Food System Transformations

Social Movements, Local Economies,
Collaborative Networks

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Are we talking about a political project? Yes and no. It certainly embodies a politics of space, but at the same time goes beyond politics inasmuch as it presupposes a critical analysis of all spatial politics as of all politics in general. By seeking to point the way towards a different space, towards the space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production, this project straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and ideality, conceived and lived. It aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between "possible" and "impossible", and this both objectively and subjectively (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 60).

3.1 Introduction

In many cities, new uses of space for the purpose of growing food have emerged in the first two decades of the new millennium. They can't be classified into any traditional spatial category. Indeed, we will consider them in the sense of Lefebvre ([1974] 1991, 60) cited above as "politics of space", which at the same time go beyond common understandings of spatial politics but "seek to point the way towards a different space, production and social life". They surmount known categories by exploring dialectically the possible and the impossible. When green islands are created and food is produced, exchanged and distributed in collective urban gardening initiatives, community-supported agriculture (CSA), self-harvest gardens and farmers' markets, we're talking about something which is not a private garden, nor a public park or a space for commercial food production. Rather, the focus is on jointly developing local answers to challenges which arise from the increasingly global flow of goods, capital and people. This brings together an overriding wish to tear urban spatial production away from industrial perspectives, in a way which in one place looks like a cheerful meeting place for young middle-class people, and in another place that of a biotechnological innovation for the urban production of space and in a third place that of a socio-pedagogic measure in a district which is experiencing a shrinking population. Urban spaces are to become the stage for conditions to be spatialized for nature and producing food that are fit for the future, as well as becoming an area in which to experiment by

staging and testing out answers to contemporary environmental, climate and structural crises.

Municipal areas are consciously and collaboratively reused and redefined in the various projects and temporary uses, in order to promote issues in the nearby area which had previously been hidden. Things are therefore done where social reality is translated into visible positions as an ensemble of invisible relations (cf. Bourdieu 1992, 138). It concerns a lot of things at the same time: green infrastructure, organic food, regional production and consumption processes, sensible employment opportunities, the sense of community with like-minded people, the connection to nature and its power, also a critique of the existing food system and the economic and political guidelines which are expressed in it as well as the exploitative natural, working and gender relations (Müller 2011; Rossi 2017; Kropp 2018; Kropp and Müller 2018). Also, the participants react with their projects to forces in urban development which not only appear alien to them but which are opposed to their own interests. In place of the ongoing marketization of public space through consumer-oriented and also neoliberal urban development policies over the last few decades, in which private exploitation has been combined with the expropriation of public spaces, they consciously pursue a strategy of re-appropriating public spaces and making them suitable for community-based purposes. Food production plays an essential function in this, because it firstly makes it clear how estranged we have become from our food and how it is produced, as well as the food sovereignty which has now essentially disappeared, and secondly it makes it noticeable how access to natural resources and open spaces without consumption is unequal and restricted for different groups of people. On the other hand, "civic food networks" (Renting et al. 2012, 292) bring green infrastructure, food and urban agriculture back to the cities as a substitute for nature, enter into alliances with major players in rural areas and enthusiastically cast off the old dichotomies of nature and society, city and country, production and consumption, green and gray. They repoliticize the agricultural, economic and development policy which is otherwise hard for consumers to grasp in their immediate urban environment – bypassing the state and the market. They consciously encourage their fellow citizens to rediscover forms of collaborative local supply and ways of using spaces for communal purposes, in order to position it as a pioneering model as an alternative to the supposedly inevitable trajectory of development and modernization which appears to be coming to an end.

The alternative food movement has been investigated a number of times in the last few years. It has been hailed as "food democracy: … civic food networks and newly emerging forms of food citizenship" (Renting et al. 2012, 289) and "grassroots innovations for sustainability" (Smith and Seyfang 2013, 827) but also held up as an example of an elitist pursuit carried out by the privileged middle classes, whose uncritical conceptualization of localism is blind to social and ethnic inequality and even follows neoliberal trends (Rosol 2012; Goodman et al. 2013; Exner and Schützenberger 2018). Germany

and France are also considered latecomers to the movement, though civil society plays a major role in both countries (cf. Stierand 2014; Lamine 2015). Likewise, questions of urban spatial coding, the arrangement of alternative production and consumption practices and of different natural and spatial relationships appear to be more relevant in France and in Germany compared to the approaches of local added value and "better" food production which are emphasized in the Anglosphere countries (Venn et al. 2006; Goodman et al. 2013). In this context, we concentrate on strategies for the production of space that are particularly emphasized by activists in both countries, and specifically address their models and approaches in subversively changing the way in which space is used (Müller 2011), laying the groundwork for other representation and so opening up new ways to achieve "terrestrial" politics on earthly grounds (Latour 2018, 40ff.). Therefore, in the first part of this chapter we make observations on the political reconfiguration of urban food production, then describe the spatial strategies of the urban food movement by giving examples from Leipzig in Germany and Nantes in France, and based on this we examine how it has fundamentally questioned the previously dominant way of sharing space, time and responsibility.

3.2 The urban production of space

> *On the contrary, there is nothing more innovative, nothing more present, subtle, technical, and artificial (in the positive sense of the word), nothing less rustic and rural, nothing more creative, nothing more contemporary than to negotiate landing on some ground (Latour 2018, 53).*

In the social sciences, spaces have not been seen as neutral containers for some time, but as a heterogeneous ensemble of relationships of people, things and topologies, which are a consequence of social action and the production and reproduction of which are subject to dispute (Lefebvre [1974] 1991). They are, as Pierre Bourdieu (1992, 132) has found many times, nothing neutral, but are the result of unequal opportunities to take action, positioning and power structures. In times of the Anthropocene, they point to terrestrial negotiations to explore possibilities of landing on a common ground, in the sense of Latour (2018), cited above. Through this, the players in the production of space who assert a legitimate view of the social world in the fight for symbolic interpretation in particular can prevail, and in so doing can establish boundaries and classifications of what Bourdieu refers to as "worldmaking" (1992, 151). In the modern world, this has manifested itself in the establishment of a hierarchy between the city and the country, society and nature, consumption and production (Cronon 1991), which awards a privileged position in all areas of activity to the urban decision-making and distribution centers and the people who live and work in them over the rural production areas and their inhabitants.

Spaces, however, are more than the replica of the social relationships which they mirror, reproduce and symbolize. Instead, they emerge much more as

socio-material landscapes, therefore from the interdependent fields of the "physical – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the social" (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 11). For Lefebvre, the social production of space embedded in capitalist methods of production corresponds with the interplay between spatial practices (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space) and representational spaces (lived spaces; ibid., 35, 39). This spatial triad has an influence on society in its own right and outlines the way it is changing. The connection between city and country is therefore a historic relationship, in which industrialization and advances in technology have previously been the driving force. From the perspective of political economy of the market economy, a programmed everyday life has emerged with correspondingly adjusted urban ways of living, as has the spatial disintegration of the traditional city in favor of an industrial urbanism. Whereas cities in preindustrial times were supplied by their immediate hinterland and agricultural production could also be found within the city walls, during the course of industrialization, food production became banished further and further away to rural areas where land was less valuable. As a consequence, most farmers today produce for the global market and only few for local demand. What this has produced, following Lefebvre, is an urban environment outside the city and class struggles inscribed in space together with socio-spatial relationships of center and periphery, of marginalization, regionalization, segregation and discrimination, to which Lefebvre points with his call for the "Right to the City" (Lefebvre 1996). Since Lefebvre, space in critical geography has therefore been considered as a medium of political struggle and thus a political issue as much as just a place: "There is a politics of space because space is political" (Lefebvre 1978, 345; cf. Harvey 2001).

Although the inherent policy of using spaces for social production and the political dimension of urban and regional planning as well as the use of space have already been discussed for some time, the opportunities offered by regional planning as a political instrument however have been notoriously underutilized. In reality, regional planning procedures and land use plans provide the legitimacy for each respective prevailing use at any one time. Therefore, urban development, sites and spatial structures emerged and still do emerge predominantly as a consequence of individual ad-hoc agreements between investors, property owners and actors in the political system, but rarely as the result of deliberate and forward-looking political maneuvering.

Lefebvre criticized the understanding of the tasks of regional planners and their concepts, such as the differentiation between urban, peri-urban and peripheral areas, as a hierarchical management approach in the "capitalistic-affirmative" self-perception. He saw the administrative systems to be in contradiction to the material spatial practice, which they could neither synthesize nor transcend. By contrast, overcoming these systems on the way towards an "urban society", which is talked about a lot these days, is something he most likely expects to happen from the third dimension of the production of space,

the lived spaces of everyday living conditions and from artistic-symbolic uses of space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 42, 116; cf. Boudreau 2017).

In analyzing the production of space, he therefore combined political ambitions that are taken up today by urban food networks. As quoted at the beginning, he wrote:

> *By seeking to point the way towards a different space, towards the space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production, this project … aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between "possible" and "impossible", and this both objectively and subjectively.*

(Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 60)

Against this backdrop, what does it mean then when places for collective food production and distribution spring up in city centers, and often only on a temporary basis because of the expense? It's about interventions, in which actors in civil society mix the process of the production of space and the separation between cities where things are consumed and land where things are produced, as well as between supply and demand. They question what is taken as fact in the food industry and regional development, and instead open up horizons to other possibilities of spacing and at the same time utopian experiential spaces and scope for maneuver. They are driven to do this by the search for opportunities to jointly develop alternative power sources, but also strategically and at the center of the modern conception of the world, namely in the inner cities and as a way of reusing disused industrial areas of urban centers. With urban gardens, food assemblies and urban agriculture, packaged urban lifestyles are rejected and differential counter-spaces are created instead, which bridge the divides between producers and consumers, urban and rural, decision makers and the people who are affected by these decisions. With their tangible new interpretations of "Think globally, act locally!", the participants aim to simultaneously change the social formations of how food and space are produced, the mental constructions in which both are experienced and the economic structures which are known not to be sustainable.

Beveridge and Koch (2019) take such collective, organized and strategic practices and their objectives of achieving alternative social, spatial as well as food relations in the urban here and now as an opportunity to introduce the category of "*urban everyday politics*". They ask whether these are becoming "a more visible form of political action, even if their effects remain ambivalent" (2019, 143) and while other forms of urban politics may still remain significant. The civic food networks can be understood as examples for Boudreau's (2017) description of a "specifically urban way of acting politically" (2017, 13), including its decentered way of being political, which is not based on political institutions. It is neither bounded by a state-logic of the political with a clear center of authority and defined boundaries between spheres of individual and collective actions, nor can it be delineated spatially because actions are always

related to other spatialities and assembled human and non-human collectivities (Beveridge and Koch 2019, 145).

Far from only staging political claims how to govern urban spaces or how to care for food, the spatial grounded practices of guerrilla gardening, food rescue, food sharing, urban gardening and CSA have the potential to transform the ways of assembling a city. Politics has always had references who are referred to in representational claims (Saward 2010), has "always been oriented toward objects, stakes, situations, material entities, bodies, landscapes, places", writes Bruno Latour (2018, 52). In the modern constitution, however, politics hasn't just deliberately blurred the permanent production of hybrids beyond evoking the boundaries which give them legitimacy (urban–rural, nature–culture, science–politics), but it has located their spatial reference points on the poles between local (reactionary) and global (progressive). Ignoring the consequences, according to Latour, it overlooked that the terrestrial base is too small for an industrial scale worldwide, not exclusive and also not passive. Global warming, or the new climatic regime, however makes it clear how urgent it is to stay put and keep on working one's plot of land, to be attached to it, to take care of a piece of the Earth, to form new alliances and to repoliticize "what it means to belong to a land" (Latour 2018, 54).

3.3 Urban agriculture in the cities of Nantes and Leipzig

> *The spatial quality of Urban Agriculture is strongly related to the built environment as well as to the green infrastructure of the city. Moreover, it defines how people can use the space, how they are attached to it, and how they appropriate it. The way that Urban Agriculture is integrated into the city fabric has a direct impact on its accessibility (Lohrberg et al. 2016, 120).*

For some years now, an increasing variety of initiatives, ventures and temporary actions have been springing up (Goodman et al. 2013; Sage 2014; Matacena 2016). They question the industrialized food system not primarily through political demands but through transformative practices in establishing alternative forms of food production in urban spaces. Their protagonists make their mark by converting, reinterpreting places and spaces and putting them to other use – and in so doing changing the urban environments. This recoding of space determines novel possibilities of urban appropriation and city accessibility, as the quote from Lohrberg (2016, 120) explains. Below, we will turn our attention to examples of civic food networks in two different cities of note, namely Leipzig in Germany and Nantes in France. Both cities have been strongly affected by deindustrialization, but both have long been highlighted as cities which haven't lost out by modernization but which have pioneered other approaches to modernization and transformative urban development. In both cases, the production of food in urban spaces, the renewal of cooperative relationships between city and country and the participative design of green open spaces make a major contribution towards countering the conventional model of competing metropolises with no sense

of place to a sustainable vision of urban development on a "human scale" (Daalsgard 2012).

3.3.1 Leipzig: growing food in a shrinking city

Leipzig is in the state of Saxony in east-central Germany, where several rivers converge (the "Waterknot of Leipzig"). Historically, the city played a key role at the heart of the international fur trade, as well as being one of the first university towns in Germany. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR) era it was an important industrial city as well as a host for businesses and trade fairs and – because of the many buildings destroyed in the Second World War – an object of socialist urban renewal projects. However, despite its overall high density and large urban area, its share of the population has decreased since the global financial crisis. At the end of the 1980s, Leipzig was where the Monday demonstrations against the GDR regime took place, which played a significant role in bringing down the Berlin Wall with their demands for freedom and democracy. The reunification of West and East Germany didn't just bring the people of Leipzig new possibilities to travel and vote, but also a drastic restructuring of the economy, with high unemployment, the disappearance of the old way of life and enormous losses of jobs and population. The dramatic deindustrialization and subsequent mass emigration as a consequence of German reunification resulted in visible decay, and in more buildings becoming empty in addition to the areas which had remained as wasteland since the Second World War. At the beginning of the new millennium, 20% of the building stock in Leipzig was vacant. Today, with roughly 600,000 people Leipzig is not only growing, but it is a tolerant and open city which is well loved by young people in particular. It is known for its well-renowned university, as the center of the German "post-growth" debate, and is often cited as an example for the developmental potential of the creative scene and an active civil society. The local area was shaped by open-cast lignite mining in the 20th century, which resulted in a number of lakes being created, but also by the large agricultural cooperatives set up in the GDR era, many of which still exist today.

As the "City of Empty Buildings", at the turn of the millennium Leipzig was thought of as the textbook example of the "perforated city", a concept which has been the subject of much controversy in the debate on how to plan for shrinking cities, and a term which is used to describe cities with a lot of vacant sites and empty spaces which needs to deal with unplanned changes (Rink and Siemund 2016). While the media predominantly focus on the losses and the problems caused by shrinking cities, and the political actors mostly don't have the necessary vision to redesign the city, a number of authors also talk about the possible opportunities for urban quality of life through more green spaces, more space in general and good conditions for subcultural milieus (Haase et al. 2014). Today, Leipzig is considered one of the greenest cities in Germany, with beautiful parks and riversides, traditional

allotment communities, 35 percent of land within city limits (also through incorporations) used for agricultural purposes and urban forests. In urban planning, flexible and experimental use has been made of the spatial scope and innovative solutions for redesigning the city have been developed, partly with the participation of civil society.

Leipzig is home to a particularly broad and active scene of alternative food networks, which also interact with one another in a lot of ways. As well as a transition town, "Right to the city" and regional money initiatives, there are several organizations based on CSA known beyond the region, plenty of community gardens, food co-ops and urban beekeepers, also self-harvest gardens, "urban planters" and "edible meadows", as well as a city farm for the children of the city (cf. www.leipziggruen.de). For a more detailed investigation, we have chosen the well-known community garden Annalinde, the vegetable cooperative Rote Beete as a CSA farm, the way the fruit-finding map by mundraub is used in Leipzig and the transition town initiative "Leipzig im Wandel" (A Changing Leipzig). Apart from the vegetable cooperative Rote Beete, these networks were also research partners in the "nascent" project, and were investigated on the basis of interviews with founders and members, on-site visits and in transdisciplinary workshops. The quotes derive in part from interviews with the founders and activists, in part also from the minutes of workshops with practice partners or from media analysis, and are not assigned to individual persons. The following quote can give an impression of the breadth of their spatial project:

> Yes, we're a bit of everything, we do all sorts at the same time here, it's not just a garden or a space or a community, we're also a place for education, a kindergarten, a fruit garden and we also have some completely open spaces. The job here will never be finished, because all the little things we have to do, all the fruit boxes, events, green spaces, young plants and training opportunities combine together to form something completely new, which makes us happy and doesn't fit the old perceptions of gardening or urban development at all.
>
> (Interviewee from Annalinde, 2016)

The Annalinde community garden (*Gemeinschaftsgarten Annalinde*; annalinde-leipzig.de) was set up in 2011 on municipal land in the west of Leipzig as part of an "initiative for contemporary urban development". It was founded by a social worker and a media specialist, who were joined by two engineers for gardening and landscaping. The term "community garden" is generally used to describe collectively run urban spaces which are mostly accessible to the public and are found on private or publicly owned abandoned sites (sometimes just temporarily). They emerge in response to the newly reawakened need for producing one's own healthy food in cities, but also with the aim of encouraging neighborly exchange regarding everyday gardening knowledge as well as questions of urban development and maintaining community life.

The people who run Annalinde are not urban planners, but nevertheless want to help co-design the urban space and stress the positive role that collectively managed vegetable gardens can play in participative urban development. In a pioneering work, after a season in mobile boxes, they created a visible site for urban and community-based food production which was open to the public. Their community garden, with social vegetable nursery and connected edible mushroom cultivation area, is located on a 1,700-square-meter site which previously belonged to a brewery. An outside staircase leads up from the street to the aesthetically designed site, with over 100 raised beds, three greenhouses and 250 square meters under cultivation.

With its spatial activities, including public dinners using mobile kitchens, collective harvesting and deliberate "installations" and subcultural productions in the public space, the communal gardeners want to challenge the banishment of agriculture and food from the urban space. The gardeners grow maize, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, kale, salad, carrots, onions and much more. The "human–thing–plant compositions" which result primarily get their transformative power not from the evidence of their supply capacity, because the plant density in the limited space is much too low, but from the spatialization of alternative models of economic activity and cohabitation and from the persuasiveness of (third) imaginary spaces, which become a visible reality and which make it possible to experience different perceptions of "being in the world" and of economic activity (Kropp and Müller 2018, 192). The community garden injects new life into the image of the (shrinking) city, and creates visual surprise effects, which the media are happy to pick up. Education in sustainable development is also available, as is vocational training for young people.

With the choice of name and the economic strategies, the founders are reviving a tradition which became devalued as a result of industrialization and deindustrialization: Annalinde refers to the Lindenau district, whose previous conception of itself partly came from being a meeting place under the lime tree (*Linden* = lime trees). Today, after it no longer expects to outcompete other cities through increasing industrial efficiency according to either a socialist or capitalist model, it is focusing its attention once more on "primary production" and emphasizes its urban location in direct marketing and on the menus of its local gastronomic cooperation partner as "Annalinde Greens" (Kropp and Müller 2018, 193). For five months a year in peak season it runs a market stand at the weekly market, as well as in a different neighborhood. It has been so successful at selling its produce that there are no vegetables left over. The non-profit organization also sells seedlings in the temporary pop-up shop "Prince Charles" – another normalization of the presence of agriculture in the city – and makes spatial metabolic processes visible by having the garden activists go through the city on cargo bikes to pick up organic waste from two Leipzig organic supermarkets and adding it to the compost. They also bring vegetable containers or compost toilets to end users by bike, to make society's relationship to nature, which in an industrialized society is "hidden"

or processed on an industrial scale, more visible and tangible through the use of slower means of transport which are open to the public.

The Rote Beete vegetable cooperative (rotebeete.org) is an active CSA project in the northeast of Leipzig. Like other CSA initiatives, it creates opportunities for rural–urban cooperation, meaning that a group of citizens and one or more, mostly organically run, garden and agriculture work together regulated by a contract. The consumers give a community-supported purchase guarantee which is determined in advance for a share of the harvest, and in return receive an insight and influence into food production in their local environment. These networks operate on a solidarity basis: the producers receive the members' monthly contribution, irrespective of the size of the harvest that could be produced, even if climatic events or pests lead to a harvest collapse and each CSA member receives only a smaller basket of produce, while otherwise the producers would have to bear the full costs of the crop failures themselves. The founders of the Rote Beete vegetable cooperative speak ironically in this respect about "making blooming landscapes a reality", and address the presumptuous, but unkept, promise made by Chancellor Helmut Kohl at the time of reunification to generate wealth in the East as quick as possible with a Western market economy.

By contrast, its CSA since 2012 has been all about making consistent organic vegetable production possible without economic pressure on earnings. The particular process and product quality are guaranteed through trust and transparency, not through official seals and checks. In the cooperative with market gardeners and community farms, the vegetables produced also don't have a fixed price, but participating households pay a set amount in a bidding round at the start of the year to match their financial situation. The vegetables are supplied to them via several visible distribution centers across the city. This means that help is required in the high season and on special occasions to unload the goods, a process is digitally coordinated and creates regular opportunities for contact and exchange between producers and consumers.

The roughly 350 members of Rote Beete, who have been organized into a cooperative since 2017, each also carry out a minimum level of either organizational or agricultural work, learn about the production conditions of their local area through planting and harvesting, and celebrate together. They know a lot about the regional and seasonal growing conditions, about European agricultural policy and its effects on the local area, about changes in land prices and quality, and about new and old types of vegetables and sustainable ways of processing and preparation. All participants are explicitly concerned with building an "alternative to the ruling capitalist system", getting involved and joining forces with other post-growth networks. Locally, important decisions are discussed in co-op cafés, made using a multi-stage consensus process and then implemented, with everything organized by the group itself. Contacts exist with a number of other networks and social/ecological organizations from other regions that want to make sustainable social development a reality. The founders and the professional gardeners, some

of whom live together in a farmhouse, explicitly point out that it is not a "feel-good project" for Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability, but is aimed at building a non-capitalist form of food supply, which can also outlast any conceivable crisis. The talk is of "post-collapse agriculture". Potential interested parties are on a waiting list, including a number of families, who can only move up the list if somebody leaves the cooperative.

With its cooperation between city and country, the company wants to provide the nearby area with a new food supply and open up opportunities for people of different backgrounds to get involved together on site. The stigma is taken out of being self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables by "freeing it from its image as something only to be done in an emergency or the same as having an allotment". For a lot of participants, becoming a co-producer means being able to take existential issues into their own hands, and experiencing for themselves what it is like not to be dependent, but having power in their own right and being able to act in the public sphere. At Rote Beete, dedicated people experiment with practicable forms to develop organic and socially compatible systems of food production, and place a great emphasis on community. They take care to make connections and are conscious of being part of a natural and societal context. They explicitly reject the unreasonable perception of being "lone fighters", as it was phrased in the government reconstruction and support programs of the post-reunification era, likewise the precarious working conditions. The fair pay of, and cooperative partnership with, the professional gardeners is a high priority for the vegetable cooperative.

The first two examples show, just like countless other projects from the urban food movement in Leipzig, that self-sufficiency is no longer associated with backwardness, marginalization and poverty, but with post-material quality of life, urban ecology and learning from one another. It is not envisaged that the capital invested will accumulate, but that the added value intended is in the cooperation, keeping nature intact, high-quality regional products and fair production and trade relations. In both the following examples, the entrepreneurial considerations regarding the appropriation and redefining of local spaces by civil society, and the deliberate politicization of sustainable development perspectives are placed further into the background.

Mundraub (mundraub.org) is a community-based platform, which posts maps online of fruit trees and bushes all over Germany which are freely accessible to the public, and connects them with stories. It was founded by two young people in 2009 when they became aware of the absurdity while on a canoe trip in Saxony-Anhalt of taking fruit bought from a supermarket with them as supplies, imported from far away and wrapped up using lots of plastic, while all around them fruit on trees and bushes was disregarded and left to rot away. They began making a note of places to find unused fruit. Today, more than 60,000 people have added fruit trees via the platform, and made fruit in their area accessible to the public by using virtual maps and local information. As part-physical, part-virtual common land, mundraub organizes a very

special form of the "edible city", in order to encourage communitization and the conscious use of local nature, and to revive knowledge of common land which has been forgotten. The organizers also comply with their ideal of creating a kind of "basic income" in fruit with fair conditions for everybody by drafting the "mundraub rules" for all participants, and also by looking for a contact person at the municipal administration for the shared use of public green spaces. The initiative describes what it does on its website with the sentence, "We raise awareness of edible landscapes, locally grown and seasonal fruit, and motivate people to make use of existing resources", and also makes its own vision clear:

> Germany is an edible landscape accessible to everyone. Here people can fulfill their deep archaic need for sharing as well as direct and independent acquisition of food. Everyone is able to find plenty of fruits in the landscape and has sufficient knowledge about it, thus a feeling of "There is enough for everybody" can develop. This ideal of a self-evident basic fruit income for everyone shall serve as inspiration to implement the idea of the commons into other fields of life as well. This can help mankind to recover.
>
> (mundraub.org/press)

In 2012, a non-profit organization emerged from this philosophy, which provides services beyond the digital "picking atlas" for preserving and maintaining local fruit trees and bushes by developing models for socially and ecologically enhancing the mitigation and compensation measures with companies and network operators in eastern Germany. Also, mundraub links up with companies in the traditional food industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions and players in regional politics in order to devise alternative forms of enhancing cultural landscapes and contributes towards preserving biodiversity through the "protecting by utilizing" principle. Additionally, harvest events are held in remote areas in order to make these areas and their richness better known to local people.

With 3,495 sites entered in and around Leipzig, the network is heavily used in the area (by means of comparison: 750 sites have been recorded in Munich, 78 in Frankfurt, 10,500 in Berlin); in addition to this are five registered juice bottlers and a local group "Leipzig Mundräuber", which organizes other food-sharing actions, local cycle tours where participants can eat food which is available to the public and educational projects. In keeping with the slogan "The city is your garden", people volunteer every month to show interested people in Leipzig known and unknown fruits, berries and herbs, "which grow in front of your own front door", convey their philosophy of edible common land in the urban area, pass on recipes and tips and organize a "Long Day of Urban Nature" every year. In May 2018, this event took participants though the western part of Leipzig along river channels, cross-country though riparian forests and the Clara-Zetkin park, accompanied by

a self-built, mobile "mundraub kitchen". The cooking station installed on a traditional GDR-era trailer also makes it possible to process and sample the fruit gathered together on the tour through the "edible city". The day ended with a herb dinner on a meadow by the well-loved Sachsenbrücke bridge, and the tour was brought to a close on a high note with a freshly prepared snack and herb lemonade.

Like mundraub, *TransitionTown Leipzig* (transitiontown-leipzig.de) is also part of a larger network, which more than 400 cities worldwide and 100 initiatives in Germany belong to. The transition town movement is based on an initiative set up by British environmental activist Rob Hopkins and students of the Kinsale Further Education College in Ireland. It is based around the concept of permaculture, which aims to create long-lasting functioning, sustainable and near-natural cycles to obtain efficient and resilient natural conditions. The movement, operating as a civic society organization and following an organization concept formulated as a "handbook" (cf. Hopkins 2008), pushes municipalities to take measures towards a post-fossil redesign of the city and to focus using local suppliers in order to form answers to the big challenges which have not been answered so far by politics and the economy. Based on Hopkins' home town of Totnes, UK, communal projects are now being set up in a number of transition towns in industrialized Western countries, to prepare for a future when raw materials and fuels will be scarcer. This includes projects to reduce consumption and to use renewable energy sources as well as to strengthen regional and local economies.

In Leipzig too, dedicated locals get involved in the active transformation of the city under the name "Leipzig im Wandel", to encourage a more regional focus on food production, economy and energy supply, and to sever themselves from the unsustainable and unjust practices of a throwaway society shaped by abundance. For the activists, the aim is to "produce, process and consume as many products and services locally as possible, in order to make local demand independent of international corporations, oil and the financial markets" (interviewee from Leipziger Agenda 2). Instead, it wants to counteract the negative developments in the labor market and the deterioration in the quality of the environment. Alternative visions, a creative civil society, embedded techniques, music and knowledge should point the way towards a sustainable Leipzig. Alongside community gardens and communal harvest and cooking actions, its initiative "Leipzig im Wandel" organizes and supports educational projects to rediscover old techniques (reskilling), local economic cycles, solar panels on the roofs of private houses and the use of the local currency, the Lindentaler. All citizens should be encouraged to contribute towards a livable and sustainable Leipzig with less traffic noise, more togetherness, communal supply capabilities, codetermination and local quality of life.

In 2016, a map was created at the time of the Degrowth Conference to show where all the alternatives can be found. It is to inscribe the diversity of the projects and their contribution to the city in sustainable change in the

conceptual spatial image (see www.transitiontown-leipzig.de/arbeitsgruppen/leipzig-im-wandel/).

The networks presented aim to meet the particular challenges faced by Leipzig in a way which is creative and collaborative. An overriding goal in this respect is the sustainable use of local resources in a way which is visible to fellow citizens and which invites them to take part. Another goal is to oppose the supposedly alternativeless urban development model of unsustainable competition between cities for population, investors and tourists in favor of sustainable alternatives for people, environment and climate. Like other local initiatives, it is oriented towards reintegrating the fragmented nutritional and social spaces into local cooperations. A reinterpretation of the idea of subsistence can be recognized in their own experimental form of do-it-yourself. Unpaid niche activities are emerging from the fringes of society in people's sheds and cellars into the public sphere, combined with contemporary symbols from creative sections of the population, and are creating new concepts of urbanity, which in the meantime are also being adopted in urban and regional planning policy. Here, the civil society is building a microcosm of the city in which they would want to live, and is connecting its own space with others who are following similar goals and approaches. An alternative social and ecological reality is being made practical and deliberately positioned in the urban area. The collection of resistant and hybrid spatial and nature policies entails further experiments, which are seen as political actions and criticisms of the status quo. This, however, happens as part of the prevailing power structures and under the conditions of an ever-faster and more comprehensive collection of innovative activities and interpretations, in a consumer culture which is permanently dependent on new meaning. So that the creative structure of the community gardens and civil society networks can retain their political potential in this ambivalent context, in which even cities are governed by the imperative of always presenting the new, they need to stabilize the new approaches at all levels, in discourse, in practice, and in the material structures. In Nantes, on the other hand, the initiatives emerge in an urban policy context in which the vision of a sustainable city is the official guide.

3.3.2 Nantes: hybridizing urban spaces through gardening initiatives

Nantes is in western France, south of Brittany and close to the Atlantic Ocean, and with roughly 300,000 inhabitants it is the sixth-biggest city in France. Like Leipzig, the city is characterized by its position, where a number of rivers flow into the Loire. As a port city on the Loire estuary, for a long time it played a major role in the slave trade – a past which meant the city became familiar with the practices of global and exploitative business models at an early stage. During the 19th century, Nantes was shaped by industries relating to the port, with large-scale shipbuilding and expansive shipyards, as well as a strong agricultural and food industry with a well-known biscuit factory (LU,

Lefèvre-Utile). With the beginning of the industrial decline in the 1980s (the closure of the shipyard and the last ship launch in 1987), the city experienced an increase in poverty and exclusion. The result was a politicized population, fierce conflicts and several strikes, as well as disused spaces in the former industrial parts of the city, particularly on the Île de Nantes, an island in the middle of the modern-day city. The change towards a service metropolis was triggered by major infrastructure measures, in particular the upgrading of a modern tramway and the high-speed train TGV linking Nantes with Paris, as well as measures to improve public space. Today, Nantes is mostly known in France for its wealth of cultural offerings. Music festivals such as *La Folle Journée*, *Les rendez-vous de l'Erdre*, the *Royal de Luxe* processions in the 1990s and 2000s, film festivals such as *Le Festival des 3 Continents*, the art project *Les Machines de l'Île*, artistic tours and countless other cultural activities throughout the year consolidate this reputation.

In 2013, the city was crowned European Green Capital, and is even more committed to the political demands of a city on a sustainable transformation path, which also includes participatory approaches in urban development policy. Accordingly, the association France Urbaine describes Nantes as follows: "The Nantes basin is a jewel in the agro-industrial environment of Western France. But it is also a territory of innovation and experimentation when it comes to sustainable food and urban agriculture" (France Urbaine 2018, 39). According to a study conducted by the consulting agency Utopies (cf. Utopies 2017, 6) Nantes is among the top six cities in France for food autonomy, with a total of 6.4 percent of local products also being consumed locally. Nantes is also a city whose surroundings are used for a wide range of agricultural purposes, namely in the marshlands, which have a special tradition of vegetable cultivation. Alongside agricultural spaces, there are also natural landscapes, for example the Lac de Grand-Lieu nature reserve.

Urban nature and strategic investments in green spaces became core elements of political policy in the new millennium (cf. Ville de Nantes 2018). The current mayor even aims to create a "City in the garden",[1] and actively encourages residents to get involved in shaping the future of their city. Additionally, the *Conseil de la nature en ville*,[2] an intermediary organization founded in 2016, provides various advisory and support services, both for elected officials as well as for the interested public.

Nantes is faced with the challenge of developing from a contaminated former industrial city into a garden city, in order to become a "transition town" today (cf. Ville de Nantes 2018, 5) and a sustainable city tomorrow. Examples for this strategic realignment include the transformation of the eco-neighborhood on the "Île de Nantes", which began in the 2000s, the revitalization of the old shipyards and warehouses, as well as the conversion of the formerly derelict industrial area of the *Miséry* quarry into a botanical garden, which is also set to play host to a heron tree.[3] This strategy of creating a green infrastructure from a political and administrative viewpoint is supplemented by civil society projects for community gardens, urban agriculture and edible

green spaces. The City actively supports this engagement, for example as part of a tender to set up 15 public spaces in 2018 (cf. Ville de Nantes 2018, 11).

As we will see, civil society accepts these offers, and also suggested a number of projects for this tender, including many which relate to food. It can rely on existing civil society associations which have been dealing with issues such as urban nature, urban gardening, ecology and sustainable procurement of foodstuffs in Nantes for some time, but also on many new initiatives, which generally also have a focus on social issues. In an interview, one of the resulting initiatives considered it to be their "job to think about what's really appropriate to produce in the city" (interview with the Initiative Nantes Villes Comestible). All the initiatives asked say that the wish to see gardens and food production return to the city plays a major role. The initiatives presented below are committed to this principle in different ways, and were investigated in spring 2018 as part of a master's thesis by means of interviews and on-site visits in order to record the participants' aims, practices and methods of perception in comparison with the German case studies (Da Ros 2018). The examples mentioned here are relatively new civil society initiatives, which are currently working on reclaiming urban and abandoned spaces through innovative gardening activities and pedagogic workshops. Therefore, for a more detailed summary we have chosen an urban farm which is currently being set up (*La Petite Ferme Urbaine de Bellevue*), the neighborhood garden *Prairie d'Amont*, the initiative *Bio-T-Full* for urban agriculture and a networking platform in Nantes, the "*Maison des Agricultures Urbaines*". Socially integrated, sustainable urban development is at the heart of all these initiatives, and they are all supported by the municipality. The quotes come from the interviews with founders and participants.

The *Petite Ferme Urbaine de Bellevue* project is an urban farm covering an area of 3,000 square meters, which as the neighborhood's own food supply aims to put down roots in the area for the long term, although it is planned in mobile raised-bed cultures and greenhouses. Urban farm is the generic term for initiatives for urban food production which work closely with their neighborhood to push for the use of gardens or fruit trees and fruit bushes as renewable resources for a post-fossil urban society. The *Petite Ferme Urbaine* decided upon the model of part-urban, part-rural food production in order to generate synergies from linking different systems together, for example by promoting short distribution channels and a functioning urban ecosystem. Mushroom cultures, for example, are particularly well suited for recycling coffee grounds and for utilizing unused underground spaces, and enable harvest-fresh produce to be consumed in a convenient time frame.

The founder of this initiative has always combined his projects with ecological and social commitment. He began with vermicomposting, and in the past few years has provided a number of social housing projects in other districts with vermicomposters and communal gardens. From these experiences came the idea of creating an integrated local cycle for reevaluating waste based on organic waste, together with residents in the Bellevue district

in the west of Nantes. Work on setting up the farm itself only began in spring 2018. The idea was for it to be specifically incorporated within the neighborhood, which has a lot of public housing, in order to contribute towards promoting social cohesion in the area and to open up new perspectives for local residents to take part in transforming the food system and in accordance with their needs.

The different parts of the farm were and are designed in cooperation with the neighborhood in the form of transportable raised beds and mobile structures, so that they could be adjusted to the ongoing changes as part of building projects and new concepts for the use of space. This versatility should ensure that it remains a long-term presence in the neighborhood. The three greenhouses on the farm also include a community-supported greenhouse, which is open for little neighborhood projects as well as educational projects. By doing this, the activists are responding to the wishes of the population to have green spaces available in the neighborhood which they can landscape with plants, flowers and fruit trees, despite being unable to keep raising the necessary funds and resources. The community-supported greenhouse enables participants to sow their own plants, grow seedlings and even sell any excess seeds to other community gardens in the city, which also helps them to support their other projects in the long term. The two other greenhouses are for the farm's own production, one of which is intended for the aquaponics system while the other is already operated in the form of bioponics, i.e. it is also an aquaponics plant but without mineralized fertilizer, because the initiative already has its own natural fertilizer thanks to the vermicompost. There is also a henhouse with eight hens, which serves two different purposes. Firstly, it contributes towards converting part of the waste into eggs, and secondly it can be taken to nearby schools in a mobile birdhouse, where children are taught about food production up close.

Mushrooms are also grown in containers, which are built and labeled in such a way that everybody can experience and recreate the cultivation technique. A packaging-free shop is planned, in which locals can buy products in their own containers. They should also be encouraged to bring along their organic waste, for which they will be given vouchers for making purchases in store. All these components constitute the integrated design of a recycling project, which wants to establish an alternative urban production facility based on waste recovery as an essential element of everyday life in the neighborhood.

Some of the components which make up the farm are already in operation; some of them are currently being put into place step by step. By planning and developing the farm together, participants and interested neighbors get the opportunity to meet one another and share experiences. In the interview they emphasize the exemplary character of their farm, as a long-term example to be spread across the whole neighborhood and to other places, so that locals everywhere can re-appropriate and reshape the city for themselves.

The first part, it is only a showcase to raise awareness. In the long run, we have a lot of green space here in the neighborhood. Social housing providers do no longer know what to do with them today ..., so these spaces, little by little, we aim to occupy them with an expansion of this farm. So, from the moment when we have demonstrated that it works on this small space during the first three years, we aim to extend it a little bit everywhere in the neighborhood.

(Interviewee from La Petite Ferme Urbaine)

The urban farm project aims to use gardening to strengthen cohesion in the area to encourage more peaceful living. At the same time, it's about using resources sustainably and conveying basic skills for potential future community projects, and also about opening up perspectives for opportunities to employ locals. The garden at the foot of the residential building doesn't just exist so residents can get to know each other when composting, for example, but it also creates space and a time for doing things together as families to make everyday life easier. Firstly, the participants say, it creates a "lived" space, meaning it makes the neighborhood into a suitable place for its residents in the sense of Lefebvre, in which their own practices and demands can emerge. Active participation is what co-designs the sustainable city that administrators want – but in keeping with the everyday reality of its inhabitants. In our interview, it was emphasized that "true" urban agriculture can only play a significant role in designing the city when it comes from below, from local residents, so that it can spread from there at city and policy-making level: "[T]he real urban agriculture, if it wants to succeed, it has to start from below, and little by little it will go up again" (interviewee from *La Petite Ferme Urbaine*).

The *Prairie d'Amont* (prairie-amont.fr) association is a neighborhood garden which became permanent following the summer events as part of the "Nantes European Green Capital 2013" celebrations. As a general rule, different residents join forces in community gardens in the urban area to get active, dig the soil, sow seeds, water crops and harvest them together, often with their families and children. They create green meeting spaces, which not infrequently need to be defended against the forces of municipal bureaucracy. Not so in Nantes. Here, a maize field was created during the summer of events in previously unused space between the buildings at the eastern end of the Île de Nantes. Afterwards, some of the neighbors who wanted to keep the basic principle and convert the maize field into a garden project got in touch with the city, where they were met with an open ear. Following on, a neighborhood garden was created a few months later, which since 2017 has also played host to beehives. Alongside the fun of gardening and the relationships with neighbors which develop as a result, those taking part in the project also contribute towards the development of the city. They explicitly want to be part of developing an urban vision, shape the city through doing something together and prepare for the challenges of the future. They want to make public spaces green, plant fruit trees in every neighborhood instead of ornamental trees and

create small spaces where people can develop an alternative relationship with nature.

> We imagine a city where, tomorrow, any citizen, if he or she feels like gardening, could create this kind of micro-places, a bit everywhere. ... So, the garden creates this, this meeting space where, if there wasn't that, we would never have talked to each other.
>
> (Interviewee from *Prairie d'Amont*)

The dedicated volunteers consider their neighborhood garden to be a means rather than a purpose, despite growing vegetables, composting, bee-keeping and the skills they have learned. Even when the will is there to deal with questions regarding food, bringing nature to the city and constructing and practicing a life in the sustainable city, the main priority is that they don't do this alone. The garden is the place where these expectations can become reality, and what's more, with like-minded people from the neighborhood and the neighboring buildings. Meanwhile, the neighborhood garden in this initiative has therefore also become somewhere to meet other initiatives. Childcare, a collective composting station – in future, a hut with a kitchen and a workshop are also set to be built. Not all members and visitors come primarily because of the gardening: some get involved for the beekeeping, others pick their children up and stay, and talk with their neighbors while doing composting duty. The garden itself is described as an active element, from which "places like no other" are created, local beauty spots are revealed and you are invited to experience things which cannot be planned. We are impressed by the wide range of people seen in this French neighborhood garden, which effortlessly seems to bring together different social classes and backgrounds. It changes the spatial experience and the urban practices, and with it the expectations of urban spaces. What were once "empty green spaces in the neighborhood" have become places where people can use their imagination and engage in gardening and composting-related activities, or just ponder about alternative possibilities for using the public space in a transition town. The neighborhood garden makes possibilities for designing the urban space tangible for users and local residents in a way which is particularly logical.

The purpose of the *Bio-T-Full* (bio-t-full.org) association is to develop a versatile urban form of agriculture, and contribute with educational projects to spread their ideas beyond their own project. The term "urban agriculture" is actually a generic term for very different types of food production in urban centers, which exist to supply their local areas with food. Whereas in the global south, farms in densely populated urban areas are definitely run in a "rural" fashion, in the industrial countries it's a very urban form of agriculture, in non-agricultural spaces and in a non-agricultural fashion. Produce is mainly consumed locally, donated or sold via direct-sales channels. This predominantly means that urban agriculture can supply individuals or households with a limited range of products at certain times of the year. However, urban

agriculture does not always reach those groups which are affected by a diet which is insufficient either in terms of quality or quantity. In Nantes, the garden initiatives also have their sights on sections of the population whose consumption habits differ from those of the middle classes. Alongside urban forms of garden design, *Bio-T-Full* also supports types of animal husbandry (poultry, rabbits, aquaculture and beekeeping) in urban areas and is not bound to certain social, economic or ecological purposes, such as self-sufficiency, organic production or social exchange. Rather, the educational aspect is paramount, as is developing the capabilities of civil society. This is why there are a number of elements on their participatory site in the Solilab (joint workspace for social and social economy initiatives, at the western end of the Île de Nantes) which are dedicated to the possibilities offered by urban food production. Here, aquaponics facilities can be looked at, in which fish breeding in special containers (aquaculture) is linked with the cultivation of crops in a closed cycle, for example for tomatoes and herbs. The fish's excrement is used as nutrients for the plants – a reproduction of the natural nitrogen cycle. *Bio-T-Full* aims to use the facility to make the meaning of ecosystems more tangible and show what a return of nature to the cities can look like and how it can be different from agriculture in rural areas. Participants also develop their own educational offerings and workshops for urban dwellers who want to reconnect with nature through using different elements. The initiative tries to make the various aspects of urban gardening accessible through smaller activities, in order to build up a general level of awareness for urban dwellers, which they don't or didn't get from school and which will enable them to have a sustainable relationship with nature while being in an urban area.

Supporting garden projects within residential buildings or in the neighborhood also plays an important role in contributing towards green urban development. Those who were asked from *Bio-T-Full* stress that no urban gardening project can be successful without the lasting support, enthusiasm and dedication of local residents. They also explain this in relation to the city's public tender, mentioned above, which explicitly aimed not at organizations, experts and planners, but at citizens. The initiative *Bio-T-Full* took part in this tender and supported a group of locals in their plan to transform the *Espace Babonneau*, a green corner in a residential street, into a communal and pleasure garden. In the draft, the neighborhood's particular motivation and willingness to improve the community spirit in the otherwise anonymous district were combined with the professional experience of the initiative for urban agriculture as a proven project sponsor. The interviewee from *Bio-T-Full* puts it as follows:

> We really built and sharpened the project with the inhabitants, we could see what they were interested in, … and there is the will to create and to value the social bond within the whole neighborhood and the idea of agriculture, of the connexion with nature, of cultivating one's plants … they liked it right away.
>
> (Interviewee from *Bio-T-Full*)

It was announced to the public in June 2018 that the project had been selected, and work began in September 2018. The success may also be down to the fact that the focus of the project closely matched the city administration's own policy. At the same time, it is an example that inviting citizens to take part in urban agriculture projects in their local area will be enthusiastically received. Everywhere, programs aimed at designing people's own living environment received an overwhelming response from people willing to get involved, which cannot be seen in many other areas. Inaugural meetings for urban agriculture projects are often attended by 50–100 people, who want to play a part in developing green spaces in their city for growing food. In interviews with us, those asked emphasize that they want to take responsibility for designing sustainable urban spaces for themselves, implementing their own ideas and building a sense of social togetherness. Some say that it's about giving the interests of local residents more of a say against the increasing commercialization of the public space. This is especially important where open spaces are scarce and not all citizens can afford to consume things when meeting people. Therefore, *Bio-T-Full* is also associated with the task of civil society initiatives of opening up urban communal spaces, in which alternative ways to deal with a post-fossil future can be found by involving different interested parties.

What all projects in Nantes have in common is that involving a variety of groups, including the socially disadvantaged, is part of the plan. The urban food movement should not be the preserve of the successful middle classes nor take place in closed communities, but it should happen in a way which brings the town together as a whole, which invites other interested parties to take part and which can be used for different purposes by young and old, rich and poor alike. As in Leipzig, the different initiatives see themselves as complementing one another and being part of a cohesive whole. Even if individual projects don't engage in gardening-related activities, they are committed to the job of creating places for urban agriculture and networks for the exchange and dissemination of associated ideas both in and beyond Nantes. Therefore, for example, several initiatives and associations from Nantes have joined forces in the *Lab'AU 44* collective as "city architects" to promote the foundation of a *Maison des Agricultures Urbaines* (House of Urban Agriculture; ecosnantes.org/la-maison-de-l-agriculture-urbaine.html), which is actively orientated towards democratizing urban agriculture into multiple different "socio-natures" (Alkon 2013). Here, the different resources of the various actors come together in order to develop and test context-related models of urban agriculture, including projects with the University of Nantes. An interviewee highlights the number of potential participants who need to be involved in conversation:

> Today urban agriculture – well different types of agriculture – is multifaceted and almost systemic and so … it also involves citizen groups, collectives, as entrepreneurs, territorial community, real-estate promoters etc. So, there must also be a dialog between all of these actors.

The network wants to make the various activities and the differences between them visible, and to avoid confrontations and polarization within the urban food movement at all costs. This means it should be clear that the difference between the civil society initiatives is something to be welcomed, and its multi-faceted nature contributes towards the variety of valuable and original contributions and perspectives, which can only promote the presentation and design of a sustainable city and an organic local food system thanks to this breadth. Therefore, urban agriculture must be referred to in the plural to recognize the variety of agricultural approaches in the city and the country, and to enable the initiatives which lead to urban food production together with a number of actors and perspectives into new realms.

The civil society and municipal networks are working together in Nantes to devise a central theme to run through food and gardens, to make it possible to imagine the neighborhood and city of tomorrow and so contribute towards the necessary transition. Many interviewees say that citizens must have a right to participate in designing their city. The different types and functions of urban agriculture should also make sure that different sections of the population appropriate their own space on the right scale for them, and establish that they in fact are the main players in the social production of urban spaces. Demonstrative places like the urban farms, communal gardens and food assemblies experiment, spread innovative, cooperative and inclusive lifestyles and distance themselves from the socio-spatially fragmented "modern" city in order to stimulate the design of the city of the Anthropocene era.

The hybridization strategy followed by the urban food movement, which consciously traverses city and country and city and food supply, is highlighted and illustrated in the *Maison des Agricultures Urbaines*. This means working to create a place which promotes experimenting with urban agriculture, and which constitutes a network-like meeting point for all actors in the metropolis to exchange ideas, and plan and carry out projects which include as many different components as possible, both human and non-human. Our interviewees talk about how urban agriculture is all about the variety of people who get involved – from city-dwellers looking for somewhere to do some gardening and do things together, to entrepreneurs wanting to set up rooftop farms and organic farmers in the surrounding area. All these different types of urban agriculture must not be separated from one another, but also must not be lumped together. The *Maison des Agriculture Urbaines* wants to appreciate the spatial consistency between the different places and regard them as fluid. The dichotomy between nature and culture should be broken thanks to constant relations between production and consumption.

In general, the statements made by the initiatives interviewed in Nantes indicate a vision of urban gardening, which does not necessarily (and also not for newer initiatives either) aspire to produce significant amounts of food within the city. Instead, they aim to build bridges and get across to people living in cities that they too can experience nature and food production

through small-scale gardens in the immediate vicinity of where they live, and achieve a continuity between the city and nature. The garden involves inhabitants, plants, animals and people, and turns the hybridized city into something with a noticeable blend of ingredients. As in Leipzig, they also visualized this hybridization in the form of a map (Aubry 2017). Here, a utopian plan represents a number of initiatives and organizations from the field of urban agriculture in Nantes, some of which have already been mentioned. The spatial dynamics which come as a result of the initiatives and which lead to citizens reappropriating the lived space through the experience of gardening are illustrated in more detail. The map concentrates on visualizing the ambitions of restructuring urban spaces which the civil food networks want to realize and thus condenses the overall picture of the spatial impact of urban agricultural projects in Nantes.

3.4 Repolitizing the modern constitution

> *Everyday life is thus streaked by contradictory tensions because it is here that the ordered and unordered, dominated and unruly sectors of life, abstract space and the possibility for differential space meet (Beveridge and Koch 2019, 150).*

Comparing the two case studies increases awareness of the site-specific rationales which evolve from the complex situations regarding spatial structures, historical experiences, specific groups of protagonists and differing expectations of the future. In both cities, the civil food networks are reacting to the experiences of change and to the wish to adapt this change to meet their needs, while spatially articulating the "contradictory tensions", quoted above (Beveridge and Koch 2019). With their projects, they intervene in the primarily economically driven reproduction of urban space and disrupt an urban normality structured by capitalist imperatives. In both cases, they are interested in building a network, and join forces with important players outside the urban food movement, for example with town planners, politicians and people working in the creative arts. And we still see important differences.

In Leipzig, local policy after German reunification was aimed at developing the city as fast as possible towards the economic and social possibilities offered by capitalist Western cities. With their garden projects, committed civil society is countering this with a different vision of necessary transformation. Ecological issues and cooperatively reshaping food production into fair trading relationships which don't endanger the natural resources became particularly important. In Nantes, local policy itself is becoming focused on a transition to sustainability, and places a special emphasis on public spaces. On the other hand, a dedicated civil society is putting social issues on the agenda with their garden projects, and is aiming for social cohesion and overcoming splintering urbanism. Unlike the criticisms of Alkon (2013, 667), in the Nantes cases the co-production is not centered around middle-class labor and consumer desires, but also incorporates the kinds of labor and everyday

food practices typically performed by low-income people and people of color. In both cases, civil society interferes in the definition of what urban space is, who can interpret and design it, and whose needs in terms of using it should be taken into account. They don't just represent the residents of the local area; they also aim at a sustainably design of urban socio-nature taking into account distant, non-human and future persons affected.

We see the actions of urban food networks resulting in a strategy for developing civil society structures in cities that demonstrate the capacity to build resilience at the municipal level (cf. Smith and Seyfang 2013) in dealing with the challenges of the Anthropocene. Urban community gardens and CSAs are projects in which world references are created, made locally visible and corrected by rethinking, designing and networking local food production and the socio-natural production of space. In Leipzig and Nantes they are interlinked and networked with many other organizations and movements which are concerned with a socio-ecological redesign of life in cities. While at a global level the handling of the great challenges is often called for, but notoriously ends in always the same strategies of growth promotion, and companies globalize, but only deepen the division between winners and losers, truly innovative models of "cohabitation", expectations and routines emerge on local grounds, intertwined with specific social, ecological and political conditions for action and with a view to global interactions.

The more successful these projects are, the more they are confronted with the overall framework in which they operate. They find themselves in the area of tension between "right to the city" versus gentrification, subsistence versus green growth, and must determine their "alterity" in these tensions. On the planning side, the spaces of urban food provision and the associated relationships have only been discovered in recent years as a separate topic of spatial and planning sciences (Morgan 2015). However, at no time were cities ever passive "food consumers", but rather they have always been places where culinary meanings are created, negotiated, changed and made a target for the producing "suppliers" (Cronon 1991). So far, however, this interaction has been characterized by mutual demarcation and instrumentalization. Civil food networks instead are looking for partnership and trust-based relationships in the city, between city and country, and between the local and the global. According to Renting et al. (2012), the potential of this movement to change the dominant food-from-nowhere regime is particularly great when it assumes the character of a movement. In fact, our research shows that the participants of civic food networks share common visions, practices and strategies and their current spread can be seen as a local food movement with global aspirations. They formulate a vision of continuous change and overcoming "big food" as a symptom of a more fundamental crisis. They seem to cooperate so successfully with networks of different reach that a post-industrial understanding of action and a collective capacity for change are gradually emerging. As we have seen, their spatial strategies include the reversal of the privatization of public spaces, the strict emphasis on environmental and social purposes and

values, the testing and staging of alternative forms of economy in which the invaluable and the unpaid are also recognized, and the visible, tangible transformation of neighborhoods.

Beveridge and Koch (2019) suggest adding urban everyday politics to the conceptual repertoire of political action with regard to this type of alternative networks. Therefore, their interest is limited to those forms of political action which "confront contradictions and antagonism that are operative in urbanization. And they do so by articulating these conflicts through spatial interventions, through the realization of differential spaces, where the homogenizing forces of state and market (abstract space) are countered" (Beveridge and Koch 2019, 146).

> They are political because they are antagonistic towards the way current processes of urbanization unfold in the everyday and they cannot be reduced to minor acts of everyday life. Of course, it is ultimately difficult to draw a line that clearly delineates between practices as everyday acts and practices politicizing the urban everyday.
>
> (Beveridge and Koch 2019, 148)

Indeed, the political character of the urban food networks is controversial, because they are organized on a very small scale, concerned with themselves, focused on a countercultural aesthetic and appear to be not broad-based enough socially and too unsuccessful economically. By contrast, Marchart (2011, 972) is of the view that it does not matter "how big the collective, how effective the strategy, how intense the conflict, and how good (or bad) the organization" is (Marchart 2011, 972), so long as four minimal conditions of political action are fulfilled, namely *collectivity* (acting together), *strategy* (self-conscious activity in contexts of constraints), *conflictuality* (confronting complicated obstacles and antagonisms) and *organization* (ibid.; cf. Beveridge and Koch 2019, 149)

All the criteria named are met by the food networks investigated. They work together in a mutually supportive way to develop strategies for a social and ecological transformation in the local area which are in conflict with the dominant powers in the social space, and develop organized networks, associations and companies to achieve this. In the process, they follow the overarching goal of reintegrating a food industry and urban policy which has been affected by neoliberal interests into the social and ecological sphere of community-supported relationships. As is also shown for Italian food networks, the "utilitarian-private vision" is opposed to a "solidarity-collective logic", in order "to favor the development of more significant collective agency, civic engagement and political activism" based on a "shared sense of responsibility and a common idea of food citizenship" (Rossi 2017, 3). Alkon (2013, 671) considers this "an important departure from an environmental movement focused largely on places in which humans do not live" to urban spaces where diverse people and collectivities "live, work and struggle" for our

common future. From this perspective, the reformulation of terrestrial food spaces in cities is not only the stage but also the object of political struggle.

Notes

1 Cf. Ville de Nantes 2018, www.nantes.fr/home/actualites/a-nantes-et-pas-ailleurs/2017/top-nantes-vertes.html
2 Cf. www.nantes.fr/conseil-nature-ville
3 One of the current projects of Machines de l'Île, which is "a completely new type of art project, which is the brainchild of François Delarozière and Pierre Orefice. The imaginary worlds of Jules Verne, the mechanical universe of Leonardo da Vinci and the industrial past of the city of Nantes on the remarkable site of the former shipyard" (cf. www.lesmachines-nantes.fr/de).

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