

Article

Self-Organisation in Urban Community Gardens: Autogestion, Motivations, and the Role of Communication

Christopher Yap 

The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London, London WC1H 9EZ, UK; c.yap@ucl.ac.uk; Tel.: +44-207-679-1111

Received: 17 February 2019; Accepted: 3 May 2019; Published: 9 May 2019



Abstract: Urban gardens are continuously negotiated, contested, and remade. One of the primary ways that these spaces are negotiated is through the ways that communities self-organise to manage them. Drawing on critical urban scholarship, this article explores the ways in which the dynamics of self-organisation in urban gardens both shape and are shaped by the spatial development of the sites. Reflecting on two cycles of participatory video-making with urban gardeners in Seville, Spain, the article specifically examines how the motivations of the gardeners and the issue of communication influence the dynamic relationship between self-organisation and the spatial development of gardens.

Keywords: community self-organisation; autogestion; urban agriculture; communication; motivations; participatory video; participatory action research; Seville

1. Introduction

Urban community gardens are often self-organising and self-managing. However, there are a wide range of practices, politics, and potentials associated with the idea of self-organisation. Self-organisation can be an emancipatory process, individually and collectively. It can also be socially conservative, reproducing hierarchical thinking and entrenching existing inequalities. Self-organisation can manifest with political intent or as an everyday practice, a conscious process or an emergent property. The possibilities, contradictions, and challenges of self-organisation are not specific to urban community gardens, and yet, here, they can take on very particular forms. This article examines the ways and extent to which these specific forms of self-organisation and their spatiality imply a particular set of transformative potentials within the city.

Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's concept of autogestion [1–3] and articulated within his notion of the right to the city, in this article, I examine how the dynamics of self-organisation both shape and are shaped by the spatial development of urban community gardens. Specifically, I examine how two factors—motivations for urban gardening and processes of communication—influence processes of self-organisation and self-management in and around urban gardens and the ways that these processes manifest spatially.

The issues of “motivations” and “communication” emerged as key areas of interest and concern during a participatory action research process that took place with urban gardeners in Seville, Spain, in 2015–2017, as described below. In this article, I aim to make two contributions to the academic discourse. The first is to describe the dialectical relationship between processes of self-organisation and spatial development of urban community gardens. The second is to reflect on how the idea of autogestion could be combined with critical conceptions of communication, power, and networks in order to better understand processes of self-organisation in urban community gardens.

To this end, I aim to address three interrelated questions: how do processes of self-organisation influence and how are they influenced by the spatial development of urban community gardens;

how do the motivations of gardeners and processes of communication affect the relationship between self-organisation and spatial development in urban community gardens; and to what extent does the idea of autogestion help us to better understand these processes?

In the introduction to this article, I examine how the idea of self-organisation has been explored within the urban agriculture literature and outline the contribution of this article to the discourse. I also explore the opportunities and limitations of using one conceptualisation of self-organisation, autogestion, to articulate the significance of self-organisation in community gardens at the city level. In the second section, I outline my methodology and introduce the Seville context. In the third section, I examine the relationships between self-organisation and their spatiality in three urban agriculture projects. I also explore the ways in which these processes are influenced by both the gardeners' motivations for participating in the project and by the dynamics of communication within the project. In the final section, I return to the ideas of self-organisation and autogestion to propose areas for further study regarding the relationships between urban community gardens and broader urban processes.

This article uses the term “mode of organisation” to refer to the diverse processes of management, governance, and decision-making within gardens. The term relates both to the managerial and decision-making structures that are formally or informally, consciously or unconsciously, established within gardens, as well as the ways in which power and authority are distributed within these structures. Throughout the article, “modes of organisation” incorporates both processes of organisation and the resultant structures of organisation: the who, the where, the what, and the how.

1.1. Urban Agriculture and Urban Community Gardens

The current and potential multi-dimensional significance of urban agriculture is well documented [4–7]. However, the past two decades have seen the rise of a discourse that focuses on the social and political significance of urban agriculture. Urban community gardens represent one form of urban agriculture, lauded for their capacity to foster diverse communities [8], engage children and young people in community-oriented projects [9], and for putting women at the centre of decision-making processes [10,11]. This is to say that there exists a significant body of literature that focuses on the “who” of community self-managing urban gardens but less on the “how”.

Elsewhere, scholars have focused on the socio-political impacts of urban community gardens. Staeheli et al.; for example, identify New York's community gardens as the locus of a “counter-public”, whereby marginalised and disenfranchised urban inhabitants can discuss, develop, and debate alternative visions of public space [12]. Others have emphasised the potential of urban community gardens for radical democratic processes [13] and the development of “ecological citizenship” [14].

However, there is no reason that urban gardens should be necessarily transformative spaces [15]; they can become inclusionary or exclusionary spaces [16], progressive or conservative. Critical scholars have recognised the contradictory politics—a “dialectical tension” [17]—at the heart of urban agriculture [18,19]. Whilst urban agriculture can be a radical socio-political activity that enables urban inhabitants to “escape the wage economy” [20] and a “means for building worlds beyond capitalism” [21] (p. 732), it can also be a practice that emphasises individual responsibility over collective action [22], contributes to gentrification and displacement [23], and replaces the distributive functions of the state [17].

There exists a substantial body of literature mapping out the diverse motivations of urban inhabitants engaged in urban agriculture projects [24,25]. The motivations of gardeners, their aims, and expectations of participating in community gardens relate closely to the functions performed by gardens in cities [26,27], such as their associated environmental impacts [28]. However, the motivations of gardeners have not been explored in relation to the spatial development of the sites.

Moreover, within the urban agriculture discourse, little attention has been given to the precise forms of communication that exist within urban community gardens. Instead, scholars have tended to focus on the role of communication in network-building between projects and social movements [4] or the role of communication in building social capital [29]. Elsewhere, scholars have argued

that urban community gardens can be spaces to enhance communication between disparate social groups [30]—again emphasising the “who” more than the “how”.

Both the motivations for participating in an urban gardening project and one’s approach to communication can reflect internalised conceptions of community and community spaces. In this sense, the challenges identified relating to communication and challenges arising from differing motivations and expectations of urban community gardening can be understood as fundamental factors that influence modes of self-organisation and self-management.

Overall, the dynamics and politics of community self-organisation in and around urban agriculture projects remain under-theorised and under-researched. The contribution of this article is to partially address this gap by showing how the processes by which urban community gardens are organised and managed influence both the spatial development of the gardens and the political outcomes associated with the practice of urban agriculture. To this end, it is useful to turn to the idea of autogestion in order to articulate the relationship between self-organisation and spatial development of urban community gardens.

1.2. A Note on Autogestion

Self-organisation always has a spatial dimension. Within the urban agriculture discourse, some scholars have examined how the impacts of urban gardens are distributed spatially across the city [31], while others have taken a more critical approach to the spatial dimension, emphasising that urban space and social reality are co-constitutive [32,33]. For this latter approach, the work of Henri Lefebvre has been particularly important. He presented a spatial ontology rooted in the social production of space that describes a dialectical relationship between three “moments of space”: spatial practice, representation of space, and spaces of representation [34] (p. 91), commonly referred to as perceived, conceived, and lived space. Urban space, he argued, was the product of the dialectical relations between these moments. This is to say that cities are continuously remade through the relationships between material, social, and psychological processes. In this sense, the spatial and the social are fundamentally and inextricably linked.

Lefebvre’s political philosophy, often expressed in terms of his idea of the right to the city, is a direct product of his spatial ontology; urban space is continuously (re)produced by all urban inhabitants; therefore, all urban inhabitants have a collective right to participate in its governance and management. Lefebvre argued that it was only through autogestion—translated to mean either “self-management” or “workers’ control” [35]—that urban inhabitants could realise their right to the city. Lefebvre therefore provides a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic relationship between self-organisation and spatial development in urban community gardens.

Across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, autogestion has been associated with ideas of self-organisation, self-management, self-governance, and autonomy. Marx used the notion of autogestion to refer to the subversive ways in which the proletariat in factories might self-organise to self-manage production. However, the idea also has a particularly close and important relationship with late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century anarchist thought, which emphasised federated systems of governance beyond the state, as well as principles of mutual aid, free agreements, and self-jurisdiction [36–38]. In the context of Spain, Murray Bookchin described the distinct modes of self-organisation that emerged within the popular libertarian anarchist movement in Andalucía in the 1930s, which “sought out the precapitalist traditions of the village, nourished what was living and vital in them, evoked their revolutionary potentialities as liberatory modes of mutual aid and self-management, and deployed them to vitiate the obedience, hierarchical mentality, and authoritarian outlook fostered by the factory system” [38] (pp. 7–8). This is to say that there are historical processes of self-organisation and self-management that have taken place in Spain that resonate closely with both Marxist and anarchist readings of autogestion. European thinkers, including Lefebvre and Castoriadis, were critical in bridging these different conceptions of autogestion. Lefebvre’s contribution to the

discourse was to frame autogestion not as a political argument, but as a methodology; an opportunity and imperative for all urban inhabitants to realise their right to the city.

Approaching the subject of self-organisation through the lens of autogestion is useful for two reasons. The first is that within Lefebvre's articulation of the right to the city, autogestion is fundamentally and intrinsically connected to spatial practice and spatial politics. Within this framing, urban gardens are not theatres in which self-organisation takes place; rather, they continuously reconstitute and are reconstituted by social processes, including self-organisation, therein. As Merrifield writes: "It's not in space that people act: *people become space by acting*. Nothing is scenic anymore . . . participants' own bodies become the major scenic element, the spatial form as well as the spatial content" [39] (p. 425). The second is that the concept is useful for helping to contextualise place-based processes of self-organisation within broader urban processes. Interpreted as a form of autogestion, conscious or unconscious, self-organisation has a telos and a purpose that can be understood in the context of the broader production and management of cities. In order to articulate a social and political defence of urban community gardens, it is critical that the dynamics of self-organisation are understood in relation to the wider city.

Purcell and Tyman make a very compelling case for interpreting self-organisation in community gardens in the United States of America in terms of "the fledgling struggle for spatial *autogestion* that is already taking place in the contemporary city" [40] (p. 1142). They identify some urban gardens with Lefebvre's notion of "sites of encounter" [41]—sites of unchoreographed, spontaneous encounter that are critical for overcoming segregation and alienation; reconnecting and re-socialising urban inhabitants. This article seeks to build on this important work by focusing on how the internal dynamics of negotiation, governance, and management influence the social and political significance of self-organisation in urban community gardens. To this end, the issue of communication is particularly important.

There exist, at many levels, close relationships between processes of communication and self-management. Lefebvre himself stated in 1989 that communication and technology were the themes that interested him the most [42]. In the introduction to *Space and Politics* [1973], Lefebvre writes, "In the most 'positive' of terms [the right to the city] signifies the right of citizens and city dwellers, and of groups they (on the basis of social relations) constitute, to appear on all the networks and circuits of communication, information and exchange" [3] (pp. 194–5).

However, Lefebvre was not interested in the micro-politics of communication, the communication between individuals, or the ways that communication influences modes of autogestion. Rather, he was interested in the role of communication in reproducing or challenging city-, regional-, and global-level socio-economic trends. It was Manuel Castells who explicitly characterised the relationships between communication and power within what he termed the "networked society" [43,44]. Additionally, it was Habermas' theory of communicative action [45] that offered a pragmatic challenge to universalist and objectivist conceptions of reason by attempting to reconcile collective, lived-experiences with systemic and structural explanations of the world. By signifying the importance of "communicative acts", Habermas' conception of rationality is inherently tied to issues of communication, interaction, and language.

In accordance with Castells and Habermas, this article explores not only the procedural politics of communication, but also the ways through which communication both reinforces and undermines existing power dynamics within communities and within the city more broadly. This is to say that by augmenting the idea of autogestion with more critical conceptions of communication, power, and networks, it may be possible to articulate more comprehensively the potentials of urban gardens for realising territorial autogestion.

2. Methodology

This research used a participatory action research (PAR) approach. PAR is a form of inquiry rooted in life experiences and practice that embraces epistemological plurality, diversity, and difference

and whereby knowledge is acquired “through responding to a real need in life” [46] (p. 19); PAR is less about “world-mapping” and more a process of “world-making” [47]. In practice, a PAR approach is reflexive, iterative, responsive, and co-produced. Within this approach, this research employed a combination of qualitative, ethnographic, and participatory visual research methods.

This article draws on two cycles of research that took place in Seville, Spain, between 2015 and 2017. Each cycle comprised distinct phases of planning, fieldwork, analysis, and critical reflection. The first cycle took place between April 2015 and April 2017, involving 14 weeks of fieldwork, which focused on two urban community gardens, Miraflores Sur and Huerto del Rey Moro. The second cycle of research took place between April 2017 and October 2017 and focused on the urban permaculture collective, La Boldina. Each cycle developed around a participatory video process conducted with a group of gardeners.

Participatory video-making is a research methodology that involves teaching small groups of people to plan, shoot, edit, and distribute films about issues that are important to them. Participatory video-making has emerged as a distinct methodology over the past 20 years with the increased availability and affordability of cameras and video-making technology. However, it is only in the past decade that there has started to emerge substantive critical engagement with the practice, politics, and ethics of participatory video-making, as well as its potentials for research, as distinct from other participatory visual research methods such as Photovoice [48–51]. Overall what has emerged is a more nuanced understanding of the potentials of a participatory video-making process to create spaces for critical engagement and active learning that challenge academic dominance in knowledge production. As Kindon argues, “The knowledges produced (through participatory video-making) are both for and by the participants, which challenges dominant representations and goes some way to breaking down usually hierarchical researcher/researched relationships” [52] (p. 144).

This project participatory video-making had three main purposes. The first was to generate qualitative data through interviews conducted within the video processes, as well as ethnographic and auto-ethnographic material. The second was to generate critical spaces and an epistemologically diverse process through which we, as a group, might explore specific issues in greater depth than can be easily achieved by the use of one method, such as qualitative interviews or surveys, alone. The third was to contribute to the work of the gardeners in Seville by enabling them to create their own media for external, as well as internal use, and to build their capacity for media production. There has not been any research to date that has used participatory video-making as a primary research method in urban community gardens, and therefore, this represents an important methodological innovation.

This project comprised two distinct participatory video processes, one for each cycle of research. Each process comprised six distinct elements, adapted from the participatory video process developed by the United Kingdom-based participatory video NGO, InsightShare [53]: planning, technical training, thematic workshops, filming, participatory editing, and screening. Each video-making process involved in-depth training workshops that emphasised collective discussion of the ethics of video-making—including issues of consent—and collective narrative-building over technical training. For each process, we negotiated ethical protocols regarding the shooting and distribution of the output film. Every person that appears in the film was given an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form indicating that they understood the purpose of the video and its relationship to the wider research project.

The elements of the video-making process are distinguished by the fact they provide participants with distinct opportunities for different forms of engagement with the video-making and research. Each element therefore represents a specific set of learning pathways, both for me as researcher and for the gardeners as participants. Each element contains particular epistemological opportunities, as well as specific limitations and challenges. The ways in which certain ideas emerged or were articulated within each element could be complementary, but they could also be contradictory. For example, gardeners may set out to represent a situation in one way when shooting the film, but this might be contradicted by the way the same situation is represented during and as a result of the participatory editing process.

The dialogue between these distinct forms of engagement and the possibility to reflect on this dialogue is one of the greatest opportunities of participatory video-making as a research methodology.

The first participatory video process involved four gardeners from Huerto del Rey Moro—three females and one male—who made a short film about the themes of communication and transformation within and between Huerto del Rey Moro and Miraflores Sur. The gardeners were self-selecting, long-term gardeners (a minimum of three years at the site) and were deeply involved in the daily management of the garden. The themes of the film were developed through two participatory workshops that took place in the garden. The first was a problem tree exercise, in which the gardeners identified communication as a key challenge and opportunity in the garden. The second was a more focused discussion on how the gardeners understood processes of communication. The film was shot by the gardeners across both sites. It was edited together through a three-day participatory editing workshop and widely distributed online <http://vimeo.com/176170458> [54].

The second participatory video process involved eight gardeners from the collective, La Boldina: three females and five males. One female and one male gardener participated in both video processes. The themes of the film were also developed through participatory workshops; it was shot by both the author and the gardeners and edited together through a participatory process. At the end of the video-making processes, it was agreed amongst all participants that the video should not be publicly released. This was for three reasons. The first is that the gardeners felt that the themes of the film could be considered sensitive in the context of recent conflicts within the community; the second is that parts of the film were shot in occupied locations, and it is possible that publicly revealing these locations could be a threat to residents; and the third is that the gardeners and the author agreed that the process of making the film had been richer and more productive than the final film.

In addition to the two participatory video processes, this article draws on 36 qualitative interviews conducted by the author with participants in the video-making processes and other key stakeholders engaged with the urban gardens, including members of local associations and academics. The first cycle included 20 interviews: seven in Huerto del Rey Moro, ten in Miraflores Sur, and three with actors not associated with either garden. The second cycle included 16 interviews conducted with members of the group, La Boldina. These interviews enabled more time for discussion and reflection on key issues and themes that emerged from the video-making processes. The article also draws on both ethnographic observation and a process of auto-ethnography that was recorded in a field journal.

The data that emerged from the participatory video processes, qualitative interviews, ethnographic observation, and auto-ethnography were brought together for thematic analysis using an adapted form of an analytical matrix based upon the framework method, an approach to thematic, qualitative analysis that aims to “identify commonalities and differences in qualitative data, before focusing on relationships between different parts of the data, thereby seeking to draw descriptive and/or explanatory conclusions clustered around themes” [55] (p. 118). The aim of presenting and analysing the information in this way was to recognise and maintain the interrelations between the different participatory and non-participatory research elements and the development of specific ideas, themes, and conclusions through the research process. I believe that this was important in order to recognise the diversity of modes of investigation within this project, as well as to enable me to better account for my own influence on the thematic development of the research.

The interview transcripts were coded in three phases, each of which corresponded with new, distinct engagement with the material. In the first phase, I coded the transcripts according to the key themes that had emerged from the participatory video processes—themes that had either been suggested explicitly or had emerged from discussions during the process. In the second phase, I used a more inductive and interpretive approach to coding the transcripts, identifying themes that overlapped with or were relevant in the context of the idea of Lefebvre’s right to the city. These phases were used to identify thematic clusters, such as community self-organisation, the subject of this article. The third and final round of coding was more systematic and more deductive, identifying sub-themes

and drawing on transcripts of interviews, as well as patterns and clusters of themes that had emerged in the matrix.

In the following discussion of findings, quotations from fieldwork are anonymised, except for public figures who consented to be interviewed with full knowledge of the project. I also indicate the month and year that the interview took place, whether or not it was part of the participatory video-making process or a semi-structured qualitative interview, the gender of the respondent, and the location of the interview/video recording. The only exception to this rule is interviews that took place in occupied (squatted) locations, so as not to reveal the location of these properties or increase the risk of eviction for the residents. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated by the author.

The article utilises a form of comparative inquiry, drawing on research conducted with two groups of urban gardeners and one city-wide network. However, my aim is not to use comparison as a research method; there is no attempt to develop a metric or framework to compare modes of organisation between the gardens and the gardening network. Rather, this article employs comparison as a “mode of thought . . . as a means for situating and contesting existing claims in urban theory, expanding the range of debate, and informing new perspectives” [56] (p. 726). Comparison, in this sense, enables us to emphasise the lived commonalities and contrasts in ways that should be considered “essential to support(ing) different ways of working across diverse urban experiences” [57] (p. 765). This is an approach to comparative inquiry that emphasises heterogeneity, juxta-positioning, and trans-local geographies as a generators of insight, and which has become increasingly prevalent in the field of critical urban geography [58,59].

Introduction to Seville's Urban Gardens

Seville is an historic city in the Autonomous Community of Andalucía in the South of Spain with a population of approximately 700,000 people. Seville is unusual in Western Europe for its lack of a large-scale industrial revolution, meaning that much of the urban expansion encroached directly onto agricultural lands. The new developments—characterised by wide avenues and high-rise tower blocks—are spatially distinct from the “Casco Antiguo”—the Old Town—where the narrow streets and historic architecture have remained largely unchanged for centuries. The most recent survey by the city hall, conducted in 2016–2017, identified 15 urban gardens in the city, with the majority located in the periphery. However, this did not take into account all urban agricultural practices, many of which take place on private or institutional lands and which were omitted from the survey. It is beyond the scope of this article to evaluate the significance of urban agriculture within Seville's ecological infrastructure. However, it is important to recognise that the gardens discussed below are part of a wider green infrastructure that includes waterways above and below ground, public parks not used for agriculture, and private and institutional gardens.

Miraflores Sur is the largest urban garden in Seville. Huerto del Rey Moro is the smallest site, and the only one located within the “Casco Antiguo”. The two gardens present the most extreme contrasts, spatially and organisationally, within the existing gardens and, as such, were chosen as sites for the first cycle of research. La Boldina, the subject of the second cycle of research, operates as a network in several sites across the city.

Miraflores Sur is a community-managed growing space on the site of a farm known as Huerta las Moreras within Parque de Miraflores in the north of Seville. The land that now constitutes the park was a flood plain for the river that ran through Seville. The propensity of the land to flood meant it was designated a Green Zone in the 1960s. However, the site quickly became a dumpsite for construction debris and was almost entirely inaccessible to the local population.

In 1983, the organisation, “Comité Pro-Parque Educativo Miraflores” (Miraflores Park Educational Association) was established by local residents with the aim of developing the land into a public park that respected the cultural heritage of the area. Monthly citizen assemblies were initially held on the site in order to determine the future of the space. The park now covers 847,000 m² and includes large areas for sports and other activities.

Miraflores Sur gardens were established within the park in 1991. The gardens comprise 36,400 m² (approximately 4.2% of the total park area). The gardens are divided up into 162 individual plots, of approximately 60 m² and 10 school gardens of approximately 150 m². The land is owned by the city hall, which is also responsible for water, electricity, infrastructure development, and maintenance of pathways, water access, and security fences. Today, the gardeners are predominantly retired people from the local area; retired men hold the majority of plots.

Huerto del Rey Moro is an occupied, community-managed garden in the Macarena district of Seville's Old Town. The garden occupies approximately 2000 m² between Calle Sol and Calle Enladrillada on land that was formerly the private orchard of a large private house. The garden was unused and hidden from public view until it was 'rediscovered' in 2002 by members of the local community and gradually transformed into an urban garden. Today the space combines growing areas with large communal spaces. The garden grows a combination of vegetables, aromatics, and medicinal plants according to a mixture of organic and permaculture principles. The communal areas are used by adults, children, and visitors to the garden on a daily basis, primarily as open public space. The site hosts a variety of workshops, festivals, and public events throughout the year, including weekly bread-making workshops and 'bio-construction' workshops in which structures for the garden, as well as other community-managed spaces, are built from reclaimed materials.

La Boldina is an urban permaculture collective that emerged from Huerto del Rey Moro in early 2017. The group was started by a small number of gardeners with a strong interest in permaculture, but it has grown to include a diverse group of 30–40 people that work regularly on sites across Seville, as well as outside the city. Beyond urban gardening, La Boldina is involved in public workshops, advocacy, lectures, and performance art to promote permaculture principles and practice.

The group cultivates a wide range of growing spaces according to permaculture principles. During the second participatory video-making process, the group was working in Huerto del Rey Moro, in a large school garden in Macarena, in an occupied house, on three city-owned plots in Parque de Alamillo, on land made available around a local radio station, and on a small farm outside of the city in a town called Hinojos. La Boldina's other activities, such as street theatre, take place predominantly in Macarena within the "Casco Antiguo". Through the latter part of 2017 and 2018 the number of projects that the group are involved in grew dramatically. However, this article only refers to projects that were underway during the period of fieldwork in May–July 2017.

3. Results

3.1. Modes of Self-Organisation and Their Spatiality

3.1.1. Miraflores Sur

Miraflores Sur is managed formally by a gardeners' association, headed by a long-term gardener, who was elected by the group. The head of the association is responsible for organising events in the garden, reallocating disused plots, managing communications, and liaising with the park association, the primary conduit to city hall. Whilst this evidences a hierarchical decision-making structure, the fact that the head of the gardener's association is a long-term user of the space, has a personal relationship with almost every gardener on the site, and is very accessible, means that the gardeners do not feel that it is undemocratic. Indeed, the election of a representative to make decisions on behalf of the group closely mirrors the form of representative democracy employed by the state.

Outside of the formal management structure, the garden is developed and maintained according to decisions made by the community of gardeners. For example, decisions on how to cultivate shared and communal areas are made through discussion and on an ad hoc basis. This form of decision-making depends upon the strong, amiable relationships between the gardeners, something that was emphasised by every gardener interviewed through the first participatory video-making process:

You have relations with many people, with Jose, with Manuel, with many people. We share things, we help one another. (female gardener, Miraflores Sur, May 2016, first participatory video process)

Sharing both administrative and manual work in the garden is central to the gardeners' mode of organisation. This can be seen in the ways that they collaborate on construction projects and exchange skills in the group. This mutuality can also be seen in the self-managed networks whereby tools, seeds, and knowledge are shared and exchanged.

Gardeners have control over their own plots, so long as they abide by general rules set by the association. For example, gardeners cannot use chemical pesticides. However, the close communication between the gardeners and the continuous exchange of knowledge and experience mean that there is a gradual, progressive spatial alignment between plots and growing methods the longer the gardeners work at the site; over time each plot begins to resemble the others.

Today's organisational structures contrast significantly with the participatory, community-led process that established the park in 1983. The initial process of self-organisation from 1983–1991 was reflexive and dynamic, as the current head of the Parque de Miraflores association explained:

There was no previous experience. This little model is the model that emerged gradually from people. Neighbourhood assemblies were happening and gradually we came here and started doing assemblies in the park as well ... It was made from the meeting point of a physical vision and a social vision. (interview with Manuel Lara, Miraflores Sur, May 2016)

However, the structures that were created, including monthly assemblies, no longer exist. Today the community of gardeners is far less mobilised and far less adaptive than the site's initial founders. This does not signify a lack of political engagement; rather, it signifies a different mode of organisation to the more participatory and deliberative democratic processes in Huerto del Rey Moro and La Boldina, discussed below—one that relies on more widely practiced systems of representation and hierarchy and a close, albeit mutable, relationship with the city hall.

In Miraflores Sur, there has been a steady decrease in the amount of communal space across the site. In part, this has been to meet the increasing demand for individual plots. One of the ways that gardeners have recreated these shared spaces is through the construction of communal sun-shelters that bridge adjacent plots. These shelters are used daily by the gardeners and enhance the relationships between close neighbours. However, the overall lack of communal space means that gardeners across the site do not communicate regularly. Miraflores Sur's shift from a deliberative to a representative management structure coincided with the increasing involvement of the city hall in the gardens. Over time, the changing relationship with the city hall has had a significant spatial impact on the site. Today, the city hall maintains the infrastructure of the garden to a high standard; the paths that run in between rows of plots are well-maintained and respected by the gardeners and visitors to the site. However, the involvement of the city hall has also constrained spontaneous development or community-led planning within the gardens. The sense amongst the gardeners is that they are responsible for their own plots, but the city hall owns the gardens.

3.1.2. Huerto del Rey Moro

Huerto del Rey Moro is managed on a daily basis by a small number of gardeners, varying seasonally between 10–25 people. Longer-term planning and management decisions are made by a neighbourhood assembly of approximately 50 people that meets once a month. The assemblies include gardeners that work in the space on a daily basis, as well as local residents and other long-term users of the space. Assemblies are chaired by one of the gardeners, rotating within a small group of six to eight people. The assemblies are semi-structured, but also provide time for unstructured discussion and debate on issues that might arise.

Members of the Huerto del Rey Moro assembly also hold deliberative workshops to discuss specific issues or make plans for specific areas or events within the site. These workshops occur once

or twice per year, as required. These processes have played an important role in conflict resolution and have proved a productive and inclusive way of planning around contentious topics. For example, in October 2016, the garden hosted a ‘visioning’ workshop for approximately 40 regular users of the site to develop and share their visions for the future of the space.

Whilst Huerto del Rey Moro is nominally non-hierarchical, there are two primary mechanisms through which hierarchy emerges. The first is through control of management processes. For example, the Huerto del Rey Moro website (huertodelreymoro.org) is managed by one individual. The website is the primary way that non-local residents learn about the activities in the garden and is the primary form of communication with the wider public. This arrangement has caused some tensions as some gardeners have argued that the website should be managed collectively by those that work most frequently in the space. The second way that hierarchy emerges is through the epistemic authority possessed by certain gardeners. This is particularly important for the group of gardeners who work according to permaculture principles. The small number of individuals with training in permaculture or significant experience working according to permaculture principles was granted authority to make important decisions regarding the management of the garden spaces. This was not a source of tension amongst the gardeners; however, it has been a source of tension within the monthly assemblies, where many local residents, who do not regularly work in the gardens, have argued the garden is controlled by a small and specific faction of people and that the overgrown plants are “invading” the family space.

The differing visions of these groups manifest spatially within the site; garden areas are sharply distinguished from children’s play areas and other communal areas. However, through 2016, both groups remained committed to ensuring that, overall, Huerto del Rey Moro remains an inclusive and open space, even if this means a degree of spatial segregation within the site. Thus, the majority of gardeners and local residents continue to participate in the assemblies, even when they have become, at times, fraught and contested.

However, overall, to a first-time visitor to Huerto del Rey Moro, the community appears highly self-organised, participatory, inclusive, and dynamic. The adaptive management structure has emerged through negotiation and relationship-building within the community. Many of the challenges and conflicts that have arisen within the monthly assemblies are a testament to the degree of horizontality and commitment that characterise the gardeners and local residents. Gardens, vegetables, trees, and pathways have become the means and language through which a diverse community discuss collective and individual visions of community, cooperation, public space, and the urban environment.

The spatial contrast between Huerto del Rey Moro and Miraflores Sur is significant. A visitor to either garden will very quickly recognise the different cultures of the spaces by the ways that the gardens are planned and managed. In Miraflores, the closely regulated plots reflect an effort of the management to ensure efficiency of individual plots within the bounded area, whilst the carefully planned individual plots reflect the efforts of gardeners to produce as much food as possible within their allotted space. In Huerto del Rey Moro, ‘efficient use of space’ is not an idea that is used within the garden. The diverse and often chaotic space reflects a desire to include as many people as possible within the community. Sometimes this manifests as spatial divisions within the garden, but when compared with Miraflores Sur, Huerto del Rey Moro has created a larger and more diverse community with far less material space. The garden is regularly used by hundreds of local residents as opposed to the small community of gardeners that work in Miraflores Sur. Additionally, whilst the community of gardeners in Miraflores Sur comprises predominantly retired men, Huerto del Rey Moro is visited and managed by women and men of all ages and from a range of backgrounds and professions.

3.1.3. La Boldina

La Boldina is not a formal organisation; it functions more like a supportive network, which capably manages several projects simultaneously. The group meets weekly in a community meeting space to plan the next week’s activities. Compared with the assemblies at Huerto del Rey Moro, the meetings are more informal and less structured. Whilst the group take it in turns to propose items for an agenda,

the majority of meetings are taken up by discussion of spontaneous ideas and issues. On other days, small groups gather together to work on other sites in Seville. Many of the group's gardening projects began through one member's access to a site or a personal relationship with a person who could grant access.

La Boldina prides itself on its strong group cohesion, which "depends less on personalities" than the management of Huerto del Rey Moro (male gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, June 2017, second participatory video process). The group brings together people with diverse interests, skills, and values, but with an interest in permaculture:

In La Boldina, I see people with many different values and interests that all come together, and I see myself in each one of these people. (male gardener, undisclosed location, May 2017, second participatory video process)

Well, in the group there is a variety of interesting people. These people come from all walks of life. That's something that I really enjoy—everyone committing to this cause... No one asks anything of anyone, and everyone gives what they're able to. (female gardener, Parque de Alamillo, June 2017, second participatory video process)

The weekly meetings are always held in the same space, although, with the numerous projects the group is involved in, much discussion and decision-making occur outside of the organised meetings. Decisions regarding the strategic direction of the group are made collectively. Decisions regarding specific projects are also made collectively but never without the individual that negotiated the group's access to the space.

The community of La Boldina's commitment to permaculture is reflected both in the spaces it cultivates and in the group itself, including how it functions and how it engages with the wider city. The group is consciously diverse and non-hierarchical, comprising gardeners, architects, teachers, and performing artists, amongst others. However, by creating a space for knowledge sharing, discussion, and experimentation, La Boldina has become a creative and adaptive organisation, from which diverse projects emerge and take shape organically.

In La Boldina, permaculture is a philosophy that extends beyond urban food production. Whilst food and the environment are central themes, the group also uses permaculture as a lens through which they engage with other urban processes; a permaculture-inspired community, for example, should be diverse, adaptive, and self-managing. At the same time, agroecological ideas, such as recognising interconnectivity and cycles, are being repurposed as social and political principles for engaging with broader urban issues, including the speculative housing market and gentrification of working class neighbourhoods. As one member explains, "permaculture principles are increasingly reflected in the private lives of the group" (male gardener, undisclosed location, May 2017, second participatory video process). Permaculture principles derive from an approach to agriculture developed by Bill Mollison [60] that integrates the design of food, energy, water systems, and human settlements. However, the articulation of permaculture in La Boldina also draws on indigenous and other low-impact approaches to agriculture.

La Boldina does not have a coherent spatial strategy. Their various projects have emerged opportunistically. However, within the group, there is a conscious desire to connect growing spaces from across the city, a desire that was not ever articulated when the group was based in Huerto del Rey Moro. In many respects, the group represents what Murray Bookchin [38] has described as an anarchist mode of organisation, emphasising mutual aid, individual and collective intellectual and emotional development, and an expedient, flexible, and responsive organisational structure. There is no formal hierarchy, and all members are invited to participate in discussion and decision-making processes. This contrasts with decision-making structures in Huerto del Rey Moro but most significantly with Miraflores Sur.

The spatial dimensions of management in Miraflores Sur contrast significantly with Huerto del Rey Moro, where the layout of the garden is continuously renegotiated, reimagined, and remade

according to the needs of the community. However, the permaculture gardeners who went on to create the collective, La Boldina, spent proportionately more time and contributed proportionately more labour to the space. Therefore, decisions made by this group, outside of the assemblies, often spontaneously, had a disproportionate influence on the space. For example, the decision to create or close paths through the garden significantly impact their perceived accessibility to visitors to the site.

When compared side by side, the management structures of Huerto del Rey Moro and La Boldina are not dissimilar. The greatest distinction is the space in which these self-management processes occur. While Huerto del Rey Moro's assemblies take place in a public space and actively invite participants with diverse ideas and levels of engagement with the garden, La Boldina's take place in a semi-private space. The semi-private nature of the management space reinforces the dynamic that those in the room already share a number of core principles. This lack of conflict allows the group to be more dynamic and responsive to opportunities and new projects; however, it lacks the conscious and hard-fought deliberative elements of Huerto del Rey Moro. In La Boldina, the creativity and energy for urban agriculture that emerged and was nurtured in Huerto del Rey Moro is suddenly being applied at the city level. To some extent, this has been liberating for the group; the group is not bound by deliberative decision-making structures. However, at the same time, the group lacks the diversity of the Huerto del Rey Moro assemblies and the unique, dynamic space that results from it.

The gardeners across the three projects are not practicing autogestion in the broad societal sense that Lefebvre outlined. However, in Huerto del Rey Moro and La Boldina they are practicing forms of self-organisation and self-management in ways that contrast significantly with decision-making processes in the wider city; deliberative democracy has become naturalised within the groups. While autogestion across the three projects might not be resulting in autonomy, in the case of Huerto del Rey Moro in particular, it is leading to greater agency and control over public space in the neighbourhood.

3.2. Motivations for Urban Gardening and Their Impacts on Self-Organisation

In Huerto del Rey Moro and Miraflores Sur there are significant differences in terms of the gardeners' motivations for participating in both the practice of urban gardening and how this impacts the management of the projects. These contrasts are even more significant when compared with La Boldina.

In Miraflores Sur, many of the gardeners interviewed practiced urban agriculture for the anticipated positive impacts it would have on their lives. In contrast, in Huerto del Rey Moro, some gardeners were motivated by their interest in permaculture, but many participate for more tangential reasons, including the nature of the space itself. Overall, this research identified four primary motivations for gardening, some of which are specific to one garden and some of which were identifiable across both sites.

The primary motivations identified are as follows: the positive anticipated impact of urban gardening on health and wellbeing; a childhood connection to gardening and food production; interest in community-building and collective learning; and a desire to work closely with nature. The second motivation was exclusive to Miraflores Sur, whilst an interest in community-building and collective learning was found to be a motivation only in Huerto del Rey Moro. In both gardens, gardeners were motivated by the anticipated health and wellbeing benefits of urban gardening and expressed a desire to work closely with nature; however, there were significant differences in responses between the sites.

In Miraflores Sur, the gardeners spoke at length about the perceived and anticipated health benefits of urban gardening, as well as the opportunity to produce one's own vegetables. Some gardeners also argued that gardening was good for their mental wellbeing:

Well, what can I say? You do a physical activity, you move outdoors, and have healthy food. What more do you want? (male gardener, Miraflores Sur, April 2016, first participatory video process)

The oxygen we take, talking with our neighbours. It's an outdoor gym; this is our gym. (female gardener, Miraflores Sur, May 2016, first participatory video process)

Many retired gardeners in Miraflores Sur also spoke about a childhood connection to food and farming:

It's a hobby for me. I like it and am in touch with nature. It transports me to my childhood with my father . . . I was brought up with a small field and orchard. (male gardener, Miraflores Sur, April 2016, first participatory video process)

I started working in the fields at thirteen years old. Well, now this is not work, but hey, you return a little to the earth. (male gardener, Miraflores Sur, April 2016, first participatory video process)

In both gardens, both younger and older gardeners spoke about their desire to be close to nature. In Miraflores Sur, gardeners emphasised the positive impact that proximity to nature had on their wellbeing, whereas in Huerto del Rey Moro, many gardeners expressed their desire to bring nature into their neighbourhood through gardening, as well as in terms of grander societal change:

We had no clue what we wanted the space to be. What we did know was that we wanted our children to be able to touch the soil, feel the environment, and have a space that was ours. (interview with female gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, May 2017)

The objective here, for me, is to create harmony between man and nature. (female gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, May 2016, first participatory video process)

A small number of gardeners from both sites expressed their interest in specific approaches to growing food. In Miraflores Sur, some of the gardeners had attended training courses in agriculture/horticulture, organised by the City Hall, and wanted to put this knowledge to practical use. In Huerto del Rey Moro, a significant proportion of the gardeners were motivated to participate in the garden due to their interest in permaculture.

So how do these diverse motivations affect the process of self-organisation in the gardens? In Miraflores Sur, the gardeners motivated primarily by the anticipated health benefits associated with gardening and/or a childhood connection to food growing have distinctly individualised visions of the garden; it is a space that contributes towards fulfilling their physical and emotional needs. For this reason, the organisational structures in the garden predominantly play an enabling role, securing their ongoing use of the site and facilitating access to inputs, such as woodchips and composting materials.

Overall, the management structure in Miraflores Sur meets the needs of the current community of gardeners. The community is characterised by its strong interpersonal relationships; however, there is little enthusiasm for change or improvement, either to the managerial structures or the material planning of the site. For this reason, it suits the gardeners to delegate the relatively simple tasks of allocating plots and purchasing inputs to an elected representative.

This is in sharp contrast to Huerto del Rey Moro, where people's motivations for urban gardening are closely linked to the struggle for public, community space. The activity of urban gardening therefore represents a practical outlet and a focus for much of this energy. For this reason, the vast majority of gardeners and many local residents are involved in its ongoing governance and management. Many have a desire not only to be close to nature, but also to create a productive and sustainable community around gardens that is inherently tied to a commitment, at least on the part of the most active gardeners, to a collective and community-led project. This commitment manifests as a horizontal and democratic approach not only to working on the land, but also to decision-making within the community.

After the creation of La Boldina, permaculture played a less critical role in the management of Huerto del Rey Moro, as many of the most active gardeners are now working regularly in a variety of spaces beyond the garden. Yet, many of the remaining gardeners in Huerto del Rey Moro retain

community-building motivations for gardening, while organic gardening became the dominant discourse. The motivations and expectations of the participants in the space, both before and since the creation of La Boldina, is not to produce significant amounts of food or take control of an individual parcel of land. Rather, it is to share and thus contribute to a public green space in the city.

These community-centred motivations mean that the majority of visitors are invited, even expected, to participate in community activities, including festivals, workshops, and assemblies. For this reason, the monthly assemblies are not only a conscious effort to create a democratic and participatory space, but also a practical way of meeting the expectations of the gardeners and visitors to the site. In this way, the assemblies have become a self-reinforcing mode of organisation. First-time visitors to the garden are confronted by a democratic and open form of self-management that influences would-be-gardeners' decisions about whether or not to become part of the community; certainly, many of the gardeners of Miraflores Sur today would be discouraged by the lively and often contested management processes in Huerto del Rey Moro.

To a great extent, members of La Boldina share many motivations with the gardeners of Huerto del Rey Moro, comprising, as they did, a significant proportion of the gardeners at the site. However, there are significant differences in terms of how these motivations are articulated, as well as new motivations that were not described during the first cycle of research. The motivations for members of La Boldina fall into three categories: the desire to work with nature, specifically through permaculture; the desire to be part of a community; and the desire to drive societal change.

Every member of La Boldina expressed their desire to work closely with nature. Sometimes this was very practical; members of the group described wanting to be in contact with the soil and work with the land. At other times, nature is spoken of in terms of both its intrinsic and symbolic value; gardens are often referred to as “un paraíso”—a paradise. In this way, La Boldina project abstracts values onto material garden spaces, which have come to represent something profound for members of the group. Overall, however, the desire to work with nature was most frequently expressed in relation to permaculture:

For me this has been my main motivation for wanting to stay, the permaculture ... It's something that's very important to me and now this is what I do. (male gardener, undisclosed location, May 2017, second participatory video process)

The second primary motivation relates to their changing concept of community. The establishment of La Boldina was an attempt to build a close community around the theme of permaculture. However, in contrast to Huerto del Rey Moro, the idea of community was no longer bound to a particular space or area; rather, it could exist simultaneously in multiple spaces, at multiple scales. Whilst recognising that it is not possible to separate one from the other [61], La Boldina can be considered primarily a community of interest rather than of place. This has liberated the members of the group in terms of the types, locations, and scales of project that they are beginning to involve themselves with:

Since I don't have a family, I also don't have a home. If there is a project in Seville, then I'll be here in Seville. If there is one in China, I'll be in China. I want to open myself up more in order to achieve a more global community. (female gardener, Huerto del Santa Marina, May 2017, second participatory video process)

The third primary motivation identifiable within La Boldina is the desire to drive wider societal change. This motivation existed to some extent amongst the same group when they were based in Huerto del Rey Moro; however it is now far more explicit, directed at both transforming industrial, intensive farming systems, as well as bringing about a more collective and empathetic social culture:

For me, it's a strong community experience with many people who are conscious that they want a different direction in our current society. (male gardener, undisclosed location, May 2017, second participatory video process)

As a small organisation, members of La Boldina recognise the limitations of their activities in enabling grand socio-economic transformation. What has changed, however, from their time in Huerto del Rey Moro is the more strategic way that the group is managing its projects towards maximum exposure through engagement with a public audience. La Boldina wants to advocate for changes in the way that people think about and manage natural resources, and the group organises itself in a way that maximises its impact towards this end.

When compared with the relationships between motivations and self-management practices in the two urban gardens, La Boldina's approach appears far more linear, focused, and purposeful. The group self-organises to self-manage a wide range of projects—gardening, teaching, cultural projects, art, and theatre—that contribute towards their permaculture-oriented aims. La Boldina's mode of self-organisation is both practical and aspirational. On the one hand, the group organises to maximise the skills and capacities of each member in order to have maximum outreach within the city. On the other hand, the group dedicates significant time to unfocused discussion for developing both their identity as a group and a collective vision for transforming the city according to permaculture principles.

By looking across the urban gardens and La Boldina, we can see that people's motivations for urban gardening are closely linked to the forms of self-organisation that occur and the corresponding management and decision-making structures. In Huerto del Rey Moro and La Boldina, we can also see strong links between the gardeners' desires to work in nature, according to permaculture principles or otherwise, and the organisational structures that have emerged in the space. What is perhaps most significant about the self-management of La Boldina, in contrast with both Huerto del Rey Moro and Miraflores Sur, is the way that the visions for future actions in Seville include the self-management of processes beyond urban agriculture and gardening, including manufacturing, education, and housing. La Boldina's visions for the group, and ultimately the city, are continuously communicated and contested within the group.

What the three cases demonstrate is that the relationship between self-organisation and spatial development is self-reproducing; gardeners are motivated to participate in projects that resonate with their goals and expectations of participating in the project. This indicates that the issue of identity, including but not limited to motivations, can critically influence the relationship between modes of self-organisation and spatial development. The significance of identity and interpersonal politics does not appear in any significant way in Lefebvre's articulation of autogestion. I return to this discussion below.

3.3. The Significance of Communication for Autogestion in Seville's Urban Gardens

The importance of communication within the urban gardens was one of the primary findings of the first participatory video process. Through a series of participatory workshops, the gardeners in Huerto del Rey Moro explored the issue of communication for the ongoing self-management of the gardens. The conversations about communication began with the logistical challenges of exchanging information and managing the space. Initially, the gardeners emphasised communication as a form of engagement, specifically discussing the need to communicate continuously in order to effectively manage the garden:

You have to be communicating. All the time you're here you're exchanging information. You are asking, sometimes they are asking you, all the time. In my experience that is what you have to do, to be in a continuous process of exchanging information. (male gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, April 2016, first participatory video process)

However, in further discussions, the gardeners began to talk about communication, not in terms of individual conversations, but in terms of the construction of a more collective process. For example, the gardeners discussed the importance of empathy and shared values for effective communication, as well as the role of communication in socialisation and community-building:

To me the meaning of communication in a space like this is to discover that we are not individual beings ... It is a constant process where information comes and goes everywhere. And I think that this transformation occurs when we start to live and work in community. I think that is why this place is so important because we go back to the essence of working together. (interview with female gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, June 2016)

The gardeners in Huerto del Rey Moro and Miraflores Sur identified multiple distinct modes of communication within the gardens. In Miraflores Sur, the group emphasised the importance of face-to-face communication over digital media, due in part to the available technologies when the gardens and park began:

We also have to think that this project was born when there was no Internet. Of course, there was no Internet, there were no emails, so communication patterns here have been a little different to projects that are created today, right? Now when projects are born, they have a very powerful virtual or digital element, and often a fainter physical, real element. We are the opposite. (Head of the Parque de Miraflores association, Miraflores Sur, June 2016, first participatory video process)

In Huerto del Rey Moro, there is also an emphasis on face-to-face communication, as well as the use of numerous signs and notices to share information, advertise events, and, as of 2017, lay out the rules of the garden to visitors. However, in both gardens there were also clear processes of tacit, indirect communication through which knowledge and ideas were shared. For some of the gardeners, better communication is a measure of the progress they have made towards creating a diverse and inclusive space. Nevertheless, many gardeners also identified communication as a primary challenge to self-organisation, not only within the garden, but within wider society:

Seville is a society that apparently communicates quite well. They are open people; they really like to have beer in bars and to chat in the street. Apparently it is a very open society. But when you dig a little deeper there are also profound communication problems. (male gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, May 2017, first participatory video process)

These “profound communication problems” manifest, on the one hand, as an inability to communicate within and between disparate communities and, on the other hand, as an unwillingness to try. Some gardeners suggested this is because people inherently avoid conflict. Nevertheless, many gardeners in Huerto del Rey Moro also identified the unique potentials of community-managed gardens to mitigate these challenges and enable deeper and more effective communication within the community:

For me this is a place where the dialogue that normally in society is broken, takes place. We talk all together, we eat all together, we coexist. We make society again I think. (male gardener, Huerto del Rey Moro, May 2017, first participatory video process)

In Huerto del Rey Moro, the multiple simultaneous levels of communication serve to galvanise a community around the garden. This resonates with Lefebvre’s notion of “sites of encounter” [41]. In Miraflores Sur, the strong relationships within the garden have mitigated the desire of the group for more organised, deliberative structures. Conflicts within the garden are very rare, and the gardeners are content for decisions to be made by the management structure. This does not mean that there is necessarily poor communication within the garden, but, rather, that there is little desire to create the type of communicative spaces that might enable potentially more profound levels of communication beyond the day-to-day management of the space.

Across both gardens, the constellation of modes of communication has helped forged connections and shared values between disparate urban inhabitants, through discussion, through debate, and through shared work, as Raul Puente Asuero explains:

People come to the gardens to do something. They do not come for a walk or to look; they come to work. And that's the best way to involve citizens, right? They cannot be spectators, citizens must be actors in the territory. So, the best way to communicate between different people is for these people to have something to do . . . everyone must have a role, a task. That is the best way to communicate, right? Having something to do. (Miraflores Sur, May 2017, first participatory video process)

From the outset of the second participatory video-making process, gardeners in La Boldina spoke frequently and openly about the importance of communicating emotions and the importance of creating a community in which people can exchange knowledge and reflections. The natural, horizontal communication between the members is part of what allows their organisation to adapt so quickly and respond to new issues, ideas, and opportunities as they arise. What is new, however, for the group and did not exist in Huerto del Rey Moro is the energy and strategic decision to try to communicate with a wide audience, repositioning the gardeners not as productive workers in a space, but social, political, and ecological activists within the city.

Overall, it seems that managed communication plays a far less critical role in La Boldina than in Huerto del Rey Moro. Some of the close personal relationships in the group existed before La Boldina, whilst others are developing within the naturally communicative space. In this way, the relationship between communication and self-organisation more closely resembles Miraflores Sur than Huerto del Rey Moro. By looking across the cases, we can also see that the relationship between communication and self-organisation is nuanced. In Miraflores Sur and La Boldina, the strong personal relationships between the participants mitigates the need for more formalised democratic processes. In Miraflores Sur, this has led to a lack of dynamic change, whilst in La Boldina, this has created a space in which more personal, emotional issues, as well as broader social missions, can be spontaneously discussed and acted on. In this sense, communication both enables and reflects the modes of organisation that exist between the three projects.

Communication is not a central theme within the literature on autogestion. However, as these cases demonstrate, the dynamics of communication significantly impact modes of self-organisation and the social production of space; communication can reveal issues of power and also of community. However, in order to understand the significance of communication, it is important to look beyond Lefebvre in order to draw out the ways in which communication plays out through language, interaction, conflict, and lived experience.

4. Discussion: Autogestion in Urban Community Gardens

In Seville's urban gardens, we can see a variety of modes of self-organisation that variously enable and constrain gardeners' and other residents' capacities to achieve autogestion in the political sense that Lefebvre intended. For this reason, gardens should not be interpreted as inherently apt spaces for self-organisation; rather, they are spaces that are defined materially, spatially, and socially through the distinct modes of self-organisation that emerge therein. However, Lefebvre's concept of autogestion, within his idea of the right to the city, pushes us to be cognizant of the broader (urban) structural conditions in which self-organisation is embedded.

In this article, I have argued firstly that people's motivations for urban gardening are a strong indicator of the forms of self-organisation and community governance that emerge; motivations for and expectations of urban gardens and their communities become self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing properties. Secondly, I have argued that communication is a critical issue for both enabling and constraining self-organisation in urban gardens; spaces of communication are particularly important determinants of modes of self-organisation. Thirdly, I argued that the various modes of self-organisation impact significantly the spatial organisation of the gardens and their associated networks.

My aim has been to demonstrate that, by drawing on Lefebvre's concept of autogestion, we can better understand the current and potential significance of urban community gardens, as well as the challenges that constrain their transformative potentials. In the cases of Huerto del Rey Moro and

La Boldina, the innovative forms of horizontalism, self-management, and community-led processes are important examples of forms of self-organisation—the autogestion—that Lefebvre argued was necessary for the right to the city.

However, the forms of self-organisation in each of the gardens are not inherently radical and, in the case of Miraflores Sur, actively mitigate or quell any enthusiasm for significant change. Moreover, for many of the urban gardeners, self-management is a process that is, to some extent, silo-ed within the part of their lives around urban gardening. This is to say that while there are some examples of the horizontal, democratic, and adaptive forms of governance and decision-making in the gardens leading to corresponding transformations in the gardeners' professional and personal lives away from the gardens, it is important to recognise that they still exist within a broader neoliberal socio-economic and political context. For this reason, it is important not to overstate the importance of these self-organising processes.

Yet, the self-organised communities in Huerto del Rey Moro and La Boldina are capably self-managing projects, infrastructure development, education, and outreach, in ways that are largely invisible to the state. These communities are not achieving autogestion in the way that Lefebvre intended, but they are actively and purposefully experimenting with new forms of self-organisation and self-management. The emergence of La Boldina, in particular, represents the significant potentials of urban gardens to act as crucibles for experimentation through which self-organisation and self-management could be translated into other areas of urban life.

The self-organisation of the Huerto del Rey Moro community may yet have profound impacts towards territorial autogestion at the neighbourhood or even city levels; however, this was not identifiable through this research. One such mechanism through which this may occur is collectives and networks, such as La Boldina, whereby the modes of self-management from one concentrated garden can be disseminated, socially and spatially, across the city. This approach enables gardens to gain significance beyond their capacity for growing food. They can become sites of mobilisation and empowerment—a means through which diverse urban struggles can become material reality.

In this way, the idea of autogestion can be useful in helping us to articulate the significance of these self-organising and self-managing processes. In isolation, these examples do not add up to the realisation of the right to the city. However, we can certainly identify processes, actions, and outcomes that contribute significantly to a form of urban life that is in sharp contrast to the broader, individualising city. These forms of autogestion are not exclusive to urban community gardens, but in Seville, the energy to create public, green, and community spaces has manifested as urban community gardens. Additionally, it is through negotiation and material experimentation with these sites that urban inhabitants are learning the processes of autogestion that are critical for transforming our food systems and transforming our cities.

This research has demonstrated the analytical and conceptual relevance of the idea of autogestion to the practice of urban community gardening. The article has attempted to demonstrate that Lefebvre's articulation of autogestion, intrinsically linked to his spatial ontology, is a productive approach to understanding conflict and community within urban community gardens, as well as for articulating the significance of these spaces to the wider city. This research has also identified some of the limitations of Lefebvre's articulation of autogestion for understanding issues of communication, power, and identity; combining the idea with more nuanced accounts of communication processes represents an important area for further work. Additionally, this research has attempted to demonstrate the value of using the idea of autogestion to articulate the social and political significance of urban community gardening, which is critical for defending these frequently precarious and contested spaces in cities.

Operationalising the idea of autogestion as an analytical category has significant potential consequences for research into community-managed spaces. In some cities, this may be urban gardens, but in other cities, the forms of self-organisation and deliberative democracy identified in Huerto del Rey Moro may manifest through other activities. The significance of issues of communication and

motivations for gardening emerged as critical in the Seville context; however, it is very likely that other concerns and challenges may emerge in other contexts.

Moreover, this research has attempted to demonstrate the ways in which ecological and spatial diversity within urban community gardens—a key part of any urban green infrastructure—reflect social diversity within the city. Understanding how urban community gardens relate to this broader green infrastructure represents an important area for further study.

Funding: This research received funding from the research project ‘Agroecology for sovereignty’, funded by the Agroecology Fund, and hosted by the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University. The research was conducted while the author was the recipient of a full doctoral studentship from Coventry University.

Acknowledgments: This research was made possible thanks to the gardeners and participatory video makers in Huerto del Rey Moro, Miraflores Sur, and La Boldina. Thanks go to my doctoral supervisors, Michel Pimbert, Colin Anderson, and Caren Levy who helped these ideas to develop. Additional thanks to Chiara Tornaghi, Moya Kneafsey, and Robert Biel for their insight and feedback. Thank you also to the anonymous reviewers of this article for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Lefebvre, H. Problèmes théoriques de l'autogestion. *Autogestion* **1966**, *1*, 59–70.
2. Lefebvre, H. Comments on a new state form. Translated by Victoria Johnson and Neil Brenner. *Antipode* **2001**, *33*, 769–782. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Lefebvre, H. *Writings on Cities*; Blackwell: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1996.
4. Mougeot, L. *Agropolis: The Social, Political and Environmental Dimensions of Urban Agriculture*; Earthscan: London, UK, 2005.
5. Poulsen, M.N.; Hulland, K.R.S.; Gulas, C.A.; Pham, H.; Dalglish, S.L.; Wilkinson, R.K.; Winch, P.J. Growing an Urban Oasis: A Qualitative Study of the Perceived Benefits of Community Gardening in Baltimore, Maryland. *Cult. Agric. Food Environ.* **2014**, *36*, 69–82. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Redwood, M. *Agriculture in Urban Planning: Generating Livelihoods and Food Security*; Earthscan: London, UK, 2008.
7. Van Veenhuizen, R. *Cities Farming for the Future: Urban Agriculture for Green and Productive Cities*; IDRC: Ottawa, ON, Canada, 2006.
8. Holland, L. Diversity and connections in community gardens: A contribution to local sustainability. *Local Environ.* **2004**, *9*, 285–305. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Hung, Y. East New York Farms: Youth participation in community development and urban agriculture. *Child. Youth Environ.* **2004**, *14*, 56–85.
10. Hovorka, A.; de Zeeuw, H.; Njenga, M. *Women Feeding Cities: Mainstreaming Gender in Urban Agriculture and Food Security*; Practical Action: London, UK, 2009.
11. Slater, R.J. Urban agriculture, gender and empowerment: An alternative view. *Dev. S. Afr.* **2001**, *18*, 635–650. [[CrossRef](#)]
12. Staeheli, L.A.; Mitchell, D.; Gibson, K. Conflicting Rights to the City in New York's Community Gardens. *GeoJournal* **2002**, *58*, 197–205. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Shepard, B. Community gardens, convivial spaces, and the seeds of a radical democratic counterpublic. In *Democracy, States, and the Struggle for Global Justice*; Gautney, H., Dahbour, O., Dawson, A., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2009; pp. 273–295.
14. Travaline, K.; Hunold, C. Urban agriculture and ecological citizenship in Philadelphia. *Local Environ.* **2010**, *15*, 581–590. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Pudup, M. It takes a garden: Cultivating citizen-subjects in organized garden projects. *Geoforum* **2008**, *39*, 1228–1240. [[CrossRef](#)]
16. Donald, B.; Blay-Palmer, A. The urban creative-food economy: Producing food for the urban elite or social inclusion opportunity? *Environ. Plan. A* **2006**, *38*, 1901–1920. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. McClintock, N. Radical, Reformist, and Garden-Variety Neoliberal: Coming to Terms with Urban Agriculture's Contradictions. *Local Environ.* **2014**, *19*, 147–171. [[CrossRef](#)]

18. Harris, E. Neoliberal subjectivities or a politics of the possible? Reading for difference in alternative food networks. *Area* **2009**, *41*, 55–63. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Kurtz, H.E. Differentiating multiple meanings of garden and community. *Urban Geogr.* **2001**, *22*, 656–670. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Hodgkinson, T. Digging for Anarchy. In *Vista: The Culture and Politics of Gardens*; Richardson, T., Kinsbury, N., Eds.; Frances Lincoln Ltd.: London, UK, 2005; pp. 66–73.
21. Wilson, A.D. Beyond Alternative: Exploring the Potential for Autonomous Food Spaces. *Antipode* **2012**, *45*, 719–737. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Sbicca, J. Food labor, economic inequality, and the imperfect politics of process in the alternative food movement. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2015**, *32*, 675–687. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Johnston, J. Counterhegemony or Bourgeois Piggery? Food Politics and the Case of FoodShare. In *The Fight Over Food: Producers, Consumers, and Activists Challenge the Global Food System*; Wright, W., Middendorf, G., Eds.; Pennsylvania State University: University Park, PA, USA, 2008; pp. 93–120.
24. Poulsen, M.N.; McNab, P.R.; Clayton, M.L.; Neff, R.A. A systematic review of urban agriculture and food security impacts in low-income countries. *Food Policy* **2015**, *55*, 131–146. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Draper, C.; Freedman, D. Review and analysis of the benefits, purposes, and motivations associated with community gardening in the United States. *J. Community Pract.* **2010**, *18*, 458–492. [[CrossRef](#)]
26. Ruggeri, G.; Mazzocchi, C.; Corsi, S. Urban Gardeners' Motivations in a Metropolitan City: The Case of Milan. *Sustainability* **2016**, *8*, 1099. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. Calvet-Mir, L.; March, H.; Nordh, H.; Pourias, J.; Cakovská, B. Motivations behind Urban Gardening: 'Here I Feel Alive'. In *Urban Allotment Gardens in Europe*; Bell, S., Fox-Kämper, R., Keshavarz, N., Benson, M., Caputo, S., Noori, S., Voigt, A., Eds.; Routledge: Birmingham, UK, 2016; pp. 320–341.
28. Goddard, M.A.; Dougill, A.J.; Benton, T.G. Why garden for wildlife? Social and ecological drivers, motivations and barriers for biodiversity management in residential landscapes. *Ecol. Econ.* **2013**, *86*, 258–273. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Kingsley, J.; Townsend, M. 'Dig in' to social capital: Community gardens as mechanisms for growing urban social connectedness. *Urban Policy Res.* **2006**, *24*, 525–537. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Shiner, K.J.; Glover, T.D.; Parry, D.C. Leisure spaces as potential sites for interracial interaction: Community gardens in urban areas. *J. Leis. Res.* **2004**, *36*, 336–355. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Bohm, M. Urban Agriculture in and On Buildings in North America: The Unfulfilled Potential to Benefit Marginalized Communities. *Built Environ.* **2016**, *43*, 343–363. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Barron, J. Community gardening: Cultivating subjectivities, space, and justice. *Local Environ.* **2017**, *22*, 1142–1158. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Eizenberg, E. Actually Existing Commons: Three Moments of Space of Community Gardens in New York City. *Antipode* **2012**, *44*, 764–782. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Lefebvre, H. *The Production of Space*; Blackwell Publishing Ltd.: Oxford, UK, 1991.
35. Brenner, N. State Theory in the Political Conjuncture: Henri Lefebvre's "Comments on a New State Form". *Antipode* **2001**, *33*, 783–808. [[CrossRef](#)]
36. Kropotkin, P. *Mutual Aid*; Porter and Sargent Publishers Inc.: Boston, MA, USA, 1976.
37. Kropotkin, P. Anarchism, law and authority. In *The Essential Kropotkin*; Capouya, E., Tompkins, K., Eds.; Liveright Publishers: New York, NY, USA, 1975; pp. 27–43.
38. Bookchin, M. *To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936*; AK Press: New York, NY, USA, 1994.
39. Merrifield, A. The Right to the City and Beyond. *City* **2011**, *15*, 473–481. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Purcell, M.; Tyman, S.K. Cultivating food as a right to the city. *Local Environ.* **2015**, *20*, 1132–1147. [[CrossRef](#)]
41. Lefebvre, H. *The Urban Revolution*; University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 2003.
42. Kofman, E.; Lebas, E. Lost in transposition—time, space, and the city. In *Writings on Cities*; Kofman, E., Lebas, E., Eds.; Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, UK, 1996; pp. 3–62.
43. Castells, M. *The Information Age: The Rise of the Network Society*; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1996; Volume 1.
44. Castells, M. Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society 1. *Int. J. Commun.* **2007**, *1*, 238–266.
45. Habermas, J. *The Theory of Communicative Action*; Beacon Press: Boston, MA, USA, 1984; Volume 2.

46. Wicks, P.G.; Reason, P.; Bradbury, H. Living Inquiry: Personal, Political and Philosophical Groundings for Action Research Practice. In *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd ed.; Reason, P., Bradbury, H., Eds.; Sage: London, UK, 2008; pp. 15–31.
47. Gergen, K.J.; Gergen, M.M. Social Construction and Research as Action. In *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd ed.; Reason, P., Bradbury, H., Eds.; Sage: London, UK, 2008; pp. 159–171.
48. Milne, E.J. Critiquing participatory video: Experiences from around the world. *Area* **2016**, *48*, 401–404. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Milne, E.J.; Mitchell, C.; de Lange, N. *Handbook of Participatory Video*; Altamira Press: Lanham, MD, USA, 2012.
50. Mistry, J.; Bignante, E.; Berardi, A. Why are we doing it? Exploring participant motivations within a participatory video project. *Area* **2014**, *48*, 412–418. [[CrossRef](#)]
51. Shaw, J. Emergent ethics in participatory video: Negotiating the inherent tensions as group processes evolve. *Area* **2016**, *48*, 419–426. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Kindon, S. Participatory video in geographic research: A feminist practice of looking? *Area* **2003**, *35*, 142–153. [[CrossRef](#)]
53. Lunch, C.; Lunch, N. *Insights into Participatory Video*; InsightShare: Oxford, UK, 2006.
54. Blanco, L.; Castroviejo, X.; de Angelis, T.; Testi, E.; Yap, C. *Jardin Interior: Garden Inside*; Vimeo: London, UK; Seville, Spain, 2016.
55. Gale, N.K.; Heath, G.; Cameron, E.; Rashid, S.; Redwood, S. Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. *BMC Med. Res. Methodol.* **2013**, *13*, 117–125. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
56. McFarlane, C. The comparative city: Knowledge, learning, urbanism. *Int. J. Urban Reg. Res.* **2010**, *34*, 725–742. [[CrossRef](#)]
57. McFarlane, C.; Robinson, J. Introduction—Experiments in Comparative Urbanism. *Urban Geogr.* **2012**, *33*, 765–773. [[CrossRef](#)]
58. McFarlane, C.; Silver, J.; Truelove, Y. Cities within cities: Intra-urban comparison of infrastructure in Mumbai, Delhi and Cape Town. *Urban Geogr.* **2017**, *38*, 1393–1417. [[CrossRef](#)]
59. Ward, K. Towards a relational comparative approach to the study of cities. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2010**, *34*, 471–487. [[CrossRef](#)]
60. Mollison, B. *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*; Tagari: Tyalgum, Australia, 1988.
61. Hargreaves, A. Building communities of place: Habitual movement around significant places. *J. Hous. Built Environ.* **2004**, *19*, 49–65. [[CrossRef](#)]

