

BÁRSONY FANNI¹

A közösségi kertek, mint a fenntartható közösségmozgalom szervezetei Magyarországon

Absztrakt

A „sustainable community movement organisation” (SCMO) egy elméleti keret, mely a helyi, közösségi alapú és alternatív fogyasztási módokat előtérbe helyező, a szolidaritást és kapcsolatokat erősítő kezdeményezések leírására szolgál (Forno és Graziano, 2014). Magyarországon az elmúlt tíz évben jelentek meg a városi közösségi kertek, és a világ számos országában működő kertekhez hasonlóan több funkciót is ellátnak a városi zöldítéstől az egyéni és közösségi jóllét növeléséig. A tudatos állampolgárok fellépése eredményeképpen helyben megtermelt szezonális élelmiszer révén a kertek a hagyományos élelmiszertermeléssel szemben alternatív fogyasztási formát jelenthetnek. A tanulmány a magyarországi kertekben gyűjtött kvalitatív interjúkra alapozva és az SCMO keretet használva arra keresi a választ, hogy előmozdítják-e és amennyiben igen, hogyan mozdítják elő az alternatív életstílust a kertek.

Kulcsszavak: közösségi kert; sustainable community movement organisation; politikai konzumerizmus; alternatív életstílus

Community gardens as sustainable community movement organisations in Hungary

Abstract

Sustainable community movement organisation (SCMO) is a framework to interpret community-led initiatives that provide alternative forms of consumption and create new bonds and solidarity between people (Forno and Graziano, 2014). Urban community gardens have emerged recently in Hungarian cities. Just like the collective gardens in other countries, community gardens in Hungary can have different functions from urban greening to individual

¹ PhD candidate, Corvinus University of Budapest, Doctoral School of Sociology, barsonyfanni@gmail.com

and community well-being. Providing spaces for locally produced, organic fresh food the gardens can act as sites where the mainstream patterns of production and consumption are challenged by conscious communities of citizens. Relying on qualitative data **from** urban gardening sites in Budapest and applying the framework of SCMO it is demonstrated in the paper if and how the practices in the community gardens promote alternative lifestyles.

Keywords: community garden; sustainable community movement organisation; political consumerism; alternative lifestyle

A kutatást az EFOP 3.6.1-16-2016-00012 számú Innovatív megoldásokkal Zala megye K+F+I tevékenysége hatékonyságának növeléséért című projekt támogatta.

Introduction

Urban food cultivation dates to early times as of the 18th century in Western countries (Lawson, 2004), but the new wave of community gardening is associated with the gardens emerged in the 1970's in US cities (Walter, 2013). Citizens on the one hand expressed their critique against shrinking public spaces due to neoliberal urban policies and claimed their rights to the city in form of symbolic land occupation (Eizenberg, 2012). On the other hand, environmental movements and the growing consciousness of citizens, as well as the increasing food insecurity increased the demand for food-self provisioning in metropolitan areas. In the recent history of community gardens the collective sites of food cultivation appear mainly as bottom-up, community-initiated projects. The gardens are present now everywhere in the cities of the Global North and show a great diversity in terms of organisational forms. Beside the grassroots gardens, there are more top-down, municipality-or NGO-driven projects (Fox-Kämper, 2018). There are gardens with pure leisure- and with entrepreneurial or educational profile. Some gardens are multicultural and explicitly aimed at helping the integration process of participants with migration background (Aptekar, 2015), whereas some case studies highlight that many gardens have a rather homogenous membership made of affluent citizens (van Holstein, 2017). The gardens can differ in how collectively they are managed by the participants. Most community gardens are divided into individual plots and communal plots, and there are also gardens where the entire area is cultivated collectively. Some gardens are open to visitors all the time, whereas most gardens offer only a limited accessibility to the broader public (Vollmann and Viehoff, 2015).

Scholarly work of different disciplines proved that independent of the main drive and organisational form, the gardens can contribute to participants' wellbeing by providing space for physical exercise, sensual work and connection to nature (van Holstein, 2017; Warner, 2007; Witheridge and Morris, 2016). They can also facilitate the formation of diverse place-or interest-based communities by bringing people with different socio-economic backgrounds and age together (Firth et al., 2011). The collective management of the garden and its physical infrastructure require a certain level of coordination of individual actions, this and the face-to-face interactions in the physical space of the gardens are favourable to community development. Thus, the gardens are interpreted as fruitful sites for the generation of social capital (Glover et al., 2005), sense of community (Holland, 2004) and social cohesion (Kingsley and Townsend, 2006).

The first community gardens in Budapest were established in 2012. Inspired by the global trend of urban agriculture, two gardens were initiated simultaneously by a citizens' group, and two NGOs. By 2019, there are around 30 gardens in the capital city, and approximately 20 more in the country. In case there is an NGO involved in the process they negotiate the land with the land owner, most often with the municipality. The NGOs have a patronising role by providing professional support on how to start and manage the garden both in terms of infrastructure and community development (Bende and Nagy, 2016). There are gardens initiated by informal groups of citizens who directly lease the land either from the municipality or from a private land owner. Local municipalities also became active in the gardening projects, there are sites which were initiated by the local government. Individual gardeners or families make contracts either directly with the municipality or with the patronising NGO. These contracts involve the gardeners' main responsibilities regarding the cultivation of their plot and participating in the collective tasks. The contracts are usually for one year and can automatically be renewed in case gardeners did not violate the rules. Independent of in which model the gardens are operating in, the gardens are built on self-governance and participatory principles. The division of tasks, the management of the jointly cultivated areas and the infrastructure are all matters of collective decision-making.

The gardens serve only as subsidiary sources of food for the gardeners, who plant vegetables and fruits, often herbs and flowers. Some cast commonly consumed vegetables such as tomato or onion, others experiment with more exotic plants and there are gardeners who consider aesthetic functions in the first place. Community garden members have different expertise and knowledge in food production, therefore, peer learning is an important aspect of the social benefits of the projects (Walter, 2013). Like the gardens of other countries (Krasny

et al, 2015), the Hungarian ones follow organic and sustainable practices including composting, mulching, seed saving and the limited use of pesticides and synthetic fertilisers too.

The Hungarian cases provide evidence that the gardens foster cooperation not only among their members, but between different stakeholders such as citizens, agricultural practitioners, non-governmental actors, educational institutions, and representatives of local governments.

1. Theory: Sustainable Community Movement Organisation (SCMO)

The concept of political consumerism is based on the idea that in contemporary societies consumption is an essential part of our every day practices. Individuals to a large part of their times act as consumers, actively shaping the production process by their choices. Consumption becomes political when purchasing goods and services consumers make choices not only by price and product quality, but they consider the behaviour of producers and the production methods too (Micheletti et al., 2004). Consumption is normally seen as the expression of individual preferences, thus, in the context of modern societies the image of the individual utility maximiser consumer is often contrasted with the responsible citizen who is acting for the common good. Political consumerism complements consumerism by individual responsibility. By recognising their impact on the production process, critical and conscious consumers can give a political meaning to their consumption (Forno and Graziano, 2014).

Forno and Graziano (2014) argue that so far political consumerism has been studied more from the individual perspective, and they suggest that more attention should be paid to collective activities that promote a political vision of consumption. They argue that in the last few decades we can witness a rapid growth in the number of community-led initiatives for sustainability worldwide, especially in areas of food, energy, housing and alternative currencies that want to solve the individualisation of society and the failures of neoliberal capitalism at the same time. These initiatives are started by usually well-off citizens who are not only critical about the market economy and the hegemonic production lines, but also have democratic values and nourish distrust towards traditional institutions such as political parties. Forno and Graziano introduces the term “sustainable community movement organisations” (SCMO) for locally based projects where alternative forms of consumption are promoted collectively. These organisations have specific cultural, economic and political traits. At a cultural level, adherents of SCMOs are opposing the traditional forms of purchasing goods and services and believe that the environmental and social harm caused by industrial agriculture must be stopped. They

generally share a critical attitude towards materialism, standard consumerism and mass production and prefer instead locally produced, artisan, hand-made products, allowing that the local activities are incorporated in global frameworks of action. Accordingly, at an economic level, they want to reorganise production into small-scale activities by promoting local and seasonal production of fresh food and traditional dishes. Adherents in SCMOs want to outplay the hegemonic capitalist market setting by fostering cooperation, bonds and solidarity between producers and consumers, even provide tools for coproduction. And at a political level these initiatives are experimenting with voluntary action and participatory models, and often setting bridges between different local stakeholders.

Table 1: *SCMO characteristics: critical attitudes, core practices, strategic activities*

Critical attitudes driving SCMOs	Core practices in SCMOs	Strategic activities in SCMOs
environmental justice concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> criticism towards mass production and consumption 	alternative forms of consumption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> preference for locally produced, fresh and seasonal food supporting artisanal products, natural materials and handmade items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> networking information sharing awareness raising education lobbying
individualisation of society	new bonds and solidarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouraging relationships between producers and consumers building mutual solidarity between and among producers and consumers convivial activities 	
distrust towards traditional institutions	innovative models of governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> voluntary actions and participation 	

Source: own compilation based on Forno and Graziano (2014)

As for action repertoires, unlike the traditional social movements which operate with conflictual, organised and change-oriented collective action (Haenflar et al., 2012), SCMOs' core activities are nonconflictual and involve networking, information sharing, awareness raising, education and lobbying. Forno and Graziano (2014) highlight that not all participants of SCMOs are equally involved in the projects, there is always a mix of more committed activists and members who are less motivated politically.

Community gardening is a novel phenomenon in Hungary and only a few investigations have dealt so far with the social practices of the gardens (Bende and Nagy, 2016). Though the gardens have been extensively studied internationally, despite the significant amount of case studies there is no universal theory to capture the social meaning of the gardens. SCMO

provides a general framework for such local initiatives that promote collective action towards the sustainable transformation of societies.

This paper is an attempt to apply the SCMO theoretical frame to the urban community gardens in Hungary. It is asked whether the framework is applicable to the gardening sites by checking the relevance of the critical attitudes, the core practices and the strategic activities in case of the studied gardens and participants from Budapest.

2. Data collection

The paper is part of a four-years PhD research that is investigating the patterns of civic action enacted in the gardens. Here, one aspect of the civic action repertoire, the expression of alternative lifestyle is presented by some preliminary research results. The PhD research applies mixed qualitative methods, involving individual and group interviews, investigative sites visits and content analysis. Results presented here are derived from 15 individual semi-structured interviews conducted with gardeners from 10 gardens. All the interviews were individual and with two exceptions took place in the gardens. During the interviews, questions addressed individual motivations, everyday routine and activities of the gardeners, and it was inquired whether the gardeners experience an existing community and what it means to them. The interviews were all recorded, transcribed, and anonymised. The transcripts were coded guided by the SCMO practices (alternative forms of consumption; new bonds of solidarity; innovative models of governance) of Forno and Graziano (2014). The interviews were run on a voluntary basis and lasted on average one hour.

There are currently 31 community gardens in Budapest. 11 gardens were initiated by informal civil groups, 9 by local municipalities and 11 (6+5) by two different NGOs both active from the beginnings in the community garden movement.² Sampling was made so that all the three types of gardens are represented. Individual interviews were made with garden coordinators and gardeners. The coordinators were easier to be reached, since normally they are the ones accepting any queries on the publicly available email addresses of the gardens. They are generally more involved in the projects and play an active role in the community development process, thus have a deeper understanding on other gardeners' motivations and involvements. However, they can be biased exactly for the same reasons, therefore they were asked to help in the recruitment of gardeners with different levels of commitment.

² based on KÉK's open database at <http://kozossegitertek.hu/kertek/> and own data collection

Table 2: Sampling design

Community garden type		Respondents
NGO-funded	4 gardens – suburb of Budapest	3 coordinators and 4 gardeners (<i>Respondent 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</i>)
	1 inner-city garden	2 gardeners (<i>Respondent 7 and 8</i>)
independent	1 inner city-garden	1 gardener (<i>Respondent 9</i>)
	2 suburb gardens	3 gardeners (<i>Respondent 10, 11, 12</i>)
municipality-funded	2 suburb gardens	1 coordinator and 2 gardeners (<i>Respondent 13, 14, 15</i>)
Total	10 gardens	15 interviewees

Source: own compilation

3. Results of the interviews conducted in urban community gardens in Hungary

Environmental justice concerns and alternative form of consumption

The theory of SCMOs emphasize the role of consumers in community-based initiatives who are engaged in the projects due to their criticism towards the mainstream food system and their raising concerns about environmental degradation. Since food production is the core activity in community gardens, participants might also be motivated to change their consumption habits and the way they access food (Corrigan, 2011). By the answers of the interviewed gardeners it turned out that their motivations are mixed and not all the gardeners are equally concerned about the industrial food system and the hegemonic supply chains. All the interviewees expressed that the promise of being able to produce vegetables in the small plots was one of their primary motivations to join the gardens. Food production however did not appear in most answers as an economic necessity or as a critical act to demonstrate alternative forms of food production. Self-expression and gardening as a hobby activity appeared to be more dominant in the answers.

Gardeners agreed that the small plot sizes mean a huge barrier for real self-provisioning to take place. But they also expressed that with some routine and conscious crop rotation, their harvested vegetables provide a supplementary source of food for their households. Most

gardeners are not financially reliant on this but the gardeners with lower income can save some money with producing food in the gardens.

“My pension is very low. When I joined I thought it is going to be a good additional source of food for my household. I have never thought I can produce that much that I can sell in the marketplace. But for my own consumption, yes.” (Respondent 1, suburb garden)

Most gardeners, especially the ones that have a busy schedule feel the need to break out from the everyday routine and escape to the garden to find peace and relief from stress.

„It is quite relaxing that we are going out to the garden, we are doing something, weeding, watering...these really help relaxing.” (Respondent 7, inner-city garden)

Gardeners find the hands-on work with the soil not only relaxing but rewarding. Harvesting the rape vegetables gives the gardeners the feeling of achievement and success.

“It is the biggest pleasure on earth when the first tomato is there, and I can put it in the hands of my dear grandchild.” (Respondent 1, suburb garden)

The tangible outcomes of land cultivation in forms of edible products also provide community garden members with the feeling that they created something and they did this on their own.

„A park is different, there you are passive and just watch the green, but here it is different, here you create something.” (Respondent 14, suburb garden)

Many interviewees mentioned that land cultivation was relevant during their upbringing or at later phases of their lives. Either brought up in the countryside and having a home garden, or having some influential people in their lives like grandparents who were involved in agriculture, the interviewed gardeners perceive that for most of the members nostalgia and earlier routines serve as important drives.

„It was mainly nostalgia. My father had vinegar where they used to hoe and stuff...So I knew how is this and I love nature, so we thought it would be nice to be outdoor.” (Respondent 8, inner-city garden)

Either involved by the parents or grandparents children are present in all the interviewed gardens. For some of the members passing knowledge on children and providing them with a safe space to be outdoors is an important motivation to join the garden.

“It also motivated me that I don’t want my grandchild to be like this typical capital kid who think that milk is coming from the purple cow like on Milka chocolate. I wanted him to see the difference between the vegetables in the market place and how it looks like when growing from the soil.” (Respondent 1, suburb garden)

General concerns about the food system did not appear as primary motives in the gardeners’ responses regarding their motivations to join the gardens. In some other parts of the interviews however, when inquiring about the benefits of their gardening activity, almost every respondent

referred to the garden as a safe source of quality food contrasted with the food purchasable in supermarkets.

*„Tomato tastes quite differently and much better comparing to the one you get in a Lidl.”
(Respondent 6, suburb garden)*

Other gardeners stressed that the problem with the food available in supermarket chains is that consumers hardly now where the good is coming from and how it was produced. In contrast, the food harvested in the gardens is more trustable.

“I like it in the garden that I know where the food I put on the table comes from.” (Respondent 8, inner-city garden)

Another interviewee highlighted how the work and personal experience adds to the value of the food harvested in the garden.

“The food that you suffer and fight and sweat for tastes quite differently than the one you just buy.” (Respondent 11, suburb garden)

When asking about the perceived motivations of community gardeners one interviewee said that she finds that there is a “*growing group of people who try to care about what they eat*” (Respondent 8, suburb garden). But when asked about a common thinking or ideology among the gardeners she doubted that there was such basis for community gardening:

“I dont think there is ideological community between the people coming here, except for the compassion for nature, but not a common worldview...” (Respondent 8, inner-city garden)

The two NGOs that are initiating the gardens and popularizing the idea of urban agriculture are promoting organic methods to be applied in the gardens. When the gardeners join a garden, they have to sign a contract and comply with the rules of the gardens which include the inhibition of using chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The interviews proved that the gardeners align with these principles and they are proudly speaking about organic cultivation as a healthier and environmentally friendly way of agriculture.

“Since this is an organic garden it provides us with vegetables which does not contain any pesticides for sure.” (Respondent 7, inner-city garden)

The answers of gardeners enlightened that though they might not be conscious alter-consumers when joining the garden, the collective process of food cultivation and the personal involvement in gardening can have a visible impact on participants habits and thus attitudes.

“The garden changed so many things in my life. Instead of the supermarket I buy vegetables and fruits in the market only. There are now many things I prepare myself for the family, I cook marmalade, dry tomato myself, preserve fruit.” (Respondent 4, suburb garden)

“I tend to eat more things that I know the origin of. I would not say that I was not conscious before, but the garden strengthened it.” (Respondent 5, suburb garden)

Like avoiding the use of pesticides in the gardens, composting is a widespread technique to be used in the gardens. Through recycling various organic materials originated from household leftovers (e.g. egg shell or potato pale) the gardeners produce nutritious soil conditioner. Compost bins are common in the garden to collect and process the organic matters. As one interviewee articulated composting makes them more conscious in selective waste collection in their homes too:

“We carry all the green waste from our household to the garden. Luckily everyone does the same, thus our compost bin gets full in a minute.” (Respondent 12, suburb garden)

Another gardener added that the garden made their family more responsible and sensible about managing the food that comes from the garden:

“You don’t get rid of the things that easily that you produce with your own hands.” (Respondent 2, suburb garden)

New bonds and solidarity against the individualisation of society

Forno and Graziano (2014) argue that SCMOs can create new bonds and relationships between people. Projects on the one hand can tackle the issue of alienation and isolation associated with modern urban life. Furthermore, in the context of food systems new vertical connections could be nurtured between producers and consumers, and horizontal ties might also develop between the consumers. Though the community gardens involve only the producer side and provide space primarily for co-producers to meet, to learn from each other and to manage a project of their shared interest with collective efforts.

The community development potential of the gardens is well-documented (Bende and Nagy 2016; Glover, 2004; Glover et al., 2005; Kingsley and Townsend, 2006) from the international cases, and the interviewees of the Budapest-based gardens also praise the gardens for their potential to bring people together.

“That is why I think this initiative is so smart. Residents here hardly know their closest neighbours, they may not even greet each other. Unlike in the gardens: here we are getting friends.” (Respondent 3, suburb garden)

It seemed a general assumption among the gardeners that community gardening is as much about community as about gardening. Firth et al. (2011) investigated what kind of communities emerge in the gardens and found that the gardens can be distinguished whether they function more as interest-or place-based communities. The former gardens are more territorially embedded in the local community, while the interest-based gardens bring people with the same interest together.

Most gardens in Budapest identify themselves clearly as place-based communities and recruit their members strictly from the proximity of the garden. This neighbourhood-garden character was reflected in the responses of the members of the gardens:

“One benefit of the garden is that you get to know the people in your area.” (Respondent 13, suburb garden)

“You cannot live your life somewhere without knowing the people near you.” (Respondent 11, suburb garden)

In some other gardens the interviewees drew attention to the shared interest related to nature and gardening among the members. This was true for the inner-city gardens, where due to the scarcity of available land less gardens can be found, and the existing ones attract people from a more expanded territory.

Though the gardeners in most cases do not know each other before joining the projects, the common tasks such as cutting the lawn, collecting the compost require collective efforts which have a community building effect. In each garden regular garden assemblies serve as forums for discussing the most urging tasks, and the organisation of work or any activities related to the infrastructure of the garden. Since in most cases the garden rules and contracts make provisions about the duties and rights of the gardeners, there is no need for constant interaction between the members. However, since the gardeners work on their plots close to each other, the gardens serve as places for spontaneous interactions and chit chats. Furthermore, since the concept of community gardening is associated with community building, most gardeners find it essential to invest time and effort in collective programmes.

Nonetheless, it became evident from the interviews that the community element is not equally important to every gardener.

“The others say it is 70% about community and 30% about gardening. For me it is the opposite: 70% about food production, and 30% about the community.” (Respondent 1, suburb garden)

Even if the motivations are mixed and biased towards gardening, especially in the peak season interactions are so frequent that participants necessarily develop bonds.

Interactions or even friendships made in the gardens mean much more to the gardeners who otherwise would find it difficult to socialise. Older gardeners have no more work-related communities, therefore as one retired gardener framed it, the garden serves as a primarily daily source of interaction for her.

“There are many lonely people...I often feel alone too. My husband is at home, but since his stroke he is not leaving the house. So it’s good to be surrounded by people”. (Respondent 4, suburb garden)

The interviews provided evidences of that bonds and mutuality develop organically by caring for the plants next to each other.

„For example if I see that someone’s chive is about to blossom I drop a mail saying - ‘Hey, I see you are busy. Shall I cut the top of the chive?’ - You know if it is not cut down on time, it gets too thick. But if it is treated on time, it remains nice and soft.” (Respondent 1, suburb garden)

Interviewees mentioned that watering each other plants as a mutual help is almost a norm in every garden.

In most gardens there are regular celebrations, season opening and closing parties organised. These occasions are welcomed by most interviewees:

“Gardening is a bit about partying. The atmosphere I mean. The gardeners who are the most involved in organising programmes are very good at this, they come with great ideas what to do, how to decorate, what to cook. So it’s a great advantage that you can enjoy this atmosphere in a circle outside of your family and friends.” (Respondent 7, inner-city garden)

“Its amazing that people with different background and of different age get on so well with each other. So basically there is a very friendly atmosphere. If someone is cooking for his family or friends the other gardeners are automatically invited. In theory these are private occasions but they are open to everyone. We do not really participate, but we could.” (Respondent 8, inner-city garden)

One interviewee revealed that partially this vivid and convivial atmosphere made them being interested in community gardening:

„Since we lived so close, we were passing by very often and saw the life inside, with the barbecue, the small cottage...So we wondered that beside getting active in some gardening activity, it would also be nice to participate in the life of the community.” (Respondent 2, suburb garden)

After being member for one and the half year the same interviewee spelled out that gardening is often getting of secondary importance behind the community of gardeners:

“When we sit around the fire, I have to confess that the garden is becoming of secondary importance. We exchange the garden related information rather on Facebook and when we are together we are curious about each other.” (Respondent 2, suburb garden)

Though community building is an essential outcome of community gardening, interviews revealed that not everyone wants to be involved in the same way and with the same intensity, but unlike in case of the common tasks where free-riding is less tolerated, the gardeners generally accept each others’ demand for socialising.

“There are members who intentionally go to water the plants when no one is there. On the other hand, there are members who can easily be mobilised for any voluntary programme. It’s just

the same I guess as in the whole society. But I don't think it's a problem, it's just the question of different habitus.” (Respondent 11, suburb garden)

Since the gardens are formed around the common hobby of gardening, they function as communities of practices where significant social learning is taking place (Wenger, 2010). Members experiment with new crops, plantation methods, organic fertilisers and they exchange their failures and successes with their co-gardeners regularly. Since gardeners have a different level of expertise the more practiced members help the less competent ones. Considering that the older gardeners are generally more skilful, knowledge exchange is becoming intergenerational in the gardens.

Though the primary effect of the gardens is to develop trust and social cohesion among the participants, a few interviewees expressed that by getting involved in hobby food production, she values more the efforts of professional farmers.

“I tend to admire the work of farmers more, especially, I understand now why bio products cost that much” (Respondent 11, suburb garden)

In this way, the gardens can raise awareness on the practices and challenges of land cultivation, and thus develop solidarity with professional producers.

Distrust towards institutions and innovative models of governance

Community gardening is based on participatory and voluntary principles. Urban land is scarce, and citizens are competing for the available cultivable land. Gardeners share a land of a size of a parking plot, and due to this scarcity, they work close to each other. This circumstance and the shared interest bring the gardeners together and the community gardens become meeting hubs that foster interactions and give place to diverse activities from food nights to workshops. What makes the gardens unique among the interest-based voluntary associations is that it brings a traditionally rural type of activity into the city. Gardens are established on vacant urban lands which are either possessed by the municipality or by a private land owner. Gardeners first need to partner up with one of these stakeholders to start the gardening project, and they need constant cooperation to sustain the garden. The gardens even if fenced and locked are visible for the broader public, they aesthetically enrich the neighbourhood and their vivid communal lives draw the attention of the non-gardening residents. This gives a public character to the gardens and fosters further networking between the gardens and local institutions. Partnering with the local pre-schools and schools is a general practice enacted by the gardens through which they serve as educational sites and providing space for pupils to take part in garden visits and even experimental learning. Yet not in an institutionalised form, the gardens are seeking partnership with each other in Budapest. Almost every interviewee mentioned the “Night of Community Gardens”, as a successful event organised by the gardens on a yearly

basis. The event is about opening the gardens for one night to the public and make the idea of urban agriculture more popular.

Interviews and site visits showed that democratic governance is prevailing in the gardens. Though the members see each other as equals, the organisation of tasks and the commonly used infrastructure require some coordination and leadership. The gardens differ in how they share the leadership tasks. In most gardens there is dual leadership, or a “coordination committee” is responsible for the execution of community duties. The leaders or members of the committees are elected by the members, and the gardens tend to make decisions with the involvement all the members either during garden assemblies or in the online forums of the gardens.

4. Discussion

The individual interviews with community garden coordinators and members revealed that community gardens are diverse places not only in terms of the benefits they contribute to the members lives and urban resilience, but also in terms of the heterogeneity of adherents in community gardening. Members have diverse motivations to join the gardens but the critical alter-consumerist and environmentalist attitude in case of the Budapest based community gardens do not seem to be the pioneer driving forces. Responses can be interpreted in a way that community gardening is a novel idea that provide members a convenient and low-entry barrier solution to try food production and experiment with individual and collective land cultivation. Gardeners find the idea of community gardening trendy and appealing, they appreciate the innovative usage of urban space and the gardens’ aesthetic contribution to the urban neighbourhoods. The community aspects of gardening mean different things to the gardeners: some of them mentioned the opportunity and place for socialising as a main motivation, whereas others view the community as an extra, yet not-expected benefit of their gardening activity.

As for alternative consumption, the interviewed gardeners don’t see their activity on the first place as the expression of critique against mainstream mode of food production. They do not perceive either that the critical, ecologically conscious mindset and commitment to alternative lifestyle would be common traits among the gardeners. They see their involvement more as an expression of a common hobby and not of a common identity. Gardeners perceive that they share the compassion to nature and outdoor activities, and many of them are also searching for a space to build bonds with residents from the neighbourhood.

Concerning new bonds and solidarity, community gardens give platforms and topics for neighbourhood residents and people with similar interests to regularly interact with each other. The common hobby and challenges, the frequency of meetings create bonds and solidarity between the members even if they did not aspire becoming part of a community when they joined the gardens. The gardeners do not only celebrate together, but a significant socialising process is taking place among them during the everyday gardening practices. The gardeners' diverse motivations, experiences are mixed up during the communal activities and thus the gardeners can have a serious impact on each other's knowledge, habits and attitudes. These influences may apply to the way of land cultivation (e.g. usage of fertilisers, techniques, tools), food processing and ecological knowledge in the broader sense. New bonds are not only created between the gardeners, but the garden connects its participants to different local stakeholders. Gardeners may have to negotiate with the local municipality, and partnerships are also developed between the gardens and local institutions, plus with the other community gardens of Budapest.

Community gardens act as sites for voluntary activities. The gardeners' ideal is a democratic community where decisions are made on active participation and negotiations between the members. Though building innovative governance models is not something that the gardeners are seeking, in fact due to land conditions and the gardens' dependence on the local power structures and the public character of the gardens they necessarily rely on cooperation with different actors. Accommodating the individual goals and common responsibilities make the gardeners experiment with organisational solutions that are not given to them.

As for the repertoire of actions, community gardens in Hungary just like SCMOs in other contexts promote convivial activities, community building and communal learning within the gardens, and networking, information sharing, awareness raising and education outside of the gardens.

Conclusions

Community gardens in Budapest are novel, diverse urban spaces that provide fields for investigations on various social matters. In this article it was questioned whether the gardens fit the agenda of sustainable community movement organisations (SCMO), a concept developed by Forno and Graziano (2014). The framework of SCMO suggests that community-based initiatives organised locally around a sustainability agenda express the critical attitude of

their adherents concerning environmental issues, the individualisation of societies and the mainstream institutions. These critics are expressed in the organisations in forms of practices that promote alternative lifestyle.

Interviews made with active community gardeners in Budapest revealed that though the practices executed in the gardens are aligned with the practices associated with other SCMOs, they are in most cases not consciously driven by critical attitudes. Gardeners are interested in trying a new hobby that provides them with the benefits of stress relief, personal achievement and socialising. Participants may have positive memories of past experiences with food production and they are motivated to bring them back into their urban everyday lives. Gardens are less driven by alter-consumerism and environmental concerns, but they can rather be interpreted as places for developing such attitudes. Stakeholders initiating gardens in Hungary are inspired by the global trends of urban agriculture and collective modes of food production, therefore, it can be assumed that even the less politically committed members are influenced by the spirit of this broader network. Another explanation can be drawn from the interviews which point out that hands-on work with the soil and the plants, the personal involvement and the time and effort invested in the cultivation of the individual as well as the common plots make the gardeners reflect on the food system and on broader environmental concerns.

The paper is an exploratory investigation around the relations of alternative lifestyles and community gardens in Hungary. One important conclusion derived from this study is that the social learning taking place in the gardens is crucial and therefore needs to be investigated further to understand what values and attitudes are promoted by the gardens. Factors like the environmental and alter-consumerist movement in Hungary might also influence what kind of organisations the community gardens are, therefore, the ideological, historical and institutional context also need to be studied further.

References

Aptekar, S. (2015). Visions of public space: reproducing and resisting social hierarchies in a community garden. *Sociological Forum*, 30(1), 209–227.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12152>

Bende, C. – Nagy, G. (2016). Effects of community gardens on local society: the case of two community gardens in Szeged. *Belvedere Meridionale*, 28(3), 89–105.

<https://doi.org/10.14232/belv.2016.3.7>

Corrigan, M. P. (2011). Growing what you eat: developing community gardens in Baltimore, Maryland. *Applied Geography*, 31(4), 1232–1241.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2011.01.017>

Eizenberg, E. (2012). Actually existing commons: three moments of space of community gardens in New York City. *Antipode*, 44(3), 764–782.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00892.x>

Firth, C. - Maye, D. - Pearson, D. (2011). Developing “community” in community gardens. *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 16(6), 555–568.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.586025>

Follmann, A.- Viehoff, V. (2015). A green garden on red clay: creating a new urban common as a form of political gardening in Cologne, Germany. *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 20(10), 1148–1174.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2014.894966>

Forno, F.- Graziano, P. R. (2014). Sustainable community movement organisations. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 14(2), 139–157.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540514526225>

Fox-Kämper, R. - Wesener, A.- Münderlein, D. - Sondermann, M. - McWilliam, W. – Kirk, N. (2018). Urban community gardens: An evaluation of governance approaches and related enablers and barriers at different development stages. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 170, 59–68.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2017.06.023>

Glover, T. D. (2004). Social capital in the lived experiences of community gardeners. *Leisure Sciences*, 26(2), 143–162.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400490432064>

Glover, T. D. - Parry, D. C. - Shinew, K. J. (2005). Building relationships, accessing resources: mobilizing social capital in community garden contexts. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37(4), 450-474.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2005.11950062>

Haenfler, R. - Johnson, B. - Jones, E. (2012). Lifestyle movements: exploring the intersection of lifestyle and social movements. *Social Movement Studies*, 11(1), 1–20.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2012.640535>

Holland, L. (2004). Diversity and connections in community gardens: a contribution to local sustainability. *Local Environment*, 9(3), 285–305.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1354983042000219388>

Kingsley, J.Y. - Townsend, M. (2006). “Dig In” to social capital: community gardens as mechanisms for growing urban social connectedness. *Urban Policy & Research*, 24(4), 525–537.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08111140601035200>

Krasny, M. E. - Silva, P. - Barr, C. - Golshani, Z. - Lee, E. - Ligas, R. - Mosher, E. - Reynosa, A. (2015). Civic ecology practices: insights from practice theory. *Ecology and Society*, 20(2).

<https://doi.org/10.5751/es-07345-200212>

Kurtz, H. (2001). Differentiating multiple meanings of garden and community. *Urban Geography*, 22(7), 656-670.

<https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.22.7.656>

Micheletti, M. - Follesdal, A. - Stolle, D. (2004). *Politics, Products and Markets*. London: Transaction Publishers.

Lawson, L. (2004). The planner in the garden: a historical view into the relationship between planning and community gardens. *Journal of Planning History*, 3(2), 151–176.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513204264752>

Torres, A.C. - Nadot, S. - Prévot, A.C. (2017). Specificities of french community gardens as environmental stewardships. *Ecology and Society*, 22(3), 1–13.

<https://doi.org/10.5751/es-09442-220328>

van Holstein, E. (2017). Relating to nature, food and community in community gardens. *Local Environment*, vol. 22(10), 1159–1173.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2017.1328673>

Walter, P. (2013). Theorising community gardens as pedagogical sites in the food movement. *Environmental Education Research*, 19(4), 521–539.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2012.709824>

Wenger, E. (2010): *Communities of practice and social learning systems: the career of a concept*. In Blackmore, C. (ed.): *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice*, 179–198. London:Springer.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-84996-133-2_11

Witheridge, J. - Morris, N. J. (2016). An analysis of the effect of public policy on community garden organisations in Edinburgh. *Local Environment*, 21(2), 202–218.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2014.936843>