue of open space development for private use on public land in New York City has a long tradition, which as the analysis digression on the community open space

development in Philadelphia with its long tradition in urban open space use for common gardens, could have been taken place differently.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the City of New York introduced city planning with the enactment of the zoning ordinance of 1916 to provide for better welfare of the urban population and to control speculation with substandard low-income housing in the inner city and in new suburbs, also to guarantee of a more stable tax base. In the inner city, the subdivision of land for the construction of apartment buildings and the subsequent reduction of open space was followed by regulation to provide sanitary conditions and quality of life to the urban population. This was done by provision of public housing and subsidizing suburbs, but also with the help of zoning, i.e. through separating urban districts for different functions by declaring the land suitable for different uses. Since the quality of life especially of the low-income inner city population was low due to the lack of provision with privately usable common open space land, residents of the South Bronx answered with the creation of community gardens by in the late 1970s. Still low-income housing was planned as an isolated aspect of urban life and did not include other aspects like the social networks and open spaces as a necessary connection of the residents to their neighborhood. Therefore low-income residents at the time continued to improve their own quality of life by privately using available public open space for gardens in the same way as about one hundred years later residents' groups creating community gardens in the South Bronx starting in the 1970s.

The participatory planning effort of residents was answered by the New York City municipality by setting up participatory planning tools such as Community Planning Councils and Little City Halls that led to the enactment of New York City's 59 Community Boards and of 197-a plans that allowed residents to have a greater impact on their local interests. For example the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan was developed between 1992 and 1998 by the municipality with participation of community organization Nos Quedamos for the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx to provide housing as well as accessible public open spaces. During the plans development, the construction of two- and three-story, owner-occupied row houses in the Melrose neighborhood was discussed that would endangered community gardens, which led to the Homes and Gardens Plan by another residents' group calling for higher density and then to the revised Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. Today several new affordable housing developments have been build in Melrose that include so called community gardens on site.

Major finding: Despite contradictory top down city planning the people will to privately use public open spaces in the city these spaces prevailed. Consequently I recommend the inclusion of neighborhood interests in the form of participatory planning in the decision making process of urban planning and the creation of zoning of public open spaces used for urban gardening.

#### **6.2.5 Summary Findings: Specific land use aspects – community gardening and the casita**

In my thesis I looked at the relation of urban land use and specific land use of community gardening and the casita in regard to common land for privately accessible open space.

Community gardeners are usually long-term residents of a neighborhood community, often have a similar cultural background and are interested to improve their neighborhood as well as in long-time, private open space use. Community gardeners vary in age with the average age of gardeners in 2003 between 50 and 59 years. While in the middle of the 1980s there used to be more men than women active in community gardens, by 2003 equally men as women participate in community garden groups. The specific constellation of a gardening group in regard to their own and their neighborhoods interest, their cultural background and the changes in this constellation over time is reflected in the development, management and design of a community garden.

The construction of structures in South Bronx community gardens is in the same way as the design of the overall garden an expression of the gardeners' culture and a reflection of the garden groups' and the neighborhoods' needs. Since the beginning of the urbanization, low-income residents have been constructing shelter structures on privately accessed and used urban public open land. The construction of garden structures out of affordable material or by recycling found material in community gardens in the South Bronx called "casitas" are built in the Latin American or Caribbean cultural tradition of the gardeners and influenced by their low-income economic situation.

The use and construction of casitas has been regarded by city officials as privatization of public land instead of a cultural expression and the voluntary management of public open spaces. Since the installation of the municipal community gardens program GreenThumb by the City administration

under Mayor Edward Koch in 1978 the construction of casitas in community gardens has been regulated since 1978. During the middle of the 1980s until the late 1990s, rules regarding illegal structures were based on the level of enclosure a structure provided was interpreted at the time as a sign of private use of the structure, but rarely enforced. The demolition of casitas by the administration of Mayor David Dinkins in 1990 triggered the discussion of developing a prototype of casita for GreenThumb.

A prototype of a GreenThumb garden structure developed in 1991 was not built due to city officials losing interest. This was followed by the demolition of community gardens by the administration under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the middle of the 1990s. In contrast the administration of Mayor Michael Bloomberg provided longer-term preservation for community gardens and casitas with Community Garden Settlement of 2002, the development of citywide structural guidelines for community gardens and the development of the GreenThumb Gardenhaus guidebook in 2006 that provided design guidelines based on casita construction in community gardens. The Gardenhaus guidebook was developed based on the construction of a prototype in the Vogue Garden in the South Bronx. The citywide regulations for the structures in gardens as well as the development of the Gardenhaus design kit allowed community gardeners to continue to construct affordable, self-build structures such as casitas as residents' group have done in community gardens in New York City's low income neighborhoods like the South Bronx since over 30 years.

Major finding: Community gardening is an activity that demonstrates peoples' demand and need to claim and privately use public open spaces in the city for gardening. Consequently I recommend that a human right to garden needs to be anchored in legislation to include public gardens as urban institutions in comprehensive land use plans.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The creation of community gardens on vacant lots by urban residents expresses the human need to individually design and organize one's enclosed and open space living situation.

To ensure the continuation of privately used public gardens in future urban centers and to manage the influences of the various public and private interest groups that anticipate future challenges and roadblocks, I recommend that:

#### ***1- the human right to garden needs to be anchored in legislation as urban institutions in comprehensive land.***

Community gardens improve the quality of life of the participating residents in economic terms by allowing improving individual skills and self-esteem, which might lead to finding employment. Residents investing sweat equity in the creation of a community open garden and in food production save "food dollars" or to sell produce for reinvestment in their community open space while at the same time the actively used public garden space increases the value of private property surrounding the garden and thus the tax income for City. In addition, community gardens improve the quality of life of the participating residents and the surrounding neighborhood in social terms by creating community as well as reducing social conflict and crime reduction. Residents feel empowered by organizing themselves through the creation of the community garden and able to take on control over their neighborhood by creating a sense of ownership of an urban location thus socially stabilizing the surrounding of their enclosed and open spaces.

Consequently for these benefits to arise from public gardens for all urban residents as well as since it is the will of the people to have privately accessible open spaces next to privately accessible enclosed open spaces in the city I recommend that this land use form needs to be guaranteed and protected as such against private and public interest groups by anchoring it as a human right to garden in legislation.

#### ***2- a public agency needs to be created that coordinates urban land use for privately used public gardens in order to foster communication among the various public and private interest groups.***

Community gardens on public land are used by urban residents for various reasons and need to be recognized in their various resource values by remaining public land maintained participatively according to these resource values so that they are used to best meet the present and future needs of a neighborhood.

This is reflected in residents' taking on ownership of a property - ownership of enclosed as open space - in terms of present control and enjoyment, and the responsibility of present maintenance that

provides a stake in the neighborhood and an anchor against social and economic decay. Thus despite the political power game of housing and open space use in the inner city there is the will of the people to privately use public open spaces in the city these spaces prevailed. Consequently I recommend the creation of an independent public agency that coordinates the urban land use for privately used public gardens in order to foster communication among the various public and private interest groups.

***3- that zoning of public open spaces used for urban gardening needs to be created and supported by a participatory planning process to include public gardens as urban institutions in comprehensive land use plans.***

The common management and the participative design process that is part of the land use community garden since the beginning until today ensure that the community garden will be changed and developed over time to continue to meet the changing needs of the neighborhood. Community gardening is a structured as well as unstructured residents' activity that has prevailed despite contradictory top down city planning efforts and thus demonstrates the people's demand and need to claim and privately use public open spaces in the city for gardening. Thus I recommend the inclusion of neighborhood interests in the form of participatory planning in the decision making process of urban planning and the creation of zoning of public open spaces used for urban gardening to include public gardens as urban institutions in comprehensive land use plans.

**6.4 Contribution, limitations and future research**

In anticipation of an increasing number of residents in urban centers worldwide my research is set in the continuation of research existing since the beginning of the urbanization that is analyzing urban land use to develop city and open space planning for the improvement of social conditions in cities. My analysis points out that there have been constant developments within the development of the land use of privately accessible gardens on public land in the inner city that lead to the same outcome that it is in the strong interest of the people to privately use public land to garden in the city. Because of that, the city needs to facilitate the people's need to garden in the city, not repress it. Accordingly, my recommendations promote the trajectory of history and the resilient demands of people.

The research for my thesis was limited by time and access to data, especially on the number of gardens and type of housing in the South Bronx.

The basis for my hypothesis can be found in the basic need of the human being to ensure one's own and one's family's quality of life, which includes the individual and common use of an enclosed and an open space. I suggest that future research work will expand the discussion of the context of human rights and gardening in the context of privately used enclosed and open spaces in the inner city.

## Chapter 7: Literature and resources

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