

Governmentality in urban food production? Following “community” from intentions to outcomes

Luke Drake

Author pre-print for *Urban Geography*

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Abstract

Community-produced spaces such as community gardens are attracting widespread scholarly interest for the potential of not only food production, but also for social, environmental, and educational benefits. Yet community gardens have also been scrutinized as sites of governmentality that produce neoliberal subjects. In this article, six case studies are analyzed as representative of three ways to organize and manage gardens—grassroots, externally-organized, and active nonprofit management. I use performativity theory to examine how definitions and enactments of community can be used to include, exclude, or bridge difference. The analysis highlights some of the specific moments in garden organizing and management that influence participation or resistance to community-oriented urban food production.

Keywords: community gardens, community, relational space, performativity

Introduction

The concept of community, like neighborhood, has long raised complex questions for geographers. There are many debates about how to define community—by spatial proximity, shared social interests and attributes, or relationships between individuals, for example (Brint, 2001; Hillery, 1982; Rose, 1997b; Young, 1990). Increasingly, the focus has shifted toward documenting and theorizing the work of community—what is done through, and in the name of, community. Much of the impetus for such analyses comes in the wake of myriad community-based projects and initiatives, including the empirical focus of this paper, community-based food production in cities.

Discussions of the work of community range from finding it to be a source of social capital, on the one hand, to critiques of community-laden policy discourse as a neoliberal tool, on the other. The social capital side draws on arguments that close-knit social networks—ideally cultivated through community—have value (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Such approaches to community often assume a certain tendency toward inclusivity and democratic process; as such, they bear resemblance to certain notions of “local” that have been subject to critique by geographers in recent years (e.g. Born & Purcell, 2006). Specifically, that critique challenges the assumption that spatial proximity inherently leads to just outcomes.

In addition, post-structural social theory has problematized the notion of community as a homogeneous entity. In this vein, discourse in which “community” suggests a common identity in fact obscures vast social differentiation (Nancy, 1991; Young, 1990). Indeed, when organizations and institutions assume that spatial proximity fundamentally ties people together, it can lead to exclusionary and oppressive practices (Panelli & Welch, 2005; Staeheli, 2008). Since inclusiveness is often construed as an inherent trait of community, many scholars have argued that the expectations of community allow such exclusions to be overlooked or even justified (Gibson & Cameron, 2001; Joseph, 2002).

Alongside this rethinking of community are analyses based in political economy that frame community-based initiatives as evidence of “roll-out” neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2002). The concept of governmentality runs through these critiques—that people learn to govern themselves as neoliberal subjects through willing engagement in projects labeled with concerns for community (Foucault, 1978). By using a narrative of community, policy makers seemingly convince people that it is more effective and egalitarian to provide their own services. Such strategies build on the idea that community is inherently the most democratic and inclusive form of governance; by doing so, the state offloads its responsibilities onto already overburdened and over-worked groups.

This process of subject formation raises interesting questions about how people organize and implement community gardens, perhaps one of the most common forms of community-oriented food production in cities (Lawson & Drake, 2013). The meaning of community varies from garden to garden; questions regarding whether a community garden belongs to just gardeners or includes nongardeners, for example, vary from place to place (Kurtz, 2001). In this paper I extend this line of inquiry by asking what the process looks like from organizers’ and leaders’ points of view—since these sites can be initiated variously as grassroots or externally-led projects—and by evaluating the consequences for the process of establishing community gardens. Rather than beginning with ‘community’ as a unit of analysis, I situate community as a concept that gardeners struggle with as they attempt to enroll other people as gardening subjects. This work is an exploratory effort to develop a framework that follows the process of garden organizing from the organizers’ perspectives, while problematizing the various bottom-up and top-down ways that people plan gardens. I document how garden leaders perform—imagine and enact—their own notions of community.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, I review two ways that community gardening is understood as a vehicle for social capital or neoliberal governmentality, along with a third view that considers subject formation as an unstable process in gardening. I then address in more detail the relational space-theoretical framework that guides the empirical analysis: I draw on performativity in order to examine how individuals perform—that is, imagine and enact—community. After reviewing the study design, I present data from six community gardens in Miami, Florida. The cases represent three types of community garden organizing—grassroots, externally-organized, and active nonprofit management—in order to capture a diversity of perspectives. This typology expands on the commonly-held notion of a community garden as a grassroots effort. In terms of management models that utilize community discourses in urban food production, these three types represent community garden management more broadly. Then, the data are organized under two main themes: community as a way to include or

exclude certain groups, and community as a way to connect across difference. My findings suggest that community organizers' varied perceptions of community, and the different ways they engage and enact these perceptions, is highly influential in the construction and longevity of garden communities.

Community garden organizing: intentions and governmentality

Drawing on research across countries in the Global North, the community gardens literature includes both implicit and explicit reference to the subjects formed through enrollment in community-based activities. Certain presumptions are evident about the given state of community as either a grassroots entity or an externally-imposed discourse, which influence the types of subjectivities likely to be produced. Historically, it is clear that community garden organizers have premised their actions on the idea that gardening is a means to an end—the formation of moral, social, or economic subjects (Lawson, 2005). Based on various ontological assumptions about community, these subjectivities tend towards positive, exploitative, or contingent outcomes.

One way to conceptualize community gardens is to understand them as grassroots or bottom-up projects (Corrigan, 2011). From this perspective, gardening is a way for individuals to connect with others in their community, mobilize resources, and build social capital (Firth, Maye, & Pearson, 2011; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005; Kingsley & Townsend, 2006). For some, a community garden is synonymous with community and place: “community gardens are grassroots initiatives. . .” (Parry, Glover, & Shinew, 2005); “by working together on a common vision, participants directly witness the strengthening of their community” (Levkoe, 2006, p. 90). Even though umbrella organizations in the public or nonprofit sectors have been important partners for community gardens, grass-roots management of sites by gardeners is seen as a key criterion for success (Mees & Stone, 2012). An implicit assumption is evident that community gardening allows city residents to tap into underlying communal bonds with their neighbors—relationships that emerge from spatial proximity. Although subject formation is not often explicitly mentioned, it is clear that “community building,” in this approach, occurs when garden subjects leverage their collective social capital.

A second reading of community gardens takes a critical stance in seeing community discourse as a technique of government. Governmentality, from this viewpoint, would show that the state cannot merely coerce people into engaging community projects. Instead, people must come to think that it is in their self-interest to take on such work in place of the state (e.g. Agrawal, 2005; Taylor, 2007). Community garden advocacy is rich with signs that these projects are intended to produce these subjectivities: gardens are often justified as a means for residents to produce food, beautify their neighborhoods, and become self-reliant (Lawson, 2005; Rosol, 2012). Indeed, community gardeners have even reproduced—to their own detriment—the same state-sponsored discourses of the need for urban food production in such a way that frames their efforts as temporary (Drake & Lawson, 2013).

Some scholars have thus argued that community is part of a set of discursive elements that facilitate neoliberal policies through the creation of self-reliant subjects; as such, research focuses on garden organizers and how they aim to change others through gardening. Pudup

(2008), for example, emphasizes the importance of assessing the intentions of those people who are trying to encourage others to participate in community gardens. In her study of two community gardens in the San Francisco Bay area, she found that a prison's garden was able to reduce recidivism, but did so by allowing people to garden for their own reasons. In contrast, the Edible School Yard project was a highly regimented educational program intended to teach children about nutrition and food preparation—and in turn, more insidious objectives to create like-minded consumer subjects became visible. For the latter, “the claim to community is undermined by the management and surveillance strategies aimed at children to insure they behave in a community minded way, and the seemingly all-knowing assumptions pervading the well-intentioned adult participation” (Pudup, 2008, p. 1238). Similarly, broader attention to food security efforts has focused on how such activities often carry implicit racial and class dimensions, with affluent White activists trying to teach low-income minorities how to eat properly (Guthman, 2008; Slocum, 2006, 2007). In sum, there are two major approaches—one where the essence of authentic community gardening is based in grass-roots management (Mees & Stone, 2012), and one where planners and organizers seek to transform and mold individuals (Lawson, 2004).

Third, there is emerging evidence to suggest this process is not straightforward—in part because governmentality studies of community gardens focus primarily on the intentions of organizers and the subjectivities that organizers seek to produce. Although it is easy to identify the intention to transform residents into individual neoliberal subjects through community gardening, it is less clear precisely how these goals are accomplished. In Berlin, Germany, the local government has initiated community gardens as an attempt to pass responsibilities for public green space maintenance to residents (Rosol, 2010, 2012). Those intentions, though, failed in a long-term sense because residents still view park maintenance as a job for the local state and refused to completely take over those tasks. That is why Hobson and Hill (2010), using cases from Australia and the Philippines, argue that while governmentality may explain the intentions of the people planning community gardens, practices can and do exceed those intentions. In other words, although garden organizers' agendas can set the conditions for neoliberal subjectivities, in practice there are other factors that come into play that can result in outcomes contrary to organizers' intentions.

This paper builds on these critical interventions by problematizing how people who are trying to get others involved in community gardens imagine and enact various expectations of community. If, as Kurtz (2001) argues, each group of community gardeners grapples with continual debates about what it means to be a community, then it is important to understand the process through which people in leadership roles imagine community, how those expectations guide encounters with others, and how these organizers interpret outcomes of those interactions. Rather than concentrating on just the intentions or the outcomes, this paper traces the process of going from one to the other. As such, we need a theoretical framework that allows “community” to be understood as an enactment.

Relational space and performativity as interpretive frameworks

Tracing the expectations and experiences of organizers who imagine community and work to persuade others requires a theoretical perspective on community space as relational. As with

debates on geographical scale, it has been argued that simply because a community organization is grassroots or “bottom-up” does not mean it is inherently democratic or just (Born & Purcell, 2006; Joseph, 2002). The actions that result in inclusion or exclusion are instead foregrounded in this perspective, while spatial proximity is problematized instead of taken-for-granted.

In this sense, community space does not pre-exist or determine social relations within that space; rather, relationships are what produce community space (Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006). Gillian Rose, for example, has drawn on Massey’s theoretical work on relational space and place in her fieldwork with community groups (Massey, 1994; Rose, 1997a, 1997b). In this vein, she argues that if place is produced relationally, then perhaps community is constituted in a similar manner. Rose maps a community arts program through its “connections and alliances” that connect people in different locations through their work, rather than mapping a set of contiguous boundaries onto cartographic space (Rose, 1997b, p. 10).

Accordingly, we might understand community as the ways in which people interact with one another—instead of a fixed, given state (Young, 2000). That is, community is the process by which people engage with one another through their similarities and differences (Gibson & Cameron, 2001; Rose, 1997b). We can then understand group identity through how people relate to each other and not through the existence of shared characteristics: “a relational conception of group difference does not need to force all persons associated with the group under the same attributes” (Young, 2000, p. 90). Similarly, Jean-Luc Nancy introduced his concept of “being-in-common,” urging us to think of community as an effect rather than an organizing principle (Nancy, 1991). Community, in this perspective, is an outcome of relations rather than something that precedes them (Paasi, 2011; Ramsey, Annis, & Everitt, 2002).

An additional conceptual tool—performativity—can also serve as an interpretive frame to document and analyze garden organizers’ expectations of community. Geographers use performativity in various ways to theorize and understand identity not as fixed and singular but as continually enacted and subject to change. It developed through a range of humanities and social science scholarship from the early 1990s onward, and although different disciplines have used it in varied ways, performativity has “enabled a powerful appreciation of the ways that identities are constructed iteratively through complex citational processes” (Parker & Sedgwick, 1995, p. 2). Well known for her development of performativity theory, Butler (1990) argues that gender identity is not an internal essence of an individual but is inscribed onto a person through repetitive discursive acts. By way of example, she contends that gender characteristics such as masculinity or femininity do not emerge from biological factors but are produced through the enactment of masculine or feminine behaviors, appearance, and speech. She argues that “acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body,” creating the illusion that a core identity is the cause of such characteristics (Butler, 1990, p. 185, emphasis in original). Put simply, gender characteristics are not expressive but performative: “these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal” (Butler, 1990, p. 192).¹

In this paper, I use performativity as an interpretive lens to examine how individuals perform community—how they imagine community, encounter others, and interpret outcomes of those encounters. Geographers, among other scholars, have extended performativity from a focus on individual bodies to spatial aspects of broader social phenomena such as communities, the economy, and citizenship (Bell, Binnie, Cream, & Valentine, 1994; Butler, 2010; Callon, 2010; Gregson & Rose, 2000; Rose, 1999). Pine (2010), for example, finds that community boundaries are not easily delineated between “insiders” and “outsiders.” He studied the relationships between Dominican-owned bodegas and African American residents and problematized the assumption that proprietors of bodegas would inherently be considered outsiders. Using performativity, he argues that these shops become incorporated into the residential community in varying degrees, or not at all, through the enactment of relationships between shop owners and residents. In other words, performativity allowed a nuanced analysis of neighborhood-scale social relations and showed how certain actors become seen as insider or outsider.

In summary, I seek to understand the various expectations of community that guide organizers’ efforts in the formation of community gardens, and how these assumptions affect their encounters with others. From the literature it is evident that community gardens do not easily mold people into neoliberal garden subjects; the way community is imagined—implicitly or explicitly—seems to play a role in this process. I thus set out to document a story of the meanings and performances of “community” in the movement of community garden organizing.

Study design

I examine these processes within three distinct forms of implementation of community gardens in Miami, Florida. Field research took place in 2009 and 2010. While Miami lacks the long, sustained history of community gardens in New York, Toronto, and Seattle, it has become a prominent focus of attention to community gardens in the last decade. As such, Miami can be understood as a site on the edge of the growing movement for community gardens in cities in the United States and elsewhere across the Global North. While the place lacks the deeply sedimented histories of community organizing that define community gardens in the movement’s ‘core’ cities, Miami offers the opportunity to document how organizational practices and expectations of community unfold under the rapidly-shifting conditions of contemporary urbanism. Miami is the most transient of large cities in the United States (Nijman, 2010), and thus most domestic and international immigrants do not stay long-term; among those who do, concerns for Miami’s conditions of urban life are tempered by enduring loyalties to distant homelands. As Nijman argues, this transience—not the immigration per se—leads to weak social capital in this “city without memory” (Lejeune, 2009). As local food and environmental stewardship have achieved mainstream popularity across the Global North, however, so has interest in community gardening in Miami. Unfortunately though, other than anecdotal reports and newspaper articles, there is no centralized information available on how many community gardens have been created in the past decade. Nonetheless, statistics gleaned from the Miami Herald are telling: the newspaper ran 11 articles about community gardens in 2009 alone, whereas in the 25 years from 1983 to 2008 it published only 13. Moreover, after the financial crisis of 2007, real estate development came to a halt, land became available for such projects and there was little short-term danger of losing access. In sum, there is much land and interest but little coherent historical presence of community garden organizing—and as such, this is a

good place to investigate just how people might be using the discourse of community in order to implement gardens.

I have organized these six garden projects into three categories based on different organizational forms: grassroots, externally-organized, and active, nonprofit management (Table 1).² The first category includes gardens planned and managed by their own gardeners. The second refers to gardens initiated by outside groups intending to hand the sites over to neighborhood residents. The third group consists of gardens that are planned and actively managed as organizational programs; they are not intended to be user-managed.

“Garden leaders”—organizers, planners, or managers—are the primary unit of analysis in this paper. I take examples of garden leaders from the three categories above; leaders carry out organizing or management practices and are present across these three types. This is a subject position, and leaders can simultaneously be garden members, as in grassroots gardens, or not involved with other gardeners apart from that role, as in the other two categories. Previous studies of community gardens have shown the importance of organizers’ intentions to the disciplining of garden subjects; this study extends that research by focusing on the expectations of community among people in these roles (Lawson, 2005; Pudup, 2008; Rosol, 2012; Staeheli & Thompson, 1997). The empirical data come from in-depth interviews, which lasted up to two hours each, along with extended participant observation at six community garden projects. Due to the unique characteristics of each community garden, the people in leadership roles varied. As such, the number of people interviewed ranged between one and three for each garden; a total of 11 people were interviewed in-depth (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). These gardens were in formative stages and had been initiated recently before this research began. There are two reasons for selecting garden sites that have not become well-established. First, there were no long-running community gardens identified in Miami at the time. Second, and more importantly, by targeting community gardens that are just beginning, I was also able to trace the implementation processes of short-lived gardens. Although community—seen performatively—is always in the process of becoming, this study design allowed me to document garden leaders whose projects did not work out. In the next section, I provide brief backgrounds to these six garden sites before presenting empirical data under the analytical themes of expectations, encounters, and outcomes.

[Table 1]

Case descriptions

Grassroots-organized

Two community gardens in Miami Beach exemplify what could be called a grassroots approach to organizing and management. The municipal government provided land after residents lobbied for garden space. Additionally, the city’s parks department provided labor and resources for site preparation in terms of site clearance, construction of fencing construction and planting beds, and provision of benches, tools, storage sheds, and, importantly, water use. Yet, in the eyes of the municipal official heading up those efforts, “we’re taking a very hands-off approach,” because it is managed by the gardeners.

The “South Beach” and “North Beach” gardens were initiated and managed by neighborhood residents. The South Beach Garden officially opened in February 2005. After residents learned of a city plan to convert local green space into a parking lot, many petitioned the city in late 2001 to preserve the site. Ten gardeners cleaned up the site and petitioned the City’s historic preservation board to protect the garden. In January 2002, the city moved to relocate the garden to the current site a half block away, which at the time was a parking lot. Since the city owned both lots, the process was fairly simple once the gardeners approved it. As one green space was turned into a parking lot, another parking lot was made into a community garden; it opened after three years of work and renovation by parks department employees and garden members.

North Beach Garden was established in 2008. Its manager, like South Beach’s, lives in the neighborhood and is also a gardener at the site. The North Beach Garden organizer had previously started a butterfly garden on nearby public property, and in 2006, another resident approached her and wanted a place to grow vegetables. Through her membership in a neighborhood-based development corporation (a nonprofit organization that facilitates planning issues), she successfully lobbied city council for land.

Externally-organized

This category features two community gardens established by organizations going into neighborhoods and intending residents to manage them after the gardens were built. Both community gardens under this heading were established separately in two low-income African American neighborhoods. The first, “Grove Garden,” was the work of the Miami chapter of a national nonprofit organization that focuses on sustainable design projects, who established the garden in early 2009 in the Coconut Grove section of Miami. Over the previous several months, the Miami chapter president had developed a relationship with the director of a community development organization (CDO) in the Coconut Grove neighborhood. This relationship started when the chapter president was an architect at a firm that was involved in a controversial housing development; she began meeting with the CDO’s director to help quell neighborhood fears of gentrification. In the process, she felt like she became aware of life in the mainly low-income and African American neighborhood. The chapter president was subsequently laid-off from her company— soon afterward, she approached the CDO through her role in the nonprofit organization with ideas to start a community garden. That CDO secured a church-owned vacant property, but the chapter president spearheaded and organized the activities after that.

“Liberty Garden,” in the Liberty City neighborhood, was built through the efforts of a local affiliate of a national environmental organization in March 2009. It was developed through a nationwide effort by a national fertilizer producer to create five community gardens across the United States. Through collaboration between this company, a botanical garden in Ohio, and a gardening trade association, the local environmental affiliate facilitated the establishment of the garden. The garden was established at a public housing site.

Active nonprofit management

The third category includes two community gardens that were established by organizations but are not intended to be managed by gardeners. Instead, there are programmatic goals through

which gardeners become involved. “Overtown Garden,” located in the mainly African American neighborhood of Overtown, began in 2006 as an income-generation project of a community development organization based in that neighborhood. The CDO director spent part of his childhood in Overtown but now lives in an upper-middle class suburb ten miles away from Overtown. Since the CDO’s role is in strategic planning for the organization, the director recruited a garden manager, who is from a different part of Miami, to handle the day-to-day work of procuring materials and interacting with gardeners from the neighborhood. Contrary to many mainstream community gardens, there are no individual plots; the entire site operates under the central management of the organization. It employs neighborhood residents in a 12-month job training program, and surplus produce is sold at farmers’ markets. The gardeners live within three or four blocks of the garden.

The “Airport West Garden” is located in a warehouse district near Miami International Airport with no residents. Situated on unused former railroad beds, the project cultivates mostly herbs—which are all grown in pots due to soil contamination—through an education program for Miami children. It is not visible from the street but rather is behind the warehouse of one of the nation’s leading producers and processors of herbs and specialty greens. The garden is run as a nonprofit organization by this company. Day-to-day management and maintenance of the site is taken care of by paid staff; school groups from around Miami participate in gardening activities.

Community as a way to include and exclude

Inclusion and exclusion in grassroots gardens

In the grassroots gardens, inclusion and exclusion were effects of the same sets of performances. Leaders’ own inclusion and participation stems from their identification with the neighborhood and desire to grow their own food. They emphasize the themes of growing high quality food for consumption, and community as spatial proximity. “Growing food is the objective, and the community aspect is important,” states the South Beach Garden’s chairperson, who says that “the most active gardeners live pretty close.” He also brings up the benefit of “growing stuff not in the store and harder to get, like komatsu, Asian greens. Things like oak leaf lettuce are too delicate to distribute commercially.” For him, it makes it possible to eat food that is either not available or hard to find commercially; moreover, the taste is superior: “when you eat something from the garden, you can’t go to Whole Foods anymore.” Several miles away at the North Beach Garden, there is also the theme of providing individual spaces for food cultivation: “it’s a wonderful thing for our community. We are a neighborhood of multi-family [housing] units and people didn’t have room to grow anything.” At both gardens, there is the sense that community corresponds with neighborhood residence and spatial proximity.

The tension between inclusion and exclusion was evident in their efforts to sustain what they perceived to be well-functioning community gardens. This appeared in the ways that leaders had to balance disciplinary actions against existing members while encouraging new members to join. Soon after the South Beach Garden opened, it began to get overgrown with weeds. The problem, according to the manager, was due to the difficulties of gardening in South Florida. With plot sizes around 250 square feet, it was often too much work for one or two people, especially during the summers. Although gardening in the South Florida winter is pleasurable

and productive, the hot, humid summer months involve a lot of weeding without producing much food. The garden manager points out the commitment one needs to sustain a garden plot:

“It takes more work in the summer. If you get weeds in the rainy season it’s unbelievable how fast they grow. And then you can only grow certain crops, so you say things like, ‘oh, komatsu [Japanese spinach] again for dinner!’ So people would go away for two days in the summer, come back, see all the weeds, and then say ‘[expletive], I’ll pick it up next year [and quit the garden].”

He and a few other active gardeners got together at the annual elections intending to make changes—particularly, subdividing the plots. It was meant to achieve two goals: reduce the workload for individual plots, thereby making it easier to keep up with maintenance; and increase the number of gardeners.

Although spatial proximity initially appeared to be the central understanding of community, in practice inclusion revolved around whether or not people abided by rules of garden maintenance. The process was not without its own conflict. Once plots were subdivided into smaller, 50 square foot sections, “bad” gardeners—those who don’t weed and leave dead or diseased plants in their plots—were expelled. However, some members were very upset by the reorganization. “People were really mad, physically angry, when we decided to subdivide the plots to get more involvement,” remarks the manager. The majority of the gardeners had approved the move, though. Community, in this case, appears to be restricted to those participants who follow the rules.

At the North Beach Garden, the person spearheading the project ran into resistance from neighbors uninterested in gardening—residents of high-rise condominiums who did not want to look down and see a messy, unkempt site. In the end, she knew enough residents of the condo who were able to gather enough support to approve the garden, and the positive response outweighed the opposition. Still it was not long before there were problems such as weed overgrowth, abandoned plots, and a generally unsightly site—the very thing that initial opponents were afraid of. “I was tired of people asking me if this was a pet cemetery,” she says, because most of the 4-foot by 4-foot plots had become overgrown and abandoned-looking. The manager then told everyone to use his or her plots or be expelled. The North Beach manager told me that running the garden is similar to being in charge of a condo association in that it is necessary to deal with many different types of personalities whose only concerns may be self-interest. Here, she is unapologetic about her approach:

“The garden does not come without its problems. When you think of it, it’s common space. It does not belong to [individual gardeners]. They wrote rules that need to be followed, like it or not. . . [The idea is to] be nice, but what’s nice to somebody is not necessarily nice to someone else. So there has to be rules. Without rules they’ll run you over. . . If I’m in charge it will be the way it’s supposed to be.”

The grassroots gardens had enough interest that they both formed waiting lists, but they both also expelled members that did not follow garden rules. Inclusion and exclusion are part of the same

process, then, because spatial proximity and the degree to which gardeners follow the rules determine garden membership. Even though “the most active people live pretty close...” and proximity is “a necessity in terms of maintaining it,” (South Beach manager), inclusion is also determined by how people follow rules of maintenance. For North Beach, the manager’s approach catalyzed garden participation and upkeep—plots and common areas were clean, and healthy plants were growing. A waitlist remained, suggesting popularity among neighborhood residents. However, she also expelled members who did not follow the rules to sufficient detail. A monthly community work day has been established at South Beach Garden, where all gardeners do general upkeep in the common areas. Still, some long-term members stick to old ways: “[one member’s] broccoli has sprouted flowers! We’re watching it die while people are starving” (South Beach gardener). This gardener’s comment refers to the notion held in what the chairperson sees as the garden’s objective, which is growing food. However, it is really more of an appreciation of the ability to eat fresh, healthy food rather than an agenda to feed malnourished city residents. There had been some talk about donating surplus to food banks, but he made the following judgment about the garden’s potential: “there really isn’t enough stuff to give away.” Leaders thus saw a community of gardeners instead of a garden for the broader community.

Inclusion and exclusion in externally-organized gardens

For the externally-organized gardens, processes of inclusion and exclusion are more easily delineated through leaders’ efforts to establish the sites. In terms of their own participation, leaders were not concerned about growing their own food at the gardens but about the availability of nutritious food in low-income neighborhoods. As the chapter president at Grove Garden remarked in an interview, “there aren’t that many food choices beyond corner stores and Twinkies. There’s not even a Publix [supermarket] close by.” The objective of the design group heading up Grove Garden was to provide a space where people could learn how to grow organic fruits and vegetables, and thereby begin to eat more nutritiously. Similarly, the manager of Liberty Garden was concerned about individual nutrition—not because of “food deserts,” but what she saw as a pragmatic approach to reductions in government food assistance. For her, “community gardens are important because the world is moving towards greener practices, and gardens serve as a way to prepare and educate.” Furthermore, Liberty Garden’s manager said “health care reform is part of the problem because the focus has been on how to make money instead of reducing health liabilities through growing your own food.” As far as gardening itself, though, the Liberty Garden manager thinks it is more important to provide space and resources than to teach people how to grow plants: “gardening education is the easiest part, lots of uneducated people have a family history of growing things at home. . . [in fact] super-educated people often complicate things.” In sum, for Grove Garden, the aim is to educate people about nutrition, whereas at Liberty Garden it is to teach them to become more self-reliant.

A variety of actors were enrolled into these two projects through networking efforts that reached far beyond the immediate garden neighborhoods; “community” was able to include many people who were interested in the projects but were not the intended end-users of the sites. The chapter president who established Grove Garden obtained land from a neighborhood church, but used her social networks to recruit volunteers from around greater Miami to build the garden. Similarly, she successfully obtained donations of funding and materials from businesses located in various

parts of the metro area. What drew these volunteers together was not their affinity with a place—Coconut Grove—but their association with the nonprofit design organization. Many were university students enrolled in design fields and tended to be interested in local food activism; some were involved in similar organizations and projects around Miami. Liberty Garden, of course, was not initiated in Miami at all but through the collaborations between industry and press actors elsewhere in the country. With funding in hand, the local stakeholder—the program manager at the environmental organization—set out to find a location to implement the project. In evaluating potential sites, “politics over the school land took too long,” but public housing “didn’t require as much red tape to get through,” and thus she worked with that agency to select the community garden site.

In March 2009 Liberty Garden was constructed and a dedication ceremony occurred on April 1. The highly publicized event was chaired by then-Miami mayor Manny Diaz and included representatives from private and nonprofit stakeholders who flew in from around the country. Other city and county politicians attended, and media coverage was provided by the Miami Herald. During the ceremony, Mayor Diaz led attendees in reciting a pledge written by the fertilizer company: “I pledge to garden for the greater good. I will plant a little more than I need. I will eat my home grown foods as often as I can. I will donate my extra harvest to a local food bank.” The sponsorship allowed the construction of 40 4’x25’ raised beds, and the sponsorship team planted herbs, purple cabbage, collards, and watermelons. After the ceremony, the national sponsors left and the garden was turned over to the public housing site’s residents’ council. In sum, community was used effectively to include stakeholders and participants across scales in order to plan and build the garden sites; as we see next, though, intended garden users were not a part of this process.

While the external organizers of these two gardens experienced support and participation to establish the gardens, those same performances of community excluded the intended users. At Grove Garden, a few examples illustrate how a discourse of food security and nutrition underpins much of the interactions she had with other volunteers and neighborhood residents and alienated them from the garden. First, she held a workday to prepare the site, begin construction of planting beds, and start planting. The organizers provided a free breakfast of fresh pastries and coffee in order to raise interest among residents and get them involved. According to the chapter president, when she told some passersby about the breakfast, they responded dismissively and asked, “why not bacon and eggs?” On another occasion, the chapter president approached the coordinators of a children’s fair that was happening at a park a block away from the garden. She told them about the community garden and asked if it could be included in the fair so that children could come over and experience gardening. The coordinators told her that the children could not leave park property, but when she pressed further, they said that if she offered a lunch of pizza and ice cream that the children could go. The chapter president reflected on these two experiences to me with disbelief: “here we are, trying to teach about healthy foods, and they want us to serve pizza and ice cream!” She also encountered a stumbling block after the Miami Herald interviewed her about the garden and described her organization as providing its services to the “needy.” The chapter president remarked that after the article was published, “I had to back off for a couple of months,” because residents resented being characterized in that way. Here, it is clear that this particular performance of community means adhering to a firm set of assumptions about a problem (healthy food access) and solution (what counts as healthy food);

as such, the participants she engaged were from elsewhere in Miami and not that particular neighborhood.

Ultimately at Grove Garden, residents did not participate and external volunteers maintained plots. The chapter president's interpretation of this outcome belies her own adherence to a fixed set of assumptions; she attributes the low participation by neighborhood residents to dependency on welfare. Such interactions led her to portray neighborhood residents as being more concerned with government assistance than with growing their own food. When talking with some young people about the garden and the reasons for gardening, she recalled that the youths' conversation turned toward fantasies of "an endless supply of food stamps." Her reaction to me was one of exasperation—"the point is to get them off food stamps. . . there is a lot of educating to do." Although the implementation team hoped for residents to take ownership of the garden, it is not surprising, then, that they did not. She seemingly recognizes this outcome through the following observation: "at a workday, some of us saw the pastor [of the church that donated the land] sitting down at the edge of the garden. We invited him to come over and help us, [asking] in a real friendly way. But he didn't want to do very much work. He said it was 'your' [the organizers'] project, not his."

Residents living near Liberty Garden harvested some food, and garden maintenance continued through that first summer through the help of a volunteer that ran a youth gardening program. However, participation in the garden ultimately ended: "the original hard workers have moved away, and people have lost ambition," (Liberty Garden manager). The residents' council at the public housing, to whom the garden was given, did not form a committee to run the garden or take charge as was expected by the organizers. Ironically, the chapter president who started the Grove Garden determined that failure to involve the intended users in the planning process was a major factor in the garden's tenuous connection to the community: "I was at the ceremony, and a resident told me 'they didn't ask me about starting a garden'" (Grove Garden manager). Furthermore, the presence of the garden beds has displaced children's play activities; the same resident who was not consulted was upset because she could not install a small playground set for her children. Indeed, children ended up playing in the street because there was no room to play in the yard (Liberty Garden manager). Cinderblocks from the beds became broken, and the beds filled with weeds over the course of the summer and fall. "It has been called a graveyard. . . people don't associate it with happiness" (Liberty Garden volunteer).

Similar to Grove Garden's manager, the manager blamed the low participation on how "some residents say food stamps replace gardening." In less than a year, the remaining beds were removed and there was no evidence of a community garden other than the sign installed on opening day. One observer of these efforts, a cooperative extension agent, had her own interpretation of the problem: "[Organizers] think it's a global thing, [meaning] if you get people coming from all over the place. . . working together, then that makes it a community garden. No. The community is the neighborhood."³

Inclusion and exclusion in gardens actively managed by nonprofit organizations

One of the active nonprofit management gardens—Airport West—did not set out with a neighborhood-based clientele in mind as its gardeners; as such, a different story of inclusion and exclusion is evident. The Airport West Garden is driven by similar concerns about food security and access, but the manager defines the project as being somewhere between for-profit urban agriculture and community gardening. “It’s really a commercial farm, in terms of how it’s managed, but we have a community component with education,” she says, but “most farms aren’t set up to take 40 kids on at a time.” For her, the conventional grassroots community garden is not very effective at addressing what she believes to be the fundamental reason for engaging in those activities—producing food and changing how we think about food production: “most gardens can only feed ‘X’ number of people. Most community gardens can only feed the maintainers.” She assumes that community gardens usually do not produce surplus. In her work, she thinks about greater Miami rather than any people living in close proximity to the site. Since “it’s close to schools,” she has a focus on education like the other community gardens as well. This project is part of what she sees as a reorientation to how Miamians use urban space. “I come from Vietnam and [we] must plant in order to keep our land. Look at all the houses in Miami with nothing but grass, or a pool.” She is displeased with what she sees as neglect of these local spaces accompanied by middle-class food consumption attitudes: “people say they want local [food] but want asparagus year round. If people spent time in [a] garden, they would buy more local. They have no idea how much work it takes [to grow food].” For her, this project is a better use of urban space than conventional community gardens because of the ability to produce surplus food and the educational impacts through programming.

For Airport West, inclusion is most evident in the way that local politicians and public agencies were enrolled in efforts to change zoning laws and school groups were brought in to participate at the site. Although municipal code did not ban agricultural activities, it did not explicitly allow it. The team went to their county commissioner to draft changes to zoning code, who sponsored a bill to allow plant nurseries on utility and railroad rights-of-way. Their bill proposed that only not-for-profit organizations would be allowed, and they included a provision that an education program would accompany the agricultural use. Through a series of debates between commissioners, many of whom supported for-profit urban agriculture, zoning changes were introduced that allowed educational agriculture activities on railroad rights-of-way.

The Airport West Garden’s manager developed relationships through Miami-Dade Public Schools and organized field trips that bring school groups to the site. On these outings, “it is an opportunity to have other connections that are different than the mall or the movies. . . [children can] get dirty, plant things.” Additionally, there is a “grow your own lunch” program, in which children pay a fee to plant, cultivate, and harvest their own herbs and greens. The manager sees its urban location as one of the keys to its popularity with schools in that it is much closer than the agricultural southern reaches of the county.

Through its efforts to ensure its own permanence through rezoning, however, the project excluded other forms of urban agriculture that did not operate on the terms of the legislation. The manager felt that zoning changes would not only allow them to establish the project but also prevent other people from engaging in gardening in ways she didn’t agree with: “[our] concern

was making sure things were allowed in a respectful manner. . . making sure you don't have little squatter farmers on another patch of land where maybe they're not as mindful... like setting up a chicken coop or cows." Strictly for-profit ventures were forbidden as well due to the clause requiring educational activities. In contrast to many community gardens, though, nothing is intended for donation to food banks. Rather, its surplus produce is sold to the herb company that sponsored the project, with proceeds going back into the project. All in all, it is an example of community taking on a scale larger than the neighborhood, especially visible since there was no neighborhood interest in this case.

Community as a way to connect across difference

Whereas the cases above show how performances of community can produce inclusion and exclusion, another case in particular demonstrates how people connect across difference. By trying to understand other points of view while engaging others in garden organizing, leaders might then see difference as an asset rather than exclusionary. At Overtown Garden, another active nonprofit site, this became evident through the performances of community by the organization's director and garden manager since they have contrasting motivations and outlooks on the neighborhood. The director is straightforward about his motivations—income generation for unemployed neighborhood residents—but the garden manager is driven by nutrition. "This garden is not about beauty. . . it's about jobs," he said in a Miami Herald interview; he planned to sell surplus produce to farmers' markets in order to support the program.⁴ The organization that started this community garden had previously run job training projects in landscaping for indigent residents. The idea for a vegetable garden began, as the director told me, when "some guys were sitting around watching us work, drinking beer at 9 a.m. and asked, 'why don't you grow something we can eat?'" The director's motivation for the community garden, then, included elements of food and nutrition but was rooted in income generation. For him, food insecurity is a problem that is due to insufficient income to buy healthy food that is already on the market. "There's healthy food out there. People just don't have the money to buy it," he said.

However, the director wanted a permanent staff member in charge of the community garden, and so he hired the manager, a Chilean woman living in another part of Miami, after she had approached the organization initially as a volunteer. She, in contrast, was much more concerned with nutrition, local food, and environmental stewardship than with income generation. For her, the educational value in learning where food comes from is extremely important, and she said "there is benefit in not just growing your own vegetables but also in teaching a healthy diet." The director assumes that people are not eating well because they simply cannot afford the healthy food that is already available; the manager thinks that there is a lack of education about food production and healthy eating.

These divergent expectations did not lead to conflict as they may have at the other sites, largely because of the openness of leaders to other people's opinions and experiences. The manager's expectations of the community garden are very similar to the chapter president who helped organize Grove Garden. However, compared to the organizer of Grove Garden, Overtown Garden's manager paid much more attention to residents' lives—and tried to do so from their points of view. By spending time in and around the garden with garden workers and residents who were not involved in the garden, she listened to their experiences and attempted to

understand what the community garden meant to them. She thus became more sympathetic about not only the gardeners but about life in the neighborhood. “All of them have been homeless at some point,” according to the manager. She reported that all 10 of the gardeners lived within three or four blocks of the garden and must either walk or bicycle to work. Moreover, she recalled in detail the routes taken by gardeners who pick up eggshells and coffee grinds from neighborhood restaurants for composting: “they go by bicycle, but sometimes it takes three or four trips back and forth.” Additionally, she reflected on an encounter with one gardener who had apologized one morning for smelling bad because he had to pay rent but did not have enough money left over to do laundry. The manager also spoke about another gardener who started crying after she congratulated the crew on a successful workday: “I asked him what was wrong, and he said that he had never been told that he had done a good job in his whole life.”

During our interview in the garden, she looked toward nearby Interstate 95, elevated several meters above the ground: “people drive by here every day and have no idea what it’s like. Even me, I used to volunteer at [a nearby social service agency] and didn’t realize how hard it is here.” The point here is not that she somehow knew what it was really like to live there, but that she performed community differently than the garden leaders at the other sites—even if the initial goals were the same as Grove’s manager.

The CDO director and garden manager at Overtown Garden are open, to varying extents, to the motivations and assumptions of each other, and this perhaps helped shape an active community garden. Although the manager still holds her concern for food education, she ended up realizing that the residents and gardeners have many other pressing concerns. Furthermore, the director was open to having a manager with her own different concerns; instead of excluding her from the outset based on her goals for food and nutrition education, he established this connection. Indeed, the community garden experienced high levels of interest and participation and has developed a waitlist. The director planned to expand the project into new sites, and he felt like the garden’s community was more than just the gardeners.

Conclusions

This paper brings to light how leaders’ intentions regarding community do not lead directly to expected outcomes but depend partly on their own performances of community, embedded within particular spatial configurations of social relations. Performativity theory allows one to trace how connections are made and broken in order to see both successes and failures in community building. In particular, this study shows an important point is whether garden leaders are open, to various degrees, to recognizing and taking seriously other points of view. At both Grove and Liberty Gardens, it was evident that there was no “buy-in” on the part of residents—the organizers simply assumed that residents needed a community garden due to food access issues, and that they would take over after it was handed over to them. This paper shows specific moments in that process that influenced the lack of buy-in. Not surprisingly, these gardens failed to coalesce after their initial construction. Yet, at the Overtown Garden, the manager had the same presumptions about food deserts and nutrition education at the start. She saw the neighborhood in the same way as the Grove and Liberty organizers saw theirs; however, there was higher participation at Overtown. Certainly, the fact that Overtown Garden was paying gardeners changed the context, but the manager did not disparage or dismiss the viewpoints of

neighborhood residents as in the encounters at Grove Garden. In other words, even with gardeners receiving wages, it is questionable how much sustained interest there would have been if the manager had held fast to her initial goals and expectations.

Through a new typology of community garden organizing, this study also shows that community discourse inflects a variety of urban agriculture efforts, and thus likely interacts with the broader contextual variation in perceptions and motivation for urban agriculture in any city's population (e.g., Colasanti, Hamm, & Litjens, 2012). Beyond the classical image of the grassroots neighborhood garden, there are food production sites created and managed by organizations as well as hybrid forms that blend income generation with community engagement. Moreover, top-down versus bottom-up models of organizing are in practice much more complex. In these examples from Miami, the grassroots gardens became quite active, even with waiting lists, and yet some gardeners were expelled for not following rules. The externally-organized gardens, seemingly the ones most oriented toward neoliberal mantras of community self-reliance, never really took shape, and indeed produced passive resistance by neighborhood residents. There were also active participants at the two active nonprofit sites, but neither was user-initiated or managed. Indeed, one of those gardens seemed to have broad neighborhood support, while the other had no neighborhood to speak of.

What is also evident through this approach is the process of performing community through three stages—expectations, encounters, and outcomes. Garden leaders' expectations of community are evident in the ways they approached other people, and whether they saw difference as an obstacle or an asset influences the degree to which they engaged others. Subsequent encounters—which ranged from casual personal interactions to outright exclusions from garden planning—impacted the degree to which intended users participated. In each of the three garden types, this process unfolded differently and in sometimes unexpected ways. The organizational form—grassroots, externally-organized, or active nonprofit management—does not predictably lead to participation. How garden leaders bring their own expectations as they encounter others, however, perhaps makes more of a difference. That is, the way that people perform community is important. As Hobson and Hill (2010) argue, intentions do not translate directly into outcomes.

Lastly, leaders' expectations and encounters both reflected and changed how they defined the scale of community. The community scale could be restricted to a community of gardeners, a larger group of neighborhood residents, or even a citywide community of activists. First, at South and North Beach gardens, leaders initially imagined them as a community's garden—spatial proximity to the garden site guided first impressions of who should use the garden. In practice, though, leaders talked about communities of gardeners who abide by certain practices. Moreover, there is little interest in forging connections with people outside of the gardening group; for instance, surplus produce is not seriously considered for outside distribution. Second, the organization-run Overtown Garden seems to be both premised and performed on the idea that it is a garden for the neighborhood; the director and manager see the garden as a neighborhood site through its rotating program of employing residents. Gardeners keep some produce and surplus is sold at a farmers' market in that neighborhood.

Third, beyond neighborhoods, people imagined that a citywide effort to establish gardens constituted a community effort. At Grove Garden, the chapter president was set on getting a

group of like-minded activists from across the city together to implement the garden. Airport West Garden reached out to county government to change zoning codes, and they contacted schools to participate in educational programs. Liberty Garden enrolled participants from across the United States while excluding local residents. Overtown Garden, even though showing assumptions of a strong neighborhood base, also brought in an “external” manager to help lead the project. In short, there are different ways to imagine the geography of community, and multiple expectations and encounters can co-exist within the same project.

Building on previous research that calls attention to garden organizers’ intentions, this paper explored a framework to problematize the different ways that people plan and manage community gardens, and to trace how garden leaders interpret the meaning of community throughout the process of garden implementation. Since this study of garden leaders draws on the example of just one city, though, additional research across other cities, regions, and countries is needed to deepen these understandings of the complexities of garden implementation. Furthermore, these cases draw attention to the forms that community discourse can take in a variety of urban food production sites. If community entails both the idea of locality as well as the interactions between people, then these assumptions are subject to change—or remain steadfast—through the many interactions that go into establishing community gardens. These expectations and encounters have direct impact on the planning, management, and ultimately the success of community- oriented food production.

Notes

1. Although it has been pointed out that some definitions of agency are problematic within Butler’s theory of performativity, for the purposes of this paper the point is to examine how community identity is produced through performances (Nelson, 1999; Webster, 2000).
2. The names of gardens and individuals have been changed to preserve anonymity.
3. Cooperative Extension programs are operated by land-grant universities in the United States to provide agricultural outreach and education.
4. I do not include references to Miami Herald articles that list the names of research subjects.

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Table 1. Key characteristics of case study sites

	Year established	Organizing model	Leadership	Intended users	Key performances	Key outcomes
South Beach Garden	2005	Grassroots	Gardener	Residents interested in gardening	Rule enforcement	Waitlist grew and members expelled
North Beach Garden	2008	Grassroots	Gardener	Residents interested in gardening	Rule enforcement	Waitlist grew and members expelled
Grove Garden	2009	External	President of design org.	Food-insecure residents	Engaging residents on eating habits	Most intended users did not participate
Liberty	2009	External	Director of	Food-	Handover of	Most

Garden			environmental org.	insecure residents	garden without engaging residents	intended users did not participate
Overtown Garden	2006	Active non- profit	CDC director & employed garden manager	Low- income residents	Recognition of concerns about income	Strong interest and participation by intended users
Airport West Garden	2009	Active non- profit	Non-profit arm of commercial agriculture firm	School groups	Changed zoning laws	Outreach to school groups; exclusion of other urban agriculture