Modern Commons:

Place, Nature, and Revolution at the Strathcona Community Gardens

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Modern Commons: Place, Nature, And Revolution At the Strathcona Community Gardens

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A B S T R A C T

Do revived systems of local control have the potential to resolve modern social and ecological crises? This study assesses the revolutionary potential of place through a detailed look at the Strathcona Community Gardens (located in Vancouver, Canada). While presenting modern place relations as complex and contradictory, involving conflicts of interest structured by class, gender, and other divisions, the theoretical approach outlines structural bases through which place-based movements might counter capitalist and patriarchal social and natural relations.

Chosen as an example of local land management, the Gardens serve as a basis for analyzing the outcomes of renewed communal structures. The methodology mirrors the complexity of local relations. Analysis is conducted in three general areas: social relations, natural relations, and senses of place. Within each area, the aim is to assess the degree to which the Gardens manifest tendencies contrary to those of dominant, capitalist relations. Research tools include a survey (returned by 53 Gardens members), key informant interviews, archival data, and texts and maps produced by Gardens members. Observed outcomes are related to what are suggested to be structural causes (e.g., production for use rather than exchange), but also to related processes and particularities of the locality.

The research reveals the Gardens project as strikingly successful in promoting cooperative relations, enhanced senses of place, and ecological revival. Social processes have gone hand in hand with ecological regeneration—diversity of species, soil health, wildlife habitat. Key factors in this reclamation of place, it is argued, are production for use, communal control, attention to power relations within the group, and direct democratic decision making. Together, these factors have begun to produce both a diverse and revitalized ecology and a powerful community. But social divisions have not simply

disappeared. Contradictions of "race", of gender, and of class linger beneath the surface, affecting intra-group relations and shaping who has effective access to decision-making power. The persistence of such tensions suggests that limited, local politics can challenge but cannot, in itself, resolve contradictions in the broader society. To do so, it would need to be woven into a broader revolutionary project.

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I am grateful to my family and friends for their encouragement and advice in the course of this research. My partner, Rosemary Mann, provided critical support, and was remarkably patient through my long hours of reflection, hesitation, and revision. My son, Sasha, was the best incentive not to waste time, and was, on occasion, a helpful research assistant. My two moms, my dad, my siblings and grandparents and aunts all offered encouragement, as did many friends, particularly Phil Tamminga.

Although, at first, a few wondered what I was up to, the members of the Strathcona and Cottonwood Community Gardens were of great and indispensable help at all stages of the research. At the July, 1993 meeting of the society, members formally expressed support in principal for the research and gave me access to organizational records. Support for the research was suggested in the high response rate to my survey. My own enthusiasm for the research was continually renewed as I became acquainted with more Gardens members. I am particularly grateful to Ellie Epp, who freely shared her own insights into Gardens processes and went out of her way to provide me with pertinent source material. I hope that the research findings may be of some lasting value to the Gardens.

I am also particularly thankful to both of my research supervisors, who advised me with characteristic insight and good will. John Brohman offered timely and appropriate guidance on theoretical and practical matters, but also allowed me the leeway I needed. Nick Blomley gave me encouragement and thoughtful criticism. As it happened, Nick himself joined the Gardens while serving on my committee, an eventuality that allowed him to advise me from both an academic and an insider's perspective. The humour of the situation was clear when a coordinator at the Cottonwood site recommended Nick to me as

a suitable candidate for an interview! Peter Boothroyd, who served as the external examiner, brought a friendly approach and fresh perspectives to the defense.

In carrying out the research, I was assisted by many groups and individuals not already mentioned. Of particular assistance were staff at the City of Vancouver Archives and the Department of Housing and Properties of the City of Vancouver. Colleagues in the S.F.U. Department of Geography gave me valuable criticism, and the staff of the Department were particularly welcoming and helpful. I would have been unable to undertake the research without financial assistance given by the Department of Geography in the forms of teaching assistantships and a graduate fellowship. The latter, in particular, helped me balance academic demands with my responsibilities as a parent.

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MODERNITY, TRADITION, AND PLACE

It came to me as I tramped among the plots with Joanne Hochu back in the Fall of 1992: the Strathcona Community Gardens was the image of a village commons in medieval Europe (see, e.g., Merchant 1980: 42-50). Land was held in common and shaped by the shared needs and labour of local residents. Even the spatial layout was comparable, with its mixture of individual plots and common orchards, fields, and wilds. For a few seconds, my imagination wandered and I saw peasants in aprons and straw hats, chatting in some rich, Germanic tongue as they brought in the communal harvest. Then the vision passed and I was back in this verdant corner of Vancouver's east side, but I couldn't shake the idea that there was much more here than met the eye. It's not that there was anything archaic or backward-looking about the gardeners I met; they were, on the contrary, alive with a critical consciousness. Yet, in terms of both natural and social relations, the Gardens seemed to reinvent key elements of a traditional commons. Was this similarity merely superficial, or did it reflect some deeper recapturing of pre-capitalist relations? The question led me to intriguing and much-contested issues relating to the theory and praxis of social change. What structures are required to regain balances of pre-capitalist relations? What is the role of locality in revolutionary transformation? This study is my research and reflections toward answering these questions.

Although penned almost 150 years ago, these phrases still capture the heady anguish that marks the condition of modernity:

> Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social [and, we may add, natural] conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations . . . are swept away . . . . All that is solid melts into air . . . . (Marx and Engels 1986 [1848]: 20)

Modern systems have created the potential for levels of security, knowledge, and well being that peoples of past ages could scarcely have imagined. But everywhere this potential is squandered. Freidrich Engels (1953 [1844]) described in grim detail the human and natural degradation that underlay the fabulous wealth of industrial England. Today, the old factories of Manchester are mostly silent, but the black filth and urban disease they spawned are reproduced on a vastly swollen scale in a hundred distant locales: Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Bombay. Can the orphan lying in the street look on the marvels of modern technology as anything but cruel mockery? Even in the wealthy north, cold market relations are eating at the very fabric of social life and of nature. Increasingly, our cities are cities of strangers, sucking the life out of farmlands half a world away. As we careen into a future of untold wealth and tragic crises, we have to ask loudly and clearly: how can our modern world recapture some of the balances of what Marx called the "fixed" relations of the past?

Place seems to be central to the question. The balances and limitations of traditional societies were rooted in locality. We see this in the commons, an institution that was found in some form in almost all agricultural societies. Here land was held in common by a village community; human survival depended on communal ties and on the continued health of a local nature. It was only with the enclosure of the commons that local balances in production were replaced by dependence on the market and the state. The extreme consequence is a particularly modern disarticulation of people and place.

Two sorts of approach have dominated responses to the modern dissolution of local

limits and bonds. The first (initiated by the European romantics of the late eighteenth century) hearkens wistfully to an idyllic and mythified rural past, free from the ravages of industry and the city. This is the fairy tale celebrated by William Wordsworth in his quaint and beautiful verses. From the first, this response has been strongly steeped in masculinist, middle class values: nature is a passive landscape, an escape from the rigours of commerce and the industrial city. Indeed, we can trace the vast expanses of suburbia in part to just such images (Davidoff and Hall 1983). Missing from this tame view of nature, of community, and of place is an analysis of the social relations and relations of power that underlay the harmonious guise of pre-modern societies.

The mirror response revels in the powers of capital and state to destroy the restrictions of tradition. We might think of the Rudyard Kiplings of the nineteenth century, eulogizing the "White Man's Burden" to bring civilization to the savages; but this celebration is not limited to the self-conscious apologists of empire. State socialists, too, once glorified the conquest of place, holding that the crises of modernity would be resolved through the logic of modernization itself. Any who protested the destruction of traditional ties were conservative; "Nay, more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history" (Marx and Engels 1986 [1848]: 27). By eroding all local ties and extending human control over nature, capitalism paved the way for a communism free of the restrictions of locality. Where the conquest of place and nature had not yet been completed, a revolutionary state could finish the job. But such false dreams must now be abandoned. By leaving "no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest" (Marx and Engels 1986 [1848]: 19), capital in the industrialized North has prepared for itself more docile servants than grave diggers (to invoke the phrases of the *Communist Manifesto*). Critics argue that the so called "conquest" of nature has served not the general interest of humanity but the specific interest of capital accumulation—or, in the case of state socialism, of aggrandizing the state.[1] According to this viewpoint, far from preparing the

[1]"Now we can see that the hope to 'dominate nature' for the betterment of the species has become the effort

emancipation of humanity, the modern conquest of place celebrated by state socialists has only ensured our continued enslavement.

Rejecting these two responses, I want to base this study in a *synthesis* of place and revolution. We need to reclaim place—not to return to some mythified past, but to redeem the very real promises of modernity. "[T]here is no choice but to call for the 'recovery of the commons'—and this in a modern world which doesn't quite realize what it has lost"; that's how the poet and ecology activist Gary Snyder has put it (1990: 36). At the core of my research is this idea of a *modern commons*: a reweaving of social and natural relations through the locality, one that reclaims traditional balances while retaining the progressive logics of modernity. I'm going to approach it through a careful and detailed look at an example of revived community-land ties: the Strathcona Community Gardens.

In later chapters, I'll give a much fuller description of the community gardens, but let me give an overview at the outset. The Gardens occupy about 2.8 ha of what used to be "wastelands" bordering Vancouver's poorest residential area. In 1985, a group of local residents got access to half of the land to develop as garden plots. (The other half, known as the Cottonwood Community Gardens, was acquired in 1991.) Since then, a core membership of local residents, as well as members from other parts of Vancouver, has developed a diverse agricultural landscape. There are individual plots, where people grow food and flowers for themselves and their families. There are a number of "common areas", including fruit orchards, an herb garden, green space, and composting facilities. And there are "wild" areas, where existing brambles have been enhanced by selected plantings and the creation of ponds. All of these transformations have been planned and decided upon by the membership, and achieved through their volunteer labour. What are the social and natural relations promoted by this example of revived ties of place? What factors are most important in forging these relations? By delving into these questions, I aim to learn something about both prospects for and limitations to a place-based solution to

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to gain unequal access to nature's resources for purposes of social domination." (Harding 1987: 16).

the crises of modernity.

Much of the study takes the form of textual analysis; I am interpreting texts, illustrations, and statements made by Gardens members. But, of course, my interpretations are in no way definitive. They are inevitably shaped, to a degree, by how I am personally "located" - as a university student, a white heterosexual man, an at-home parent, a sometime political activist. My interpretations also reflect the diverse interactions I've had and friendships I've formed with Gardens members in the course of research. So I am not reading off the objective meaning of these texts (or of information gathered through other sources). Rather, I am trying to raise questions, identify points of tension, and suggest conclusions that remain open to contention and debate.

In 1988, I was myself involved in a short lived attempt to start up a community garden in Vancouver. Our garden lasted two years, failing when most of the members, including me, moved out of the neighbourhood. Before we began, several of us went down to a Strathcona Community Gardens meeting to see how their organizing worked. Years later, as I read over Gardens minutes in 1994, my own signature on a meeting attendance list was a strong reminder that the line between researcher and research subject is indefinite and permeable.

The study opens with a fairly involved theoretical exploration of place relations in conditions of modernity. I've tried to write this in a direct language, free of unnecessary jargon or abstraction—and mostly failed. Anyone wanting to get on with the case study can, I feel, safely skip all of Chapter 1 and the first half of Chapter 2, picking up with the overview of the Gardens, and the historical treatment of Chapter 3 (where the more lively voice I want as my own begins to come through).

This said, though, I view the theoretical account as essential to the study. I've already suggested that even apparently "radical" approaches to the study of place most often fall into dualistic treatments (e.g., idealizing place or celebrating its demise). In this study, I want to challenge easy associations between community, nature, and harmony, but at the

same time to explore liberatory potentials of place. My approach is a *left green* one; I draw on ecological approaches within Marxism, anarchism, and feminism. These perspectives give crucial insights into how capitalist and state relations have eroded systems of local power, and provide powerful tools for understanding sources of alienation from nature and community.

In Chapter 2, I draw on the theoretical account to outline methodologies for the study, and introduce research materials and tools, including a survey returned by more than half of the main gardens membership. In the second half of the chapter, I introduce the Gardens and their locality to provide a basis of reference for the balance of the study.

I begin the case study in Chapter 3 with a detailed historical geography of the evolution of the gardening sites, both before and following their acquisition by the gardeners. By retracing the origins of this place, I aim to describe and analyze the complex social forces and relations that have entered into its development. This historical description makes way for analysis of the Gardens themselves, clarifying points of continuity with and divergence from previous patterns and processes in the locality.

In Chapter 4, I analyze social and natural relations at the Gardens. Looking first at relations of gender, "race", and class at the Gardens, I gauge the extent to which this alternative form succeeds in challenging local relations of domination. This analysis is complemented with a look at relations of production, focusing on the degree to which members enter spontaneously into cooperative relations. Looking then to natural relations, I evaluate the success of the Gardens in reversing the anti-ecological processes characteristic of capitalist agriculture, e.g., in species diversity, soil composition, and fertility enhancement. I look as well at relations with wildlife and wetland habitat.

In Chapter 5, I bring social and natural relations together in a look at senses of place at the Gardens. Within humanist and ecological literatures, "sense of place" is often discussed as an unambiguously positive condition arising from local involvement. I begin the look at senses of place by analyzing the subjective ties to this place experienced by

members, taking as bases of analysis a member's journal and maps of the Gardens drawn by members. Yet there is more to the experience of place than aesthetic enjoyment or empowerment. To fill out the discussion of senses of place at the Gardens, I examine ways that social contradictions in the locality have contributed to conflicting senses of place between the gardeners and other local groups, and within the gardening group itself. I also consider manners in which the Gardens project has pushed beyond the limits of place by contributing to change at extra-local scales.

Finally, I suggest conclusions and implications (Chapter 6). Focusing on both findings and limitations of my research, I suggest directions for further research and for action.

C H A P T E R 1

RECLAIMING THE POWERS OF PLACE

It's out of hope, not nostalgia, that we must recover a community-based mode of production and way of life, founded not on greed, but on solidarity, age-old freedoms, and identity between human beings and nature. (Galeano 1991: 13)

All over the world, ecological and related movements are pushing for a return to local, community control over land management, with the idea that this could resolve social and ecological crises intrinsic to capitalist relations. My aim is to challenge and refine this position through analysis of a particular example of local land management: the Strathcona Community Gardens (located in Vancouver, Canada). The realist theoretical approach - developed in this chapter - challenges easy associations between locality, community, nature, and harmony, but reclaims structural bases through which place-based movements might counter capitalist and patriarchic social and natural relations. Special attention is paid to the ways in which social relations and relations with nature interpenetrate in a locality. In the body of the study, the revolutionary potential of place relations at the Strathcona Community Gardens is assessed through qualitative and quantitative analysis of social relations, natural relations, and senses of place.

1.1 Contradictions of Place

There is nothing extraordinary, nothing romantic about the work that has created the Strathcona Community Gardens: women and men digging soil, pulling out rocks, hauling manure, planting seeds, shaping the land through hard, physical labour. This is the common, everyday labour that has reproduced society and social nature for millennia. Neither the dreamy nature lover nor the "hardened" revolutionary would look here to find models for change. Yet there is a degree of complexity, a level of mystery to be discovered in the very commonness of this place and its routines.

In one form or another, community gardens are to be found in cities all over the world. They are places where people come together to secure access to land for growing food. The community gardening movement has inspired a wealth of "how to" books (Naimark 1982; Sommers 1984; Johnson and Bonlender 1990) and a number of periodicals.[1] English allotments have been analyzed as working class landscapes (Crouch and Ward 1988b; Crouch 1989), while community gardens in North America have been studied as a means of improving nutrition (Blair, Giesecke et al. 1991) and as examples of landscape planning (Grossman 1993; Eckdish Knack 1994). But few researchers have looked for the meaning of community gardens at a deeper level. Here I want to see the "everyday" community garden in a new, theoretical light. My focus is on the particular conflicts and contingencies that have shaped relations of place at the Strathcona Community Gardens. The processes and outcomes are unique to this locality; but I think we can glimpse through this example logics, patterns, and relations that transcend the particular and have wider applicability and relevance.

Traditional balances among communities and local nature could be recaptured by

[1]E.g., *Community Gardens Quarterly* and the *Community Greening Review*.

reviving place-based relations, or "reclaiming the commons" (Ecologist 1993):[2] this is the strategic claim I want to critically assess. Both activists and academics have pointed to reviving systems of local, communal resource management as a key to ecological regeneration (Berkes 1989; Meyer and Moosang 1992b). A revival of place-based relations is viewed as a key to reversing alienation from community and local nature.

In common with these perspectives, I want to explore the potential of local forms to reclaim disrupted balances of community and nature. Yet, at the same time, I want to challenge some of the assumptions and analyses that underlie prominent ecological approaches. In many treatments of place, easy associations are made between locality, respect for nature, and harmonious social relations. It's as if the assertion of "local" control would be necessarily turn the tide of social crisis and ecological destruction. Examples can be found in more conservative approaches to bioregionalism.[3] Often missing from these perspectives is analysis of social contradictions at the local scale.

In this chapter, I critique both ecological and left visions of place (taking deep ecology and Marxist geography as examples) before exploring perspectives that bridge the two (here I begin with contemporary schools of critical social theory, but move also to reclaim insights into place relations developed within Marxist, anarchist, and feminist writings). Then I focus on agriculture, and urban agriculture in particular; this section will form the basis for analysis of the Gardens as an agricultural system. Finally, in suggesting conclusions, I outline a tentative model of place relations in conditions of modernity, from which the research methodologies will be drawn.

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[2]"In older times, common land managed according to local customs and experience of natural events was the foundation for ongoing sustenance . . . . The commons also acted as community glue for cooperative efforts" (Tukel 1993: 66).

[3]*Bioregionalists* promote a return to local governance based on natural areas or "bioregions" (Andruss, Plant et al. 1990), defined according to features such as watersheds, climactic areas, and vegetation zones (Aberley 1993).

1.1.1 Places in Deep Ecology

Images of place play a key role in informing the strategies of ecology movements. To get a better idea of images of place in ecology movements, I want to look at articles in the August, 1994 issue of *International Journal of Ecoforestry*, a journal dedicated to promoting new approaches to forest management based on local community control and ethical norms.[4] In analyzing these articles, I draw on feminist work on place and landscape, particularly that of Gillian Rose (1993).

The contributions to *Ecoforestry* outline an attractive alternative to what they term "resource imperialism" (Devall 1994: 95). Against the control of forest regions by multinational capital, Hill (1994) argues that both ecologies and human communities would be served by a return to local forms. Walter (1994) emphasizes the roles of social equity and respect for natural processes as bases for "sustainable communities". Systems of community control based in "a deep commitment to dwell in place over generations" (Drengson, Stevens et al. 1994: 83) would be more sensitive to local detail, would promote community ties, and would value a diversity of uses. There is an attractive attention in these perspectives to the specificity of regional cultures and ecosystems (Gordon 1994: 63), to the potential for cooperative relations (Drengson, Stevens et al. 1994: 83), and to the limits of scientific knowledge (Seed 1994).

Yet, on closer examination, it seems that the images of place presented by these authors draw on a series of unacknowledged and potentially problematic associations. Undisturbed nature is presented as a realm of "beauty and harmony" (Drengson, Stevens et al. 1994: 83), an image echoed in a quotation from Aldo Leopold featured on the back cover of the issue: "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the

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[4]This was the most recent issue of *Ecoforestry* at the time of writing and contained several articles relevant to ecology and place relations. Aside from wilderness preservation, "community forestry" is the most prominent of the alternative forestry movements in the Pacific Northwest of North America (Vance 1990: 73-77). The fullest treatment is Hammond and Hammond's (1992) *Community Guide to the Forest.*

pretty. It expands through successive states of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured in language." This strikes me as an implicitly feminized nature, the object of a (hetero)sexual, masculine gaze. The view of nature as feminine is reiterated through references to a maternal nature: "People relax in nature, as if relaxing in the arms of a mother" (Gordon 1994: 63). Seed (1994: 91) describes his personal ritual of communion with nature: "[I] lie down in the forest when it's dry, cover myself in leaves, and imagine an umbilical cord reaching down into the earth." Place embodies the harmony of Mother Nature; but nature is simultaneously an external "other" defined by its separation from human action—"wilderness means: extensive areas . . . off-limits to human exploitation" (Foreman, Davis et al. 1994: 99).[5] Surely this is an uneasy harmony. Is the association of woman with home, nature, and domesticity unproblematic? The question is not raised, since gender relations, as well as ethnicity and other social relations, are not addressed in the discussion of the constitution of a local community.[6]

Ambiguities in these articles can be traced in part to *deep ecology*, the body of theory explicitly adopted in *Ecoforestry*.[7] Deep ecologists call for a revival of "[l]ocality and togetherness in the sense of community" (Naess 1989: 144), for a recultivation of local knowledge and intimacy with a particular land and its people. With its seemingly militant calls for an end to the destruction of the wild, deep ecology has gained a strong activist and academic following, making it one of the leading schools of "radical" ecology (Merchant 1992).

I find much that is compelling in the work of deep ecology. The rich, poetic beauty

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[5]See Katz and Kirby (1991: 266) for an insightful analysis of the social construction of "wild" nature as "part of a larger process of social control propelling and propelled by capitalist relations of domination."

[6]Inattention to gender issues may be related to the fact that twelve out of thirteen principal authors in this issue were men. One article promised that "socially responsible practices" would be addressed in a future issue of *Ecoforestry*, but implied in doing so that social relations were a second-order concern: "We hold that ecological responsibility is our first social responsibility" (Drengson, Stevens et al. 1994: 86).

[7]The publishers define ecoforestry as "a practice and a movement which is consistent with the application of the platform principles of the Deep Ecology Movement to the use of forests and the practice of forestry" (Ecoforestry Institute 1994). For a primer in deep ecology see Devall and Sessions (1985).

and anger of Gary Snyder's work is a welcome contrast to the stifling prose of the academy (Snyder 1990). And certainly, the legacy of domination in Western philosophy - the domination of nature, in particular - has long burdened liberation movements. As I will argue in the next sub-section, Marxism needs to be confronted with just such insights.

Yet it seems to me that in their root analyses, based in idealism, deep ecologists internalize many of the dualisms they seek to unravel (society vs. nature, mind vs. body, etc.). Alienation from nature and community is traced fundamentally to ideas. *Anthropocentrism*, the belief in human superiority over non-human nature, is particularly blamed: "the environmental crisis [is] fundamentally a crisis of the West's anthropocentric philosophical and religious orientations and values" (Sessions 1993: 166). The links between these ideas and evolving social relations are not closely examined. Similarly, analysis often focuses on exchange relations. It is humans as *consumers* who bring about ecological crisis, by purchasing too much or reproducing too quickly (see, e.g., Sale (1988)). Much less attention is given to analysis of structural inequalities arising from relations of production or reproduction; yet (as I will argue) it is precisely these that have played a central role in the emergence of capitalist modernity.

Too often, nature is examined in idealized terms, as a pleasant landscape to be enjoyed through leisure activities rather than as a necessary source of human life. At the same time, images of homogeneous "community" gloss over possibilities of internal divisions and conflicting interests. Indeed, there are clear parallels between pastoral, implicitly feminine images of place in ecology movements and those of the new right, which similarly contrasts highly idealized images of "traditional" (that is, white, heterosexual, etc.) community to the blasphemies of the feminist-atheist-homosexual-immigrant-baby-killing rabble that has since undermined American civilization.[8] With good reason, feminist authors have critiqued perspectives on place that invoke some

[8]The view of place in (hetero)sexual, masculinist terms is explicit in Hay (1991).

supposedly harmonious tradition.[9]

Appeals to community can overlook or conceal very real divisions and contradictions that structure social relations, even at the local scale—divisions of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, ability. Social alienation, as well as alienation from nature, may be intimately linked to these divisions. Localized relationships may "serve not only the individuals who engage in them, but also a specific social structure", including local relations of domination (Eyles 1985: 78). Dickens (1992: 193) argues:

> If the deep green movement has much to teach Marxism and social theory about their tacit anthropocentrism, critical social theory has much to teach the ecological movement about the social forces and relationships underlying the separation (their notion of 'alienation') with which they are concerned.

If it is to undo the forces of alienation in most modern communities, a return to place has to directly address structural sources of inequality and domination.

1.1.2 Places in Marxist Geography

To approach perspectives on place within critical social theory, I want to look at radical approaches within the discipline that focuses explicitly on questions of locality and relations with nature: geography. Radical geographers have evolved subtle and sophisticated models of the ways that capital has eroded local systems, and have moved more recently to integrate concepts of place and relations with nature into social theory.

David Harvey and Neil Smith have been prominent among those drawing directly on social theory to analyze modern spatial relations. Building on spatial aspects of Marx's writings, Harvey (1982) identifies key forces underlying the erosion of place-based relations; in extending its grasp worldwide, capital strips away the bases of local autonomy. In the most prominent radical geographic treatment of society-nature relations,

[9]For feminist and anarchist critiques of deep ecology see, e.g., Merchant (1992) and Bookchin (1988).

Smith (1984) analyzes the modern extension of human control over nature.[10]

In refreshing contrast to dualistic treatments of nature as external and pristine, Smith insists on the interpenetration of social relations and relations with nature: "The contemporary relation with nature derives its specific character from the social relations of capitalism" (*ibid*: 47). Defining production as "a process by which the form of nature is altered" (*ibid*: 35), Smith argues that this originally localized process has been universalized under capitalism, leading to what he terms the *production of nature*. Prior to the rise of capital, "first" (non-human) nature, defined as that "previously unaltered by human activity" (*ibid*: 47), existed in a form distinct from "second" (human) nature. But capitalism's inherent need to expand leads it to bring all available nature into the production process. Hence, "the distinction between a first and a second nature [becomes] increasingly obsolete" (*ibid*: 58), since there no longer exists a nature "unaltered by human activity". In effect, nature *no longer exists*, since it is now universally altered in form - hence, *produced* - by capital.

For both Harvey and Smith, the role of capital in freeing humanity from natural limits formed the basis for an escape from place. Having "emancipat[ed] itself from the constraints of nature" (Smith 1984: 39), humanity, via capital, was freed from the specificity of locality and could produce space to its own requirements. Areal variation based on local nature or culture was eroded, to be replaced by uneven development serving the requirements of capital accumulation (Harvey 1982; Smith 1984). While this process was one of exploitation, it was also potentially liberatory. Harvey (1991: 109) praised capital's conquest of place and nature as central to the "many positive aspects to capitalist

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[10]Smith's book addresses a need identified as early as 1976 when Richard Peet called for radical geography to address "environmental relations" as well as spatial ones (Peet 1977: 26). Smith was hailed for traveling "farther than anyone else toward an integrated general theory of how capitalism makes geography" (Fitzsimmons 1989: 115), and his book remains the fullest treatment of interpenetrating social and natural relations within radical geography. Peet himself was critical of Smith's work (Peet 1985), but nonetheless viewed it as the most highly developed perspective on nature within radical geography (Peet 1989). See Castree (1995) for a presentation and critique of the production of nature thesis.

modernity": "The potential command over nature that arises as capitalism 'rends the veil' over the mysteries of production holds a tremendous potential for reducing the powers of nature-imposed necessities over our lives." Being, as Harvey put it, "free of nature" (Harvey 1974: 267) and of locality, humanity (thanks to capital) could now choose to produce space to serve social ends, and similarly to produce nature "as an integral part of society" (Smith and O'Keefe 1985).

But did this work really succeed in undoing the dualism of nature/society to achieve an integrated spatial politics? With O'Keefe, Smith wrote that "[t]he contradiction within the positivist conception of nature cannot be ignored by banishing one side of it in theory while it remains in practice" (Smith and O'Keefe 1980: 30). Yet this is *precisely* what the production of nature achieved. For all its dialectical sophistication, Smith's theory succeeded in undoing the dualism of society and nature only by eliminating one side of the pair—nature. The exclusive emphasis on production downplayed questions of reproduction, whether human or natural. Gender, where mentioned, remained secondary to what seemed the primary contradiction: class.[11] And the potentials of local action were discounted (Entrikin 1991: 30). There is little "place" here for geographies of resistance.[12]

In critiquing literatures of deep ecology and Marxist geography, I haven't aimed to dismiss their potential contributions. Each suggests important insights: deep ecology into the powers of place, and Marxist geography into structural sources of placelessness. Rather, I've focused on how dualistic treatments of place can persist even in self-consciously "radical" approaches.

More specifically, the two approaches I've outlined seem to fall into pairs of

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[11]In praising capital for rending nature's veil, Harvey is at best oblivious to the gendered implications and origins of the metaphor. They are drawn out clearly by Merchant (1980: 89-90): "After the Scientific Revolution, *Natura* no longer complains that her garments of modesty are being torn by the wrongful thrusts of man. She is portrayed in statues by the French sculptor Louis-Ernest Barrias (1841-1905) coyly removing her own veil and exposing herself to science. From an active teacher and parent, she has become a mindless, submissive body."

[12]In a more recent work, Harvey (1993) considers the intersections of local and universal concerns.

opposites—what Rose (1993) called *binary oppositions*. Preliminarily, they look something like this:

place	space
tradition	modernity
nature	society
feminine	masculine
rural	urban
private	public
particular	general

In romantic discourse (including many ecological literatures), place is associated with "Mother Nature", with a traditional, rural society of particularized community ties; this is Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*. In contrast, modernist theory (including Marxism) focuses on decontextualized space, a social, urban, and implicitly masculine realm sharply divided from nature and tradition. I want to explore the sources of these associations and oppositions, and, in doing so, begin to contest them.

My approach, then, moves in two seemingly opposing directions. On the one hand, I want to problematize the easy associations made between place, home, nature, and harmony—without descending into self-serving theory. On the other, however, I want to reclaim the potential of place to serve as a basis for forging cultures of resistance.

"To understand place requires that we have access to both an objective and a subjective reality," Entrikin has suggested; "Place is best viewed from points in between" (1991: 5). So far I've outlined (in a brief and admittedly incomplete way) two contrasting approaches to place relations: place as idyllic bosom and place as shattered shackle. Now I want to begin to explore geographies in between.[13]

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[13]In an article relating Henri Lefebvre's Marxian work on the production of space to place relations, Merrifield (1993: 518-519) argues that Entrikin's "betweenness of place" thesis internalizes - rather than challenging - dualistic treatments of place and space. However, Entrikin's close consideration of the impact of global forces on a locality, and likewise of the role of locality in affecting global processes, argues against Merrifield's conclusion.

1.1.3 Mapping Out Places of Difference

Since the late 1970s, links between locality and social process have been explored with increasing theoretical sophistication through diverse approaches: post-structuralist Marxisms, feminism, structuration theory, post-modernism.[14] By identifying the ways in which social contradictions are reproduced or challenged in places, these literatures may begin to suggest critical approaches to place. In this section, I turn to two directions within these literatures - imaginary geographies and the social construction of space - and then review research projects linking locality to social theory.

In one intriguing direction, theorists have used spatial metaphor to reveal both contradictions in social relations and potential directions for change. Social "locations" or "positions" are "mapped" or "explored" with the aims of clarifying both "geographies" of oppression and potential "territories" of resistance. Spatial metaphor has been employed with particular power in feminist writings. In an influential article, Adrienne Rich (1986) explored a "politics of location", describing how she was personally "placed" as a white woman, a Jew, a lesbian. For Rose (1993: 159) a "paradoxical space" inhabited by women allowed them to imagine an "elsewhere" beyond the violences of patriarchical society.

In the work of Rich and Rose, location becomes a powerful basis for understanding the intersection of multiple structures of domination. More generally, spatial metaphor may clarify the links between locality and social process by relating place and position to social

[14]Increased attention to the specificity of locality, placement, and situatedness reflected a rejection of the universalizing claims of structural Marxism. Class reductionism, in particular, had denied the diversity of modern experience. In "post-structuralist" Marxisms, locality provided a basis from which to contest the universalizing claims of structuralism (Thrift 1983). In countering the view of class as the "primary contradiction", feminists emphasized the diversity of women's experience in place (Rose 1993; Pratt and Hanson 1994). Within the structurationist project of undoing the dualism of social structure and human agency, Anthony Giddens (1984: 118) introduced the concept of *locales*, which referred to "the use of space to provide the *settings* of interaction", which were in turn "essential to specifying its *contextuality*." In post-modern discourse, similarly, a renewed attention to the "spatiality of social life" was a means to approach the multiple and conflicting axes along which social power was exercised (Soja 1989; Keith and Pile 1993b).

contradiction. But - as used particularly in post-modern literatures - there is a sense in which spatial metaphor is increasingly un(ground)ed. By invoking an apparently given spatial realm, spatial metaphor may obscure the ways that material space is itself socially constructed and produced (Bondi 1993: 98-99; Smith and Katz 1993). To inform a revolutionary politics of place, imagined geographies need to be brought down to the ground.

This introduces the second direction of theory I want to look at: the interpenetration of social process and spatial form. Research in this direction was presented in *The Power of Geography* (Wolch and Dear 1989), where contributors explored the roles of locality in both constraining and enabling social change. Rather than a passive container for social action, space was seen as actively constituted through social processes along many and potentially contradictory axes. As Dear and Wolch argued in the introduction, localized systems and structures (the heterosexual nuclear family, the place of employment, the local state) were essential in reproducing dominant social relations. Yet local autonomy might also play a key role in transformation: "Social change and transcendental social action would not be possible if *locales* did not possess some degree of relative autonomy" (Dear and Wolch 1989: 13).[15] As Pratt and Hanson (1994: 25) concluded, "Places are constructed through social processes and, so too, social relations are constructed in and through place."

And then, perhaps most suggestively, there are attempts to bring out "the interconnectedness of material and metaphorical space" (Smith and Katz 1993: 68). This is a territory charted by bell hooks (1990: Chapter 15). hooks described her upbringing in a space produced by divisions of class and gender and "race": "As black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality" (*ibid*: 149). Breaking out of that place - coming to the city - was crucial to her emergence "as

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[15]On "The possibility of local autonomy", see Brown (1993).

critical thinker, artist, and writer . . .". Yet it was no less crucial to hold onto that marginality, at once social and geographical. To deny her own voice would be a denial of difference—of pain, but also of power. hooks struggled to tell "a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices within me" (*ibid*: 147). Through this process, a material and social place of marginality may become a site of resistance:

> I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility. . . . We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (*ibid*: 153)

Links between social process and locality have been addressed through specific research projects and schools. Within geography, researchers revived interest in the importance of locality in shaping social process; as Massey (1984: 58) put it, "Local cultures and traditions of organization can develop a life of their own . . . ." So it was not enough to posit universal tendencies of capital; the effects of local conditions also had to be considered. Particularly in Britain, these considerations fueled a body of *locality studies*, focusing on the ways that general dynamics of capitalism were conditioned by the context of a locality. Related to this was the development of a "reconstructed" or "new" regional geography (Gilbert 1988; Pudup 1988; Sayer 1989), defined by Thrift (1983: 38) as "a regional geography that builds upon the strengths of traditional regional geography, for example, the feel for context, but that is bent towards theoretical and emancipatory aims."[16]

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[16]Traditional regional geographers were strongly critical of emerging conditions of modernity; we can see this perhaps most strongly in the work of Carl Sauer (1963a; 1981a). Sauer deplored the erosion of local, rural lifeways (1981b), and denounced the dismantling of organic nature (1963b). Sauer's perspectives in many ways presage those of today's ecology activists: "In the space of a century and a half—only two full lifetimes—more damage has been done to the productive capacity of the world than in all of human history preceding. The previously characteristic manner of living within the means of an area, by use of its actual 'surplus', is replaced at this time by a reckless gutting of resource for quick 'profit'" (1963b: 147). The influence of traditional regionalism on deep ecology and bioregionalism is explicit in, for instance, Gary

At their best, locality studies and new regional geography began to reclaim the power of place-based experience (Agnew and Duncan 1989).

Critical perspectives on place aim "to specify the relations between the many dimensions of oppression - including class, gender and race - and then to suggest strategies of resistance" (Keith and Pile 1993a: 1). Insofar as the flurry of new work addressing questions of spatiality and place illuminates both restrictions and potentials of local relations, it helps to clarify the role of locality in revolutionized relations. In this study, I want to draw on these critical perspectives linking social relations to the construction of both imaginary and material geographies.

But it seems to me that, in the rush to claim new theoretical "space", important aspects of place relations are being neglected. In approaches like locality studies and new regional geography, there are clear vestiges of the "orthodox" Marxism from which they in part emerged, however much this is supposed to have been transcended in "post-structuralism" or, to repeat Thrift's redolent phrase, "post-poststructuralism" (1991: 23). Locality is viewed as an important context for disempowerment, but (with exceptions I've noted) less often as a potential basis for emancipatory struggle.[17] Relations with nature are not particularly addressed, outside of programmatic statements. For example, none of the contributions to *Place and the Politics of Identity* (Keith and Pile 1993b) made more than passing reference to relations with nature. Most disturbing of all, many contributions are full of the name-dropping, condescension, and empty eloquence that characterize so much of what now poses as radical research (e.g., Thrift [1990; 1991]).[18]

Snyder's essay "The place, the region, and the commons" (1990) and Kirkpatrick Sale's *Dwellers in the Land* (1985). In a lyrical essay, Barry Lopez (1992) describes "a philosophy of place" as "a recognition of the spiritual and psychological dimensions of geography".

[17]Rose (1994: 47-49) identifies a "neglect of oppositional discourses" within what she calls "the cultural politics of place".

[18]Reading "post-structuralist" and "post-modernist" accounts, I can't help thinking of Marx' and Engels' biting opening lines in their 1846 work *The German Ideology*. They compared the series of bold theories evolved by the Young Hegelians to industrial products distilled from the decaying "absolute spirit" of Hegel. Today, too, "heroes of the mind overthr[o]w each other with unheard-of rapidity". Only now it is

If ecology movements often privilege mind over matter, consumption over production, and relations with nature over social relations, structural Marxism leans too far in the opposite direction. Between these extremes, work in a range of critical perspectives is beginning to map out geographies of difference. I'm going to return to the question of place and interlinking structures of domination. First, I want to fill some absences in these accounts by returning to consider nature and the potentials of place from the perspectives of classical revolutionary theory.

1.2 Place, Nature, and Revolution: Tracing the Links

In the space of a few short centuries, the limiting dynamics of place have been shattered. Formerly isolated and unique localities have been drawn increasingly within global systems of production, exchange, and political power. Whole nations have been transformed into supply grounds, pulsing to the rhythms of overseas production cycles. In the late twentieth century, forces of globalization have entered a new phase as technologies of transport and communication permit an increasingly "footloose" mode of production, one that can pull up and leave, seemingly at a moment's notice, to sites of cheaper labour or more lax regulation. What structures and dynamics underlie this modern erosion of local forms? What alternative structures would be needed to reclaim the balances of place? Radical analysis is essential in answering these questions. I want to begin by exploring insights developed within two classical left traditions - Marxism and anarchism - before turning to newer approaches—feminism and ecology.

The theoretical approach I'm working within is realist or "critical" realist (Sayer

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not Hegel but Marx himself who is the rotting corpse from which enterprising scholars glean their potions, marketing them boldly "as a revolution of world significance" (Marx 1972b [1846]: 111). (See, e.g., Soja and Hooper (1993: 187).)

1984) in the sense that it regards events or outcomes as resulting from underlying causal structures, in combination with contingently related processes. Marx claimed that a concrete, scientific analysis of capitalist society

> is not possible until we have a conception of the inner nature of capital, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are not intelligible to any but him, who is acquainted with their real motions, motions which are not directly perceptible by the senses. (1987 [1867]: 300)

In the same way, we can't outline alternatives to capitalism without theorizing what alternative structures might bring them about. Yet critical realism most often has shared with Marxism a primary emphasis on social relations, particularly class. While not denying the importance of class, I want to see structures on lines suggested above: as multiple, conflicting, locally contingent, and subject to challenge. A focus on locality permits a view of structure as itself reproduced through human agency.

1.2.1 Capital and Class

To many environmentalists, questions of capital and class seem far removed from ethical concerns of reclaiming community among people and nature. In the blunt appraisal of one deep ecologist, "it does not really matter what the petty political and social arrangements are that have led to our ecological crisis . . ." (Sale 1988: 672). Yet, as left theorists have shown, social relations and relations with nature cannot be so easily separated out. Despite its failings (some of which will be addressed briefly below), Marx's rich and subtle analysis of capitalist modernity remains an essential beginning place in exploring the relation of place, nature, and community.[19] I want to explore Marx's

[19]One of the more complete and accessible overviews of the relation of Marxism to ecology is given in Pepper's *Eco-Socialism* (Pepper 1993: Chapter 3). The classic work on Marxism and nature is Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (1971), a product of the Frankfurt School (a critical tradition within Western Marxism). Dickens (1992: Chapter 3) gives an insightful introduction to ecological implications of Marx's early writings, while, e.g., Gorz (1980), Benton (1989), O'Connor (1988), and Faber (1993) apply Marxist analysis to ecological politics. Certainly, these contributions go beyond the essential

contributions to the analysis of place relations in three areas: the nature of alienation, capital's role in dissolving place limits, and the expansionary tendencies of capitalist production.

1.2.1.1 Young Marx on Alienation

Human life depended on a "continuous interchange" of matter and energy with non-human nature, Marx argued in his early *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1961 [1844]: 100-101). Through this interchange with nature, humanity literally produced and reproduced itself. As Marx would put it much later in Capital, "[b]y thus acting on the external world and changing it, ['man'] at the same time changes his own nature" (Marx 1987 [1867]: 173).[20] But class domination and, in particular, the commodification of nature rendered labour a process of enslavement rather than self-realization:

> If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, but confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to *a man other than the worker*. If his activity is a torment to him it must be a source of enjoyment to another. Not the gods, nor nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over men. (Marx 1961 [1844]: 104)

Alienation from nature had its concrete source in *social hierarchy*.

Alienation is by no means unique to modern society. But only here is it *generalized*, only here is it worked out to its logical extreme, because only under capitalism is the alienation of nature universalized. In pre-capitalist society, even that marked by strong class divisions, the relation to nature was relatively direct. With land, in particular,

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dualism of the "production of nature" (Smith 1984—see above). However, questions of locality and community have not been convincingly addressed. O'Connor, for instance, insists that ecological movements should rely on the capitalist state (1991). For feminist and anarchist critiques of Marx and nature, see Klein (1989) and Bookchin (1980a).

[20]This theme was treated at length by Engels in his classic essay "The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man" (Engels 1940a [1874]).

private property was the exception rather than the rule. But under capitalism, and particularly with the development of wage labour, alienation becomes a universal condition. A "putrefied nature" (*ibid*: 142), wielded as a weapon of enslavement, was the final outcome of the alienated society of capital.

This analysis of the interpenetration of social and natural alienation had crucial implications for the revolutionary project. The contradictions aroused by alienation - body vs. mind, society vs. nature, etc. - must be resolved not only ideally but in real material practice: "The resolution of the *theoretical* contradictions is possible only through *practical* means" (*ibid*: 135). The establishment of direct, unmediated relations with nature was central. Only by eliminating alienation at its source - in human hierarchy and the resultant commodification of nature - could society achieve "the *definitive* resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man" (*ibid*: 127).

1.2.1.2 Capital and the Dissolution of Place

These early insights, so strongly at odds with prevailing ideas, were deepened in the subtle analyses of Marx's later work. How do moderns come to be rootless, members of no meaningful community, isolated even from the natural means of subsistence? In bourgeois society, such isolation seems to result from some natural law, but Marx (1987 [1867]: 166) argued that this separation was by no means natural:

> Nature does not produce on the one side owners of money or commodities, and on the other men possessing nothing but their own labour-power. This relation has no natural basis, neither is its social basis one that is common to all historical periods.

In pre-capitalist society, membership in a community is a condition of production for the individual:

> and, as such a member, *he relates to a specific nature* (say, here, still earth, land, soil) *as his own inorganic being*, as a condition of his production and reproduction. As a natural member of the community he participates in the communal property,

> and has a particular part of it as his possession. (Marx 1973 [1858]: 490, my emphasis)

Hence, "The individual can never appear here in the dot-like isolation in which he appears as mere free worker" (*ibid*: 485). The alienation of individuals from nature, and simultaneously from each other, presupposes the erosion of community bonds to local nature. This, in turn, assumes a dualism in practice: the opposition of property to propertylessness, of wealth to poverty, of mind to body—ultimately, of capital to labour. But how is this alienation achieved in practice? What tendencies - latent but not yet dominant in pre-capitalist society - bring it about? These are the questions taken up in Marx's major work, *Capital.*

Capital begins with the dialectical contradiction between *use-value* (the value of an object in itself, comprising the use to which it can be put) and *exchange-value* (the relative value of an object as commodity). The first is posited as a product of both labour and nature; the second is purely a social relation, and therefor produced by labour only. In pre-capitalist society, use-values predominate. As I've emphasized above, the logic of a use-value economy is worked out in localized, often communal production and consumption, involving, e.g., cooperation and reciprocity. But under capitalism an exchange-value economy, based on the maximization of private profit, for the first time triumphs over the economy of production for use.

Capital is first born in the sphere of exchange. Before the generalization of a money system, exchange of commodities is a directly reciprocal process, necessarily localized in time and space. One item is bartered for another, and both become use-values for their new owners. Only with the development of a universal equivalent - money - can exchange be freed from the limits of place. In their metamorphosis into money, commodities "strip off every trace of their natural use-value, and of the particular kind of labour to which they owe their creation" (Marx 1987 [1867]: 111). The former relationship

of simple barter becomes a link in an endless process of exchange, for, even after a particular commodity has dropped out of circulation, its money equivalent remains, ever ready to perform new feats of metamorphosis. The universalizing power of money renders all values potentially uniform, making face-to-face relations unnecessary. In the apparently simple process of exchange, we glimpse already the latent potentiality for ruptured relations to nature and place.

1.2.1.3 Production for Production's Sake

But it is when capital gains control of the sphere of production that the dissolution of place begins in earnest. Capitalist production is based above all on the separation of people from the communal and natural means of production, since it is only when people have been stripped of the means to support themselves that they will enter, as workers, into their "free" contract with capital. For this reason, the spread of capitalist relations of production demands the dissolution of preexisting forms, a process accomplished at times through persuasion but more often by force. In England, through the fourteenth century, peasants "enjoyed the usufruct of the common land, which gave pasture to their cattle, furnished them with timber, firewood, turf, etc." (Marx 1987 [1867]: 671). Enclosure of the commons, and subsequent rural-urban migration, formed the historic presupposition of the capital-labour opposition. In essence, the unity of land and labour was destroyed so the two could be exploited independently.[21]

As capital progressively conquers the means of production, competition pits one capital against another in a ruthless drive for accumulation. These conditions give a great spur to productivity, since greater output translates, in the short run, into a competitive advantage. As transportation technologies progress, capital is increasingly freed from the

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[21]The modern disarticulation of land and labour is a central theme in Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1967).

restrictions of locality. Capital strives "to conquer the whole earth for its market", and simultaneously "to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another", achieving what Marx poetically termed the "annihilation of space by time" (Marx 1973 [1858]: 539). The aim and purpose of production, however, is not the satisfaction of needs, but the expansion of profit. The inherent tendency of capitalism is "[a]ccumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake" (Marx 1987 [1867]: 558). Gradually, but compellingly, capital draws all of society and nature into its own metabolism.

So we arrive at an outline of the political ecology of modernity. Capital is based fundamentally in the erosion of ecological links, both among people and with local nature. As every social and natural relation is drawn into the market, the limits and balances inherent to pre-modern society are exploded. The "grow or die" logic of capitalist accumulation leads to concentration and centralization of property and social power; but it also produces continual expansion. Potentially, capital leaves "no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest" (Marx and Engels 1986 [1848]: 19). At the same time, relations to nature are fundamentally transformed: "Nature becomes for the first time simply an object for mankind, purely a matter of utility" (Marx 1973 [1858]: 410). Crucially, alienation from nature and social alienation form part of a unitary process, centring on the erosion of place. So long as the key dynamics of capitalism remain intact - class division, private monopoly of the means of production, an exchange-value economy - a "definitive resolution" to the crises of modernity will be out of reach. An ecological society (not, of course, Marx's term) certainly implies a new form of community and consciousness; but it also demands the elimination of class domination.

I have suggested that the forms of analysis first developed by Marx provide important, even essential bases for understanding place relations in conditions of modernity. Yet these bases have remained poorly developed within Marxism. This fact

can be attributed, in part, to historical developments (e.g., Stalinism), but also reflects ambiguities and shortcomings within Marx's work. Alongside the profound and far reaching critique of capital, Marx in his "middle" period presented a view of capitalism as inherently progressive, historically necessary, and the means toward (inevitable?) communist utopia.[22] Central in this view was a celebration of "the great civilizing influence of capital" (Marx 1973 [1858]: 409), i.e., in destroying locally-based social formations and extending human control over nature. And, potentially, domination in all its forms was reduced to class domination: "with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself" (Marx 1972a [1875]: 392). Critically, the role of the state was undertheorized. These positions have limited the relevance of Marxist theory to analyzing the potentials of place. To resolve these shortcomings, I look to alternate revolutionary traditions.

However, there are hints of what an ecological Marxism might resemble in the late work of Marx himself (Shanin 1984). In the last years of his life, Marx was asked to comment on the potential of the Russian village commune (the *mir*) to contribute to a revolutionized society. Would the communes hold back the progress of modernization (as many argued in his name), or would they form a social basis for revolutionary relations? After a period of careful study and thought, Marx threw his weight firmly behind the latter position. If freed from state and capitalist domination, the communes could be a "regenerative element" of Russian society, allowing it to reap the scientific benefits of capitalism "without having to pass under its harsh tribute" (Marx 1984 [1881]: 110). The crises of modernity, Marx concluded, would be resolved only through "the elimination of capitalist production and the return of modern societies to a higher form of the most archaic type—collective production and appropriation." (*ibid*: 114). This sounds to me very much like a modern commons.

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[22]The division of Marx's career into "early", "middle", and "late" follows Shanin (1984).

1.2.2 State and Domination

The modern destruction of age-old balances of place and community reflects the inner logic of a class society geared to the production of private profit; yet there are other, potentially contradictory logics also at work. With its legacy of commitment to centralism and state authority, Marxism is often poorly equipped to explore forms of domination not rooted in class. Yet this failure is not shared by a second revolutionary tradition. If the potential of place is just now being discovered within Marxism, it has always been prominent within anarchism, particularly anarchist communism. I want to draw out elements of anarchist theory relevant to the study of place by looking in detail at the work of the Russian revolutionary Peter Kropotkin.[23] Three themes stand out: the role of the state, the importance of the commons, and the potential of the city.

1.2.2.1 The Role of the State

The anarchist communism of Kropotkin and associates shared much with Marxist socialism: an analysis of class domination in capitalism and a revolutionary platform demanding popular control of the means of production, for instance (Kropotkin 1970a [1887]). But it also differed in key ways. In particular, anarchists viewed the state as an oppressive force on par with class domination.

Kropotkin's anarchism is based in an analysis of authority and hierarchy. Class division, certainly, is seen as a key obstacle to human progress. Progress will be impossible "as long as society remains organized so as to permit the owners of land and capital to appropriate for themselves, under the protection of the state and historical rights,

[23]Today, the work of Kropotkin is in many ways continued within the social ecology of Murray Bookchin (1980b; 1986; 1990) and associates (Clark 1984; Tokar 1987). Bookchin focuses in particular on the liberatory potentials of the city. For an overview and critique of anarchist ecology, see Pepper (1993: Chapter 4). Yih (1990) presents a Marxist critique of social ecology.

the yearly surplus of human production" (Kropotkin 1985 [1899]: 26). Yet the elimination of class distinction will not in itself ensure a free society. In particular, the state is identified as a force of domination linked to, but distinct from, capital. In opposition to state socialists (Marx and Engels among them), Kropotkin maintained that communist society had to be created directly, through the immediate forging of communal relations and productive power. Relying on capital to pave the way to communism or on the conquest of state power as a means to emancipation was denounced as counterrevolutionary.

The strength of Kropotkin's analysis is clear in his prescient appraisal of the Soviet revolution in his native Russia. Writing from within the revolutionary state in 1919 in an open letter to the workers of Western Europe, he declared that "[a]ll efforts to reunite under a central control the naturally separate parts of the Russian Empire are predestined to failure". It was not only the diversity of the region, however, that precluded success; it was the pursuit of revolution through centralism and dictatorship. "I owe it to you to say frankly," Kropotkin wrote, "that, according to my view, this effort to build a communist republic on the basis of a strongly centralized state communism under the iron law of party dictatorship is bound to end in failure" (Kropotkin 1970b [1919]: 254). This prognosis seems to foretell the demise and eventual collapse of state socialism in the Soviet empire.

Strategically, building revolutionary power in opposition to the state meant promoting local control. In order to escape defeat or cooptation by surrounding states (fates suffered by many "free" cities of medieval Europe), communes were supposed to unite in confederal associations—the commune of communes.

1.2.2.2 Rebuilding the Commons

In opposition to the state socialist position, Kropotkin emphasized the potential of free, self-reliant cities, towns, and communities as bases for revolutionary society. The concentration of industry and accompanying relations of authority were certainly features of

capitalist society; but these needn't dictate the form of future society. He pointed to existing examples of small-scale, cooperative production as proof of the viability of these forms, and as inspiration for transformative efforts (Kropotkin 1985 [1899]).

Key to Kropotkin's approach were his ideas on the unity of human and non-human nature, a theme developed in his two major works *Mutual Aid* (undated [1902]) and *Ethics* (1992 [1925]). Against the view of competition as the driving force of natural evolution (a legacy of Darwin's work), Kropotkin advanced the thesis that cooperation formed a parallel tendency in nature: "Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle" (Kropotkin undated [1902]: 5). The evolution of a second or human nature continued tendencies toward cooperation already latent in animal societies. Thus, "the same forces are seen to operate throughout one unified nature" (Galois 1976: 5). The potential for cooperation was viewed as an inherent human trait, albeit one that was partially blocked by the hierarchies of feudal and capitalist societies.

As instructive models for revolutionary society, Kropotkin pointed to mutual aid institutions such as the village community and the urban guild. In pre-capitalist Europe, these had ensured balance in production and the meeting of needs. He pointedly critiqued the idea that the rural commons had given way spontaneously to a "higher" form of organization:

> The fact was simply this: the village communities had lived for over a thousand years; and where and when the peasants were not ruined by wars and exactions they steadily improved their methods of culture. But as the value of land was increasing, in consequence of the growth of industries, and the nobility had acquired, under state organization, a power which it never had had under the feudal system, it took possession of the best parts of the communal lands, and did its best to destroy the communal institutions. (Kropotkin undated [1902]: 236)

The erosion of traditional bonds among people and with the land was brought about in part by capital; but the role of the state was also essential. The destruction of mutual aid institutions had been a primary objective of emerging states:

> when the medieval cities [of Europe] were subdued in the sixteenth century by growing military states, all institutions which kept the artisans, the masters, and the merchants together in the guilds and the cities were violently destroyed. The self-government and the self-jurisdiction of both the guild and the city were abolished; . . . the properties of the guilds were confiscated in the same way as the lands of the village communities. (*ibid*: 263)

The centralized authority embodied in the state was necessarily corruptive to autonomy, self-reliance, and hence freedom (Kropotkin 1946 [1903]).

Potential bases for revolutionary transformation could be found in surviving remnants of traditional social relations and institutions, and in continued efforts at reviving systems of mutual aid. In tribal Africa, despite centuries of foreign invasion and indigenous tyranny, "the nucleus of mutual-aid institutions, habits, and customs, grown up in the tribe and the village community, remains" (Kropotkin undated [1902]: 260). The point was not that the maintenance of such institutions would of itself constitute revolutionary progress. Rather, they would serve as its basis by keeping people "united in societies, open to the progress of civilization, and ready to receive it when the day comes that they shall receive civilization instead of bullets" (*ibid*: 260). The parallels between Kropotkin and the late Marx are clear.[24]

1.2.2.3 The Potential of the City

"[M]any of the aspirations of our modern radicals were already realized in the Middle Ages," Kropotkin reflected in the 1890s. More than this: "much of what is described now as Utopian was accepted then as a matter of fact" (Kropotkin undated [1902]: 194-195). The revolutionary project thus necessarily took the form of reweaving social bonds, of reviving past linkages even while striving to transcend the restrictions of both past and present. In this project, the city had a special role.

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[24]Indeed, Kropotkin (1985 [1899]: 145) credited Marx for having "mitigated the absoluteness of his earlier formulae . . . with regard to the village community in Russia".

Against atavistic, pastoralist utopians, Kropotkin focused decidedly on the liberatory potential of the city. In pre-urban societies, birth or adoption into a family, clan, or tribe was the criterion for community membership. As an institution, the commons was designed as much to exclude outsiders as to provide for members. Only in the city - particularly, to Kropotkin, in the "free" cities of medieval Europe - was the bond of humanity extended beyond the limited sphere of kinship (whether biological or metaphorical). The medieval city was "a fortified oasis amidst a country plunged into feudal submission" (*ibid*: 200). To the fortunate serfs who managed to move there, the city was an escape from the oppressive conflation of people with place. More broadly, the city presented unique opportunities for free and creative association.[25]

With their incorporation into emerging states, cities were stripped of their autonomous powers (leading to what Isin (1992), with reference to the Canadian experience, called "cities without citizens"). In the cities of industrial Europe, Kropotkin wrote, "all bonds of union among the inhabitants of the same street or neighbourhood have been dissolved" (Kropotkin undated [1902]: 284). Yet the promise of communality was by no means defeated. Even in the heart of the modern metropolis - especially among the poor - Kropotkin glimpsed the ancient tendency of mutual aid at work among people. For him, this tendency was antithetical to the corrupting forces of commercialism and the state. Urban gardening was among the examples of mutual aid that he cited (*ibid*: 248).

Anarchist analyses of authority and the state compliment and enhance Marx's critique of capital, especially when viewed in light of subsequent history. Revolutionary movements cannot simply seize the machinery of capital and re-deploy it for new,

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[25]Like Kropotkin, Mumford (1961) looked back at the autonomous cities of medieval Europe as inspirational models. Marx (1987: 669) similarly viewed "the existence of sovereign towns" to be "the highest development of the middle ages". Missing from such perspectives was any close consideration of the place of women in medieval cities. However, with reference to modern cities, feminist authors have explored the potential role of the city as an escape for women from oppressive tradition (Wilson 1991; Pratt and Hanson 1994).

emancipatory aims, since this machinery is itself riddled with the logic of domination. This is true of the state apparatus, and also applies to the technology of capital, as Engels himself was prepared to admit:

> if man, by dint of his knowledge and inventive genius, has subdued the forces of nature, the latter avenge themselves upon him by subjecting him, in so far as he employs them, to a veritable despotism independent of all social organization. Wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself. (Engels 1972 [1872]: 663)

Yet the anarchism of Kropotkin shares with classical Marxism a neglect of forms of domination besides capital and the state. In particular, gender and "race" are treated only peripherally. Coupled with this failure is a masculine concentration on production, to the exclusion of reproduction.[26] In Marx's *Capital*, nature and women's work of reproduction are considered alike as simple "preconditions", which needn't be incorporated into core analysis. To fill in these silences, I turn to the third major strand of revolutionary theory - feminism - and also to critical perspectives on nature.

1.3 Reproducing Nature

Modern alienation from place and nature cannot be understood without an analysis of changing social relations. The emergence of capital (based in a new class relation) and

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[26]A further weakness in Kropotkin's analysis is to be found in the theoretical approach. In his last work, *Ethics*, he focused insightfully on identifying "potentialities concealed in modern society" (Kropotkin 1992 [1925]: 23). Yet, up to this point, Kropotkin's stated method lacked the subtlety needed to delve beneath the surface appearances of modernity. In the pamphlet "Modern science and anarchism", Kropotkin dismissed dialectical analysis as dated and debunked; in its place he forwarded the modern "natural-scientific method" of induction (Kropotkin 1970c: 152-153). To analyze social evolution, it was enough to identify its tendencies and project them into the future. Yet, in practice, the "tendencies" of social change were many and contradictory. The key question was, what *gave rise* to these tendencies? Kropotkin's rather naïve application of positivist science to the analysis of social revolution led to an inability to distinguish between ideal and reality. It was not enough, for instance, to argue that decentralization of industry was both possible and desirable; Kropotkin insisted that it was the inexorable *tendency* of contemporary society (Kropotkin 1985 [1899]). That this tendency, if present, would have to contest a dominant tendency inherent to capitalist production was not allowed. Kropotkin's contributions amounted to keen insights situated in detailed historical analysis, but inadequately grounded in social theory.

the birth of the modern state were crucial moments in the dissolution of localized forms. So the modern destruction of place and nature is fundamentally new, and marks a disjuncture from traditional societies. Yet, in important ways, both capital and the state draw their powers from older sources. Such sources are explored within theory centred on women and nature, subjects long marginalized within masculinist theory, whether mainstream or radical.

1.3.1 Dualism and Hierarchy

In *The Death of Nature* , her now classic work of ecological feminism, Carolyn Merchant (1980) traced the links between the domination of women and of nature in the emergence of industrial capitalism.[27] In Europe, as elsewhere, she argued, pre-capitalist societies had strong social limits on the exploitation of nature. Taking the form either of laws or customs, these limits reflected a view of nature as living and organic, and thus as subject to permanent damage. This view, in turn, was related to the system of social reproduction, in which locally based peasant production put a premium on the maintenance of the conditions for continued subsistence. Central to changing ecological relations was "the transition from peasant control of natural resources for the purpose of subsistence to capitalist control for the purpose of profit" (*ibid*: 43).

The emergence of capitalist relations demanded the elimination of pre-capitalist restrictions on the domination of nature; but this was a cultural as well as economic process. Gradually, the image of an organic nature was replaced by a mechanistic ontology of nature, typified in Newtonian physics. But sexual politics played an essential role in this

[27]Eco-feminism includes diverse and sometimes conflicting tendencies associated with the spectrum of feminist theory (liberal, radical, spiritualist, etc.). The schools of ecological feminism drawn on here, rooted in social analyses, have been referred to as *social eco-feminism* (Merchant 1992). Critiques of dualism were made in some of the earliest feminist writings, including Mary Wollstonecraft's (1962 [1792]) *A Vindication of the Rights of Women.* Interestingly, Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary Shelley, wrote, in *Frankenstein* (Shelley 1984 [1818]), one of the most prominent literary critiques of the domination of nature.

transition. It was no coincidence that images of nature as passive, mute, and subject to domination drew on gendered metaphors. Francis Bacon, the celebrated "father" of the modern scientific method, likened scientific investigation to the torture and interrogation of witches. Merchant concluded that Bacon's scientific method, "so readily applicable when nature is denoted by the female gender, degraded and made possible the exploitation of the natural environment" (*ibid*: 169). By linking the domination of nature with that of women, patriarchical capitalism was able more readily to erode the ecological sanctions of pre-capitalism.

Shiva (1991) extended the eco-feminist critique of capitalist modernity, basing her work on examinations of agriculture, forestry, and water issues in her native India. She saw modernization as a process undermining the traditional roles of peasants and women in reproducing local nature. This process was based in the ideology and practice of domination:

> I want to argue that what is currently called development is essentially maldevelopment, based on the introduction or accentuation of the domination of man over nature and over women. In it both are viewed as the 'other', the passive non-self. (*ibid*: 6)

The outcome in practice of the process of maldevelopment was a delinking of communities with the natural cycles that previously sustained them. Of course, traditional relations always included gender and class domination; but colonialism and capitalism deepened these previous divisions, removing limiting factors. The logic of profit maximization, coupled with a devaluing of traditional (often, feminine) knowledge and techniques, produced a modernity antithetical to the true needs of peasants, women, or nature. But this result did not go uncontested. In the struggles of women and peasants to regain local means of production and reproduction, Shiva saw the potential for renewed ecological balances.

Table 1.1: Structure of Hierarchical Dualism

woman	man
child	adult
animal	human
object	subject
nature	society
"coloured"	"white"
emotion	reason
savage	civilized
working class	capitalist class
slave	master
homosexual	heterosexual
body	mind
country	city
home	work
etc.	etc.

The analyses developed by Merchant, Shiva, and other ecological feminists point in two crucial directions.[28] First, they trace out essential links that connect seemingly separate forms of domination. Social domination takes the form of interlinked hierarchies: man over woman, human over animal, European over non-European. These hierarchies are intimately linked with forms of consciousness, such as the privileging of reason over emotion. As Val Plumwood (1993: 48) argued, "the dualisms of human/nature, male/female, reason/emotion, civilization/primitive, mind/body, and mental/manual have 'naturalized' the domination of nature, of women, of race, and of class". (This set of dualisms is presented in expanded form in Table 1.1.) Man as human as civilized as master—woman as animal as savage as slave: these interpenetrating hierarchies were essential to traditional societies, in so called "primitive" regions as much as in Europe. Yet the meaning of hierarchy was basically transformed with the emergence of modernity. Merchant (1980) characterized the disjuncture in Europe as one between organic and

[28]For applications of Shiva's and Merchant's work to place studies, see essays in Anderson and Gale (1992).

mechanical hierarchy. In the society of organic hierarchy, local linkages and limits restrained domination; in the mechanical order, all such restraints were exploded. The integration of hierarchical structures demands that they be dismantled jointly. A simple return to tradition (were it possible) would merely recreate the very structures of domination from which capital and the state originally emerged. A revolutionary politics of place needs to embrace not only class politics but the elimination of domination in all its interlinked forms.

Plumwood (1993) outlined three strategies taken to dis-integrate dualistic structures. The first, "uncritical equality", aims to deny or eliminate difference. With its denial of nature's existence, Smith's production of nature thesis is an example of this first strategy. The second, which she called "uncritical reversal", accepts the hierarchical basis of dualism but simply inverts it, e.g., the deep ecologist claim that human interests should be secondary to the needs of "wild" nature. The third strategy, which she saw emerging in a "third wave" of feminism, centres on the radical transformation of the category in question so that difference can be made non-hierarchical. One example is the project of remoulding the masculine and the feminine in forms devoid not of power but of domination.

The second focus of eco-feminism highlights the continuing centrality of reproduction. The immense productive power of capitalist industry is not free, but stems ultimately from the cycles of reproduction which recreate the conditions on which production depends. This is true as much for the reproduction of labour power (mainly through women's work) as for natural materials. Seen in this light, the opulence of modernity reflects not merely technological and organizational progress, but also the unprecedented sacking of sources of wealth stored up over millennia. Modern crises - mass starvation, species destruction, the "greenhouse effect" - reflect the preeminence of linear logics of production over the underlying cycles of reproduction. A politics of

liberation must return the sphere of reproduction to a central position. Instead, this has been left out as much from Marxist as from capitalist formulations.

Alongside important contributions of ecological feminisms, problems remain. Nesmith and Radcliffe (1993: 383) note in the work of some ecological feminists, including Shiva, forms of essentialism, i.e., claims to "an irreducible essence, an innate quality in women that connects them to nature, which is not present in or available to men". Such essentialism may obscure social origins of domination by rooting it in presumably biological (hence, immutable) traits. There is also a danger of the connections made between distinct forms of oppression remaining formulaic (*ibid*: 387). "Race", gender, sexuality, class, and relations with nature intersect in complex ways, which are dependent, in part, on particular local circumstances (Keith and Pile 1993b). So, for example, Plumwood's generalized "third wave" approach - i.e., that differences should be rendered non-hierarchical - can't be applied equally to all of the dualisms she discusses.

Questions of "race", for instance, require further specificity. Emerging jointly with European imperialism and linked from the first with processes of domination, modern conceptions of race constructed social characteristics around supposed biological differences between types of people. Contemporary research in biology refutes the claim that such distinct "races" exist, rendering irrelevant the question of whether social characteristics can be assigned to racial (i.e., biological) differences.[29] "Race", then, is an inherently ideological construct (hence the convention, followed here, of placing quotations around the word), and must be distinguished from ethnicity, sometimes defined as the cultural values and viewpoints by which a group of people identifies itself (Hiebert 1994). Yet racial ideologies and structures may play a strong role in shaping ethnic identities, as, for instance, when a shared racial oppression becomes a source of common identity and resistance. Can a racial identity be reclaimed for liberatory struggle, despite its ideological

[29]For a good summary of contemporary research on questions of "race", see Anderson (1991: Chapter 1).

origins? Questions like this one call for specific, contextualized analysis.

If "race" fits uneasily within a schema calling for difference to be rendered non-hierarchical, class clearly requires a very different approach. Class divisions simply cannot be rendered non-hierarchical—they must be overcome. An end to class domination requires a radical restructuring of social relations, including collectivization of social capital. Failing to explicitly acknowledge this crucial difference, Plumwood's eco-feminist analysis verges on liberalism, despite its radical departures.

Revolution in our century has been cast in masculinist terms of vanguard struggle, and defined in terms of relations of production. Extending the earlier insights of anarchism, feminist theory has shown the fallacy of a revolutionary movement that doesn't confront its own contradictions. A return to place must denaturalize the interlinked structures of domination, while at the same time revaluing the work of women—and of nature. This is an approach suggested in the closing lines of Adrienne Rich's poem "Natural Resources" (1978: 67):

> My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
> so much has been destroyed
>
> I have to cast my lot with those
> who age after age, perversely,
>
> with no extraordinary power,
> reconstitute the world.

1.3.2 Nature and Dialectics

Up to this point, I've tried to ground the study of place in a dialectical view of social relations; now I want to extend this to nature. Place and nature are intimately linked in perspectives on modernity. In the modernist view, the conquest of place frees humanity from the dictates of a hostile, unruly nature. To the romantic, a return to place is a return to the harmony of nature's ample bosom. It is not hard to recognize both these images as

social values thrust on the natural world. Here I want to explore alternative visions.

Bourgeois science has produced the death of nature, in theory and, seemingly, in practice. As William Blake (1979 [1788]) saw, modern science reduced the miraculous universe to "a mill with complicated wheels". In part, the view that animals are machines, and that nature is composed of blind molecules in random combination, is the imagery of capitalist machinery imposed on the world at large; Marx noted as much.[30] But it also reveals the influence of new social relations. Modern society is increasingly atomized; it's in no way surprising that philosophies of nature should reflect this.

But if the image of a mechanical and hostile nature is riddled with class ideology, the harmonious alternative is not less so. Passive, pastoral nature is the middle class English garden tended by a dutiful wife, the haven to which a harried husband returns for feminine solace. "In pastoral imagery," as Merchant (1980: 8-9) notes, "both nature and women are subordinate and essentially passive". No less than the modernist alternative, romantic images may sanction both social domination and the domination of nature.

Darwin's work represented, in potential, a challenge both to the atomistic ontology of nature and to romanticism. Evolutionary theory reclaimed a view of nature as process, flux, and development. Yet in identifying the key dynamic of evolution, Darwin drew directly on Malthus, the bourgeois political economist whose formulations on population growth seemed to give capitalist relations the force of natural law. The "struggle for life" underlying evolution was to Darwin (1985 [1859]: 117) "the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms". In treating organisms as isolated individuals shaped by an external and preexisting environment, Darwinian evolutionism internalized bourgeois visions of social relations. Similarly, ideologies of

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[30]In a footnote to *Capital*, Marx offered comments on Descartes and Bacon that seem to foreshadow contemporary ecological critique: "Descartes, in defining animals as mere machines, saw with the eyes of the manufacturing period . . . . That Descartes, like Bacon, anticipated an alteration in the form of production, and the practical subjugation of Nature by Man, as a result of the altered methods of thought, is plain from his 'Discours de la Méthode'" (Marx 1987 [1867]: 386).

progress and perfectibility infused evolutionary theory: "As natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection" (even though this perfection is achieved through "the war of nature, . . . famine and death") (*ibid*: 459).

Diversity and complexity are central concepts in many ecological literatures. Greens often argue that natural "tendencies" in these directions provide objective grounds for social ethics and hence social organization. Such positions are articulated in bioregionalism (Andruss, Plant et al. 1990) and deep ecology, but also in eco-anarchist schools such as social ecology.[31] It is on the basis of these presumed tendencies that industrial capitalism is declared unnatural. Yet these positions are dangerously redolent of a natural order, to which human society should presumably conform. This implication is explicit in deep ecology. Among the frequently reproduced platform principles of deep ecology is the need to "substantially decrease human population", a need stemming from excessive human "interference" in nature's diversity: "humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs" (Naess 1989: 29). In making such arguments, some green perspectives are not so far removed from social Darwinism, which justifies capitalist social relations on the basis of the supposed survival of the fittest in nature.

If critical social theorists generally avoid speculation on tendencies of nature, then, the reasons are clear. Theories of nature have perhaps invariably naturalized social relations. But, even like the "production of nature", the promotion of an "unnatural discourse" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994) denaturalizes social domination only by rendering nature mute, invisible. While nature is clearly socially constructed, "that construction is *of*

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[31]Murray Bookchin, for instance, writes that non-human nature exhibits an inherent "tendency toward greater differentiation, complexity, [and] increasing subjectivity . . ." (Bookchin 1990). However, it is only in humanity that these tendencies are rendered self-conscious: "Humanity, in effect, becomes the potential voice of a nature rendered self-conscious and self-formative" (*ibid*: 201). In such passages, the influence of Kropotkin is clear.

something" (Massey 1984: 52). Fitzsimmons (1989: 112) suggests that ecosystems, as well as human society, are "organized by their own distinguishing laws and tendencies". To reclaim a perspective on place as a composite of social and natural relations, structures and tendencies in nature must be addressed. I think that there is at least one promising move in this directions: dialectics.

Engels, in fact, tried to take just this approach, claiming that dialectical analysis should be applied not only to human society but to nature as well. Drawing on Hegel, Engels argued in *Dialectics of Nature* that "dialectical laws are really laws of development of nature" (1940b [1880]: 27). Against the view of nature as composed of inert molecules responding to mechanical forces, Engels insisted that nature was alive with potentiality and manifested inherent inner tendencies: "the motion of matter is not merely crude mechanical motion, mere change of place, it is heat and light, electric and magnetic stress, chemical combination and dissociation, life and, finally, consciousness" (*ibid*: 21). The dialectics of nature were to be discovered in three Hegelian principles: the transformation of quantity into quality, the interpenetration of opposites, and the negation of the negation.[32] But Engels abandoned his planned book in manuscript form (and here, as elsewhere, the "mastery" of nature was celebrated: "In the most advanced industrial countries we have subdued the forces of nature and pressed them into the service of mankind; we have

[32]The principle of the transformation of quantity into quality holds that, beyond a given threshold, changes in amount will produce qualitative changes. A simple example: cooled beyond zero degrees (quantitative change), liquid water will transform suddenly to ice (qualitative change). Marx employed this principle in his analysis of the origins of capital, noting that a certain minimum number of employees was required to free the nascent bourgeois from direct involvement in production. "Here, as in natural science," Marx (1987 [1867]: 292) wrote, "is shown the correctness of the law discovered by Hegel (in his "Logic"), that merely quantitative differences beyond a certain point pass into qualitative change." The negation of the negation posited a contradictory mode of development of phenomena, in which change occurred through a series of oppositions. The most notable example in Marxism is the characterization of communism as "the negation of the negation" (Marx 1961 [1844]: 140). Capitalism is the negation of traditional society, of community, of organic relations with nature; but this is precisely its historic mission: "Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness, and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption" (Marx 1973 [1858]: 325). The very ravages of capital are viewed as necessary, in that they prepare the way for the new negation: communism.

thereby infinitely multiplied production" [*ibid*: 19]).

Nevertheless, the insights hinted at by Engels have been taken up more recently within a "new biology", most fully by Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin.[33] Levins and Lewontin (1985: Chapter 1) problematized the idea of simple "tendencies" towards diversity or complexity in natural evolution, but without denying that these characteristics might play important roles in local ecosystem dynamics. In particular, they critiqued the dualism that pits isolated species against an external environment, moving to clarify the mutual reproduction of individuals and their surroundings. All organisms, they suggested, "even the most rudimentary, enter into a dialectical relation with the world around them, such that at all times they are both remaking the world and being remade by it, so that they remake themselves" (Lewontin and Levins 1990: 64). Evolutionism treats organism and the environment as opposites, when in fact they interpenetrate each other intimately.[34] Related to the *interpenetration of opposites*, Levins and Lewontin (1985: 287) proposed *universal interconnection* as a dialectical principle: "against the alienated world view that objects are isolated until proven otherwise, for us the simplest assumption is that things are connected."

Work concerning interconnection has led to new views on the interpenetration of organism and environment. Theoretical efforts centered first on the atmosphere, with the theory (originating with Soviet and British scientists in the 1920s and 1930s) that the chemical composition of the earth's atmosphere had been gradually modified by life forms capturing carbon and giving off oxygen (*ibid*: 47). Similar processes were observed in other areas, such as the gradual formation of soils and the role of vegetation in increasing rainfall (through evapotranspiration). The general conclusion: life itself creates and maintains the conditions for life. And, at a certain point, this life includes human society:

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[33]Dickens (1992: 115-121) relates this "new biology" to treatments of nature in social theory.
[34]Similarly, Levins and Lewontin (1985: 38) explore the insights stemming from "the Marxist-Hegelian idea that qualitative changes could arise from quantitative change".

animals and plants used socially are, "in their present form, not only products of, say, last year's labour, but the result of a gradual transformation, continued through many generations . . . by means of [human] labour" (Marx 1987 [1867]). The world as we know it - the atmosphere, soils, weather systems, as well as the varied life forms - is produced and reproduced through biological and social processes. From this perspective, complexity, diversity, and cooperation in nature can be viewed not as linear tendencies, but as potentialities arising from complex interdependencies and interpenetration.

The cycles of nature's value begin at the very local scale—a plant dies, decays, and provides nutrients for new growth. As Richard O'Connor argued, "the environment itself is local; nature diversifies to make niches, enmeshing each locale in its own intricate web. Insofar as this holds, enduring human adaptations must also ultimately be quite local" (Ecologist 1993: 16). Drawing on Kropotkin's work on mutual aid, Murray Bookchin has focused on organizing at the local and municipal scale (1986). If the power of capital emanated from the erosion of locality, transcending capitalist modernity required the reestablishment of direct, local ties between people and with nature.

These perspectives on place and ecology can enhance analysis of the *capitalization of nature*, a concept developed by James O'Connor and others associated with the journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*. The capitalization of nature is defined by Rao (1991: 2) as "the process by which natural resources are privatized and commodified by capitalist interests to create more surplus value at the cost of denying common people access to both the means and conditions of production." As nature is brought increasingly into the service of capital, the logics of exchange value production disrupt both natural systems and traditional means of livelihood. Yet, by reclaiming access to nature, local communities may begin to reverse the capitalization of nature, challenging the reproduction of capitalist relations while regaining balances in relations with nature.

Place is not dead; local dynamics continue to structure social relations in crucial

ways.[35] Nor is nature truly vanquished. The creativity of natural evolution remains, waiting to be tapped by a society sensitive to its potentials. This will be accomplished not by the vanguard politics of the past but by a community of equals, cultivating a shared heritage of everyday labour.

1.4 Green Revolutions: the Ecology of Urban Agriculture

The contradictions of modernity are nowhere more striking than in agriculture. Modern techniques and technologies produce fabulous yields far in excess of anyone's needs—yet millions of people starve. Science has provided the means to mine water, to manufacture fertility, to mold new species almost at will, but many contend that modern agriculture is destroying its own productive base. Soils are eroded at rates far above those of regeneration. Chemical poisons destroy the natural bases for pest control, at the same time that they undermine workers' health. Irrigation is depleting aquifers and salinizing soils on a vast scale.[36] Amid these ecological crises, the social bases of agriculture are similarly eroded. In the South, peasants and smallholders are driven violently from their lands; in the North, family farms succumb to the expansionary logics of corporate agriculture.

In this section, I want to apply the general analysis previously developed to agriculture, and in particular to agriculture in the city. Does a return to local production for use (community gardening) have the potential to overcome the crises of modern agriculture? How might successes be traced and measured?

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[35]Agnew (1989) argues that the mistaken conflation of place with idealized, traditional community underlies the devaluation of place in social science.

[36]On the ecology of capitalist agriculture see, e.g., Levins and Lewontin (1985: Chapter 9).

1.4.1 Reclaiming Balances

In *Capital*, Marx included some particularly penetrating observations on the state of modern agriculture. Capitalist agriculture "disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil," he wrote; "it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil". Hence, "all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility." This contradiction is, surely, the essence of today's ecological crisis in agriculture. Yet

> while upsetting the naturally grown conditions for the maintenance of that circulation of matter, [capital] imperiously calls for its restoration as a system, as a regulating law of social production, and under a form appropriate to the full development of the human race. (Marx 1987: 474-475)

The ecological and social contradictions of capitalist production necessitated new social and natural relations, ones that would restore pre-capitalist balances while at the same time transcending the technical limitations of traditional agriculture.

The "circulation of matter" and energy described by Marx is certainly key to understanding the disjunctures between traditional and modern agricultures. In a historical geography of agriculture, Bayliss-Smith (1982) used energy flow dynamics to trace divergent ecological relations. Pre-modern systems, he found, were characterized by localized, completed cycles; crops, for instance, were consumed by peasant producers, and hence helped reproduce the labour for further cultivation. The hallmark of modern, industrial agriculture was its uncompleted cycles. Inputs came from external sources (e.g., petroleum, chemical fertilizers), while production was aimed at distant markets.

As agriculture comes increasingly within a capitalist economy, productivist logics displace previous cycles of reproduction. Scale is a central factor. Pre-capitalist agricultures relied on communities of cultigens and localized genotypes. To produce the predictable and uniform crops required for large-scale trade on the world market, capitalist

producers must replace the random diversity of local factors with increasingly industrial inputs, designed to minimize variation in the conditions of production. As Haila and Levins (1992: 158) note, "Diversity is lost when the single criterion of profitability excludes considerations of risk, food value, environmental impact, employment opportunities, taste, and other factors". Yet, as Shiva argued (1991: Chapter 5), diversity and ecological balances may be reclaimed by returning agriculture to communal control.

Reclaiming the local balances of agriculture demands that production be returned to local cycles—but how? After all, more and more people live in big cities, far removed from the farmland that produces their food. But this in itself needn't preclude participation in agricultural production. Only in conditions of modernity does urban agriculture appear to be a contradiction in terms.

1.4.2 Urban Agriculture and Community Gardening

"If we are to have sustainable, livable cities in our future," Katz claimed, "it is necessary to create a metropolis that produces much of its food while reweaving the patterns of the natural world back into its infrastructure and byways" (1986: 150-151). The aim may seem hopelessly idealistic; doesn't the city represent the antithesis of nature and of agriculture? But as Jane Jacobs forcefully argued, cities "are part of nature too, and involved with it in much deeper and more inescapable ways than grass trimming, sunbathing, and contemplative uplift" (1961: 445). Agriculture has always been, and remains, a part of all cities.

When Bernal Díaz entered the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, he and his fellow mercenaries marveled at the "floating gardens" that graced the city centre. But urban food production was not limited to agricultural civilizations. In the smaller cities of medieval Europe, Lewis Mumford notes,

> the agricultural improvements and rural charms of the countryside were transported into the heart of the city: witness the internal gardens, the cultivated open spaces, and even the common fields, within or just without the walls. (1961: 261)

The urban commons was transported to America in the early British colonies, becoming a key focus of town life. The Boston Common remains as a prominent reminder of that heritage, though its use as grazing land is now long past. Only with the spread of capitalist relations were urban agricultural grounds consumed for more immediately profitable uses (Mumford 1961: 414).

The lasting importance of urban agriculture is clear in the development of Vancouver. Much of the present-day city was cleared as farmland from the 1870s through the 1910s and 1920s. Chinese Canadians, in particular, were active in market gardening and truck gardening (that is, selling produce directly from trucks). These land uses were explicitly recognized in Vancouver's first city plan in 1929 (Bartholomew 1929). In 1928, the City initiated a garden allotment program, which was greatly expanded during the Second World War; in 1943, allotments were among the 52,000 "victory gardens" that were cultivated as part of the Lower Mainland's contribution to the war effort. In the postwar period, truck gardening was abolished when the establishment of the B.C. Coast Vegetable Marketing Board made such direct marketing illegal (Reynolds 1976). Vegetable production was relegated increasingly to household back yards. Yet there have been recurrent and successful efforts to claim public space for agricultural uses. Today there are at least four community gardens in Vancouver besides Strathcona—two like the Strathcona Gardens on Parks Board land, and two located on railroad rights-of-way.

In *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Kropotkin (1985 [1899]) reviewed the potential of small-scale, intensive agriculture, particularly in the city. As an example, he cited the *marais* of Paris, a medieval inheritance that survived through the end of the nineteenth century. Sites of intensive gardening based on high inputs of composted stable

manure, the *marais* displayed production levels that often exceeded those of today's industrial agriculture on a per-hectare basis. In the late 1800s, some 1,400 hectares were in *marais* cultivation, with an average holding of 0.7 hectares employing four to five people (Katz 1986: 153). While, clearly, such a form cannot be reproduced directly - as Kropotkin already noted, the motor car was supplanting the source of urban manure - the *marais* serve nonetheless as an important example of the potential for food production in the city. Kropotkin concluded with a note on the role of cooperative effort:

> Two hundred families of 5 persons each, owning 5 acres per family, having no common ties between the families, and compelled to find their living . . . almost certainly would be an economic failure. . . . But the same 200 families, if they consider themselves, say, tenants of the nation, and treat the 1,000 acres as a common tenancy . . . would have . . . every chance of succeeding. (1985 [1899]: 105)

In Kropotkin's view, the success of small-scale, intensive agriculture would depend on the sharing of tools, labour, and knowledge—on the cultivation of cooperative ties among a community. This is precisely the factor that has led to the formation of community gardens in cities all over the world. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, communal urban agriculture "is basic to increasing food security . . ." (Wade 1986: 1). In the form of municipal allotments, urban commons are a prominent feature of Western European landscapes (Crouch and Ward 1988a), while in Eastern Europe allotments and community gardens have sprung up as one response to the economic chaos of the new market economies.[37] In Canada (Quayle and Sangha 1986) and in the U.S., community gardens have claimed spaces in every major city; in New York, the quintessential capitalist metropolis, there are more than a thousand.

The role of community gardening in improving access to food and, hence, nutrition is most fully documented in a study undertaken by Blair, Giesecke, and Sherman (1991) in

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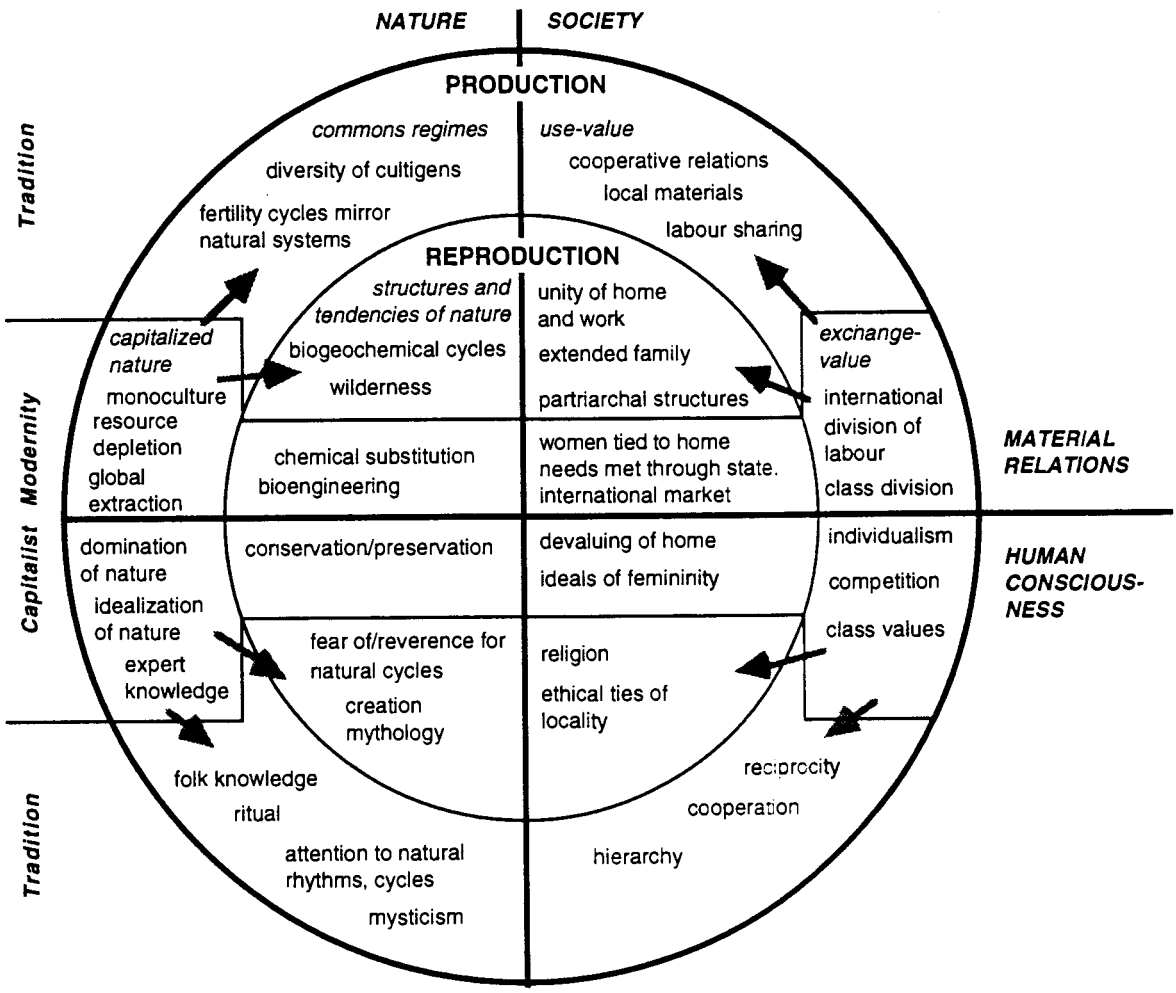
[37]Robert Argenbright, personal communication, May, 1993.

material relations and human consciousness.

In pre-capitalist societies, material relations in the locality are limited to local need and production for use, although these relations often exist in precarious balance with the

Figure 1.1: Model of Place in Conditions of Modernity



extraction of surplus by an aristocratic class. Commons regimes form an integral part of relations to nature in production, and are reflected in conjunctions such as diversity of cultigens. The dominant use-value economy emphasizes cooperative relations in

production, use of local materials, and labour sharing, while the exchange-value economy is un- or underdeveloped. Within the sphere of reproduction, autonomous tendencies of nature and human reproduction exist in some balance with the productive systems that depend on them. These relations are reflected in and reflect forms of consciousness that emphasize cooperation and reciprocity, hierarchy (where class relations are developed), and vernacular knowledge and expertise about nature.

The emergence of capitalist modernity is premised on the destruction of the commons (Ecologist 1993). With the capitalization of nature, local nature is incorporated into a global mode of production in which the pace of extraction is limited only by cycles of demand on the world market (moderated by state regulation). In a parallel way, wage labourers are drawn into the anatomy of capital. Particularly with processes of mass urbanization, individuals become alienated, both practically and psychologically, from the nature on which they depend.[39] Locally based, cooperative relations are replaced with structures emphasizing individualism and competitiveness on the world market. The expansive logics of capital and the state progressively corrode traditional relations and forms of consciousness and natural systems (as illustrated by the arrows in Figure 1.1), engendering crises of production and reproduction. Yet, even as Marx claimed, the modern condition raises prospects of freedom beyond the limited horizons of either tradition or modernity.

As I have argued, images of place have served conservative, even reactionary political programs by rooting specific social relations in a presumably "natural" tradition. Such images support the patriarchical religious community (e.g., the U.S. Amish), where the smallest detail of dress or conduct is dictated by unyielding tradition. But there are more disturbing examples: the forced de-urbanization of Pol Pot's Cambodia; or, lest we

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[39]In advanced capitalist societies, Dickens (1992) argues, fetishistic ideals such as "pristine" wilderness and health foods reflect this alienation.

forget, the "blood and soil" of Nazi Germany.[40] These, too, are images of modernity tempered by tradition, where place has regained its symbolic importance. They serve as reminders that the idealization in theory of tradition, community, and links with nature has had very real - at times, unspeakably tragic - consequences. This history justifies a particularly careful, searching approach to place relations.[41]

Yet such an approach may reclaim revolutionary potentials of place. I have argued in this chapter that the erosion of locally-based social and natural relations is inherent to the workings of capital, and to the related logics of the state. The bourgeois-working class division - the defining characteristic of capitalist society - implies a particular relation to nature—as external and alienated. This class division is reinforced by, and reinforces, a complex set of social divisions linked to gender, "race", ethnicity, sexuality, and other socially constructed characteristics. On this account, a resolution to the crises of modernity requires the reassertion of popular control over the means of production, and an accompanying return to production for use rather than exchange. I think this analysis supports the potential of place on at least three grounds.

First, historical and contemporary examples suggest that locally-based social forms may be appropriate to meeting social needs without compromising natural processes (Gibbs and Fromley 1989). As Marx suggested with reference to Russia, the solidarity arising from communal relations may provide bases for revolutionary association. The revival of communal ties to local nature may begin to defuse the powerful engines of a decentred modernity, bringing the ethereal ideals of ecology into real, material practice.

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[40]In his classic essay on European urban ideals, Schorske (1963: 113-114) noted the influence of "neo-archaist" ideas on Nazi ideology and practice.

[41]Bookchin (1988) was accused of overreaction when he descried "eco-fascist" tendencies in radical ecological movements; yet his examples are convincing. In statements he cited, deep ecologists opposed immigration from Central America to California as a threat to "our" bioregions, welcomed the AIDS virus as a cure for "overpopulation", and opposed food aid to African nations as interference in "natural" processes (i.e., human famine and consequent death). The links between these statements and fascist appeals to natural order are clear. (Dave Foreman, one of the writers cited by Bookchin, later retracted his statements.)

A second consideration is the scale of alternative forms. Traditionally, the hopes of leftists have soared and plummeted with the fates of revolutionary movements at the state level: China, Cuba, Nicaragua. Of course, these examples were not unimportant. But, too often, this dream of a revolutionary state has obscured the potential significance of movements at the local or regional scale. Particularly within the capitalist core, the prospect for structural revolution at the state level appears remote, at least in the short- or medium-term. Under these circumstances, it seems necessary to critically assess the potential of alternative forms at the local scale. While certainly not exempt from state influence, local movements may gain a measure of autonomy, creating alternative systems of power.[42]

Finally, movements at the local scale may serve as valuable sources of new analysis. By providing concrete examples of alternative forms, they may allow us glimpses of the worlds we are striving to achieve.

'[O]ut of hope, not nostalgia," activists may begin to forge "a community-based mode of production and way of life," as Galeano put it (1991: 13). The Strathcona Community Gardens bring together many of the factors I'm positing as potential bases for revolutionized social and natural relations: local control, production for use, community involvement. Do they begin to reveal the outlines of non-alienated relations? I will evaluate the outcomes at the Gardens by gauging natural and social relations, and by exploring senses of place among the gardeners. In approaching this analysis, I want to be alive to contradictions and disjunctures arising from the complexity of social relations, which is not less at the local scale. In the next chapter, I outline methodologies linking the

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[42]Cuba in the 1990s provides rare and valuable examples of how, in the right historical moment, limited, localized alternative forms can provide the basis for general transformations. The most striking example is in the area of agriculture. Prior to the current "special period", ecological approaches to agricultural production had made marginal but significant inroads against the state-sponsored industrial model. When pesticide and petroleum imports from Eastern Europe failed, throwing the system into chaos, proponents of ecological approaches were ready to step in with proven theories and methods. Expanding from bases of strength, the formerly alternative form rapidly became the norm, producing the first nation-wide transition from industrial to ecological agriculture in world history (Rosset and Benjamin 1994).

theoretical base to empirical research and introduce the Gardens, the gardeners, and the locality.

C H A P T E R 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND INTRODUCTION TO THE GARDENS

My aim in the balance of this study is to evaluate the revolutionary potential of place relations at the Strathcona Community Gardens in three interrelated areas: social relations, relations with nature, and senses of place. In this chapter, I present the methodology employed to link my theoretical approach with empirical research, and also introduce the Gardens and their locality.

2.1 Research Design

In Chapter 1, I suggested that recapturing the powers of commons systems would necessitate a return to local forms based on cooperative production for use. But I argued that there could be nothing automatic about this process; a successful re-forging of place-based relations would require both structural change and conscious action. Here I present the methodology used as a basis for empirical investigation of such structures and actions. I also outline tools and materials employed in the research.

2.1.1 Methodology

The view of causation outlined in Chapter 1 involved the complex interpenetration of diverse social and natural structures in the construction and reconstruction of a locality. My research design is intended to address this complexity, and so involves investigation along a number of distinct lines, including: relations of gender, ethnicity, and class; degree of species diversity and soil health; and senses of place. Taking such an approach, it is not possible to examine particular questions in full detail (e.g., species diversity could be the subject of a full study). Given my focus on interconnection, however, this broader view is appropriate.

Drawing specifically on the model of place in conditions of modernity presented at the end of Chapter 1 (Figure 1.1), my methodology focuses on the role of place in revolutionizing natural and social relations. The research includes three general areas: social relations, relations with nature, and senses of place. Detailed methodologies for these areas are presented in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

Moving from the top of each table down, the rows proceed from abstract to concrete. For each specific area of investigation (listed in the top row of each table), I've posited *underlying structures or tendencies*. In most cases, I haven't specified the form of such structures or tendencies, given that they are themselves subject to investigation. For example, I posit "gender relations", rather than any particular form of such relations. Two exceptions are "use-value economy" and "local control of land", which are posited at the outset as structural characteristics of the Gardens system. *Processes* mediate between structures or tendencies and their possible realization. *Empirical indicators* are the observable manifestations of causal structures, while *methods of investigation* are means to measure those indicators. Finally, *interpretations* are the ways that research results are related to conclusions.

In the area of social relations (Table 2.1), I'm interested in the sorts of relations

Table 2.1: Methodology for Investigating Social Relations at the Gardens

area of investigation	gender relations	relations of ethnicity	class relations	relations of production
underlying structures or tendencies	gender relations	relations of ethnicity	class division, or lack thereof	communal, use value economy
processes	degree to which gender divisions are reproduced or challenged within Gardens	degree to which ethnic divisions are reproduced or challenged within Gardens	degree to which class divisions are reproduced or challenged within Gardens	degree of cooperation in production (and distribution)
empirical indicators	women as members, women in formal leadership roles	"race" or ethnicity of Gardens membership (focus on Chinese- and Euro-Canadians), statements regarding ethnicity	class composition of membership	volunteer labour on communal areas, sharing of production inputs, labour, produce
methods of investigation	analysis of membership records and organizational documents, member interviews	field observation, analysis of organizational documents, member interviews	member interviews, participant observation	member interviews, survey questions on forms of cooperation engaged in
interpretations	leadership, social space for women at Gardens would suggest balance in gender relations	constitution of membership reflective of locality would suggest transcendence of spatial divisions of ethnicity	class divisions within membership would suggest reproduction of class relations, while lack would suggest transcen-dence of class	high degree of cooperation associated with communal values, lack of class divisions

produced and reproduced by the Gardens system. I draw particular attention to questions of gender, ethnicity, and class; I also gauge cooperation in production. What social relations enter into the Gardens project? What effect have the Gardens had on social relations in the locality? Here, in contrast with the work on natural relations, conclusions are based on documentary analysis more than on the use of quantifiable, empirical indicators.

Natural relations are traced primarily through analysis of the Gardens as an agricultural system (Table 2.2). Taking as a basis the critique of capitalist agriculture developed in Chapter 1, I conduct empirical measures of the Gardens system in the areas of

Table 2.2: Methodology for Investigating Natural Relations at the Gardens

area of investigation	species diversity	cultivation techniques	soil health	wilds
underlying structures or tendencies	use-value economy	use-value economy	localized balances in production	natural tendencies toward local diversity of species
processes	generation of diversity through choice of cultivators	imperative of local self-reliance	completed or interrupted cycles of energy and nutrient renewal, legacy of methods of cultivation	conscious or unintended action aids or impedes realization of tendencies
empirical indicators	number of species cultivated in individual holdings/plots and common areas	fertilizing substances applied, pest control methods used	mineral and nutrient composition of soil, structure of soil, length of growing season	presence of wild flora and fauna species
methods of investigation	member survey, field investigation of randomly sampled plots, interviews of common area coordinators	member survey questions on fertilizing, pest control	review of soil sample analyses, comparison of current soil structure with prior descriptions. survey question on length of growing season	historical analysis of changing habitats based on documentary, interview data
interpretations	high diversity of cultivation associated with logic of use-value economy, parallel logics of organic nature	use of locally derived, organic fertilizers associated with renewed ties of place	enhanced soil health would suggest presence of localized balances	restoration of wilds would support ecological benefits of local system

species diversity, soil health, and fertility enhancement. Such ecological data form the basis for comparison between the Gardens and dominant agricultural systems. In "wild areas", I gauge natural relations by analyzing wetland restoration and wildlife habitat. Finally, I relate observed outcomes to theorized structural sources. What structural tendencies are at work? How does the Gardens system interrelate with tendencies in nature?

Social and natural relations are brought together in an analysis of senses of place at the Gardens (Table 2.3). An initial indication of senses of place at the Gardens is made by

Table 2.3: Methodology for Investigating Senses of Place at the Gardens

area of investigation	individual senses of place	evolving senses of place	conflicting senses of place—with external group	conflicting senses of place—within gardening group
underlying structures or tendencies	local control, communal production for use	local control of land	social divisions within locality	social divisions within locality and group
processes	degree to which communal links lead to heightened attatchment to place	degree to which graphic images pf place reflect and help reproduce place relations	degree to which divisions are translated into conflicting senses of place between gardeners and other local groups	degree to which divisions are translated into conflicting senses of place between participants at the two gardening sites
empirical indicators	descriptions of place in journal of Gardens member, description of place among membership	features of maps of Gardens produced by members	statements surrounding tenure and zoning conflect over Freemason housing project (1988)	discussion at meetings, expressed opinions, divergent spatial design at two sites
methods of investigation	textual analysis of garden journal, survey questions on description of Gardens site	analysis of surviving maps	textual analysis, member interviews	participant observation, member interviews, textual analysis
interpretations	heightened bodily, emotional, and aesthetic senses of place associated with communal links, transcendence of alienation	reciprocal development of imagined and real geographies suggest conscious and material grounding in place	conflicting senses of place associated with untranscended social divisions in locality	conflicting senses of place associated with untranscended social divisions in group

drawing on a member's journal as well as survey data. Maps produced by the gardeners form the basis for an exploration of evolving senses of place among participants. I also explore ways in which social divisions and contradictions in the locality have affected the Gardens through analysis of conflicting senses of place, both between the gardening group and other groups in the locality and within the gardening group itself.

Entrikin (1991: 23-26) identifies "narrative-like synthesis" as a key tool in the study of place. By integrating seemingly heterogeneous phenomena into a comprehensible whole, narrative can provide a basis for spontaneous insight into meaning. I use narrative

in Chapter 3 to trace developments at the Garden sites and link these to previous dynamics in the locality. Some conclusions are suggested in the text of the chapter; others are left to the reader's interpretation.

2.1.2 Research Materials and Tools

In studying the Gardens, I have enjoyed access, thanks to the generous assistance of the gardeners, to organizational records and some personal records kept by participants. In addition, I employed two main research tools: a survey and a set of interviews. Ellie Epp, founding member of the Gardens, volunteered to act as a liaison for me with the Gardens executive, and provided valuable guidance and consultation. In summarizing research materials and tools, I will emphasize both areas of applicability and limitations.

2.1.2.1 Minutes, Correspondence, and Other Documents

In giving support in principle for this research, the gardeners made available to me organizational files, kept by Corresponding Secretary Joanne Hochu, and a number of individual records. Surviving minutes of the organization begin in March, 1987 and extend, with frequent short gaps, to the present. Minutes record debate, motions, and announcements at monthly meetings. Also included are the names and addresses of participants attending each meeting. The minutes are useful as a chronological record of developments among the group and as a means of gauging membership participation in work and decision making. Since they generally record only topics formally raised at meetings, and are incomplete, they provide only a partial record of organizational development. Kept by Muggs Sigurgeirson since she became volunteer treasurer in 1987, financial records list income and expenditures under various subject headings. Other documents include maps, newsletters, and personal notes.

Particularly valuable is a three year personal journal of garden developments kept

by Ellie Epp, which she made available for this research.[1] The journal is valuable because it gives a subjective and interpretive view of emerging relations as seen from the perspective of a participant. Because it was written as events and processes unfolded, it provides a degree of insight potentially missing from interviews, which are necessarily retrospective. I have drawn on the journal in particular for details in the historical development of the Gardens (Chapter 3) and for insight into senses of place at the Gardens (Chapter 5).

2.1.2.2 Survey Design

To gather data not available in existing documentary sources, I conducted a survey of Gardens participants. The survey included questions on forms of participation at the Gardens, activities in individual plots, personal data, and perspectives on the Gardens. (The survey form is reproduced in Appendix 1.)

In conducting the survey, I opted to collect responses only from participants in the main gardens, rather than including also the Cottonwood site. My main consideration in this decision was the differing stages of development at the two sites; being more established, the main gardens served as a better gauge of outcomes. Additional considerations were that more complete contact data were available for the main gardens membership and that a difference in plot size between the two sites might have introduced irregularities in the survey data. Finally, differences in outcomes between the two sites might have been disguised in gross data, while the relatively small number of members at the Cottonwood Gardens (approximately 30, as opposed to 96 at the main gardens) would have limited the precision with which comparisons between the two could be made. I accepted two responses received from members with plots at both gardens.

I distributed the surveys through a three-pronged approach. First, I distributed

[1]The value of journals as a research material in new regional geography was highlighted by Thrift (1983).

survey forms, along with stamped and addressed return envelopes, at two of the monthly meetings of the society. Second, I delivered the survey personally to the residences of gardeners living in neighbourhoods near the gardens: Strathcona, Downtown Eastside, Grandview/Woodlands, and Mount Pleasant. In the course of distributing the survey, I chatted with approximately 15 members; four completed the survey on the spot. Third, I mailed survey forms, with return envelopes, to Gardeners residing outside these areas and those whose residences were not accessible to drop the survey.

At the time the survey was distributed (the Fall of 1993), there were 96 registered members of the main gardens. (As a rule, only one membership is held per household, although often more than one individual in a household works in the garden.) In all, 82 surveys were distributed.[2] The sampling frame, therefore, was the total membership of the main gardens, less those members whose current addresses were unknown and who did not attend the two meetings where forms were distributed. If there was a bias in the sampling method, it was that members who did not frequently attend meetings and moved often or had no fixed address were less likely to be sampled. A total of 53 surveys was filled in and returned, representing 55.2 percent of the total main gardens membership—a substantial portion.

One of the survey forms was returned blank, with a note including the following: "I have appreciated working with others helping to create the communal part of the gardens. I do not like this work to be used for statistics because it has nothing to do with competitive commercial interest." This response is certainly justified. given the close ties of most quantitative academic research to state and commercial interests. I hope that the statistics I've compiled on the basis of survey data may escape this fate.

Of the survey respondents, 49.1 percent lived within an estimated walking distance

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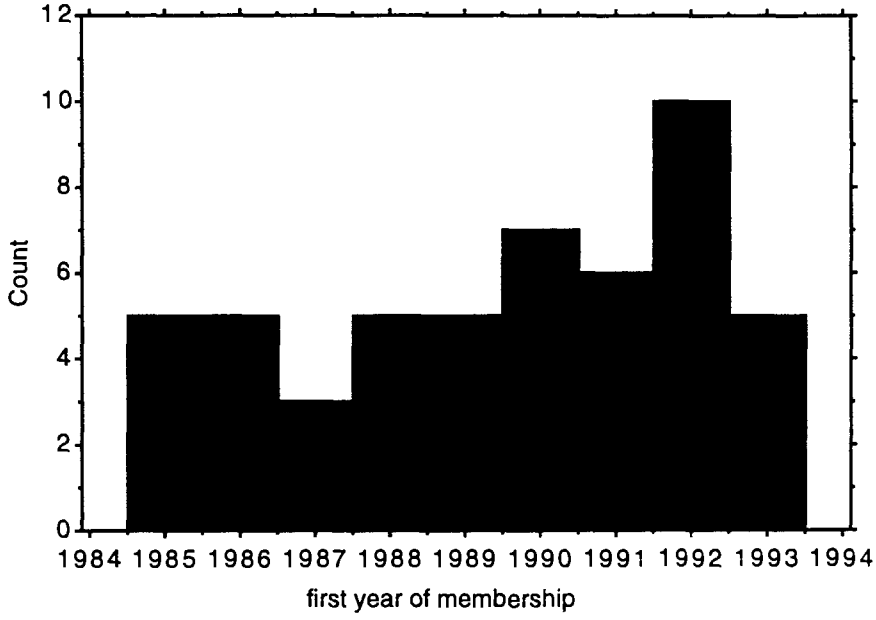
[2]Not included in this number are two survey forms returned to me by Canada Post with indication that addresses were no longer current.

of one kilometer from the Gardens, 28.3 percent lived from one to two kilometers away, and 22.6 percent lived more than two kilometres away. In other words, most were resident in the immediate or extended locality, but more than one in five came from more distant neighbourhoods. (Discussion with members indicated that several of those who lived more than two kilometres away had lived closer when they first became members.) Regarding previous gardening experience, 26.4 percent had none, 13.2 percent had up to two years, and 60.4 percent had more than two years. More than one-quarter, then, were completely new to gardening. Seventeen percent of respondents were current or past members of the gardening executive, while the remaining 83.0 percent had no such experience, suggesting that both core members and members-at-large were included in the sample. Just over one-third of gardeners reported that other members of their family worked regularly in their plots, while just under one-third said the same of at least one friend. Among the 53 survey respondents, a total of 54 family members or friends not officially members of the Gardens were recorded, suggesting that people actually working in the individually held plots outnumbered official members by a ratio of two to one. If this were true of all members of the main gardens, there would have been approximately 192 people actively cultivating there in 1993 (in addition to those active at Cottonwood).

I asked respondents to indicate their first year of membership at the Gardens; the results are displayed in Figure 2.1. The accuracy of the data may diminish somewhat with each year prior to 1993, given the relative difficulty of recalling more distant events accurately. Nonetheless, it seems from the results that both long-term and newer members were represented in the sample. Taken as an approximate profile for the main gardens as a whole, Figure 2.1 seems to reflect both continuity and change in the membership. Each year, new individuals have joined and stayed as members. This implies the yearly availability of plots, whether through the creation of new plots or through the relinquishing of existing ones as current members voluntarily reduce their allocation or leave the

Gardens. The highest number of survey respondents were in their second year of membership (the ten who reported 1992 as their first year), suggesting that while longer term members remain, the organization is continually renewed by newcomers.

Figure 2.1: First Year of Membership Among Survey Respondents



2.1.2.3 Interviews

To collect information not available through surveying, I conducted a series of open-ended key informant interviews with Gardens members. Most interviews were with members of the executive at the main gardens (Ellie Epp, Muggs Sigurgeirson, Joanne Hochu) and the Cottonwood annex (Anne Talbot and Oliver Kellhammer). I also interviewed two members-at-large - Austin Yu and Gord Lonie - and the woman whose early work led most directly to the founding of the Gardens, Leslie Scrimshaw. Four interviews were conducted at the Gardens, two at members' homes, and one at a place of work. Interviews focused on gardeners' interpretations of relations at the Gardens. I

supplemented these interviews by informal discussion with approximately twenty-five Gardens members and by participation in meetings and work parties.

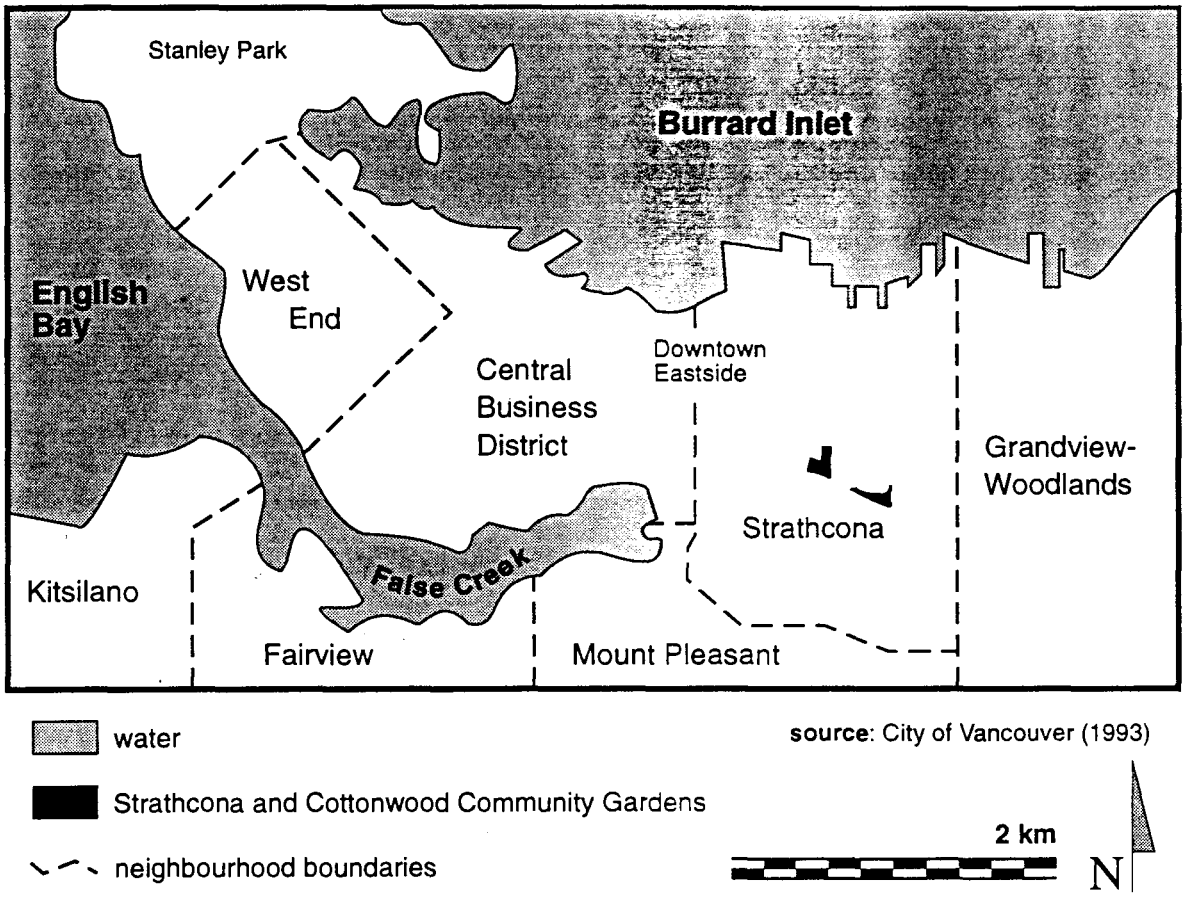
2.2 Overview of the Gardens and their Locality

In this section I introduce the locality, the gardening group, and the Gardens, with the aims of initiating investigation along some of the lines suggested above and providing a basis of reference for the remainder of the study.

2.2.1 Introduction to the Locality

Map 2.1 shows the Gardens' two sites (in black) and surrounding neighbourhoods. (Neighbourhood boundaries shown are those used by the City of Vancouver.) The Gardens have important links with three contiguous but distinct neighbourhoods in Vancouver East. The first and most prominent is Strathcona itself (previously known as Vancouver's East End), the neighbourhood in which the Gardens are situated. Strathcona is a largely low-income residential neighbourhood occupied historically by diverse immigrant communities and most importantly since the 1950s by Canadians of Chinese descent. Since the mid-1980s, an increasing proportion of housing has been taken up by middle-income people seeking inexpensive housing close to the city centre, while artists and other alternative or counter-culture folks have also moved in (City of Vancouver 1993; Atkin 1994). The Gardens have organizational ties with the Strathcona Community Centre Association and other Strathcona-based groups, and most of the more prominent, long-term members active in the main gardens live in the neighbourhood.

Map 2.1: Strathcona Community Gardens and Surrounding Vancouver Neighbourhoods



On the northwest border of Strathcona is the Downtown Eastside. This area was a centre of Japanese Canadian population up to the Second World War, when people of Japanese descent were forcibly evacuated and interned by the Canadian state. The neighbourhood has a large number of single-room occupancy rooming houses and hotels, and is home to many older single men and Native people. Since the late 1970s, local residents have organized to improve services and housing in the area, particularly through the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA). DERA has been remarkably successful in creating affordable and comfortable housing cooperatives. A relatively small

number of Gardens members actually live in the Downtown Eastside, but organizational links are strong, especially with DERA and the Carnegie Community Centre, an important recreational and social service organization.

More recently, strong ties have emerged with the neighbourhood of Grandview-Woodlands, located to the east of Strathcona. Long home to Italian and other European groups, the neighbourhood (particularly the blocks bordering Commercial Drive, known locally as "the Drive") attracted in the 1970s and 1980s a vibrant mix of non-mainstream communities including Central American refugees, lesbians, and political activists. More recently, these communities, like those of Strathcona, have been partially displaced by an influx of middle-income home buyers. Some Gardens members have moved from Strathcona to Grandview-Woodlands, while many new members have been attracted from the area. Links are particularly strong with the Cottonwood group, of which several leading members live in Grandview-Woodlands. These links with Cottonwood may reflect in part the relative location of the Cottonwood site, which is closer to Grandview-Woodlands than is the main gardens site.

2.2.2 The Gardeners

The Strathcona Community Gardens was formally constituted as an independent non-profit society in January, 1986 (Scrimshaw 1986: 3). Objectives of ecological and community enhancement are combined with a concern with locality in the purposes of the society as listed in the constitution:

a) To create a community garden for residents of Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside areas of Vancouver.
b) To reclaim, restore, and maintain the community garden using organic gardening methods.
c) To empower the community through community food production and associated community self-reliance.
d) To explore the educational and therapeutic role of gardening and to make the community garden an educational and healing centre.

e) To serve as a model for other communities wishing to undertake similar projects through outreach, special events, publications, and other appropriate forms of help. (Strathcona Community Gardeners Society 1986a: 1)

All members in the Gardens hold individual plots, so the system of plot distribution is *de facto* the system of membership selection. Members pay a ten dollar annual membership fee, in addition to a five dollar fee for each plot rented. In 1986, the gardening group formally adopted a point system for evaluating applications for plots. Points were to be awarded for lack of access to a gardening site (three points); for residence in the Strathcona Core Area (three points), Strathcona Census Area (two points), or Strathcona Region (one point), defined as concentric zones radiating out from the Gardens; and for active participation in the organization (two points for each year of participation). Economic hardship was to be the tie-breaker (Tayler 1986: 1). However, no such system was put into practice. Since there was initially no shortage, plots were distributed on a first come, first served basis. Not until the early 1990s, when the last plots at the main gardens were filled, did choosing between applicants become an issue. Even then, available plots were distributed more by happenstance than according to any formal system. Plot distribution at Cottonwood proceeded similarly: interested individuals got in touch with the volunteer plot coordinator, and, if plots were available, were accepted as members. The society possessed the power to revoke membership on the basis of actions such as stealing, but this power rarely was exercised. A plot could be redistributed on failure to pay membership and plot rental fees, though in general this was done only when the plot was not being worked. In sum, the membership constitutes those who decide to become and remain members, more than reflecting any articulated policy based on area of residence, need, or other factors.

Among the initial organizing group, the most active members were white women: Leslie Scrimshaw, Joan Tayler, Gretchen Perks (a.k.a. Gretchen Haywire). At the main gardens, this remained true through 1994. Women of European descent formed a majority

among the core organizing group (i.e., those who held executive positions, most regularly attended meetings, and participated most actively in administering the organization). Over eighty-five percent of the membership at the main gardens in 1993 was of European descent, while approximately five percent was of Chinese descent. There were 55 female and 37 male members; in four cases the membership was jointly held between a man and a woman. As official members, then, women outnumbered men by a ratio of three to two. At Cottonwood, Euro-Canadians were similarly in a large majority. As noted in Chapter 5, however, women did not play leading roles at Cottonwood to the same extent as at the main gardens, a fact that contributed to friction between participants at the two sites.

In class terms, members came from a range of backgrounds and situations. In the first years of the organization, most members came from the lower-income working class, according to the testimony of founding members. Early membership included several retired people and people residing in Downtown Eastside single-room occupancy hotels. Through 1994, low-income working class people continued to constitute a significant portion of the membership. However, middle-income professionals were joining in increasing numbers. This influx may have reflected in part the changing class composition of the locality (noted above). The membership in 1994 included people in diverse socio-economic circumstances, among them single mothers not employed outside the home, artists, a novelist, an environmental law researcher, retirees, a supermarket cashier, and a university professor. This diversity is partially reflected in responses to a survey question about employment status. Of the 51 main gardens members who responded to the question, 51.0 percent described themselves as employed, 19.6 percent as self-employed, 9.8 percent as retired, 5.9 percent as unemployed, 2.0 percent as students, and 11.8 percent as some combination of the above.[3]

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[3]One respondent refused to categorize herself according to the schema I had devised, asking, "Why do surveys always ignore full-time mothering?" Point taken.

Type of accommodation provides a further indicator to the circumstances of members at the main gardens. In one sense, accommodation is a unifying characteristic, in that approximately 96 percent of members live in dwellings lacking access to yard space for gardening. All or almost all of the these are units in multiple-dwelling buildings. Yet, within this unity, there is a diversity of circumstance. In September of 1993, by my rough and partial count, at least five members at the main gardens lived in single-room occupancy hotels, fourteen in housing cooperatives, six in social housing, one in a hospital for people with disabilities, ten in rental or individually owned multi-level apartment buildings, five in older subdivided houses, thirteen in recently renovated "character" buildings, three in relatively new condominiums, and three in single family dwellings.[4]

Formal decisions regarding the Gardens are made at monthly meetings open to the full membership and held on Tuesday evenings at the Strathcona Community Centre. Members of the main gardens and of Cottonwood meet on separate evenings. While decision making is technically on the basis of majority vote, in practice, most decisions are made on consensus. A committee structure at the main gardens mirrors the spatial design of the land: for each area there is a responsible committee, directed by one or, occasionally, two designated coordinators. An executive committee, created at the March, 1994 annual general meeting, is responsible for ratifying decisions affecting the Gardens as a whole, and meets separately. Each site (i.e., the main gardens and Cottonwood) must be represented by at least two members on this executive, which consists of the president, treasurer, and corresponding secretary of the society (initially, longtime members of the main gardens) and two members-at-large (initially, two members of Cottonwood).

Of course, only those members who attend meetings participate in the formal decision making. Of the main gardens members surveyed, 18.4 percent reported having

[4]These tallies are based on my observation of members' dwellings and analysis of the street addresses for some dwellings not visited, and include only two-thirds of main gardens members.

attended a meeting or taken on paperwork in the preceeding year, suggesting that, in practice, less than one in five members participates in the formal decision making process. As noted above, Cottonwood members were not surveyed. However, in 1994, attendance at Cottonwood meetings commonly exceeded that at meetings of the main gardens group, in spite of the much smaller number of members at Cottonwood. Seemingly, then, Cottonwood had a higher degree of participation in decision making than did the main gardens. This higher participation may have reflected, in part, a greater opportunity for participation resulting from the undeveloped state of the site.

2.2.3 The Gardens: Design and Layout

Spatially, the Gardens occupy two sites, each divided into distinct zones of use. The main gardens, first leased from the Parks Board in 1985, occupy 1.35 ha (3.34 acres) bordered on the north by Prior, on the South by Malkin, on the east by Hawks, and on the west by a seniors housing complex and fire station. Cottonwood is located approximately 100 m southeast of the main gardens, in the southeast corner of Strathcona Park, and is bordered by the park and Malkin and Raymur. Cottonwood was first leased from the Parks Board in 1991, and occupies a triangular parcel of land approximately 1.4 ha in area. Following is an overview of facilities at the two sites as of September, 1994. (Refer to the maps of the two sites given in Chapter 5.)

2.2.3.1 Facilities at the Main Gardens

Approximately one-third of the area of the main gardens is dedicated to individual plots and the pathways that separate them. In 1993, there were some 265 plots rented by 96 individual members and two community organizations (the Vancouver East Side Women's Centre and Carnegie Community Centre). Individual plots are 2.1 by 4.6 m (seven by fifteen feet) in area and are serviced by water lines and faucets for irrigation.

Almost all plots are elevated above the level of neighbouring walkways and bordered by wooden boards. Several plots are raised approximately one metre with wooden beams and are reserved for the use of people using wheelchairs or for some other reason unable to garden in the standard plots.

Common areas occupy a further third of the site area, and include an herb garden, "traditional" orchard, espalier orchard, composting area, children's play area, social area, and two sheds. Each common area is the responsibility of a member committee. Since 1993, each member has been nominally required to participate in at least one committee, although, in practice, membership is not revoked for failure to participate.

The sheds are used to store materials and tools for general use. The main shed contains shovels, rakes, hoses, and other tools owned by the society and for the general use of members. It is secured with a lock, the combination to which is given to all members. In front of the main shed is a "free table". Members or passers-by are free to take extra produce left there by gardeners.

The herb garden was established in 1989 with the aims of producing edible and medicinal herbs for common use and of providing a restful, beautiful area for the enjoyment and meditation of gardens members and visitors. The garden is in the form of a mandala (a meditation device), with a fountain at the centre. Members are encouraged to harvest small amounts of the large variety of herbs as needed, and some plants are occasionally divided for distribution to member plots.

The "traditional" orchard features fruit trees (most of them still young) interspersed in a field of wild grasses. Some of the trees were originally located on land to the northwest of the current gardens and were moved to their current location when that land was lost. Bordering the orchard are bee hives, kept for honey and for the role of bees in pollination. Honey is sold, mainly to members, at a price that approximately covers the costs of production.

Begun in 1989, the espalier orchard contains a diversity of fruit species, the majority of them apple varieties. As individual trees are miniaturized and trained to a post and wire system, a high density of cultivation is possible. In theory, fruit from both the espalier and traditional orchards is distributed among Gardens members or taken to a food bank, but in practice much of it often disappears before such measures can be taken.

The composting area features bins walled with wire mesh set atop a concrete pad. Written instructions indicate where contributors should place their garden or household waste. Sources of compost material include members' homes and the Carnagie Community Centre. The City of Vancouver also deposits leaves collected at the municipal level. The committee responsible for composting ensures that different materials are applied in appropriate ratios and that the contents of each bin are turned regularly. Finished compost is available to members at no charge.

In the southeast corner of the main gardens, a designated "wild" area occupies a final third of the total area, and includes blackberry brambles, a pond created by the gardeners, and tree and shrub plantings.

2.2.3.2 Facilities at Cottonwood

Like the main gardens, Cottonwood includes a mixture of individual plots, common areas, and wilds. Individual plots are larger than those at the main gardens (ten feet by fifteen feet, or 3.0 m by 4.6 m, on average). They are also less regularly laid out. Common areas include a tool shed and bulletin board, a composting area, three ponds, a kiwi orchard, and a collection of Asian trees and shrubs (under development in 1995). In contrast to that of the main gardens, the composting system at Cottonwood uses wire mesh tubes set directly on the soil. A "youth garden" at the eastern portion of the site is worked and administered by members of a local chapter of the Environmental Youth Alliance, a national youth organization.

In the next chapter, I explore the origins of the Gardens, including their links with

the locality.

C H A P T E R 3

CONTESTED GROUND: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GARDENS

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.
— T.S. Eliot, "Preludes" (1985: 83)

Before beginning to articulate processes underlying the Gardens project, or evaluating their outcomes, I want to explore in some detail the forces that enter into and shape the social and natural character of this place. This chapter is divided into two parts. First, I trace the evolution of the sites that will form the community gardens, from their time as Native lands to the eve of their acquisition by the gardeners. Second, I outline the development of the Gardens themselves, from 1985 to the present. Approaching the material in this manner makes it possible to trace the social and biophysical legacies inherited by the gardeners from previous cycles of use. This format also clarifies both continuities and contrasts between the Gardens experience and the community struggles that precede it. A series of maps accompanying the text illustrates developments in

temporal sequence.[1]

When work began on the community gardens in 1985, the site was littered with rubble and overgrown with grass and brambles. In setting out to dig up the background of the Gardens site, I had one simple question foremost in mind: why had it not been developed for other uses? At first sight, it might have seemed that this land had been simply neglected, passed over by the waves of development that shaped usages of surrounding land parcels. But as I gradually filled in the details - combing through archival sources, talking with local residents, reading oral histories of the area, leafing through files kept by City departments - a picture emerged of much greater complexity.[2] Far from being the casual outcome of accumulated neglect, the vacant and degraded state of the future gardens sites reflected decades of intense struggles over the definition of place. These struggles involved questions of capital, class, ethnicity, and gender and drew in various and conflicting interests within the local state. Indeed, through the microcosm of these sites, we glimpse many of the key forces and contradictions that shaped and continue to shape the social and natural character of the broader locality. By the end of this section, we should have a grasp of the complex constellation of forces entering into the construction of this place.

Here, as throughout this study, my primary focus is on the main gardens (as opposed to the Cottonwood annex), since this is where the community garden began, and in many ways this remains its centre of gravity. However, since the development of the two sites is intimately connected, the site history serves for both.

In many instances, this history highlights the powers of capital and the state. But

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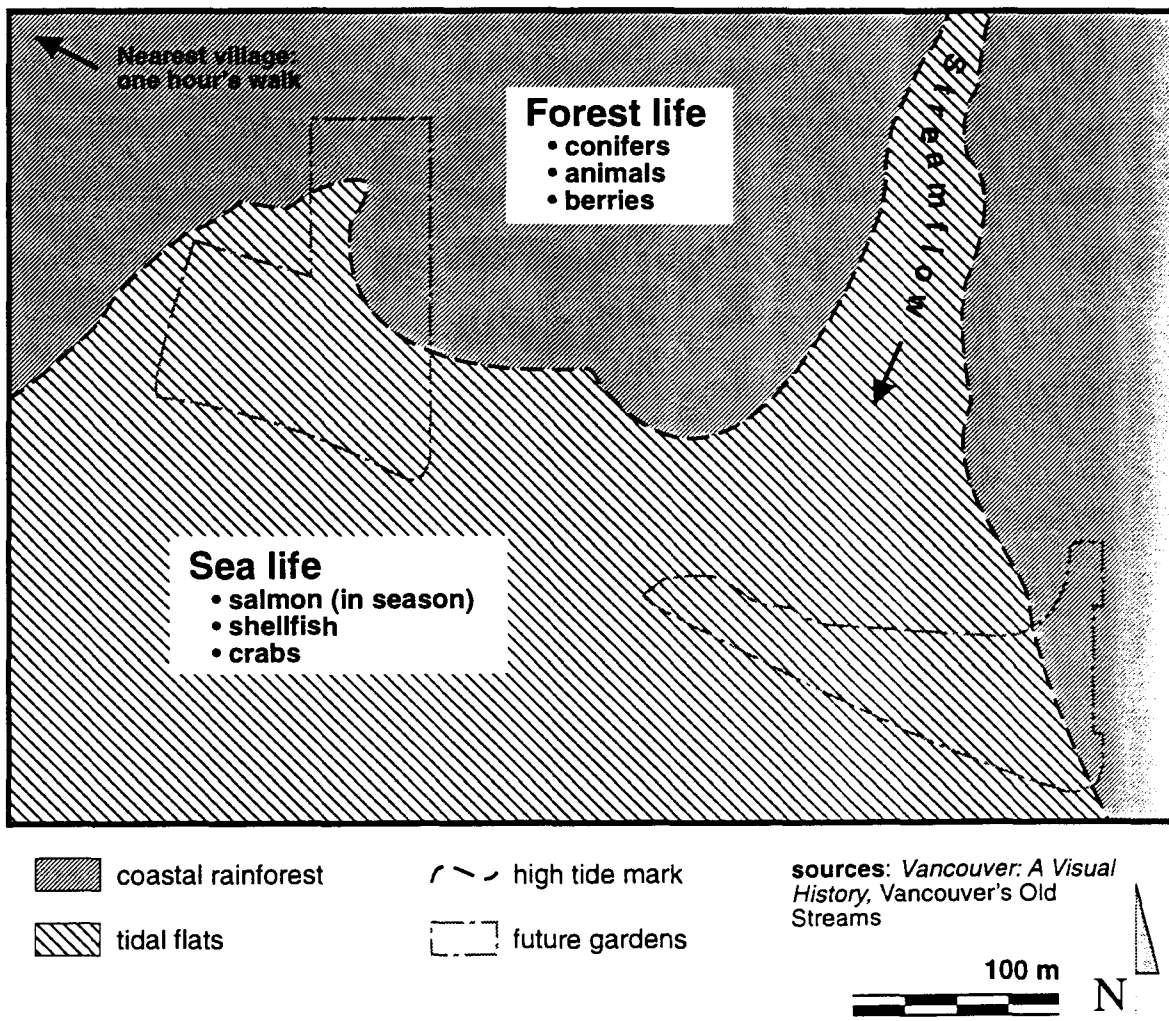
[1]I composed the base map for the maps series with the help of Dana Rogers using a 1989 air photo of the area published by the City of Vancouver. In composing the maps, I made no attempt to correct for "inaccuracies" introduced by the angle of photography (which was, in any case, close to ninety degrees) or by the curvature of the photographic lens. The view is, therefor, that of a mechanical eye transecting the landscape, an appropriate metaphor, perhaps, for the practice of computer cartography.

[2]John Atkin, local historian and member of the Gardens, gave me initial suggestions regarding the history of the main gardens site. See his summary in Kluckner and Atkin (1992: 16).

throughout we see also the strength of marginalized communities, challenging those powers or acquiescing to them, but participating actively in the shaping of place. The resultant geography bears the obvious scars of decades of abuse and neglect. If we look more closely, however, it reveals also the now hidden work, dreams, and struggles of generations of local citizens.

Map 3.1: Native Land (1840)



At the end of the historical sections I'll offer some conclusions, but the history itself is presented as a series of snapshots or vignettes. I think this style conveys the spirit of

place better than a conventional, linear history.[3]

3.1 Unearthing the Local Past

c. 1840: Native Land (1)

It is now half a century since Europeans converged on this forested coast in their great ships, bringing cargoes of wonder and devastation; but none has yet charted this inlet. The future main Gardens site is occupied by coniferous forest and tidal flats, part of a larger territory inhabited and used by the Coast Salish nation. The future Cottonwood site is the estuary of a stream that empties onto the flats. At high tide, the waters of the inlet rise to cover the rock, seaweed, and ocean creatures of the flats, brushing against the rocky shore. In season, salmon complete their spawning cycles, swimming with the tide up the mouth of the stream. The nearest permanent village is perhaps an hour's walk from here. The forest serves the people as a common hunting ground, but the area's chief draw is the rich shore life of the flats. Crabs, in particular, are abundant (Map 3.1).

In a few years, the first European navigator will arrive, sent from the young port town of New Westminster to chart the coast. "False Creek" he will name this inlet, blaming the landscape for his own ignorance.

c. 1885: Terminal City

The Canadian Pacific Railway has reached the coast, transforming the sleepy Granville Townsite almost instantly into the nascent metropolis of Vancouver. Vast tracts of land have been granted to the CPR as an incentive for locating here. One by one, the trees fall to make way for progress and profit. The logs feed the hungry mills that have sprung up on either side of False Creek and on Burrard Inlet. Household and industrial

[3]I am inspired here by Eduardo Galeano's lyrical trilogy, *Memory of Fire* (1985).

wastes are released directly into the False Creek Flats. For now the tidal flows are enough to carry away such sewage, but, as the houses and industries multiply, False Creek will begin to acquire the stench of putrification that will linger over it for decades to come.

Many years later, the spirit of the time will be captured in the text of a commemorative plaque erected on a bank building at Hastings and Hamilton in Vancouver's downtown:

> Here stood HAMILTON, first land commissioner, Canadian Pacific Railway, 1885. In the silent solitude of the primeval forest he drove a wooden stake in the earth and commenced to measure an empty land into the streets of VANCOUVER.

Of course, the land is far from empty, containing as it does both people and the myriad other inhabitants of the forest. Its emptiness is metaphorical: it has not yet received the benefits of Europe's civilization. That these benefits arrive in the form of surveying lines drawn by a real estate speculator is itself a powerful metaphor.

c. 1915: Making Space

By the beginning of the twentieth century, when the CPR's competitors are ready to extend their lines to the Terminal City, precious little land is left to grant them. It's not only a question of real estate incentives; the rail companies themselves need space for stockyards, stations, and so on. Where will it come from? But Vancouver's resourceful civic politicians soon realize that when existing coastal land is used up, more can always be created.[4] On June 16, 1901, an order in council has been passed granting the foreshore of False Creek to the City of Vancouver. A decade later, title to the flats is given to Great Northern Railroad (GNR) and Canadian National Railway (CNR). Everything below the high tide mark (and, subsequently, portions of the former shore) becomes railway lands, in exchange for the two firms assuming the costs of drainage. First, the inlet is dammed at

[4]In 1994, plans for a waterfront casino and destination resort on Vancouver's east side (strongly contested by local organizations as antithetical to local needs) are a reminder that this approach is still current.

Main Street, where an original narrowing had provided the natural basis for an early bridge. Then, in the 1910s, work begins on filling and draining the flats. This is the end of Upper False Creek, where East End lovers once rowed by moonlight.

In retrospect, it seems likely that none of the originators of the scheme imagined at the time how resilient the flats would prove. At any rate, pumping and filling will continue off and on for decades, and still there are areas of bog or open water.

c. 1925: Rat Theatre (1)

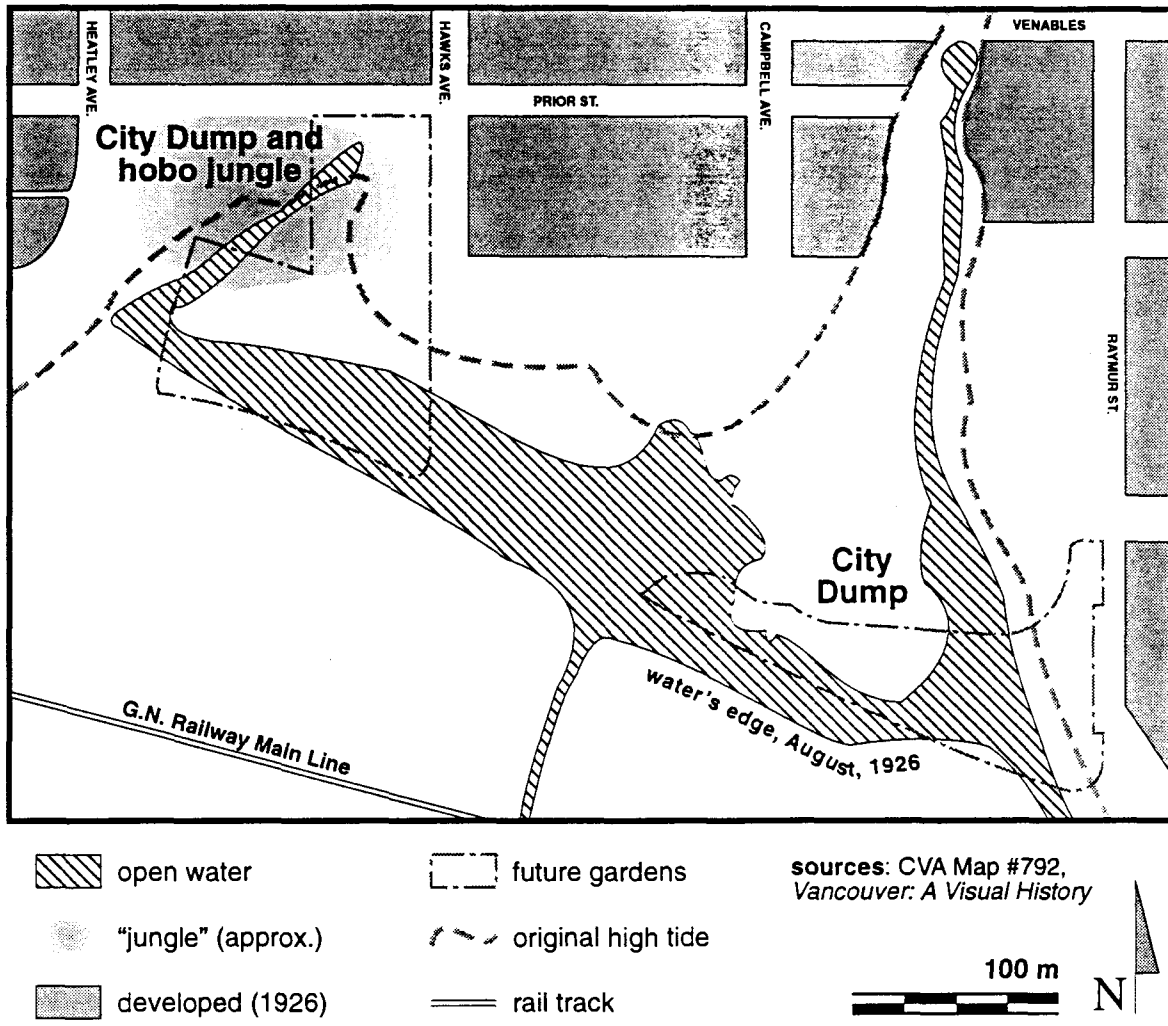
The area to the north of the flats has been developed as a working-class residential neighbourhood. The East End - Strathcona as it will later be called[5] - is non-British, in contrast to most other areas of this city. In young Vancouver, ethnicity and class are interwoven. The predominantly British character of the more affluent neighbourhoods - Shaughnessey, Point Grey, much of the West End - is reinforced by the racially motivated actions of neighbourhood associations, real estate agents, and City bureaucrats.[6] As its housing stock ages and values fall, the East End becomes home to diverse immigrant communities: Italians, Jews, Chinese, Slavs, Japanese, African Americans.

Prior Street (just north of the present Gardens site) marks the southward edge of residential development. Beyond this lies the boggy, partially filled lands owned but not yet used by Great Northern, bordered on the south by the railroad lands proper. Sewage continues to be released into the flats, although they are now isolated from the tidal flow. Through the 1920s and 1930s portions of the former shore - including both future gardens sites - are used as city dumps, a practice that serves the dual purpose of absorbing waste and furthering the filling (Map 3.2). The remaining areas of open water (which, by the

[5]The neighbourhood is named for the local elementary school, itself named for Lord Strathcona, early President of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

[6]See Anderson (1991) for detailed accounts of such actions taken to limit Chinese Canadians to "Chinatown". The role of neighbourhood associations in reinforcing racial hegemony in early Vancouver illustrates well the reactionary potential of "local" control.

Map 3.2: The Jungle at the Sewer's Edge (1924-1932)



close of the 1930s, include portions of both gardens sites) are used as swimming holes by local children, despite their rank odour.[7] Rats thrive on the garbage and sewage. Decades later, one local resident will recall the dregs of False Creek like this:

> That's where they dumped all the garbage . . . . Whenever I drove by, I would stop for a few minutes and watch because these rats were all running around, dragging each other by the tail. Some of them were as big as cats. Lots of other people watched too; it was a sort of rat theatre. (Marlatt and Itter 1979: 39)

[7]One such swimming hole was known as Chocolate Pool, the name reflecting the colour of the water.

Districts "where garbage and filth of every description are left on the surface to ferment and rot; where pools of stagnant water are almost constant; where the dwellings adjoining are thus necessarily caused to be of an inferior and even filthy description; thus where disease is engendered, and the health of the whole town periled . . ."—this is how industrial England of the 1840s was described by one source cited by Engels (1953 [1844]: 50). Point by point, the description matches Vancouver's East End through the 1930s.

The putrification of the False Creek Flats is the cultural hegemony of a British elite etched in urban space. The East End becomes a literal sewer in the same way that it is designated the repository of moral "filth"—prostitution, gambling, bootlegging, and so on.

c. 1925: Common Ground (1)

Despite continuing use as a dump site, the devastation of the flats is not complete. Areas not under water or buried in garbage are now grown over with grass and bushes, which local residents claim as an informal commons. Several East End families keep cows or horses, releasing them by day to pasture on the flats. Also, certain spots on the flats are known for their wild mushrooms, which those in the know come to gather in season (Marlatt and Itter 1979).

Autumn, 1932: Razing the Jungle (1)

It is the height of the Depression; thousands of rootless men ride the rails to try their luck on the West Coast. Down with the filthy capitalists! Revolution is in the air. Arriving in Vancouver, the wastelands of the False Creek Flats are among the first glimpses of their new home.[8] Hungry and desperate, many crowd into the shacktowns - jungles, they are called - that spring up on vacant lands. One of these, located at the city dump, spills onto the future site of the main Gardens (Map 3.2). But now the City puts an end to this phase of the common use of the flats: the city dump "jungle" is razed.

[8]My grandfather, a Serbian immigrant and labour activist, was among those riding the rails to Vancouver.

1936: Rat Theatre (2)

In an effort to rouse support for what they view as a matter "of particularly local jurisdiction", Ward Three Ratepayers' Association members have assembled a group of reporters, community leaders, and municipal, provincial, and federal politicians to witness the putrid dregs of False Creek. But they're not only complaining; they have a plan. Great Northern has fallen on hard times, and is far behind in its city taxes. GNR's holding company, Industrial Sites Limited, which owns the diseased borderland between the railway land and the residential East End, lacks the capital to develop the land, and can't unload it on a deflated real estate market. The Ward Three Ratepayers want to take advantage of Great Northern's situation. The sewer will be transformed into a park! They propose that the City forgive the outstanding taxes in exchange for Great Northern donating land to the Parks Board. Application will be made for federal grant money to clean up and develop the park.

Angelo Branca, honourary president of the Ratepayers' Association, isn't satisfied that the assembled politicians have been sufficiently roused from their usual complacency. Taking up a heavy stick, he beats at the bushes, "immediately sending a swarm of rats toward his dignified guests" (Marlatt and Itter 1979: 32). The nervous politicians express themselves "appalled that within the constituency and in the very heart of the third largest city in Canada such a condition should exist," and promise fervently to help.[9]

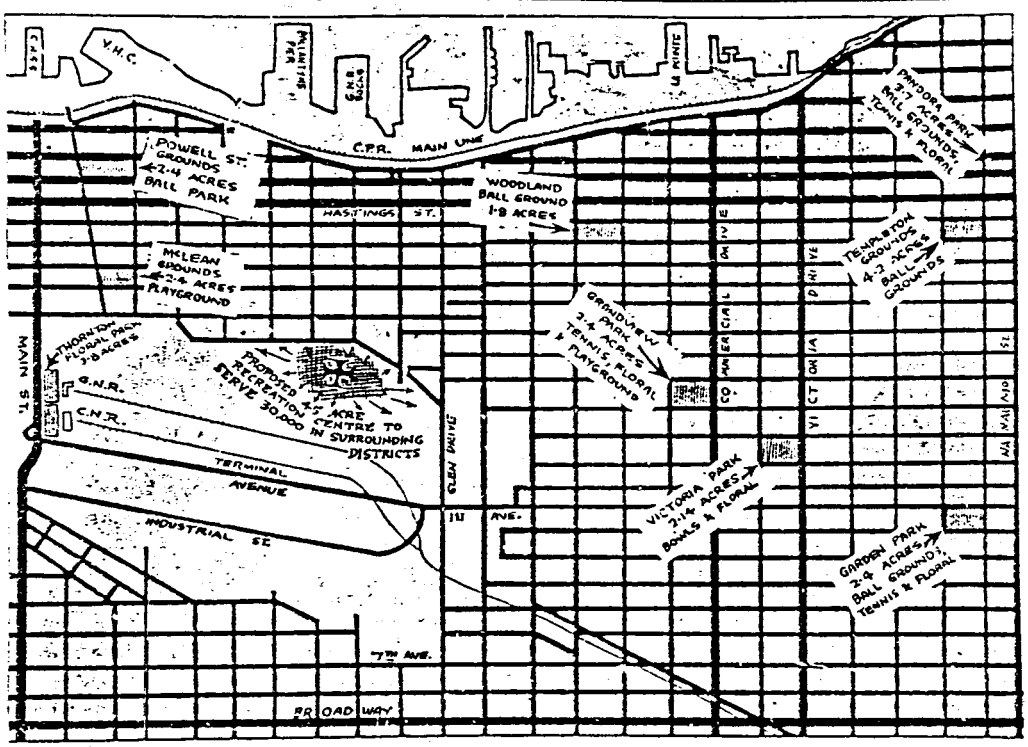
August 18, 1938: "The East End's Promised Land" (1)

This is the caption the *Vancouver Daily Province* publishes below a map that contrasts the "proposed 45 acre recreation centre" with the meager park and playground

[9]In outlining the False Creek Park campaign, I'm drawing on sources contained in the City of Vancouver Archives J.S. Matthews Newsclipping Docket M 3025-1 and M 3025-2, available on microfiche. These dockets present more than eighty news articles relating to the park. However, while each article is identified by date and title, the newspaper name is in many cases not given. For this reason, I'm sourcing articles to the archival file, rather than the original newspapers. Additional sources are contained in the J.S. Matthews Collection, Street and Place Name Cards, Add. Mss. 54, Vol. 19 Box 8, category Parks.

Map 3.3: The East End's Promised Land (1938)

THE DAILY PROVINCE, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 1938



EAST END'S PROMISED LAND—The above map shows the playground situation in the East End of the city, where it is hoped there may be eventually established a forty-five-acre recreational area in what is now an evil-smelling garbage dump at the head of False Creek Flats. The eastern part of Vancouver is one of the most densely-populated in the city. It is estimated that there are 30,000 living in the area which would be served by the new park area. The juvenile population is particularly heavy, and it is this factor which is stressed as one of the chief arguments in favor of the proposed park.

AUG 18 1938

The map shows the limited playground facilities in the area between the waterfront and Broadway, from Nanaimo to Main. It shows eight areas set aside for parks, but the largest is Templeton ground—a ball park—which contains 4.2 acres. One of the eight, Victoria Park, is merely a floral area, with facilities for lawn bowling. It contains only 2.14 acres. An idea of the size of this park can be gained from the fact that Victory Square contains nine-tenths of an acre.

Most of the parks are ball grounds. Only two are listed as being equipped with playground facilities.

An interesting point is that the total area of all the parks in the district is only 21½ acres. This is not much larger than one park in the Kitsilano area—Connaught playground—which contains 14.80 acres.

Expensive drainage and filling work would be necessary to make the marked area suitable for playground purposes. At present title to the area is vested in Industrial Sites Ltd., and the city would have to acquire the property and spend $80,000 for drainage and $70,000 more to make it suitable as a park.

Reproduced by permission of *The Province*.

facilities on the East Side (Map 3.3). The vision is a remarkable one: the very centre of disease and filth is to be transformed into a source of health and recreation. This will be not just another park but a "recreation centre", to include not only ball fields but playgrounds and diverse other recreational facilities. The initiative is "calculated to benefit

the thousands of East Side kiddies now without any such facilities for recreation, and the health and vigour such provision would bestow on this and future generations of Vancouver's East Side," says the Ward Three representative on City Council, Harry deGraves.

In another manifestation, deGraves is a leader in the movement to rescue White Canada from the Yellow hordes (Anderson 1991).

September, 1938: Public Meeting

At this meeting, held at Britannia High School, speaker after speaker calls for immediate action towards creating the park. Those addressing the meeting include two local clergymen, the chair of the Parks Board, the president of the Britannia High School Students' Council, representatives of the Salvation Army and the East End Junior G-Men, the president of the Federated Ratepayers' Association, and Ian Mackenzie, local Member of Parliament and Minister of Defense. Mayor G.G. McGeer declares, "We can't afford not to remedy this situation. The best civic remedy is to convert this present cesspool into a civic playground which will be a credit to the city."

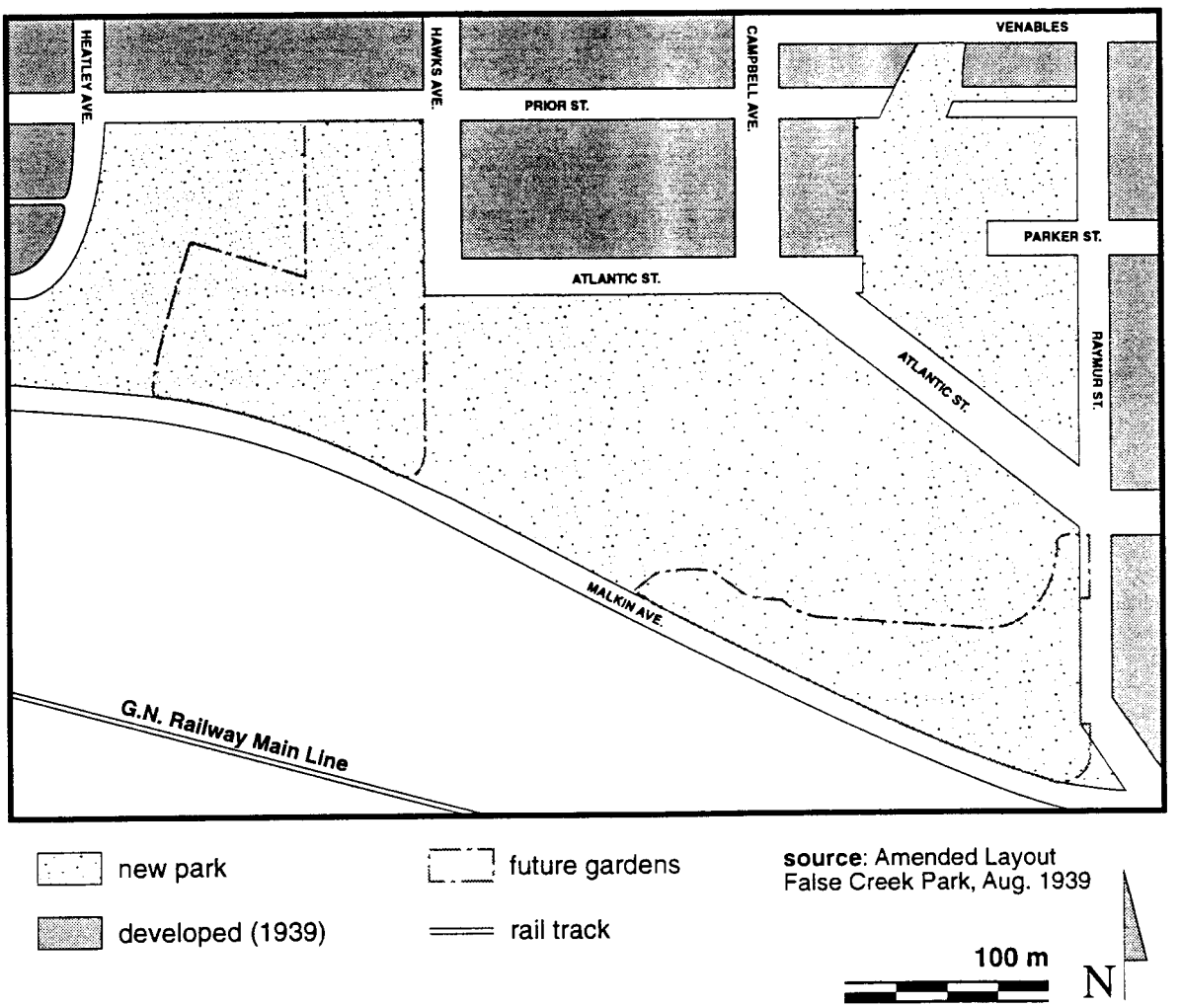
Two years have passed since the theatrics at the dump, but no progress has been made. The main problem is that the project requires coordinated action from all three levels of government, plus the Parks Board (an elected body administratively separate from the City of Vancouver). The Parks Board has to agree to create the park, the City to forgive the taxes, the provincial government to change existing legislation (which specifically denies civic governments the right to forgive taxes), and the federal government to fund drainage and filling work. All levels of government are long on promises but short on action.

February, 1940: Rezoning (1)

In June of 1939, City Council has moved at last to purchase a 46 acre tract from

Industrial Sites Ltd. Only 26 acres of this is to become park; the rest will be improved and sold. In August, plans were drawn up for the new park (Map 3.4), a fine expanse spanning four and a half city blocks at its widest point. In November, the provincial

Map 3.4: False Creek Park Created (1939-1940)



government passed enabling legislation, while the federal government (at the urging of Ian Mackenzie) has chipped in moneys for filling, which is underway. Now the Ward Three Ratepayers move to make sure that the new park won't find itself surrounded by industry.

Lands in the vicinity of the park should be rezoned from light industry to three-story multiple dwelling. City Council approves the request at a public meeting.

The name, False Creek Park, will puzzle future Vancouverites, as the natural history of the area fades from memory. In the late 1970s, the Parks Board will solve this problem by changing the name to Strathcona Park.

May 1, 1940: Filling Complete

After seven months, the last puddles of the False Creek Flats have been filled. At its height the work employed 22 trucks and their crews, as well as eleven men hired under a federal-provincial relief program. Some 100,000 cubic yards of fill have been hauled here from City-owned properties near Vancouver Technical School and on Hastings near Kaslo. Seven acres of slough have been covered. The dream of a park is about to be realized!

But Canada joins the Second World War, and all such plans are dropped. In August the Parks Board makes False Creek Park a training area for the Women's Auxiliary Motor Services (Steel 1988: 232). Not East End children but army trucks will be the first to roam this freshly moulded landscape.

May 9, 1950: Neglected Promises

Parks Board Commissioner Earl Adams is almost sheepish: "People in the False Creek area are beginning to wonder if we are ever going to develop the flats." Perhaps he remembers the words of a January 29, 1947 editorial: "Many of the youngsters who were happy at the prospect of having a playground in their district have grown to adult years and still there is no park there. The war prevented work on the scheme, but it should have been one of the first things done after the war." But now, at last, old promises are being remembered. The Parks Board undertakes yet another round of filling—for in the intervening years the water has returned. The eastern portion of the park (including the

future Cottonwood Gardens) is filled with alternate layers of soil and garbage. As the Parks Board is quick to point out, this is both cheaper and quicker than using pure soil! Trees are planted, grass grows. Not the fought for playgrounds or recreation centres but ballfields dominate the new park. And even these are not open to all. The one deluxe baseball field is the semi-private domain of the B.C. Electric Employees' Softball League, which paid for bleachers and lights. Likewise for the track put in by the B.C. Midget Auto Racing Association near the southeast corner of the park (Vancouver Parks Board 1949 1950 1951).

Few seem to notice that the original park has been sliced in half. In the post-war years, Great Northern sponsored the development of lands to the south of the park as a vegetable wholesaling area—"vegetable row", it's called. In part to provide better road access, the City has pushed through Hawks Street from Atlantic to Malkin, bisecting what was to be the park. Now the area to the east of Hawks is developed as False Creek Park; but the City quietly retains the area to the west (which includes the future main gardens).

February 12, 1960: Wielding the Meat Axe

"When you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat axe" (Berman 1982: 293-294). The words are those of Robert Moses, the modernist planner who transformed New York and sliced an expressway through the Bronx in the 1950s. Now Moses' lesser Canadian disciples draw up plans to level Strathcona, realizing a vision that has been forming since the late 1940s when Dr. Leonard Marsh called for this place to be razed and rebuilt in the image of modernity. "New Homes to Bring New Hope", is the optimistic headline to a press article lauding the redevelopment scheme. The orderly public projects to replace the chaotic houses of Strathcona "will be modern and complete", the journalist effuses.

The classification of Strathcona as a cancerous slum to be excised has clear class bases; slum clearance will solve poverty by eliminating the poor. But there are strong racial

overtones as well. Since the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in May 1947, Chinese Canadians have settled in Strathcona in increasing numbers. Images of Strathcona as diseased, dirty, crowded, and decrepit mirror long-standing racist images of neighbouring Chinatown (Anderson 1991).

Although the "renewal" schemes focus on housing, False Creek Park and its neighbouring wasteland will soon be drawn into the fray.

May 18, 1960: Fighting City Hall (1)

Just two years ago the Parks Board reiterated its hope "to have a community centre building on this Park in the near future" (Vancouver Parks Board 1958: 16); but Council has other ideas. The City of Vancouver needs a new city works yard. Council thinks False Creek Park would do nicely, and has handily passed a motion that makes the change.

But now sixty people have packed a Parks Board meeting, which a journalist describes as "the most unanimous, liveliest meeting in months." "[Y]oung people, grandmothers, Roman Catholic priest, politicians and all", they demand the park be returned.

After weeks of protest and letter writing, City Council reluctantly returns the park. The Engineering Department will use instead the portion of the original park that fell to the city; this becomes the Hawks-Prior Yard (Steel 1988) (Map 3.5-A).

February 11, 1966: Subdivision

Lot 5, Block 1, D.L.s 181, 196, 2037—this is the legal name of the Hawks-Prior Yard, which the Engineering Department has drawn up plans to subdivide and sell (Map 3.5-B).[10] The Department has a new works yard, and so doesn't need this area any more.

[10]In following developments at the future Gardens site from 1964 to 1985, I'm drawing primarily on documents contained in the City of Vancouver's Housing and Properties Department File C 234 and 235, entitled "857 Malkin 1000 Block Hawks (Strathcona Park)". The file includes reports, Council decisions, letters, maps, and inter-departmental memoranda relating to the site.

But it does need money; "the matter of interim financing for the [new] Works Yard is critical," the Director of Finance declares. By subdividing the Hawks-Prior Yard and selling it off to industry, the Engineering Department hopes to realize a tidy profit. Furthermore, their plan seems to dovetail nicely with Urban Renewal Scheme 3, which calls for the land to the west of the Hawks-Prior Yard to be cleared of its encumbering houses and sold for industrial use.

Final preparations are made to release the land for sale; but at the last minute the plan is held up by a technicality. City schemes for the district haven't yet been finalized. Assistant Director of Redevelopment A.D. Geach feels that sale of the land should be postponed until "after approval of the whole of Urban Renewal Scheme 3".

VanCity Realty Ltd., Little League Soccer, Beaver Demolition Co., Keefer Wholesale Flowers, and United Flower Growers are among the firms that express interest in the former works yard. Western Glass Ltd. suggests in April of '68 that they be given a portion of it in exchange for the land they are losing to the new Georgia Viaduct. But all are told to wait until plans are finalized.

December, 1968: SPOTA

There was little organized resistance to Urban Renewal Schemes 1 and 2, which tore out great sections of Strathcona; but the community has at last found its voice (Ptarmigan Planning 1977). The Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA) is founded to fight Scheme 3. SPOTA will help convince the new Trudeau government in Ottawa to back out of urban redevelopment. Deprived of federal funding, the City of Vancouver will reluctantly abandon Scheme 3.

The technicality holding back the sale of the former works yard has passed. But now the sale is held up by a new factor: the freeway.

August, 1971: Freeway Dreams

Speed and mobility are the ideals of the age, and the heralds of progress don't hesitate to sacrifice anything or anyone that stands in the way. The architectural firm of Phillips, Barratt, Hillier, Jones and Partners has completed its plan for a freeway approaching downtown Vancouver from the east. Their maps show thick black lines drawn over air photos of East Vancouver, obliterating the landscape underneath. The main proposed route slices through the southern edge of False Creek Park (just where the Cottonwood Gardens will be) and also through the abandoned works yard (Map 3.5-C).

The time has passed, however, when such plans could be casually imposed. SPOTA and many others turn their attention to the impending freeway. Angry, concerted protest will ensure that this freeway gets no further than the architects' heady plans.

November 28, 1972: Fill

The Engineering Department has "an urgent need for a dump site in the Strathcona area", given the extensive sewer and water work they are undertaking in Strathcona. They want to use the old works yard, and suggest that doing so would actually raise the value of the land by leveling it off. The Superintendent of Properties and Insurance now responsible for the site grants the request, but with stipulations. Filling is to be "with good quality, compactable fill. It is understood that the fill will not contain solids in the form of pavement, broken pipe, large boulders, and other materials not considered suitable for filling of this nature."

How closely these instructions are followed isn't clear. But when they set to work, the gardeners will find their site littered with boulders and concrete rubble.

September 24, 1973: Reclaiming the Park

On March 20, the City has located the new Fire Department headquarters on the

vacant former works yard, after community opposition squelched their preferred site.[11] The firehall has received 1.75 acres. Now the Parks Board moves to claim the remaining land: "Resolved, That the Board request City Council to place a park reserve on the remaining [4.37] acres of the site". The sundered halves of the original park may be reunited (Map 3.5-C)!

But Council defers any decision. After all, the official parks acquisition plan for the period 1976-80 is not yet complete.

January 21, 1975: Community Gardens

The Strathcona Joint Committee, which includes SPOTA and a number of other community groups, has a new vision for the vacant land: gardening (Map 3.5-C). They propose to "undertake a non-profit community greenhouse project as a further development of self-help that will be sponsored by all community groups in Strathcona." The SJC will apply for funding through a federal fund established for the U.N. Human Settlement Conference in 1976. The proposal finds willing backers in the Council led by Art Phillips, a leading proponent of Vancouver as a "livable city". The 4.37 acres are granted to the SJC in a unanimous motion. Moved: "That if the neighbourhood greenhouse and gardening project as proposed by SPOTA is accepted by the Federal Government as a U.N. Project, the City-owned land involved be made available to SPOTA for a $1.00 rent, for a period of up to five years."

But that little "if" proves fatal. On July 3, the feds suspend indefinitely the Canadian Urban Demonstration Program, under which the SJC has applied.

February 4, 1975: For Sale

A remnant of the original park lands, now cut off from its neighbouring lot by the

[11]On the Firehall conflict, Anderson (1991) directs readers to the City of Vancouver Archives Add. Ms. 734, SPOTA files, Vol. 15, File 1.

new Fire Hall, is put on the market for "appropriate" industrial warehouse development.

August 19, 1975: Indian Friendship

The Indian Friendship Centre Society needs a place to relocate its centre. Various potential locations are eliminated until only one remains: the vacant land on Prior. The SJC protests this new claim, as the Planning Department notes in a report:

> The Strathcona Joint Committee views the Greenhouse and Gardening Project as a means of obtaining use of Site 1 for what they consider to be much needed open space and recreational amenities in the Strathcona Area. The Committee therefore quite naturally looks on the use of Site 1 for a city-wide Indian facility as a threat to fulfillment of local needs.

But since the new Indian Centre would require only one acre, the Planning Department doesn't see why both needs can't be met. The department identifies the north-west quadrant of the parcel as best for the Indian Centre, since it is on the Prior bus route and not across the street from the linear park that SPOTA has proposed extending. On September 30, Council authorizes the sub-division; one acre is to be leased to the Indian Friendship Centre Society for fifty years at $1.00 per year. An imaginary line now transects what's left of this vacant area (Map 3.5-D).

As it turns out, the Indian Centre Society has trouble getting federal funding, and ends up locating years later on East Hastings (after another stiff battle for turf). But the line of subdivision remains, a latent potential for disruption.

August 23, 1976: Disappearing Land

SPOTA "is extremely concerned with the aggressive erosion of the only existing vacant piece of land suitable for the development of parks in Strathcona," Tom Mesic, president of SPOTA, writes in a letter to the chair of the Parks Board:

> The site originally contained six acres. In 1974 a two acre site was taken away for Vancouver's Firehall Headquarters, in 1975 another one acre site was snatched away for the Indian Friendship Centre. The remaining three acres are now being

> contemplated by City Hall for industrial use. The Vancouver Parks Board has sat blissfully ignorant and silent while Strathcona is being slowly deprived of badly needed park land.

In the name of Strathcona residents, Mesic demands that the Parks Board take decisive action to stop this "disappearing land act" and acquire the remaining 3.37 acres.

September 28, 1976: What to Do?

Instructed by Council to come up with a plan for the 3.37 vacant acres, the Planning Department has developed five options. All call for the closure of Hawks south of Prior. They are presented in order of preference by SPOTA:

a) Convert the land to park.
b) Convert 2.37 acres to park, and the remaining one acre to industry.
c) Convert the land to park, but take 2.37 acres from the southeast corner of Strathcona Park for industry (that is, the area that the Cottonwood gardeners will claim).
d) Sell the land for an adult-oriented education facility.
e) Sell the land for family townhouses.

The various Departments at City Hall, however, remain deadlocked. The Parks Board wants option A. The City Engineer opposes closure of Hawks (which, he argues, is needed for parking and circulation). The Director of Planning favours option C. No decision is made.

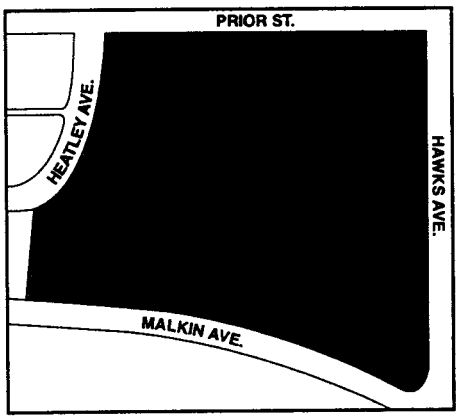
January 26, 1977: Rice Farming

"Don't walk away from a field of rice." This is the advice Bessie Lee, SPOTA's new president, has for Mike Harcourt, the ambitious city councilor who will go on to be Mayor and then Premier of the Province of British Columbia. It is a Chinese proverb. "Today we are discussing the disposition of the last piece of undeveloped land in Strathcona," Lee writes. "SPOTA feels that the ramifications of any decision for this land will have tremendous consequences for the community."

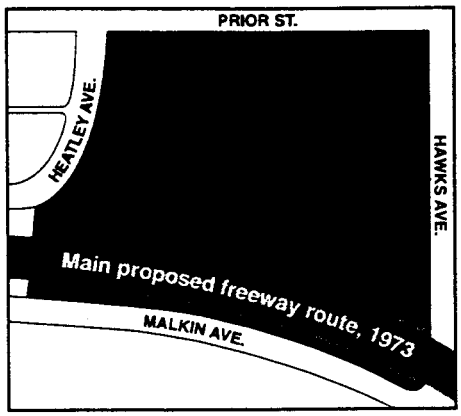
In case Harcourt has missed the point, Lee spells out the meaning of the proverb:

Map 3.5: Alternate Futures (1960-1986)

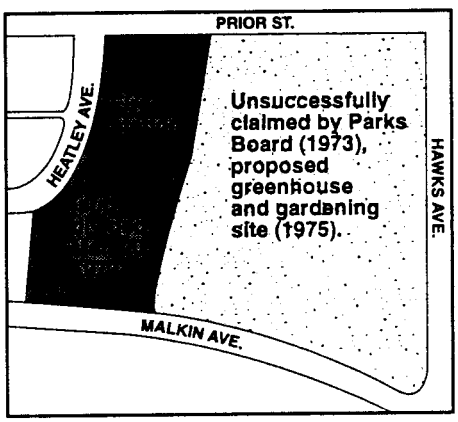
(A) 1960: Hawks-Prior Yard



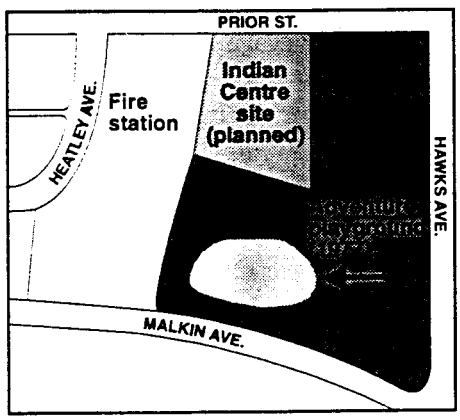
(B) 1966: Proposed subdivision



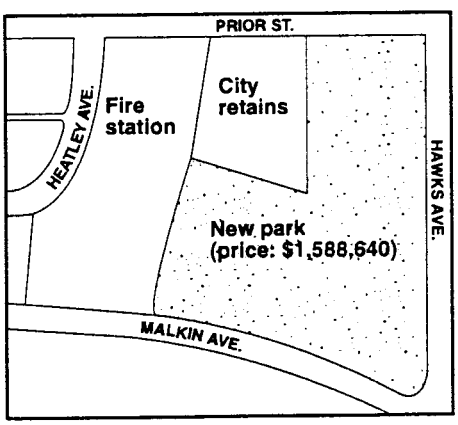
(C) 1973: Fire Station



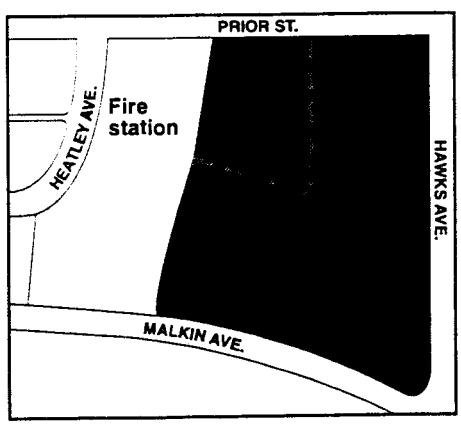
(D) 1975: Indian Friendship



(E) 1980: Park purchase



(F) 1986: Gardens begin



"after one plants rice seed in the field, they must be protected and nourished in order to produce a good harvest."

June 21, 1977: Adventure Playground

Council approves the erection of an adventure playground on the contested land from July 1 to August 31, on a trial basis (Map 3.5-D). Four decades after it was first promised, the children of Strathcona now have their new playground—at least, for the summer. The playground is by all accounts well used, but the experiment will not be extended.

June 1, 1978: Strathcona Industrial Mall

The people of Strathcona don't know what's good for them—but S.E.C. Fancy of the city's Economic Development Office does. He pushes for option c) of the Planning Department's report:

> The preferred land use option would be to trade the industrial property, on an acre for acre basis, for property in the SE corner of False Creek Park. I then propose that some way be found to develop a 'Strathcona Industrial Mall' and attract or develop companies that will hire semi-skilled people. (That appears to be the characteristic of the Strathcona unemployed.)

Certainly, the boggy, rat infested land at the back of the park has never been much good for recreational purposes. For one thing, it's cut off from the rest of the park by the location of the Midget Auto Racing track that was built in the fifties. But the main problem is its triangular shape. You can't efficiently put square fields on a triangular plot, and it hasn't yet occurred to the Parks Board that this park might be used for anything but playing ball.

October 21, 1980: Park Deal

On the south side of the former False Creek Flats, the Parks Board has sold 4.15 acres of park land to Vancouver Community College, on the condition that the Board be

allowed to purchase the 4.37 acres next to Strathcona Park from the City at the same price of $2.06 million.

But, in the meantime, the Chinese Freemasons' Society has expressed interest in the one acre lot once slated for the Vancouver Indian Centre. The Freemasons want to put a seniors' intermediate care facility there. Under pressure, the Parks Board abandons its claim on the one acre lot, and pays the City $1,588,640 for 3.37 acres of what was supposed to be park land all along. Moved by Harcourt: "that the City retain ownership of one acre of the City-owned land adjacent to Strathcona Park for development with a seniors' facility"—unanimous (Map 3.5-E).

The Parks Board will leave undeveloped their odd-shaped lot, so unsuitable for field sports. The Chinese Freemasons' project will be put on hold when provincial funding for intermediate care facilities is frozen. But like a seed forgotten in the cellar, the idea will be fertile for years.

Summary: The West Wind

Layer beneath layer, the earth of this land is an archeology of conquest—rubble, garbage, despair. Yet woven into the very soil are threads of another fabric: the local dreams and struggles that have altered its fate. These threads are invisible, but ready to be taken up again by some hand sensitive to their pattern.

This land awaits the warmth of some new year:

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? (Shelley 1979 [1820]: 206)

3.2 Common Ground: Cultivating the Community Garden

October 24, 1984: Garden Cities

The committee of the City of Vancouver's Centennial Commission, struck to

recommend a suitable project to commemorate the city's 1986 centennial, has completed its deliberation. In its report to Council, the committee enthusiastically endorses a project to create a "network of community gardens", the proposal of Vancouver's urban agriculture group, City Farmer. Committee members cite environmental benefits of community gardening, "for example, energy saving and recycling". But they also feel that "to sponsor a network of community gardens fits in with the *essence of what city planning is all about*". They cite Ebenezer Howard's early planning work, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. Like the Garden City, community gardens would preserve "the people's common interest in the land they live on and use" via "the physical intermingling of town and country".

Winter, 1985: The East End's Promised Land (2)

Standing at this vacant lot in Strathcona, gazing at the brambles, the rubble of concrete and broken bottles, Leslie Scrimshaw feels at some unnamed level that this land *wants* to be a community garden.

Leslie has been hired to establish community gardens by City Farmer's executive director. She is new to Vancouver and lives in the West End. Years later, she will look back on this time and muse that her naïveté and outsider status were important factors in her success. Oblivious to the many political rifts within Strathcona and Downtown Eastside communities, she is able to bypass them and establish a surprising consensus.

For help in preparing a proposal for the site, Leslie will involve Moira Quayle and her University of British Columbia class in landscape architecture (Gross 1985).

April 16, 1985: Turf Wars (1)

The Parks Board commissioners are to make two decisions at the end of this public meeting: whether to put in an artificial turf playing field in place of the underused track at Strathcona Park, and whether to approve City Farmer's application for the community garden. Community members and organizations attending, which loudly support the

gardens, seem set against the artificial turf idea. At the end of the meeting, the Board defers its judgment. After all, if it can't put the all-season field in at Strathcona Park, it might want the land City Farmer is requesting for that purpose .

On April 30, Leslie presents the Parks Board with a letter of support for the community garden signed by representatives of high-profile organizations in the community: the Strathcona Community Centre Association (SCCA), SPOTA, Citizens for a Real Available Beach (CRAB), RayCam Community Centre, Downtown Eastside Residents' Association (DERA), Carnegie Community Centre, and Crabtree Corner.

Not until their May 5 meeting does the Board finally concede, approving the lease to City Farmer (Map 3.5-F). Two of the parks commissioners still dream of playing fields on the site, and cast dissenting votes. Warns Commissioner Allan Bennet: "Once they're there, they're in there—permanently."

Why has this group succeeded in gaining access to the land when so many failed before? Perhaps the main difference is self-reliance. Unlike the Strathcona Joint Committee, the Indian Friendship Centre Society, or the Chinese Freemasons, the gardeners won't wait on state funding. They'll do the work themselves.

May 3, 1986: Ellie

"dug rt leg - drained, carrying topsoil - rain - sun - birds." Resting a moment, Ellie Epp records (in her own often cryptic language) the day's events in the garden journal she has begun, sensing already that this is the start of something vital. She, Mr. Li, and Henry—they are the first three gardeners here. She is the one who will serve as plot coordinator, talking with prospective gardeners and giving them plots where they will best fit in, maintaining the first lines that are drawn out for plots and walkways. Pouring her muscle and soul into the land, she will soon feel that this place belongs to the gardeners at a level no real estate developer will ever understand.

As she works, Ellie's son giggles or whines in his maroon buggy.

May, 1986: Mr. Li

He was a mathematics professor before he left his native China; now he works as a butcher. Working in his plots, Mr. Li revives an image of the old country in this new land.

May, 1986: Henry

He's a reclusive loner, this old man in his fifties who lives in the cockroach infested Pender Rooms and loses most of his welfare money to booze. But he was raised on a Dutch farm, and his hands remember. Before the community garden was established, Henry Westergaard gardened by stealth, planting a few potatoes here and there by the railway tracks. Now he is among the first to claim space at the Gardens. He is here every day, double digging his four plots, hauling manure. He will build himself a small greenhouse, so that the mice at his hotel won't get the seedlings he starts. Any money he has will still go to booze. But now at least he will eat better, since - unlike the food portion of a welfare cheque - food you grow yourself can't melt into the hard shape of a mickey.

June 21, 1986: Solstice

It is a celebration of Spring, of renewal, of the tender green life sprouting in new soil: the Dance of the Trees, held at the emerging gardens. Participants each chip in a bit of money that will go to a black walnut tree, planted in commemoration.

September 21, 1986: Fall Cleanup

Light, hazy warmth; Bob, Joan, Diana, Paul, Ellie and others are here to get the gardens ready for winter. Together they tackle the rubbish someone has dumped, and Bob is pleased when it's done. There are many hollyhocks now. Paul swings the scythe through part of the grassy field (what Ellie thinks of as *the prairie*). Later, everyone sits down to the lentil soup Joan has brought (Epp 1986-1987: 9a).

March, 1987: Scrounging

Last year, the gardeners got a B.C. Hydro contractor working on Prior St. to pile fill at the north edge of the gardens, creating a metre-high berm to shield plots from noise and vehicle emissions. A week ago Sheila, Wendy, and Ellie picked through the lots down the street where the houses were demolished and salvaged rain gutters, bricks, and daffodils for the gardens (Epp 1986-1987: 12). Now the gardeners have swung a deal with the builders who are putting in basements for a row of houses on Hawks. The Gardens will accept fill from the excavations. (The soil looks fine and it will be help in moulding the pond area.) In exchange, the builders will provide a dumpster for the gardeners to fill with rubbish.

Next week, Ellie will arrange for the workers tearing down a house on the corner to remove the joists first so they can be used by the gardeners.

Once again, the Gardens site is receiving discarded material and fill from the surrounding district. Now, however, it comes at the initiative of a group of people committed to the land, and on their terms. From destruction comes new life.

March 18, 1987: Nature's Rhythms

The afternoon sun has called the gardeners to their plots: Henry, Peter and Muggs, Michael, Paul, Joan, André, Ellie, and the Li family. In the city, our lives pulse to the powerful currents of capital and the state: rush hour, election year, employment and joblessness, work week, welfare Wednesday. Here, however, older rhythms are beginning to reassert themselves (Epp 1986-1987: 12).

March 28, 1987: Women's Work

Ellie and Muggs are among the first at this work party, and they will be the last to leave. It's a fine, sunny Saturday—good weather for a group cleanup. It's time to get the plots and group areas ready for another summer. The trash still accumulates here, and it's

a lot of work to keep on top of it. Eric needs to remove a giant boulder from his plot so a group of men head over to help: André, Bob, Paul, Ehshin, and Randy (Epp 1986-1987: 13a).

Many men are involved in the Gardens, but from the first the heart of the group is a cluster of strong women: Leslie, Gretchen, and Joan, who did so much of the initial organizing; Ellie, Muggs, Joanne, Maxine, and later Ros and others, who between them see to the daily needs of the organization, resolve disputes, and take on most of the shit work.

For a century, this land has been moulded by masculine visions, those of lumber barons, railway executives, politicians, architects, and real estate developers who would tame it with the power of industry and machines. Now, it is shaped by the hands of women, who bring to it nothing but their own muscle, their desire, and the determination to see a wasteland bloom.

March, 1987: Fighting City Hall (2)

The news spreads like grassfire in a prairie summer: the City wants to take back the land. It's true. One quarter of the Gardens is owned not by the Parks Board but by the City, and now the old Chinese Freemasons' project has been revived. This is the highest and least rocky land, where the first gardens were established. Here are Ellie's and Mr. Li's and Henry's plots. Here the black walnut tree was planted. Nonetheless, this is the area that the City is now taking back.

To the Gardeners, this is a fight of the community against City Hall; but the lines are not so clearly drawn. The gardeners have powerful local groups on their side, including everyone who's anyone on the Downtown Eastside. But influential Chinese Canadian organizations and individuals line up behind the Freemasons, including the United Chinese Community Enhancement and Services Society (SUCCESS). While some media coverage favours the gardeners, one local paper condemns them. The Gardeners are

greedy, editorializes the *East Ender* community newspaper, since they are not content with three acres but want the whole piece to themselves. As the accusations fly, both sides dig in for a fight.

April 26, 1987: Henry's Plots

Out drinking, Henry fell and broke his hip and lay there on the sidewalk all night in agony. Ellie found out only when his landlord took her number from Henry's wall and phoned. She visited him—tired and broken. Now Mr. Li's son is watering Henry's plots until he is better.

Though he'll get out of the hospital, Henry's days are numbered now. By the time the developers come to tear up his plots, Henry won't be around any more to mourn.

May, 1987: Maxine's Minutes

She tries to stick to the drab routine of minute writing, really she does, but the creative writer in Maxine Gadd often gets the better of her. Now, as she sits at her desk to write up the May 5 minutes, she can't help spicing them up with a lively comment here and there. Like when they were discussing how they would get posts to build a *tori* (a Japanese gateway) for the garden: "Maxine said couldn't we cut down a couple of trees, and Yarrow and Gretchen gasped, 'CUT DOWN TREES!'" Touchy or what? Then there was her comment on the plot arrangement, ignored at the time but certainly worthy of noting for posterity: "Maxine expressed vague but deep scruples about the present grid system both in quantity and quality of life afforded the inhabitants." There. As she notes the general lack of labour for tree planting, Maxine pauses for a brief philosophical reflection: "Where are the young muscled volunteers of yesteryear?"

June 6, 1987: Kidpit

Tony and Yarrow help to put together a frame for the children's area, set amid the

plots near the tool shed. Soon people with kids - mainly, single mothers - will be given priority for neighbouring plots, so that children can play while parents garden nearby.

February 9, 1988: Cutting Loose

City Farmer sponsored the project that led to the establishment of the Gardens, but now the gardeners want to go their own way. Tensions began when City Farmer hired grant employees to work at the Gardens in the summer of 1987. The process was fraught with difficulties, based in part on the fact that Gardens members, themselves unemployed volunteers, were left with the responsibility for supervising paid workers they hadn't themselves hired. Now there are questions of finances, as Maxine notes in the minutes: "we are an independent non-profit society and do not wish City Farmer to solicit funds on our behalf without permission in writing from our board."

February 9, 1988: Crabtree

The Crabtree Corner Daycare has applied for a plot, but everyone knows how little money they have to spare. Ellie's motion that the plot fee be waived is accepted unanimously.

May, 1988: Return of the Waters

In a boggy patch in the southeast of their land, a faint remnant of the original tidal flats, the gardeners put into practice a simple idea: rather than try again to fill it, they will help an aquatic environment return. They build up the border of the area with earth and divert drainage from garden plots here. Soon the paths that criss-crossed this area begin to disappear as the water fills in.

Seven decades of massive filling failed to extinguish the water, but with a few years of gentle coaxing there is a permanent pond. Treefrogs and even bull frogs appear. Dozens of species of bird use the area, including ducks that nest in the pond. In the spring

children wade into the water, chasing tadpoles.

July, 1988: Turf Wars (2)

At this meeting, Council will decide whether to grant the Chinese Freemasons the one acre parcel that they want for a seniors' home. Alongside the Freemasons, the gardeners and their supporters are out to defend their claim to the land. As part of her presentation, Ellie tallies up the thousands of hours she and others have worked on the gardens, turning the soil, hauling rocks. She concludes that the Gardeners have more than paid for the land in sweat equity.

Far from being won over by this argument, the Non-Partisan Association councilors are visibly enraged. Who are these squatters, this ragtag bunch of vagrants who presume to claim City land as their own? If they think that mere labour can prevail over the rights of Property, they are sorely mistaken, as the NPA majority on Council soon demonstrates. The City will evict the squatters, and give the land to the Freemasons.

The gardeners have lost the first round, and now have only one chance. Before the development can go ahead, the land will have to be rezoned from its current M-2 industrial zoning to CD-1, which would permit construction of the proposed building. The rezoning can only be approved on the basis of a public hearing. In the broadsheet they publish, entitled "Save the Gardens," the gardeners call for support in opposing the Freemasons and their allies:

> Our only hope now is that overwhelming public support for the Garden at the rezoning hearing on August 25 will make the Council change their minds. A rezoning decision is supposed to reflect the wishes of the neighbourhood affected. The Freemasons, who are Chinatown merchants, will mobilize their friends, and we will need many voices to counter theirs.

August 25, 1988: Rezoning (2)

The speakers' list is like a who's who of Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside. The first speaker against the proposed rezoning is Jim Green, powerful leader of the

Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, followed by Jean Swanson of End Legislated Poverty. But there are also prominent figures among those speaking in favour, including Eugene Le, Chairperson of SUCCESS. Those speaking against the rezoning outnumber those in favour almost three to one.

In the report presented to Council, the Director of Planning notes potential problems of noise and accessibility, but recommends that the application be approved in light of the City's outstanding commitment to the Freemasons. The Director sees no contradiction in this description: "The site is presently vacant and forms part of the Strathcona Community Garden" (City of Vancouver 1988: 1).

Tempers fray as the night wears on. At 12:30 am the gardeners' main ally on Council, Libby Davies, moves that the hearing be adjourned to another day so that all delegations can be heard, but the motion is defeated. People begin to drift home, so that of the hundreds out for the start of the hearing only a few dozen remain. At last there is no one left to speak. After a routine bit of discussion, Council passes the rezoning application as presented, and adjourns at 3:15 am. The development will go ahead.

anynight, anyyear: Tricks

Passionless grunts—and in the morning a new crop of condoms has sprouted on the roadside like pale sticky mushrooms. For years this dark, unfrequented stretch of Hawks between the park and the Gardens lot has been a favoured spot for commercial sex and drug deals. Were these the uses the City Engineer had in mind when he opposed closing off this street?

September, 1988: Mending The Broken Web

This is what I am: watching the spider
rebuild— "patiently", they say,

but I recognize in her
impatience—my own—

the passion to make and make again
where such unmaking reigns

the refusal to be a victim. (Rich 1978: 64)

Ellie is sick with anger when she thinks of the bulldozers that will erase her years of work, but she is not defeated. It's time to focus this rage, to direct it to the hard but necessary work of rebuilding. She sits down to make a new plan for the gardens, beginning with its new, shrunken borders (see Map 5.6). She sketches in features the gardeners have long aimed for: espaliered fruit trees, plots accessible by wheelchair, a new entrance. And her own favourite project, the herb garden. Then, resolutely, she draws in the border with the lost quadrant. If there has to be a fence, let it be wooden and covered with flowering vines. And let there be a welcoming gate, so that, when they arrive, the seniors can enjoy easy access to the Gardens, knowing that they weren't the ones the gardeners were fighting against.

You're only defeated when you give up on yourself.

February 22, 1989: Saving the Soil

"Creating the topsoil has been our three-year labour and now we're moving three years work in three months." Muggs Sigurgeirson can't shake the bitterness of the land fight, but like Ellie she has no time for idle complaint. All winter, work parties of up to fifty have gathered here to save the soil before the bulldozers arrive, hauling it by slow wheelbarrow load to new plots opened up on the frontier with the "wild area". But the biggest challenges are still to come. "We have to totally rebuild," says Joanne Hochu: move irrigation, build new pathways, and relocate the orchard of 45 young fruit trees. All with volunteer labour, all by hand.[12]

[12] *Vancouver Sun* Feb. 22, 1989 A3.

May, 1989: Greenhouse Effect

Cannell Films is shooting an episode of the TV show "21 Jump Street" in the neighbourhood, and one of the gardeners spots a plexiglass greenhouse on the set. Will they still need it after the shoot? Soon this prop will become the Gardens' new greenhouse, conjured from the netherworld of illusion into reality.

May 6 & 7, 1989: Rebirth

The old gardens are dead, but now they are being reborn. Three hundred and fifty volunteers show up to rebuild the plots, lay paths, dig in irrigation. The whole community is out, along with members of the Sterling Community Foundation, which once a year donates labour to a deserving project. Most of the material, too, is donated: 4,000 feet of lumber from Redwood Mills, a truckload of drain rock from Kask Bros. Concrete, pine trees from the Sterlings, food from Nite and Day catering and Safeway, buns from a local bakery. The RayCam Community Centre is providing childcare.

The volunteers dig thousands of meters of irrigation trenches and lay pipes. They haul twenty-two dump truck loads of gravel by wheelbarrow and lay it over the paths and irrigation lines. They edge pathways with wooden borders and construct raised beds for gardeners in wheelchairs. And then, at the end of the second day, they come to the RayCam Community Centre to celebrate.

The Gardens will never be the same without the lost quadrant; but, thanks to community support, they have emerged stronger than ever.

September 24, 1990: Razing the Jungle (2)

Last month, they received a strongly worded memo from Permits and Licenses. "Once again, the undeveloped south-east portion of Strathcona Park . . . has become an overgrown wasteland and a depository for junk, discarded material, garbage and household items," R.V. Hebert wrote, even threatening to take action under the Untidy Premises

Bylaw. Now, Parks Board staff recommend that the Board spend $50,000 leveling and turfing the site. Taming the brambles will prevent the site from harbouring "unwanted pests", a term that seems to cover both rats and transient humans. "The removal of brambles, cleanup and turfing," they claim, "will result in the area being healthier, safer and a more aesthetically pleasing park space."

But the Board doesn't want to shell out the fifty thousand. And besides, local residents value the site for its blackberries and oppose the turfing scheme. The Board allocates only a few thousand for cleanup.

Winter, 1990: CEEDS

The Community Enhancement and Economic Development Society (CEEDS) runs four organic, communal farms of over 100 acres each in the Cariboo region of B.C.'s interior. Last year, they began an exchange with people from Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside. Since then, members of the Gardens have traveled to the Cariboo to milk cows and bring in the hay, glimpsing new geographies of possibility (Durutti 1990: 4).

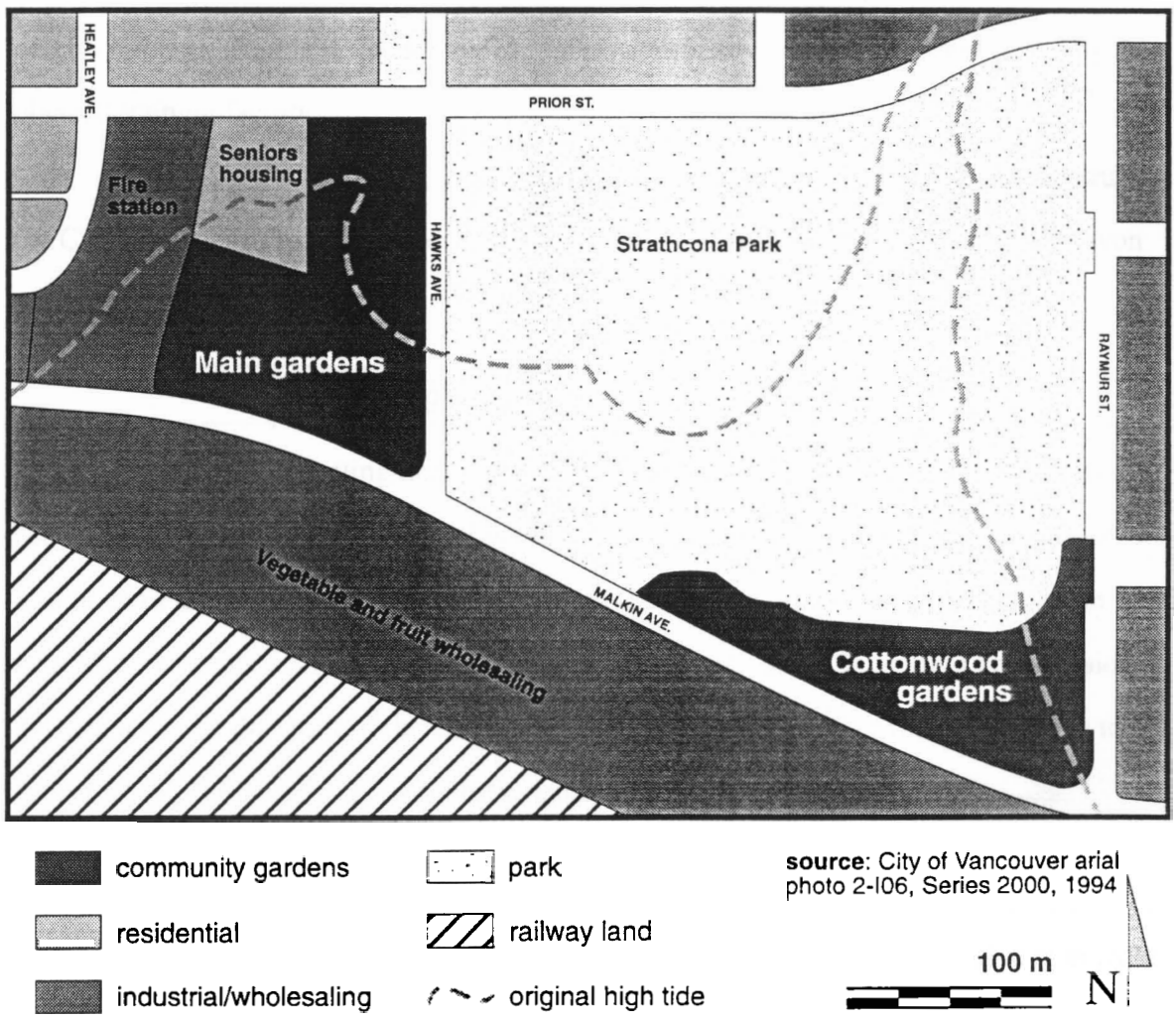
April 22, 1991: Expansion

All the plots at the Gardens are taken and there's no room for more—at least, not without encroaching more on the wild area, which is out of the question. But there's plenty of space in a neighbouring area, at the back of the park across the street. Gardeners have been eyeing this area for some time now. Today, the Parks Board agrees to extend the Strathcona Community Gardens' lease to include "the triangle bordered by Malkin and Raymur Avenue and the soccer field".

Once again, however, the issue is not so easily resolved. Half of the area in question is designated as a road allowance, and the Engineering Department claims ownership. This half happens to include all of the area developed as garden plots. In fact,

the Department is gearing up to turn the area into a training ground for the use of heavy equipment—trenching and shoring. Also, the Department points out that utilities lines run under the road allowance, including a high pressure sewer line and a gas main. Their message to the gardeners is simple: clear off.

Map 3.6: Gardens and Environs (1995)



But by now the gardeners are becoming adept at the ins and outs of civic bureaucracy. Corresponding secretary Joanne Hochu has already obtained a legal opinion

from the City's Housing and Properties Department, which found that, since the land was designated as permanent park on March 9, 1982, "the Parks Board has the exclusive jurisdiction and control". The Engineering Department's control is limited to the utilities rights of way.

Armed with this information, the Gardeners request City Council to confirm their access to the site. Once more, community associations enter the fray, including the Strathcona Community Centre, which is supposed to have responsibility for parks in the neighbourhood. Ron Hansen of the SCC raises concerns of noise and safety posed by the planned training facility.

Finally, on December 12, Council decides in favour of the gardeners, and instructs the City Engineer to look elsewhere for a training site. This time, the gardeners have won (Map 3.6).

April, 1991: Strathcona Greenway

Just as work is getting under way at Cottonwood, Goya Ngan (1991) completes her vision of a possible "Strathcona Greenway", to incorporate the southern edge of Strathcona Park. Her plan, inspired by work at the Gardens and based on consultation with local residents, includes detailed maps and diagrams. She is imagining an extension through space of the spirit of the Gardens. Soon, small details of her maps will begin to appear on the landscape: a permaculture demonstration garden, new berms.

Summer, 1991: Native Land (2)

He sleeps here in the bushes, wrapped in a blanket: Monty Jones, Native man from the Island, drinker, lover of men, a wanderer in this urban wilderness. More than once he's chased after some member of the Gardens, wielding a knife or a length of pipe; but he's not dangerous, not really. Just wild, reckless. Nothing left to lose.

Just last week, Ellie and Louie interviewed Monty for the video they're making

about the Gardens. He told them about his home on the Island, his life as a wanderer, what it's like to sleep at the Gardens.

But today, when his friend Doug comes back to the Gardens, he finds Monty disemboweled, clutching his slashed abdomen. Doug runs over to the fire hall for help, but it's too late already. Monty's dead before the paramedics can move him. When Ellie and Louie arrive later, the place is swarming with cops. But no one will be arrested. Another unsolved murder of a Downtown Eastside Native.

Late at night, after the cops have gone home, Ellie and Louie return to the herb garden to reflect in the evening's coolness. Then Doug arrives, and the three of them share the darkness. Doug drinks heavily from his can of Lysol and tells stories of his murdered friend, weeping and laughing.

The next week, on a rainy Sunday night, Gardens members gather for a wake. They start a fire in the brick stove and gather up Monty's blankets and clothes. One by one, they burn Monty's worldly belongings, freeing his spirit in the tradition of his people.

Summer, 1992: The Green and Blue World

Most days you come to the garden you will find him working in the orchard, tending the trees or hauling wheelbarrow loads of clippings to the compost. He can tell you the name of each of these apple varieties: the gillflower of Gloucester, or the drap d'or, a seventeenth century variety from France. Now, as he sits down to write about the orchard for the Gardens newsletter, Rob Mills feels compelled to say a few words about the meaning of biodiversity:

> Biological diversity is more than saving those plants of importance to humans, our apple collection for example, or natural collections of wheat or barley. It is about preserving environments. The Franklin tree was last seen in the wild in 1803. All known specimens today are the direct offspring of those plants collected by John Bartram in 1765. If he had not collected it, we wouldn't know its beauty today. (What other unknowns have we farmed and paved over?) A rare fern has just been wiped out from B.C., its home of limestone being used to improve a road.

> This finite world we live in is home to many things with no voice, no vote, no power. The very real destruction of this green and blue world is imminent. The power we exercise daily through our very numbers and through the machines we control is truly awesome. The future is our responsibility now.

In its small way, the Gardens begins to redeem and revive those vanishing shades of green and blue.

1993: Stealing

For some time people have had their suspicions, but now he's been caught red handed. Justice is swift and decisive: this longtime member is permanently expelled from the gardeners' society. Soon his plots will be given away to more deserving planters.

February, 1994: Common Ground (2)

"We're planting timber bamboo here," says Oliver Kellhammer, who could vision the folds of this land in dream. Then he shows me the immense mound of half-sprouted garlic brought here by arrangement with one of the vegetable wholesalers. It is destined for the compost bins, but in the meantime gardeners are claiming small bundles to take home or to plant in their plots. While we're chatting, Mrs. Yu comes over to offer each of us garlic greens from her plot. Delicious in a stir-fry, Oliver tells me.

Oliver, who also has plots at the main gardens, was a leader in the movement to obtain this land. He was the first one to put a plot in here. He was the one who named the site, Cottonwood, for the trees planted four decades ago when the park was new.

Leading me on a narrow track among the blackberries, Oliver points out the mouth of a deep, murky pit burrowed into the soil amidst the brambles. Bottle scavengers. The bottles from the old dumpsite will fetch good money at antique stores. One generation's garbage becomes another's livelihood.

At the eastern end of Cottonwood, members of the Environmental Youth Alliance are in the midst of a soil restoration project. The soil here is compacted and lifeless material

once brought and stored here by the Parks Board for use at baseball diamonds across the city. The EYA members are mixing in organic matter and throwing cardboard on top to keep in heat and prevent weed growth.

Birds twitter and flit in the trees, their voices mingling with the drone of refrigerator trucks parked at the vegetable wholesalers' across the street. On the corner, the caged dogs at the city pound erupt into another chorus of frenzied barking.

June 7, 1994: Spring

The main gardens are a blaze of colour: poppies in reds and pinks, lupines, sweet William, and many less common flowers whose names I don't know. Here and there people are stooped in their plots, weeding, watering. Someone is gathering up the ripe strawberries from beneath the trees of the espalier orchard. Everywhere, the plots display the lushness of late spring. Bean vines creep, tomato plants muster their strength for a spurt of dark green growth. Pea pods peek out temptingly from their foliage. At the pond, a breeze rustles the rushes and ducks swim. Life flows, against the decades of decay.

I'm here today with my son, Sasha, who delights in the breezy warmth. He runs bare-bottomed down a gravel path, eyeing the vegetation on either side. An old woman grins at him, calling cheerily in English and Cantonese.

Over at Cottonwood, things are evolving quickly. In the last few months they've put up a covered, hexagonal notice board, featuring announcements and information on the wildlife found at the gardens. At the base of the copse of black locusts there is now a low platform, built right around the trunks, handy for storage and also a fine place to sit around and chat in the shade. New plots have been developed, and new trees tucked in here and there. The bamboo Oliver promised is already tall.

Spring is here, and soon it will be summer.

3.3 Conclusions: Continuity and Change

The very lands that the Strathcona Community Gardens occupy are testimony to the transformational powers of capital and the state, which literally wrested them from the sea. Of the cultural landscape of past centuries hardly a trace remains, even in memory. The lines of property conceived by foreign conquerors have been carved in the flesh of the land, assuming a weight of presence that seems like destiny. So thoroughly has this locality been recreated that no one questions the firm ground underfoot.

British imperialism claimed this land and vanquished its inhabitants. Geometries of Fordism etched its roads. Legal geographies were transformed by the capitalist crisis of the thirties, and again by the Second World War. Small as it is, this area bears the marks of key phases in global capitalist development.

Yet there are other currents at work here, too. That the Gardens sites were not claimed for industry or commerce reflects local struggles recurring over decades. It also reflects the small twists of chance that assure that local geographies will never be produced by pure, abstractable forces. And, in some ways, the changes are neither so complete nor so final as they at first appear. Beneath the tame surfaces of modernity, older forces remain, pushing in unpredictable directions. The soil's moisture echoes a forgotten stream.

The Gardens occupy a place at the margin. It has been the border of land and water, the place where fresh water meets salt, the edge of habitation, the elsewhere, a literal sewer for the discards of civilization. Yet, as bell hooks claimed, "margins have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance . . ." (1990: 151). It was the bogginess, slope, irregular shape, and unruly growth of these sites that discouraged standard recreational use, and made them too costly to tame. But only because they had escaped development by capital or the state were these sites open to be reclaimed. The very marginality of this place has been "central" in efforts to reclaim it as a space of resistance.

Although presented as a chronology, I think this account begins at points to challenge the representation of time as a simple, linear progression. Patterns in space and time interlink, hinting at multidimensionality (Einstein 1984 [1922]: 30-31; Massey 1993). Again and again, we glimpse in today's Gardens intriguing echoes of the past. Yet there are also important contrasts, which may provide clues to understanding the success of the gardeners in reclaiming their place.

It seems unlikely that the activists of the thirties who fought for an east side park imagined anything like today's gardens. Yet, in many ways, the Gardens realize their lingering dreams of something *more* than mere green space. More than playing fields or demure lawns, activists envisioned a place where local people could come together to flex their bodies and minds, to experience nature, to regenerate their health and spirit. Their struggles ended in failure, or only partial success—the semi-privatized ballfields of the '50s. Yet, without this foundational work, no gardens would bloom today.

Through the '60s and '70s, powerful local groups defeated repeated state efforts to capitalize the land (for industry or the freeway), but made little progress in the effort to claim the space as their own.[13] In retrospect, it seems that these groups had become overly reliant on state funding, neglecting the potential of local resources.

In many places, the above narrative of the origins of the Gardens suggests transformed relations linked to locality. In Chapters 4 and 5, I again take up the threads of these stories, approaching them more soberly, perhaps, but with a continued interest in the quirks and complexities of relations in place.

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[13]At several other Strathcona sites, efforts at reclaiming local control were more successful. Examples include the creation of the Strathcona Linear Park, located across the street from what is now the main gardens.

C H A P T E R 4

SOCIAL AND NATURAL RELATIONS AT THE GARDENS

By thus acting on the external world and changing it, [humanity] at the same time changes [its] own nature . (Marx 1987 [1867]: 173)

In Chapter 3, I told legends of the Gardens as a narrative, retracing the threads that root them in time and place. Here, and in Chapter 5, I want to expand my investigation by delving into relations at the Gardens at new levels. In places, this will involve more removed or "objective" measures, yet my aim remains the same: to learn from the Gardens about the revolutionary potential of place.

In his article, "The tragedy of the commons", Hardin (1968) argued that commons regimes inevitably led to ecological degradation, since, unlike private property regimes, they allowed exploitation of a resource by an unlimited number of users. His argument was widely employed by academics and bureaucrats to justify further privatization of land and enclosure of commons systems. However, in ignoring social aspects of the commons, Hardin had portrayed not commons systems, but open access resources.[1] As Snyder (1990: 30) argued, "the commons is both specific land *and* the traditional community institution that determines the carrying capacity for its various sub-units and defines the

[1]For perspectives on "the commons debate," see, e.g., Berkes (1989).

rights and obligations of those who use it, with penalties for lapses."

In this chapter, I look at both sides of the question: the land and its users. Although I examine social and natural relations in separate sections, I'm interested also in the relations between them. In closing the chapter, I relate social and natural relations at the Gardens to the structure of energy and nutrient cycles.

4.1 Social Relations

When I asked her what underlay the success of the Gardens in winning local support, Ellie Epp answered in a word: Muggs. Muggs Sigurgeirson, with her intricate knowledge of local politics, her determination, and her unfailing energy. If I'd asked Muggs, she might have said the same of Ellie, or Joanne Hochu, or any of a half dozen other women, and men, all local residents, who have dedicated themselves over the years to the daily work of organizing. In this way, the story of the Gardens is like that of any effort at grassroots activism. It is woven of the individual narratives of particular people drawn together through networks of change.

Yet, for all their particularity, these individuals are simultaneously participants in the production or reproduction of social relations. In conditions of modernity, we are all implicated in the reproduction of dominant relations. We cannot eat without selling our labour, yet it seems that every hour worked, every purchase made draws us further away from local relations, while binding us ever more tightly to an intricate and global network of devastation, the grimmer details of which we'd rather not be told. We cannot interact with others without assuming, to some degree, the identities that dominant society has constructed around our bodies. Yet individually and in association we may begin to forge - within the limits of our placement - new relations which hint at possible futures. In this section, I ask to what degree the Gardens have made place for such transformed relations. I have chosen to focus on three areas of contradiction: gender, "race", and class. In

closing, I examine degrees of cooperation in relations of production.

4.1.1 Engendering Change: Women and the Gardens

In itself, the observation that most of the core organizers of the Gardens have been women says nothing definite about the sorts of relations produced. Clearly, many areas of social life are designated as women's work: childcare, nurturing, food preparation. While these social constructions of gender may be a source of satisfaction and empowerment to individual women, they also form part of the social subordination of women as a group. In looking at gender, I want to focus on the degree to which developments at the Gardens have challenged essentialist gender roles by opening up liberatory spaces for women.

Romantic images of place, such as those I critiqued in deep ecology (Chapter 1), imagine revived place relations in feminine terms of natural beauty and harmony. In these images, the landscape is itself "feminine". Woman is at the centre of a bounteous nature, offering solace (to men). It would not be at all difficult to apply such images to the Gardens. There, as in the bourgeois ideal, women dedicate themselves to the daily tasks of reproduction. The Gardens provide a feminine refuge from external strife. Indeed, the image of a garden has served historically as a powerful metaphor for Woman's private realm. It would be easy to claim that the Gardens realize this metaphor.

Yet such a representation of the Gardens would deny important aspects of gender relations in the project. Specifically, it would obscure questions of power. In the romantic ideal, women are the passive objects of masculinist vision. At the Gardens, however, women have been anything but passive.

In discussing gender relations at the Gardens, Ellie Epp emphasized specific group dynamics which made space for women:

I know that I wouldn't have had such a commitment to the garden if I hadn't felt

> that it was possible for women to have quite a lot of control from the ground up and do it our way. I think it's one of the things that I and some of the other women have had a conscious eye on is to make sure that it stays that way. There are a lot of organizations that are already structured, and [it is good] to be in a position where there are so many decisions that can be made about the structure of the institution at the beginning . . . .

These group dynamics were not coincidental, however, but reflected both conscious work and local circumstance. One of the conscious steps taken involved language used in the organizational structure; officers were termed "coordinators", to avoid terms laden with "centuries of associations of a certain kind". In analyzing the reasons for which the group made spaces of power for women, Epp paid particular attention to age and gender relations in the locality:

> So the women at the beginning of this organization were much stronger than they are in many other organizations, simply because they were there first, and because it really only takes a couple of very strong women to set things up in a certain way, to set a tone. Also because it's so locally based. At the stage where we started it there was no great fame to be gained. There was just a lot of work! There were always pretty well an equal number of men and women who were involved as members, but the men tended to be older men who'd already failed at many other things, so they weren't the kind who were going to push in and take control. And the women were old enough to know how to take control, which is to say they were in their forties, the ones who were taking charge. And the men would be either much younger or much older, in their fifties or sixties. There's an interesting thing about why the women were strong in the garden, which is that those same women, if they had been men, would have been powerful in some higher up position probably by that age. So they were available, and had the energy and the will, the wish to do something. That describes my case.

Having more social space open to them, men, particularly those in the prime of their social power, were little inclined to take up the mundane, unsung labour of building the organization or turning the earth. For this reason, the marginalization of women in the locality became a source of potential strength. Working from the margin, powerful women could create a place in their own image. In Epp's view, this process produced "balance" in the organization. By empowering women, the Gardens challenged dominant relations of power, beginning to put men and women on an equal footing.

Indeed, the very formation of the Gardens as an autonomous society occurred in a gendered context. After legally registering as a society, the gardeners gradually severed links with City Farmer, the organization that had sponsored the project that led to the establishment of the Gardens. Among other sources of tension, there was a stated perception on the part of some of the gardeners that the male director of City Farmer was receiving credit for work done by the women gardeners. (For his part, the director expressed discomfort with the confrontational stances adopted by the Strathcona gardeners.)

Attention to issues of gender and power is reflected in the bylaws of the society. In revising the standard bylaws in the 1979 Society Act provided by the provincial Registrar of Companies, members deleted a passage stating that "words importing a male person include a female person," inserting in its place "words importing either a male or a female person include the other gender . . . and either gender may be used interchangeably throughout these bylaws" (Strathcona Community Gardeners Society 1986a: 2). Accordingly, further changes referred to the organization's "chairwoman", partially balancing the use of "chairman" in those passages left unedited. Alongside the concern for gender was conscious attention to power relations within the group. Passages outlining powers of specific executive officers were deleted. Instead, the revised bylaws stated that "The directors shall function as a collective with each having equal authority and responsibility." Such a structure both reflected and helped reproduce a politicized consciousness relating to gender and power.

It is this conscious attention to issues of power and gender relations that differentiates the Gardens project from the masculinist visions of romantics. Women at the Gardens are not enacting "traditional" feminine roles. Rather, they are participating in processes of change which contribute, in small ways, to ungrounding the relations of patriarchy.

Geographies of gender at the Gardens are examined further in Chapter 5.

4.1.2 Different Geographies of "Race"

The Gardens emerged in a locality characterized by long-standing divisions and contradictions linked to "race" and ethnicity. As Kay Anderson argued in her detailed study *Vancouver's Chinatown* (1991), "racial" tensions in Strathcona reflected a dominant society's construction of Canadians of Chinese ancestry as exotic, foreign, and potentially threatening.[2] Spatial concentration of Chinese Canadians in the vicinity of Chinatown and Strathcona both resulted from and facilitated the Euro-Canadian construction of Chinese Canadians as "others", spatially and culturally distinct from "regular" (that is, white) society. In this sense, Chinatown and neighbouring Strathcona were spatial reflections of the racist ideology and practice of the dominant society. Yet they also reflected the self-definition of Chinese Canadians and other groups (ethnicity). Here I look at how the Gardens project has responded to the challenge of transcending spatial divisions of "race", and related divisions linked to ethnic identity.

As I noted in Chapter 2, the core gardening group consisted from the first of women of European descent. In this sense, the gardening project arose out of ethnic divisions in the locality, in a sense distinct from, but comparable to, the gendered processes discussed above. The organizations from which several core gardeners emerged - DERA, the Carnegie Centre - were predominantly Euro-Canadian, and associated with the Downtown Eastside rather than the more "Chinese" districts of Chinatown or Strathcona.

That the gardening group had failed to involve Chinese Canadians was recognized

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[2]Anderson argued that ideologies of "race", including racist images, persisted within the seemingly "benign" official policy of multiculturalism. A striking example of this appeared in the February 6, 1994 issue of *The Vancouver Courier*. On the front page, the first in a series of articles examined "The Chinese Factor", with explicit reference to multiculturalism. Also on the front page, though apparently unrelated to the series, was an article ("Cheap booze worries Council") portraying Chinatown as a source of exotic and dangerous drugs—an image that has been recycled in the local press since the late nineteenth century.

and addressed very early on. In a letter to Paul Lee, President of the Strathcona Community Centre, written October 8, 1985 (that is, before any individual plots were occupied), Leslie Scrimshaw noted: "Our main failing . . . has been in [not] inviting the Chinese community to become involved. The main barrier is language." Scrimshaw requested that the Community Centre accept phone calls from Chinese Canadians interested in becoming involved. Additional steps were taken. The initial Gardens newsletters were published in both English and Chinese. Chor Hon Wong, a volunteer with the gardening group (though never herself a gardener), publicized the Gardens in Cantonese through an October 18, 1985 interview on Vancouver Cooperative Radio, inviting Chinese Canadians to seek plots. The sign erected to mark the Gardens site included Chinese script.

These initiatives on the part of Gardens organizers were partially successful. One of the first three gardeners was Chinese Canadian, and, over the years, several more people of Chinese descent became members. Yet, by 1994, Chinese Canadians constituted only about five percent of the membership—this while, in the 1991 Canada census, a majority of residents in Strathcona identified themselves as being of Chinese descent. Moreover, in 1994, there were no Chinese Canadians among the members who exercised decision-making power (i.e., those who attended meetings regularly or held coordinator positions).

What factors might account for this lack of participation? When I posed this question to Gardens member Austin Yu, he commented that Chinese Canadians were welcomed and well received by other gardeners. But he suggested that the fact that organizational business was conducted in English discouraged active participation by Chinese Canadian members. He himself had never attended meetings of the gardeners, though he was curious about what went on at them.

Ironies arising from the "European" character of the Gardens in a predominantly "Chinese" locality were evident at the Cottonwood site in 1994. In planning the design of the site, members designated areas for the practice of Tai Chi and for a collection of trees

and shrubs of Chinese and Japanese origin. Such efforts arose from conscious concern to reflect the ethnic character of the locality, and were a positive effort at encouraging locals of Chinese or Japanese descent to involve themselves in and use the Gardens. In planning the new areas, Cottonwood members consulted with Chinese Canadians regarding questions like which tree species would be appropriate. Yet it was Euro-Canadians who elaborated the concept of creating an "Oriental" area, and decided on its content and form.

Members of the Gardens often present their project as the work of "the community". An analysis of ethnicity and the construction of this place calls for further specificity. Throughout the history of the Gardens, positive efforts have been made at transcending divisions of "race" and ethnicity, yet it remains true that the community represented at the Gardens is defined as much by "race" as by locality. Divisions are reproduced in part by barriers of language, but also by complex relations with deep roots in the history and geography of the locality (Anderson 1991). The fact that the constituency of the Gardens is, in part, racially defined doesn't mean that they don't serve local people. It means that they serve specific and limited groups of local people. A discussion in the next chapter of conflicts involving the Chinese Freemasons' housing project explores some consequences of this limitation.

4.1.3 Ungrounding Class?

"It's something to keep you from going crazy," Henry Gauthier, a retired logger, told me of his work at the Garden. "It's something to look forward to." When I visited him in his small apartment in the Stamps Place social housing complex (built as a redevelopment project in the 1960s), Henry had a couple of leeks on the kitchen counter, given to him by a friend at the Gardens. His partner showed me the small freezer they had bought to keep beets, carrots, beans, and other produce from his plots, welcome supplements to their diet as pensioners. The freezer was nearly full, even though, as his

partner indulgently complained, Henry was always giving his produce away to friends in the Stamps Place complex. Henry described his work at the Gardens as a time and place to do productive, physical work, in contrast to other areas of activity in his life as a retiree. But he also noted its emotional appeal: "It's fun to go over there and watch things grow."

Henry's description of the Gardens includes interesting tensions. The Gardens are a place of labour, but also of spontaneous cooperation. They are a site of materially important production, yet at the same time one of recreation and spiritual renewal. I want to pursue these tensions. I think they lead towards a view of the Gardens as at once a working class landscape and a place that hints at territory beyond class divisions.

The Gardens project has clear roots in working class politics. As Ellie said of two key members:

> Joanne and Muggs are a team. They used to work together in a union that had mainly women office workers. Muggs and she were negotiators for it, and they would get in and do their teamwork and they developed this fantastic team style which they then brought to the garden and they used it for relations with the City.

Hence, Ellie said, at the Gardens "there's this kind of interesting cooperation between the people whose real passion is class politics and the people, like me, whose real passion is feminist politics." In a very direct way, the Gardens address working-class needs—for food and recreation. The core members, and most of the membership at large, share lower working-class backgrounds. To the extent that it serves to meet people's needs as workers, the geography is shaped by proletarian desires.

Even this class characteristic is not absolute. By 1993, there were indications that class divisions were emerging within the gardening group. When I talked with Austin Yu in his tiny apartment in the Downtown Eastside hotel where he works as building caretaker, he distinguished between those, like himself (and his partner, who did most of the work on their plots), who relied on the Gardens for sustenance, and other, more affluent members who gardened as a hobby. Given the meager salary he received,

> I have to save money, not spend it like the white people. Here [at the hotel] they spend the money just like water. No, I can't do that. For example, if I eat out, my money all gone. Not one dollar to keep. So I just go buy something cheap to cook it by myself. Or planting something, vegetable. I do the garden not like the people just for fun. No, I must pick up something. But somebody they don't, right? They don't care. They have high salary, they have a lot of money, they have a car. They just for fun. They buy a lot of seeds, fertilizer, but nothing to pick up. Just for fun.

Yu's comments suggest that class divisions (linked, perhaps, with divisions of "race") linger beneath the surface at the Gardens, contributing to differing cultivation practices and forms of involvement.

Yet there is a sense in which the Gardens, though intimately affected by class divisions, begin to transcend them. In Chapter 1, I related class division to alienation from nature, arguing that the dominant class relation under capitalism reflected the monopoly by one class of the natural and social means of production. Clearly, the Gardens themselves are a site of production. Yet this is a form of production not directly mediated by class division. Rather, membership in a community is the condition of production—just what Marx said of pre-capitalist forms of "direct common property" in land (Marx 1973 [1858]: 490, 497). This does not mean that all members participate equally in decision making; but differences are not rooted in class antagonism. As Ellie wrote somewhere in her journal, "where it's all workers and no capital," the ones who do the work shape the geography.

While there are diverse factors that attract people to work at the Gardens, the opportunity to do meaningful labour is an important incentive. When I asked member Gord Lonie what led him to join the Gardens, he focused on their being a site of "practical work":

> Times are pretty slow, so, you know, you gotta have something to do. And a person doesn't want to spend all their time walking around looking for the endless job hunt, you know. So you want to get down and do some practical work. There's work here.

In the use-value economy of the Gardens, the absense of employment is what *allows* people to work. In particular, Gord contrasted work at the Gardens with recreational exercise, like jogging: "Here, for your exercise time, you know, that you put in, you actually get to see something that you produce, some food. So it's exercise, but it's paying exercise, too. That's the good thing about it." The Gardens are a place to participate in meaningful production for people deprived of that opportunity by capitalist relations (e.g., systemic unemployment). There are faint but discernible glimpses in this place of territories beyond the space of capital, where pleasure and labour, freedom and production, and desire and fulfillment are no longer in contradiction.

The success of the Gardens in challenging class relations in the locality can be approached more closely through looking in detail at relations of production at the site.

4.1.4 Cooperation in Production

In Chapter 1, I touched on the contradictory character of the modern city as site of alienation and potential locus of liberation. The alienation of modern urban living described in distinct ways by Engels (1953 [1844]) and Kropotkin (undated [1902]), among many others, is not only a result of the crush of numbers, but also reflects underlying structural conditions. As wage labourers, we are pitted against each other in competition for employment. We are divided by relations of domination linked to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability. As exchange relations increasingly penetrate even the most intimate of human interactions, we face each other more and more not as common participants in a shared humanity but as buyer and seller. Yet, for all its problems, the city is simultaneously a locus of liberation. As city dwellers, we are freed from the often stifling strictures of insular communities, and can pursue a politics of liberation across divisions of ethnicity or gender. The Gardens are one effort at coming together for common assistence not based in competitive gain. In analysing relations of production at the Gardens, I want

to see how far the communal, use-value economy of the Gardens has broken down relations of competition and dominance.

One important form of labour is the volunteer work that members do at the Gardens outside of their own plots. When I asked gardeners how many hours they had put into such work in a one year period, 81.6 percent of respondents reported having done at least some work. The 49 respondents to the question had logged a total of 1206.5 volunteer hours, or an average of 24.6.[3] It was clear, however, that the majority of volunteer work was done by a small, core group. Nine members had done none of the common work, 25 had worked from one to fifteen hours, and eleven had worked from sixteen to fifty hours. More than half of the hours were logged by only four respondents, who reported as many as 197 and 287 volunteer hours. Nonetheless, the high rate of at least occasional participation in communal aspects of the Gardens suggests that this form of production encourages cooperation.

To further gauge the extent to which the Gardens system promoted spontaneous cooperation in production and distribution, I asked gardeners to report whether they had engaged in particular forms of sharing in the one year period from September 30, 1992 to September 30, 1993. Questions asked whether gardeners had given to or received from other gardeners (and, in two cases, non-gardeners) three forms of material assistance: seeds or seedlings, labour, and produce. Seeds or seedlings and produce are sometimes distributed through the "free table" (a formalized cooperative institution), so particular questions gauged this form of distribution. Results are displayed in Figure 4.1.

The chart traces cooperative relations through three stages of the production process. Seeds and seedlings are inputs into the production process. In economic

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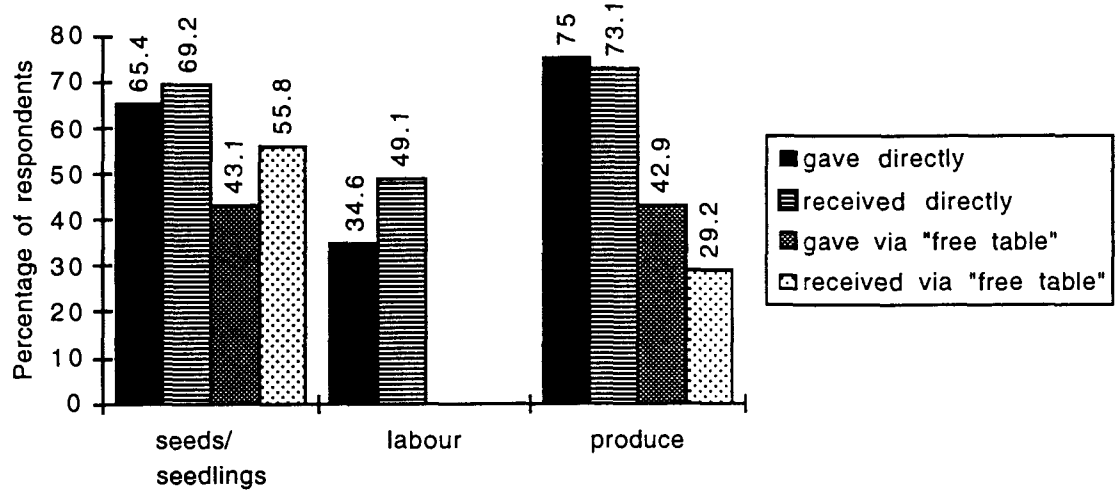
[3]To tally hours, I divided work at the Gardens into thirteen categories, which I summed for each respondent to get the volunteer hours worked. The categories, with the total hours reported for each, are as follows: bees (100), children's and social areas (46), composting (116), espalier orchard (99), fences (19), greenhouse (29), herb garden (227), irrigation (10), meetings and paperwork (337), path maintenance (74.5), traditional orchard (48), wild area (71), and other (30).

terminology, such inputs are acquired through *backward linkages*. Labour is expended in the production process itself. Produce is an output of the production process, and is distributed through *forward linkages*. The percentages of respondents who reported having directly *given to* or *received from* other gardeners seeds or seedlings, labour, or produce are represented in the black and striped columns, respectively. Giving and receiving that took place through the "free table" are represented, respectively, in the darker and lighter shaded columns.[4]

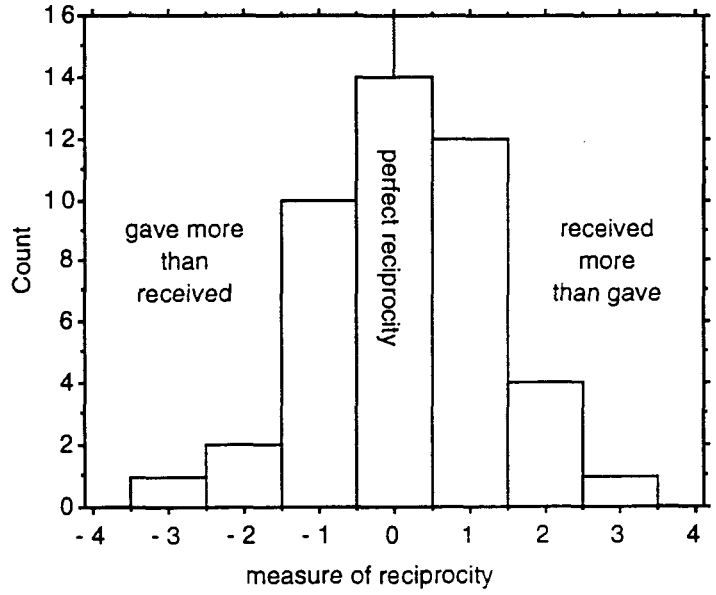
Figure 4.1: Percentage of Survey Respondents Involved in Cooperative Relations in Production, by Form of Sharing



[4]Here, as in other instances where I am relying on survey data, there is a possibility that respondents may have overreported what is deemed to be "good behaviour", e.g., sharing. If such overreporting did occur, survey results would be biased in directions supporting "positive" conclusions—in this case, that cooperation took place. Whether or not the results are biased in this way cannot be directly evaluated. But the data on cooperation may provide the basis for tentative conclusions, given a couple of assumptions. In the absense of any contrary information, we might assume that equal numbers of people would have given and received help in any given area. We might also assume that survey respondents would be more likely to overreport giving rather than receiving help—"it is holier to give than to receive". Given these two assumptions, if respondents often overreported "good" behaviour, we would expect the amount of reported giving to exceed the reported receiving by some significant margin. The data, however, are otherwise. Among survey respondents there were 143 reports of receiving help, but only 134 of giving it. Bolstered by the two stated assumptions, this datum supports the tentative conclusion that, in the area of cooperation, the data were not significantly biased through overreporting.

The results indicate a remarkably high degree of spontaneous cooperation, particularly in the areas of seeds/seedlings and produce, which had been directly given or received by two thirds to three quarters of respondents. The values for labour sharing are lower, but still fall between one third and one half of respondents. While the values for participation in the "free table" institution were lower than those for direct cooperation, they still ranged as high as one-half of the respondents.

Figure 4.2: Reciprocity in Cooperative Relations



The data displayed in Figure 4.1 support the conclusion that a large majority of members of the Gardens participate in spontaneous cooperative relations in the production process. But they don't immediately indicate the degree to which those relations are balanced or reciprocal. Is one group of members consistently on the giving and another on the receiving end? To answer this question, I calculated a measure of reciprocity by adding up, for each respondent, the number of areas in which they had reported receiving aid, and subtracting from this the number of areas in which they had given aid. The results are

displayed in Figure 4.2.[5] In the Figure, a score of zero represents "perfect reciprocity" (i.e., respondents received help in the same number of areas in which they gave it). Respondents who had neither given nor received help were not counted, to avoid their appearing as misleading examples of perfect reciprocity.

If cooperative relations had been highly unbalanced, the resulting graph would be bimodal, with modes in the positive and negative ranges representing, respectively, individuals who had received more than they had given and had given more than they had received. Instead, the graph is normally distributed around a mean of zero. This result supports the conclusion that cooperative relations at the Gardens show a strong tendency towards reciprocity.

Further to the questions relating to processes internal to the Gardens, I also asked gardeners whether they had received labour from or given produce to individuals not otherwise involved in the Gardens. Exactly half of the respondents reported having received help in the form of labour from individuals not members of the Gardens, while a full 96.2 percent reported having shared produce with non-members. This latter result, in particular, suggests that cooperative relations fostered at the Gardens extend beyond their physical and social limits.

In diverse ways, social relations at the Gardens reflect local divisions of gender, ethnicity, and class. Yet there are also senses in which the Gardens serve as a basis for challenging dominant relations. As a place in which women can take action with relative autonomy, the Gardens begin to challenge patriarchical relations. The success of the Gardens in destabilizing class divisions is reflected in relations of spontaneous cooperation and reciprocity in production.

Communal, pre-capitalist modes of production, Marx claimed, were characterized

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[5]Respondents who had not answered all of the questions regarding cooperation were not included in this statistic.

by "the *unity* of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature . . ." (Marx 1973 [1858]: 489). In the next section, I turn from social to natural relations, exploring the bio-physical outcomes of a reclaimed commons.

4.2 Natural Relations

Spatially, both Gardens sites have been developed in three relatively distinct sections. First, there are garden plots (separated by walkways), used by individuals and community organizations to produce food and flowers. Second, there are common areas, including composting facilities, orchards, an herb garden, buildings, and open space. Third, there are designated "wild" areas and berms, which include brambles, small trees, and ponds. The first two of these sections are largely agricultural, while the third is a form of managed brushland.

To analyze natural relations in the agricultural areas, I contrast them to those of industrial, capital-intensive agriculture of the sort dominant in farmlands in the Fraser River delta and other agricultural regions bordering Vancouver. The ecology of capitalist agriculture was reviewed in Chapter 1, where I argued that the sundering of local balances in production and reproduction underlay crisis tendencies in modern agriculture. Analysis of the Gardens in the areas of species diversity, soil health, and means of fertilizing and pest control allows for analytical comparison with capitalist agriculture. I analyze natural relations in the "wild" areas in terms of wildlife habitat and wetlands restoration.

4.2.1 Species Diversity in Agricultural Production

The logic of industrial capitalist agriculture tends toward the cultivation of a single species over a large spatial extent (monocrop), since this makes possible large-scale production for a single market. While it can be highly productive and profitable, monocrop

cultivation is identified with a host of negative ecological outcomes. By concentrating pest habitat, for example, it can lead to magnified crop damage and hence necessitate intensive pesticide application. However, when, as at the Gardens, production is oriented to use rather than profit, many of the structural factors underlying monocrop production may be absent. To gauge species diversity at the Gardens, I examine first common areas and then individual plots.

Table 4.1: Sample of Heritage Apple Species in Espalier Orchard

species	characteristics	place of origin	date
drap d'or	crisp, tender, sweet	France	1628
freyberg	firm, sweet	New Zealand	1934
gillflower of Gloucester	skin is yellow-orange	England	1813
grise pontoise	crisp, juicy, perfumed	France	1869
James Grieve	soft, juicy	Scotland	1893
muscadette de Dieppe	sweet, rich, aromatic	Europe	pre-1750
orenco	yellow-skinned, aromatic	USA	1840
red astradian	juicy, tart	England	1816
Rhode Island greening	"the best baker"	USA	1650
Zucomagloi's reinette	firm, rather dry, sweet	Germany	1898

In common areas of the Gardens, biological diversity has been pursued as a conscious objective, a fact particularly evident in the herb garden and the espalier orchard. The herb garden includes more than 200 species, and further perennial herbs are added each year. Similarly, the espalier orchard has been seeded with the conscious aim of creating a reservoir of biological diversity. Gardener Rob Mills, in particular, has sought out and acquired stock for a great diversity of "heritage" species, a small sample of which is listed in Table 4.1. Experience at the herb garden and espalier orchard establishes how species diversity can be achieved through common, intentional effort.

But cultivation is also undertaken in the individual plots, where the choice of cultigens follows no elaborated group policy. Analysis of species diversity within individual holdings and plots allows for conclusions about the degree to which the Gardens

promote spontaneous diversity of cultivation. By a *holding*, I mean all the plots cultivated by a particular member in a particular year. Figure 4.3 shows the number of plots held by survey respondents. While some held up to seven and eight plots, over half of the survey respondents cultivated either one or two. The plots are approximately 6.5 m^2 each in area, so even the largest holding of eight plots has an area of only 52 m^2.

As an initial measure of species diversity, I asked Gardens members how many vegetable, herb, and flower species they had cultivated in their holdings in the one year period September 30, 1992 to September 30, 1993. Figures 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 show the numbers of vegetable, herb, and flower species, respectively, cultivated by members of the main gardens. For vegetable species (Figure 4.4), the values peak at between five and twelve, dropping off sharply to the left and more gradually to the right. This indicates that most gardeners cultivate a fairly large variety of vegetables, while a few grow a great diversity. The histograms for both herb species (Figure 4.5) and flower species (Figure 4.6) show a stronger skew to the right, indicating that, while most gardeners grow some of these species, only a few specialize in them.

Summing the three groups of cultigens produces figures for total cultigen species per holding, which are presented in Figure 4.7. The values indicate a remarkably high distribution that is clearly bimodal; that is, it has two high points. The first mode, at 10 to 15 species, is slightly higher than the second, at 25 to 30 species. The higher mode may, in part, reflect cultivation of a greater number of flower and herb species and larger holding sizes.

Survey data indicate a remarkably high degree of species diversity in cultivation. However, since I asked for numbers of species cultivated over a full year period, they don't directly demonstrate diversity at particular points in time. Also, because holding

Figure 4.3: Number of Plots Cultivated by Survey Respondents

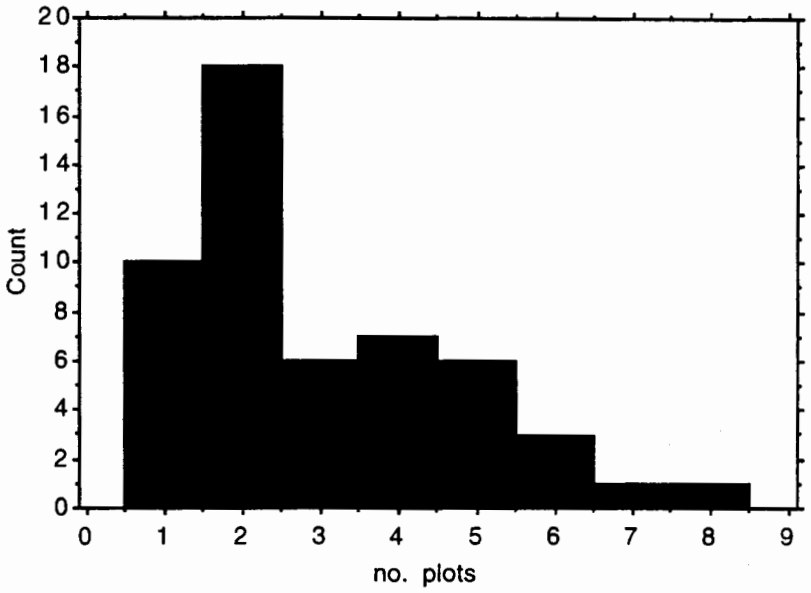


Figure 4.4: Number of Vegetable Species Cultivated by Members of the Main Gardens, 1993-94

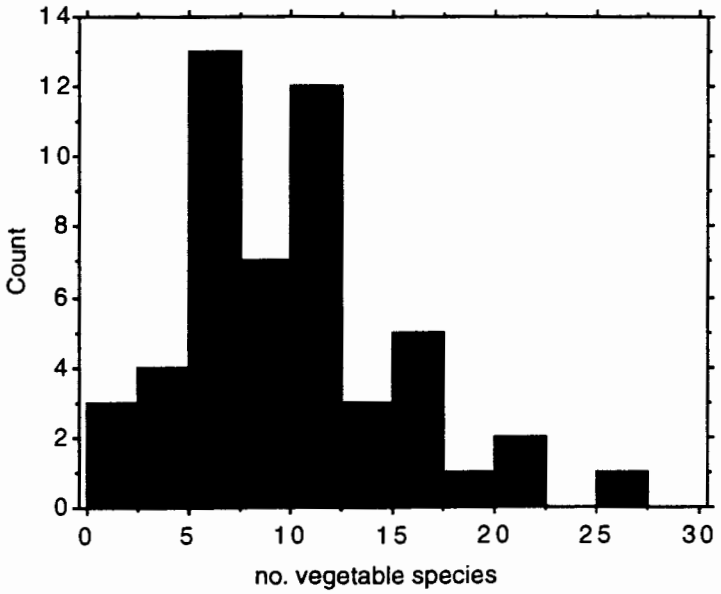


Figure 4.5: Number of Herb Species Cultivated by Members of the Main Gardens, 1993-94

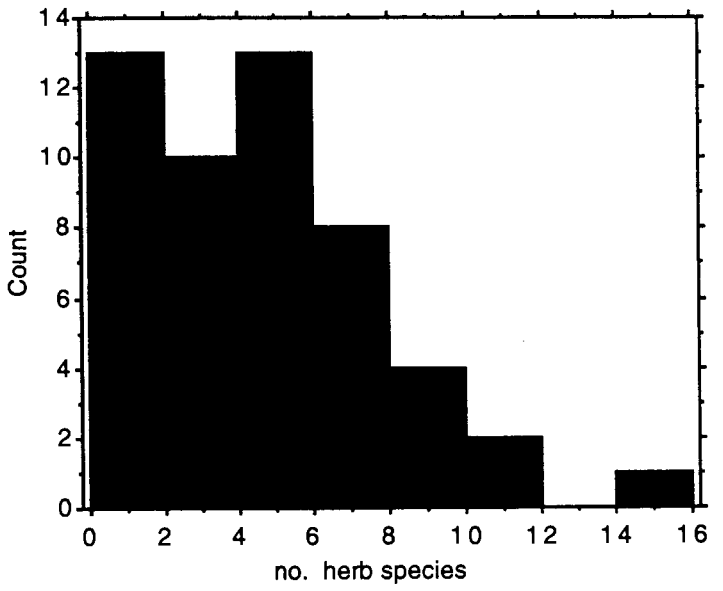


Figure 4.6: Number of Flower Species Cultivated by Members of the Main Gardens, 1993-94

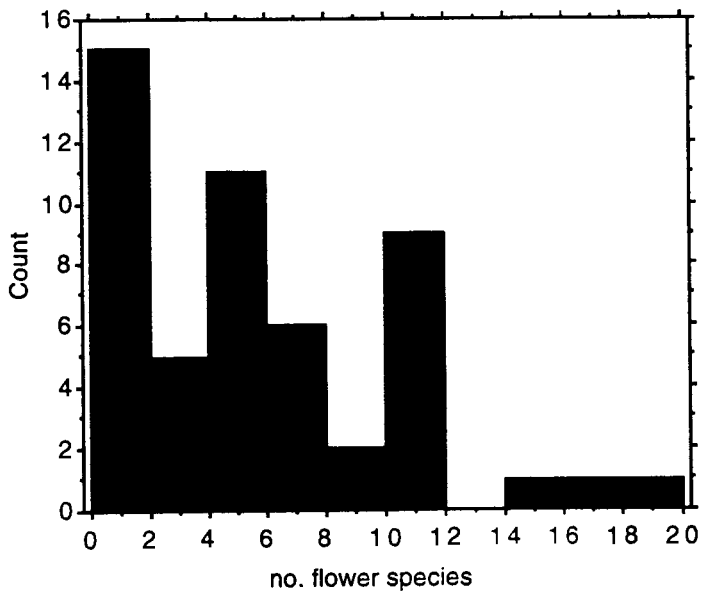
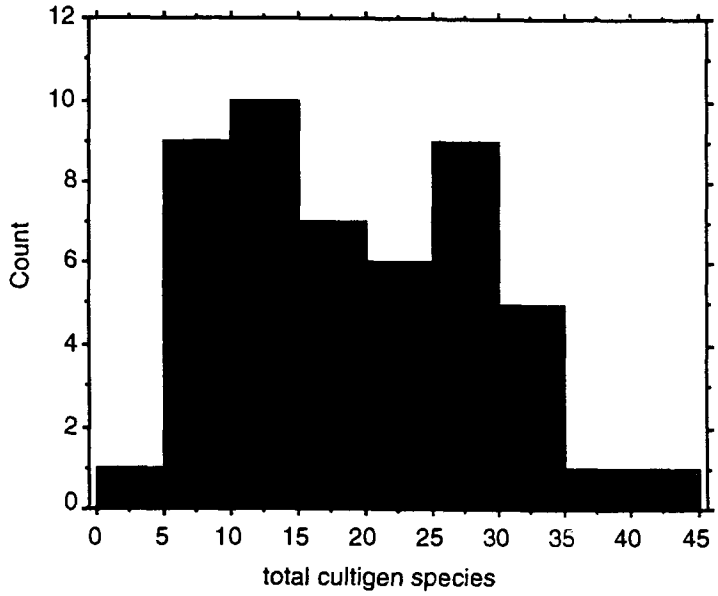


Figure 4.7: Total Number of Species Cultivated by Members of the Main Gardens, 1993-94

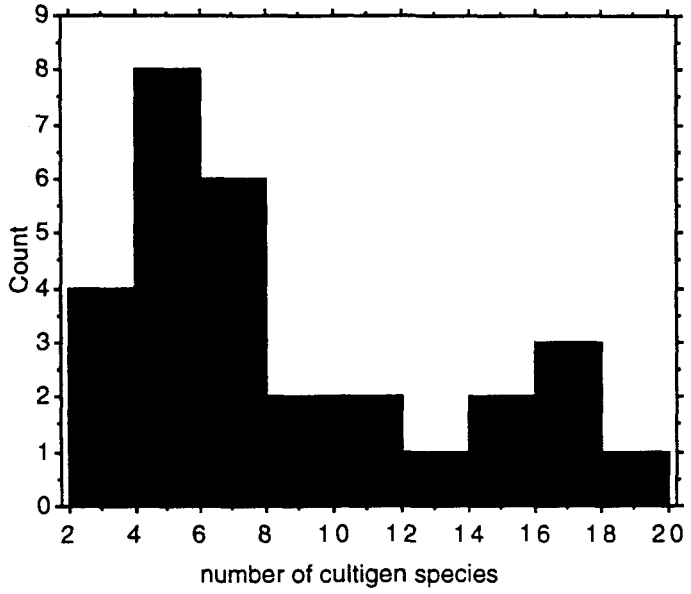


sizes varied, data didn't indicate degrees of diversity with a common spatial reference. To address these shortcomings, I examined a random sample of thirty plots from the main gardens on August 28, 1993 (towards the end of the main growing season, and hence a time when diversity could be expected to be entering a seasonal decline). As the gardens are laid out on a regular grid, I took this grid as the sampling frame. I numbered rows one through twenty-two and columns one through sixteen. From each of these two ranges, I generated a set of random numbers; taken in order, pairs of random numbers designated specific plots. Duplicate or uncultivated sample plots I disregarded, and used replacement samples. In each plot, I tallied the number of cultigens. In cases where I was uncertain if a particular species was a cultigen, I didn't count it; "weeds" I similarly disregarded.

Displayed in the form of a histogram, the results indicate a diversity of cultivation lower than that suggested in the data that wasn't specific to time and plot size, but still remarkably high, given the small areas involved (6.5 m^2). This distribution, too, is bimodal, a fact that reinforces the impression that Gardens members tend to fall into two distinct groups in terms of number of species cultivated. This measure demonstrates that, even in single plots, a high diversity of cultigens is the norm.

In contrast to capitalist agriculture, production at the Gardens is oriented not to profit but to personal and common use. The cultivation of diverse species is consistent with this communal, use-value economy.

Figure 4.8: Number of Cultigen Species Contained in Sample Plots



4.2.2 Soil Composition and Structure

The soils inherited by the gardeners consisted of decomposed garbage and compacted fill. In gauging effects of the Gardens system on soils, I focus on three areas: soil contaminants,[6] soil structure, and the lengths of growing seasons.

Regarding potential contaminants, there seems to have been contradictory perspectives among the gardening group. On the one hand, they needed to know for the sake of their own health what poisons might be concealed in the soil. Yet, on the other, there was the danger that findings that the soil was inappropriate for agricultural production might be used to weaken their claim on the land.

[6]Moir (1989) discusses soil contamination and British allotments.

Table 4.2: Metal Concentrations in Soil Samples, Summer, 1985 (PPM)

Sample #	Fe	Mn	Cu	Zn	Pb	Cd
1	42	7.0	6.8	2.2	12.4	0.12
2	42	7.0	6.0	1.6	7.4	0.04
3	28	2.6	4.0	1.6	13.0	<0.01
4	44	4.8	8.8	3.0	15.6	0.06
5	58	8.2	7.2	3.2	14.0	0.08
6	40	4.4	3.8	2.0	8.8	0.06
7	58	10.4	5.4	2.6	12.4	0.06
8	58	6.2	5.6	3.8	18.6	0.06
9	46	1.4	2.8	11.4	22.8	0.04

An initial set of seventeen soil samples, taken in the summer of 1985 by the gardening group, was analyzed for levels of iron, manganese, copper, zinc, lead, and cadmium. It appears that the site was divided into a four by four grid and samples taken from each sector beginning in the northeast corner and working down and across, with the seventeenth sample being taken from a hilly area near where the shed was later located. Of the seventeen samples, only nine sets of results survive (seemingly, those of the eastern portion of the site; they are given in Table 4.2). Values for certain elements varied widely, perhaps reflecting the diverse sources from which the soil came. Of greatest concern were the levels of lead, which ranged from 7.4 to 22.8 ppm. Students at the University of British Columbia, who helped with the soil analysis and interpretation, recommended that a winter cover crop be grown and discarded as a preliminary step towards cleansing the soil. Winter rye was sown in the fall of 1985.

In the longer term, the gardeners hoped to reduce contamination from lead and other sources with a two-pronged approach of enhancing soil nutrients and blocking emissions. The February, 1986 newsletter of the gardening society reported on findings by Nina Bassuk of Cornell University that "the addition of large amounts of organic matter, such as compost or manure, and the maintenance of a pH level near neutral" would reduce or

eliminate lead uptake <Strathcona Community Gardeners Society, 1986b #214>. To block vehicle exhaust from the neighbouring arterial (Prior St.), the gardeners constructed a berm and planted it with pines.[7]

At the end of the first growing season, in October, 1986, a set of 29 foliar samples was taken for analysis of nutrient and metal levels. In contrast to the soil sampling, this analysis measured elements actually taken up and absorbed into plant material. Samples were taken from a variety of species in both cultivated and non-cultivated areas. As with the soil analysis, lead levels were identified as an area of particular concern. Foliar levels of lead ranged from under 1.0 ppm in garden cultigens to 19.07 ppm in clover growing on stable bedding brought from a local racetrack. The second highest level of 15.98 ppm was from the hilly area noted above. Evelena Walterson, a soil scientist at U.B.C., noted that while a lack of established guidelines made it difficult to assess the safety of the measured lead levels, the levels were not extraordinarily high. Comparing lead absorption rates between cultivated and uncultivated areas, Ellie Epp concluded that "working and manuring our land brings lead absorption down fifty to sixty-five percent in plants we had direct comparisons for: i.e., covercrop clovers, grasses, and weeds" (Epp 1987: 2). The gardeners took this as partial substantiation of previous assumptions that soil nutrient enhancement lowers lead absorption rates.

On the basis of high lead measurements in both the soil and foliar samples, the gardening group decided to permanently remove the area of small hills from food cultivation. Aside from this decision, however, little use was made of the data, and attention to potential soil contaminants has since declined. No soil analysis was done at the Cottonwood site before cultivation began in 1991, although broom was planted in a planned effort at bioremediation (using plants to remove potential toxins). Since October,

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[7]Soon afterwards, new lead contamination became less of a concern when federal legislation made the use of lead-free fuels mandatory.

1986 no new samples have been taken from the main gardens, so no comparison is possible between current and past levels. It seems reasonable to suppose, however, that contaminant levels may have been reduced through berm construction and the addition of non-contaminated source material (e.g., compost).

Aside from the spectre of contamination, the soil inherited by the gardeners from previous cycles of use also presented problems of compaction and shallow organic horizons. A report on the planned community garden prepared in February, 1985 described the soil at the main gardens site as "highly compacted" and littered with rubble and rock (Gross 1985: 2). Over much of the area there was only a thin topsoil, as Epp noted in her journal entry for February 27, 1987: "under the turf it's dead mineral, no worms, nothing to make earth of it" (Epp 1986-1987: 11). To bring the land into agricultural production, the gardeners had first to revive the soil.

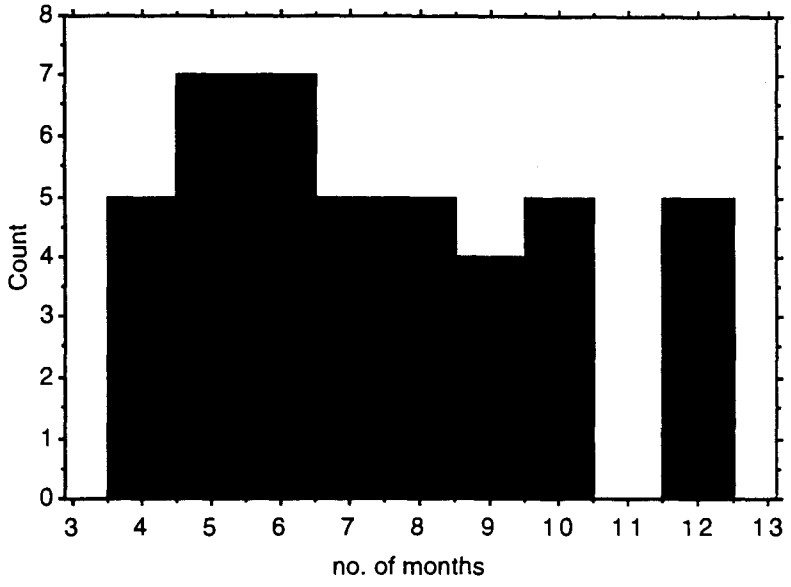
Efforts at soil regeneration centred on aeration and the addition of organic materials. Standard techniques of organic gardening were frequently, though not universally, applied. These included double digging (in which a surface layer of soil is removed so that underlying layers can be aerated), sifting in organic materials, and constructing raised beds. The construction of raised beds was particularly effective, since it permitted gardeners to work from pathways without treading on plots, and thus to cultivate without compacting previously aerated soil.

A further variable related to soil health is the length of the growing season. As a rule, large-scale, commercial agriculture in the Vancouver vicinity involves the cultivation of a single crop over a growing season of from four to five months. For the balance of the year, including the rainy winter months, the soil is typically left uncultivated and exposed, a practice implicated in high rates of topsoil erosion.

As a basis for comparison, I asked gardeners how many months of the year they had non-perennial crops in their plots. Their responses, displayed in Figure 4.9, indicate

that the length of typical growing seasons among gardeners is much longer than that of commercial growers. Gardeners have crops in their plots from four all the way up to twelve months per year.

Figure 4.9: Number of Months Per Year That Gardeners Had Crops in Their Plots



In the nine years since they gained access to the main gardens, the gardeners have achieved significant improvements in the structure and composition of their soil. Regarding soil contaminants, no firm conclusions are possible as to whether concentrations have changed. It seems likely, however, that the vigilance of the gardeners has prevented further contamination of the site that might otherwise have occurred. Also, soil compaction has been reversed in cultivated areas. In contrast to the previously meager organic horizons, garden plots now commonly feature topsoil depths of 40 cm or greater. Multi-seasonal cultivation (made possible in part by high inputs of organic matter), in combination with raised beds, may protect soil from erosion in the winter months. The

range of crops successfully cultivated attests to improved soil quality and nutrient availability. In this soil, new life flows.

4.2.3 Fertilizing and Pest Control

As she was showing me around the Gardens in November, 1992, member Joanne Hochu commented on the ties between profit maximization and ecological degradation: "Commercial farmers - I mean, some aspects of commercial farming - are kind of wrecking things. That's why you're seeing seed stock completely disappearing from the earth." Regarding soil fertility, she added,

> a lot of the major fertilizer and pesticide companies are really tied into these multinational food growing corporations. They're often an arm of the same company. They have a very vested interest in using *their* products on *their* produce on *their* farms.

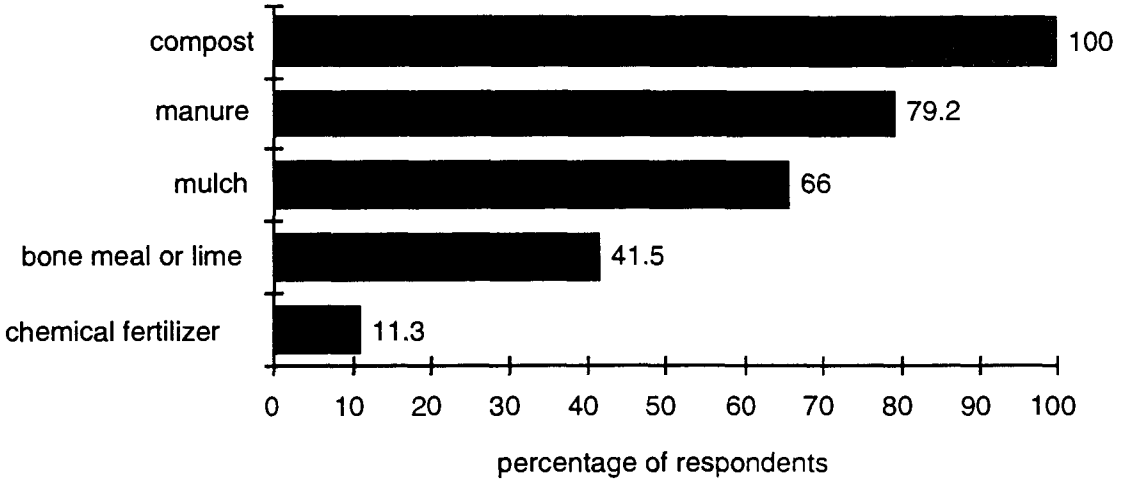
Hochu was referring to what is termed, in the academic jargon, *subsumption*, the process whereby the farm unit is subsumed within broader processes of capital accumulation. In her view, since community gardening was rooted in the locality and was oriented to need rather than profit, it tended towards ecological approaches. To provide an empirical basis for evaluating this analysis, I asked gardeners to report on forms of fertility enhancement and pest control they used in their plots.

Figure 4.10 displays the percentage of survey respondents applying specific fertilizers, in descending order. A full one hundred percent of respondents reported having applied compost to their plots. This was followed by manure (79.2 %), mulch (66.0%), bone meal or lime (41.5 %), and chemical fertilizers (11.3%).[8] Clearly, the use of organic fertilizers (including all but the last type) far outweighed that of inorganics. The order of

[8]Of course, organic fertilizers are also "chemical" in composition. I'm using the term "chemical" not in a technical sense, but in its popular usage as shorthand for non-biological substances produced through energy-intensive techniques and associated with the disruption of organic cycles.

use also suggests a reliance on locally available materials accessible through cooperative channels. Compost and materials for mulching are produced on the site, through cooperative and individual labour, and are available at no cash charge. Manure is brought in by the group, and members pay for it through an "honour" system on a per-cost price (set at 75 cents per bucket). Notably, even the organic fertilizers, bone meal and lime, - which are available only through individual, cash purchase - are used by many fewer gardeners.

Figure 4.10: Percentage of Survey Respondents Applying Specified Fertilizers



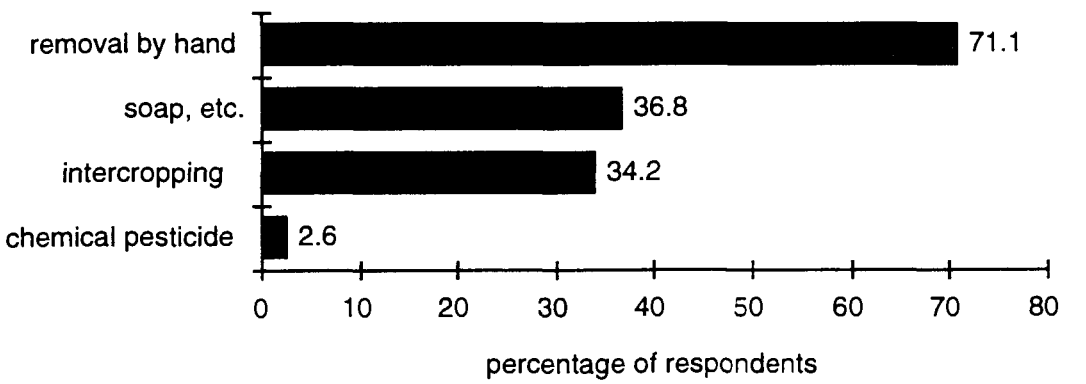
Regarding pest control techniques, some of the survey data may have been lost due to my equivocal wording of the question.[9] Using the potentially incomplete data set that I could salvage, Figure 4.11 shows percentages of respondents using specific pest control

[9]I asked first if gardeners experienced problems with insects, suggesting that only those answering in the positive report on pest control techniques used (see survey form in Appendix 1). Clearly, however, gardeners could be experiencing no problems with insects *because* they were employing techniques to control them. Because they may exclude some survey respondents who indeed used pest control techniques, my data in this area may be incomplete.

techniques. The technique reported by the most respondents was removal by hand (71 %), followed by application of soap or other biological substances (36.8 %), and intercropping (34.2 %). Only 2.6 percent of respondents (in fact, only one respondent) reported having used chemical pesticides.

No doubt, the very low reliance on chemical pesticides reflects, in part, the stated policy of the Gardens, which forbids use of these substances. The data also suggest, however, a substitution of labour and design principles for manufactured inputs. The most commonly used technique, removal by hand, applies labour rather than external inputs. Intercropping, where different species are planted together with the purpose (in this case) of discouraging pest damage, aims to incorporate pest control into the structure of cultivation, reducing reliance of techniques of removal or extermination.

Figure 4.11: Percentage of Respondents Using Specified Pest Control Techniques



Analysis of fertility enhancement and pest control techniques supports the view that the Gardens manifest tendencies contrary to those of capitalist agriculture. These contrary tendencies are associated with localized relations, cooperation, and production for use.

4.2.4 Wilds

Scruffy, boggy, and unmanaged, the wastelands of Strathcona were far from fulfilling the image of a manicured park when they were first acquired by the gardeners. Imagine the chagrin of Parks Board officials, then, when Gardens members opted to keep large portions of both the main gardens and Cottonwood in their "wild" state. Yet, as recent research argues, such areas may have unnoted ecological benefits (Hough 1994). As Platt (1994: 38) comments, "Viewed with [fresh eyes], the humblest unmanaged residual spaces may provide benefits to surrounding areas in terms of micro-climate, drainage, and biodiversity."

The "wild area" at the main gardens was conceived of early on as a means to retain and enhance the unruly, "natural" character of the site, as indicated in Ellie's journal entry for April 5, 1987: "account for the wild and naturalized stuff already there, birds, soundscape + slides, find out what we need to encourage more with view to preserve" (Epp 1986-1987: 14a). Shrub species native to the area have been re-introduced through selective plantings, some using plants gathered in regional parks such as the Pacific Spirit Park. Tree seedlings have also been planted, including fir, cedar, ash, alder, oak, maple, and poplar. The unmanaged appearance of the area has been a source of criticism, as Joanne Hochu noted:

> This is the one area we get the most grief of, I would have to say. Politicians think it doesn't look nice. They have a sense of what something should look like: it should look really tidy like a lawn. I've heard a parks board official - he's said it right to my face - that this would have made a great playing field, and they have great pressure on them always for more playing fields.

John Atkin and Betty Skakun (1992), coordinators of the wild area, viewed the effort as a recapturing of elements of the local past: "The forest around Strathcona was cut down in the 1870s and '80s for timber; what little that remained was removed when the houses in the neighbourhood were built." However, "in time, a small portion of what was here will return."

The emphasis at the main gardens on retaining "wild" areas was continued at Cottonwood. Before the Cottonwood site was formally leased from the Parks Board, Oliver Kellhammer conducted an ecological survey of the land. Included in his report (Kellhammer 1991) were notes on flora and fauna currently using the area. Kellhammer noted fourteen species of bird, four plants (the Nootka wild rose, ocean spray, Himalayan blackberry, and tansy), and two trees (black locust and, of course, cottonwood). He stressed the area's importance relative to neighbouring animal and plant habitats: "Area is a vital wildlife/plant corridor linking the Strathcona Gardens Wild Area ecosystem with the wildlife/plant communities still existing in the Grandview Cut", the Cut being a vegetated gully originally excavated to allow rail access to the Flats. Kellhammer suggested an approach to the land similar to that taken previously at the main gardens: "We propose that the land be left and slowly rehabilitated through the planned/appropriate introduction of plant species which would increase the area's value as badly needed habitat still further."

At neither site is the future of "wild" areas assured (even assuming continuing tenure by the gardening group). Following the loss of one acre of the main gardens site to the Freemason project, members opened up new plots in what had been wild area. There is a possibility that more wild area could be claimed, in response to some new reduction in the area occupied by the Gardens, or to increased pressure to expand the existing number of plots. However, ongoing commitment to the wild areas by core Gardens members weighs against any further encroachment.

At both Gardens sites, wetland restoration was a key aim in enhancing wild areas.[10] By 1994, four ponds had been created, one at the main gardens and three at Cottonwood. The ponds attracted diverse fauna including amphibians, insects, and waterfowl, and were colonized by aquatic plants such as bullrushes.

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[10]Holland and Prach (1994: 69) define wetlands as "lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered in shallow water."

Ecological values of urban wetlands are highlighted in recent work. Holland and Prach (1994) noted the role of urban wetlands as reservoirs of species diversity and as stopover and breeding sites for birds. "[I]ncreased concentration of human debris and waste products" was among the threats to urban wetlands they identified (*ibid*: 70). Yet Schmid (1994) noted of the U.S. that state regulation since the 1960s had been ineffective in preventing further filling of urban wetlands, and had accomplished even less in the area of wetland enhancement. The experience at the Gardens suggests a role for neighbourhood management in urban wetland restoration.

The value of the Gardens as bird habitat was noted by naturalist Kevin Bell, who described the Gardens as one of the few remaining areas on Vancouver's east side conducive to songbirds: "The songbirds need shrubs, trees, unruly and rank growth, to provide shelter for nesting and roosting, and the insects and seeds they eat. Most parks and playing fields are trimmed and neat, not much use to birds like these" (Sarti 1994). In 1994, birdhouses were constructed and installed at the Cottonwood site to provide additional facilities for longer-term bird residents.

Platt (1994: 38) describes urban wild areas as a new form of commons serving diverse ecological functions:

> This new urban commons of incidental patches of natural habitat cannot reverse the ecological damage inflicted by urbanizations, but it may at least soften the impact of the latter. Also, it may remind the urban dweller of the larger biosphere to which the city belongs.

The role of the Gardens areas in supporting wild plant and animal species predates acquisition by the gardeners. Yet, in many senses, the work of the gardening groups has maintained and enhanced this role. This is true of efforts to regenerate ecologies through the planned introduction of species and the reclaiming of wetland habitats. The gardeners have also minimized further disruption of the areas by dumping or filling. More generally, however, the Gardens represent an institution appropriate to ecological regeneration.

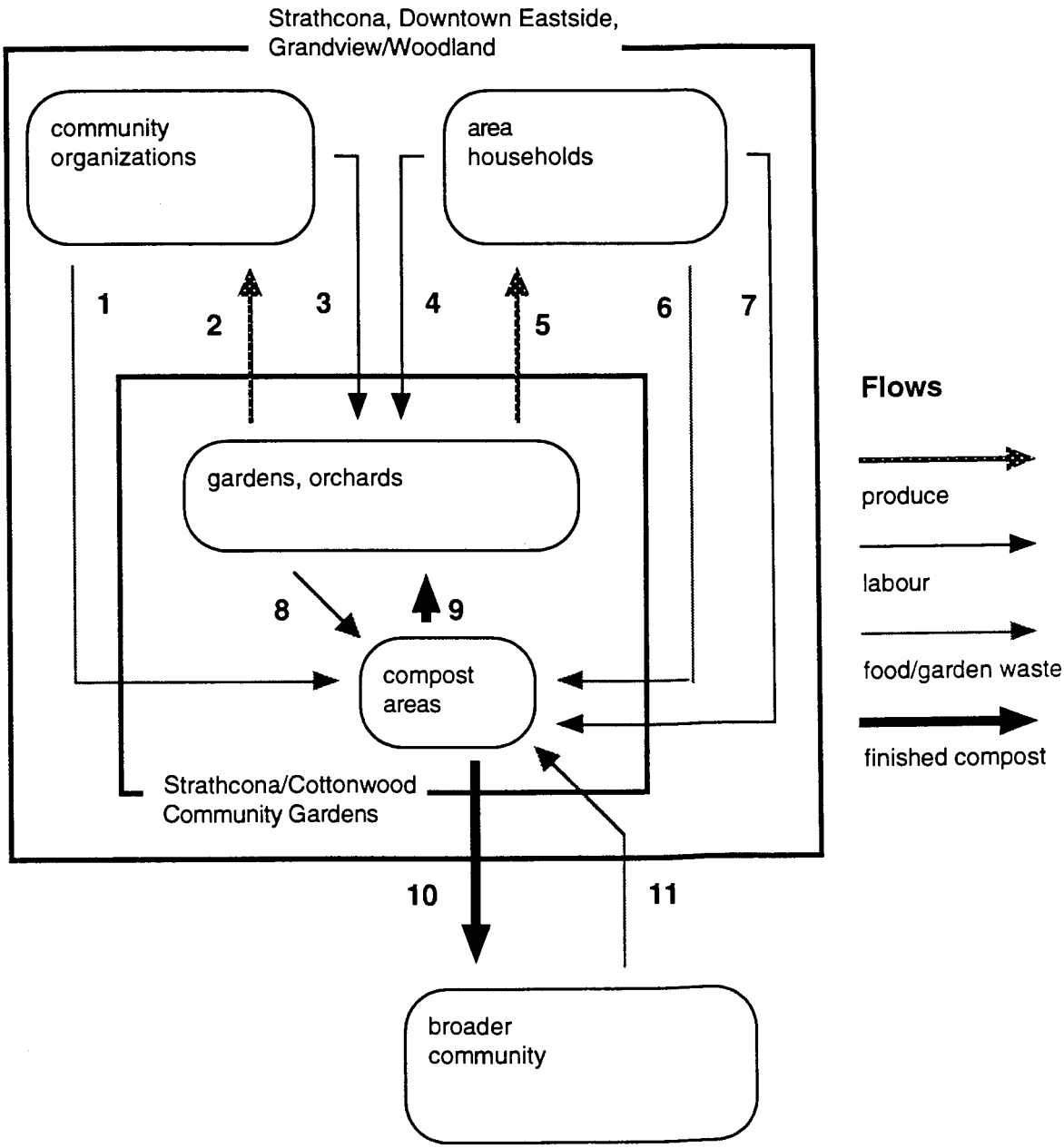
While distinct, the "wild" and agricultural areas are not separate from each other but are interlinked in many ways. Runoff from the plots feeds the pond. Birds attracted to the wild area likely play a role in controlling insect pests. In a small way, the Gardens begin to realize a vision of ecological agriculture described by Levins and Lewontin (1985: 221): "A mosaic pattern of land use should be established, combining field crops, perennials, orchards, forest, and agriculture in a way that benefits the whole region . . . ."

In discussing "The political economy of agricultural research," Levins and Lewontin (1985: Chapter 9) traced ecological crises in modern agriculture to characteristics inherent to capitalist production. An ecological agriculture would require fundamentally new logics of production, based on need rather than profit and a recognition of "the inseparability of the natural and social" (1985: 219). With its high degree of species diversity, regeneration of damaged soils, use of organic fertilizers, and enhancement of natural systems, the Gardens manifest tendencies that imply that such logics are at work.

4.3 Reclaiming Communal Nature: Energy and Nutrient Cycles

As noted in Chapter 1, the transition to modernity has been marked by the rupturing of locally based energy and nutrient cycles and their replacement with open, uncompleted cycles. By tracing energy and nutrient cycles at the Gardens, I want to begin to relate the social and natural relations reviewed above more closely to locality.

Figure 4.12: Energy and Nutrient Cycles at Strathcona Community Gardens



1. Carnegie Centre returns food wastes.
2. Produce goes to member organizations.
3. Member organizations contribute labour.
4. Area households contribute labour.
5. Produce goes to area households.
6. Kitchen/yard wastes returned to gardens.
7. Area households contribute labour to composting.
8. Garden waste goes to compost.
9. Finished compost goes to individual plots, orchard.
10. Finished leaf mould sold to public.
11. Municipality contribute leaves.

Figure 4.12 traces the principal energy and nutrient flows of food production at the Gardens. The diagram helps clarify the many cycles that are completed in the area. Regarding labour and nutrients, the principle cycle would be 4-5-4, in which household labour produces food which in turn helps reproduce household labour. A subsidiary cycle would be 7-9-5-7, in which labour expended on composting produces plant nutrients which, in the form of food, nourish the household. This nutrient cycle is complemented by the cycle 8-9-8, in which garden wastes are composted and returned to the garden. In sum, the renewed fertility of the site is premised on the completion of energy and nutrient cycles. The Gardens recapture, to a remarkable degree, the localized, completed cycles of nutrients and energy that Bayliss-Smith (1982) associated with pre-capitalist production.

It is important to note, however, that, while they are relatively complete, the cycles here are not closed ones. It is, for instance, clear that the garden produce plays a relatively small role in the overall reproduction of area household labour. The completed cycles of the Gardens are nested within the generally uncompleted and open cycles that characterize local social and natural relations. Of necessity, the Gardens represent, not an autonomous system, but a small germ of completed organic cycles set amidst a sea of disconnection. This is one key difference of this form from pre-modern systems.

In this chapter, I have examined social and natural relations in separate sections, but I don't want this separation to obscure the ways in which they interpenetrate each other. To follow just one example, the data on seed and seedling sharing are probably not unrelated to those on diversity of cultigen species. As noted, 65.4 and 69.2 percent of respondents reported having directly given and received seeds or seedlings, while 43.1 and 55.8 percent had given and received them through the "free table". These individual and institutional relations of cooperation provided most gardeners with a wider variety of cultigens than that which they would otherwise have had. In this way, cooperative relations seemingly contributed to the high degree of species diversity reported within

individual holdings.

In Chapter 1, I discussed interconnection in nature and the interpenetration of organism and environment. In a social sense, the Gardens are a site of interconnection and interdependence; people rely on each other. Production strategies rely on complexity, rather than on the reduction of factors of production to isolated inputs. In both "wild" and agricultural areas, production entails the generation of diversity. I think the analysis of social and natural relations suggests that the Gardens recapture balances with natural structures and tendencies.

I asked Leslie Scrimshaw what some of her ideas were in starting up the community garden. Her response:

> Basically, that people become so disconnected from their food that you don't know how it comes, how you get it, how do you grow it. People become in the city relatively unconnected to nature, and the natural way that you are actually supported. From my point of view, that was my own motivation, and that was probably the motivation of some of the other people involved in the gardens. Others, I think, were just motivated because they wanted to grow some food, and others motivated because they just liked to be involved in some community activity. I felt like if you can grow your own food you have a lot of power—personal power, community power. Because you can take control of that little part, a really, really important part of your life. It may not really save you a lot of money, but it does give you something. It gives you a lot of satisfaction.

Scrimshaw's perspective emphasizes the role of communal production in overcoming alienation from nature and from community.[11]

Through their common labour, members of the Strathcona Community Gardens have transformed their chosen geography, and at the same time changed themselves. The partial recapturing of place-based cycles of fertility suggests that these changes are related in part to revived powers of place. In the next chapter, I look more closely at senses of place at the Gardens, exploring both consensual and conflicting constructions of place.

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[11]After founding the Gardens, Scrimshaw started up Manhatten Seeds, a company supplying untreated seed stock and cultivation tips (Scrimshaw and Tayler 1990) to mainly urban gardeners.

C H A P T E R 5

EVOLVING SENSES OF PLACE

When you put your hands in the soil, there is something about you that fundamentally changes—and I've seen it happen here. People come and they start off in their little garden plot, and then they start doing other stuff here, and the garden becomes theirs *and they have a sense of ownership with it. And I guess that's what it is about sticking your hands in the soil. You have a sense of owning—not owning, but becoming part of what's going on around you in terms of the land and* everything.

—Joanne Hochu, member of Strathcona Community Gardens, 1992

As used particularly in humanistic and ecological writings, sense of place implies a positive feeling of involvement with and attachment to the social and natural geography of a locality, and is associated primarily with pre-modern, rural, place-based societies. In the urban and homogenized landscapes of modernity, sense of place is said to have been displaced by alienation and placelessness. To revive meaning in the world, pre-modern attachments to place have to be reclaimed.

To a degree, my treatment of senses of place in this chapter echoes humanistic and ecological themes. I want to look at personal and emotive experiences of the Gardens as a place. In doing so, I refuse to relegate aesthetic and subjective experience to a devalued category less important than the presumably "serious" realm of political and economic struggle. In common with ecological treatments of place relations, I view renewed ties to place as an important element of community empowerment.

Yet, as implied in work I reviewed in Chapter 1, treating sense of place along a

single axis (e.g., traditional/modern) denies diversity. The view that traditional place relations are necessarily positive and modern ones necessarily alienated smacks of conservatism, and ignores both the alienation of most pre-capitalist societies (e.g., the experience of serfdom) and the unique potentialities of modernity. The complex ways in which social relations of power are reproduced through a locality ensure that senses of place are not unitary—hence my focus on plural *senses* of place. Multiple and potentially conflicting senses of place, often linked to social contradictions in a locality, enter into the production of place. Senses of place are rooted in the particular histories and geographies of the group or individual holding them (Eyles 1985). In the second section of this chapter, I focus on contradictory senses of place, examining in particular the role of divisions of ethnicity, gender relations, and the local state.

Finally, the impact of local senses of place is not necessarily limited to the locality. I'm interested in the ways that the Gardens project has pushed beyond the limits of locality to join broader currents of change.

5.1 The Experience of Place

In this section, I focus on the experience of place among gardeners, drawing first on Ellie Epp's garden journal (1986-1988) and then on survey data of members' descriptions of the Gardens.

5.1.1 Digging the Homestead: Evocations of Place in Ellie Epp's Garden Journal

Entries for the first few weeks in Ellie's journal (begun on May 2, 1986) convey an emerging involvement with the changing landscape. While the focus is on the development of her plot, there are frequent references to broader processes such as weather, occurrences on the site, and the activities of other gardeners.

Much of Ellie's description is bodily, focusing on her body at work and in motion. On May 11, 1986: "digging digging down to where i need the pick - stomping the manure - so much left, i'll pile it for insulation - worn out" (1986-1987: 1a). On May 29: "sun, dark pressure on the head, burnt eyes". On July 12: "dig the hole chop chop with the spade water falling off my forehead" (1986-1987: 5). The labour of digging, irrigating, manuring, and planting is draining, but at the same time pleasurable and invigourating. On May 18:

> cold - impatient now - sticking finger in poke poke poke triangle drop in the corns - pinch the holes shut - the soil is warm - very pleasantly - pleasures of the seeds brought alive before planting - plump + sexy, + then of fingers into open warm grainy stuff, + rain on the beds . . . . (1986-1987: 2a)

Sensuous, physical labour is a point of contact with and participation in natural processes of fertility and growth.[1]

Linked to the sensuous description of labour is an intimate attention to the details of plant growth and decline. She notes the specific state of each of her cultigens, trying to learn from their responses to her efforts. Her entry for August 22 evokes the biologies of late summer: "poppies nearly over - but nasturtiums coming strong - an old grasshopper on an old sunflower - taste of resin on the seeds" (1986-1987: 6).

As the journal progresses, the focus of entries moves increasingly from Ellie's plots to the gardens as a whole. In part, this change reflects her own expanding activities: she participates in building the first shed, in shaping the children's area, and in numerous other projects. Similarly, the number of other gardeners referred to increases, mirroring simultaneously the Gardens' expanding membership and her growing circle of acquaintance. Implicitly, her focus of attention expands from private to public places and actions.

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[1]See, e.g., Rich (1986) and Heller (1993) for feminist perspectives on the body and knowledge.

Included in the focus on public places is a broadening circle of people, including both gardens members and others inhabiting the locality. Members of the Gardens often enter the journal as sources of aid or advice—giving seeds, moving rocks, discussing techniques. Discussions she records include analysis of the political roles of the Gardens: "'our spiritual relation to the land' 'profiteering . . . that is alien to our values' 'working + thinking of not eating, other places they don't eat, what do they have to do to eat here'" (1986-1987: 11a). From early on, there are references also to non-gardeners on the site. On May 9, 1986: "showing laiwan the 2 marsh huts - there was a man in a sleeping bag too, head in a cardboard box" (1986-1987: 1a).

To a degree, developments at the Gardens follow plans worked out in advance, but there is also a strong sense of spontaneity. The construction of a particular feature (in this case, an entrance) is a reiterative process of thought and action: "it's like pre-established harmony, the awkward things have perfectly uncrooked. but i had to work, rework, rework until part of one wrong plan crossed into part of another + the whole said ping! + since then everything follows" (1986-1987: 10). Does the reference to a "pre-established harmony" suggest that developments take cues from prior characteristics of the site? This conclusion is supported by her description of the opening up of a new area of plots: "looking at the new section it seemed i shd use the lightness of the upper edge of the slope + leave a broad grass path to the lower side" (1986-1987: 9). The land is transformed, but in a manner sensitive to existing forces and patterns.

Interspersed with the everyday details of plant growth and plot development are direct expressions of emerging attachment to place. On May 31, 1986: "after sick day - go to look at the homestead - it's messy wirtschaft in well-gardened wild" (1986-1987: 2a). After only a month, the garden is already named as home. By the twelfth of June, 1986: "i'm ravished in love with the garden want to be with it all day - its join to the meadow is beautiful beautiful now - little rocks to hold the ditch" (1986-1987: 3a). She enjoys contact

with the wild: "as we worked this aft, it's thick with blackbirds—redwing, plain, the utterly elegant golden eyed" (1986-1987: 16a). And she chuckles at the level of her own enthusiasm: "i find beautiful little andre's mom on the streetcorner + tell her about the garden, like a christian inviting to salvation" (Epp 1988: 8). Ellie's delight is not limited to her own plots, but draws in the site as a whole. Her excitement is in the emerging geography, which blends features constructed through shared labour with the natural character of the site. On July 1, 1986: "oh land quickly more beds + the lake + outbuildings + white marble slab" (Epp 1986-1987: 4a).

When I chatted with her in 1992 in the kitchen of her second floor apartment in a comfortably run down house in Strathcona, Ellie compared her attachment to the Gardens to her relation with a piece of land on the prairies of her childhood:

> I grew up on a farm and had years of unspoken love for the countryside that I walked through. It was such a sense of being more attached to it than I was to my family and my community; I was even more attached to it than I was to people. I think that one of the things about living in the city that was always very hard on me was not having that attachment to a piece of land, because the piece of land I grew up on, it's mythic, and I dream about it. It's the most significant structure I think I have in me is that piece of land. The sense of directions on it, and the seasons on it.

As she immersed herself in the Gardens, their geography began to acquire a similar status. And, she felt, not just for her.

> And just the sense of how galvanized people were by having this access to a piece of land that they could love. It's something that moves me a lot. I was electrified at finding out that you can harness that really primal feeling that people have for land and you can make it a feeling for community by making it communal land. People have it in relation to their back yards, and then it's just them and their back yards; but when all of these people have that same feeling for the same piece of land, we've got a community in a sense that you don't have any other way.

Common effort became a shared attachment to place.

I want to ask how much the attachment to place Ellie identifies is shared by looking to senses of place among the gardeners as a whole.

5.1.2 Individual Senses of Place

To collect some idea of senses of place among the gardeners as a whole, I asked them to choose, from a list of descriptive words, those that they would apply to the Gardens. As a basis for comparison, I asked gardeners to select from the same list (though presented in a different order, to discourage direct comparison) words they would apply to the block they lived on (chosen as a common site of strong associations). I provided 27 words to choose from, and classified them in advance as bodily, emotional, or aesthetic (nine each) and positive, negative, or neutral (four, four, and one within each of the previous classes). For each "positive" word I provided a "negative" that was roughly opposite (e.g., colourful and drab, healthy and blighted), with the aim of including a similar range of concepts in the two categories. In choosing words, I aimed for ones that had a relatively narrow range of meanings and that could be applied to either an open space like the Gardens or a city block.

Nonetheless, the meaning of the words is not objectively given but may vary significantly with the perspective of an individual or group using them. What is "safe" to men is not necessarily so to women. To be "elegant" may be the prerogative of a specific dominant class. A word like "tidy" can have strong race connotations (as Rosario Morales implied, with specific reference to gardens (Rose 1993: 145)). Similarly, the axes on which I've classed the words (as "positive", "negative", or "neutral", and "bodily", "emotional", or "aesthetic") are in part arbitrary. In analyzing the results, therefor, I want to keep in mind that the superficial unity of a particular word may disguise a diversity of experience, and that here (as throughout the study) my own classifications are interpretive rather than definitive.

Descriptions of the Gardens site were strikingly positive (see Table 5.1). Respondents described the Gardens as relaxing (84.6 %), colourful (82.7 %), healthy

(78.8 %), energizing, friendly, and peaceful (all 75.0 %), and lovely and welcoming (both 65.4 %). Words I classified as bodily were chosen a total of 154 times, emotional words 135 times, and aesthetic words 108 times. While responses were fairly evenly balanced between the three categories, then, bodily adjectives were chosen most often.

Table 5.1: Adjectives Chosen to Describe Gardens Site

	bodily	%	emotional	%	aesthetic	%
positive	relaxing	84.6	peaceful	75.0	colourful	82.7
	healthy	78.8	friendly	75.0	lovely	65.4
	energizing	75.0	welcoming	65.4	elegant	17.3
	expansive	38.5	safe	34.6	tidy	13.5
negative	draining	3.8	threatening	5.8	messy	23.1
	jarring	1.9	cheerless	0.0	shabby	5.8
	constricted	1.9	depressed	0.0	ugly	0.0
	blighted	1.9	tense	0.0	drab	0.0
neutral	idle	9.6	passive	3.8	bland	0.0

Table 5.2: Adjectives Chosen to Describe Home Block

	bodily	%	emotional	%	aesthetic	%
positive	healthy	34.6	friendly	61.5	colourful	44.2
	energizing	23.1	welcoming	36.5	tidy	23.1
	relaxed	23.1	safe	34.6	lovely	19.2
	expansive	5.8	peaceful	25.0	elegant	3.8
negative	draining	11.5	threatening	17.3	messy	33.0
	jarring	7.7	tense	13.5	drab	11.5
	constricted	5.8	cheerless	7.7	shabby	5.8
	blighted	1.9	depressed	7.7	ugly	5.8
neutral	idle	7.7	passive	19.2	bland	15.4

Descriptions of home blocks provide some basis for comparison. Home block descriptions were also positive, though relatively less so than the gardens (see Table 5.2). Respondents described their home blocks as friendly (61.5 %), colourful (44.2 %), welcoming (36.5 %) healthy and safe (both 34.6 %), messy (33.0%), and energizing, relaxing, and tidy (all 23.1 %). "Neutral" and "negative" descriptives were chosen more

often for home blocks than for the Gardens. Bodily, emotional, and aesthetic words were applied to home blocks 63, 108, and 84 times, respectively. Associations with home blocks, then, were primarily emotional, with bodily associations made not much more than half as often.

Specific analysis may be ventured on the basis of particular descriptions. I want to follow up only one of the paired descriptions: "safe" and "threatening". Feminist analysis, in particular, has focused on the construction of public space as a masculine realm that women enter at their own risk—a "geography of fear" (Valentine 1989). The main gardens is an open, outdoor space, visually and spatially removed from neighbouring houses and streetscapes. Moreover, it is located in the "dangerous" East Side. A gendered analysis of descriptions of the Gardens as "safe" or "threatening" may suggest how far they succeed in "taking back" space for women.

The percentage of respondents describing the Gardens as "safe" was notably lower than percentages for most of the other "positive" descriptions of the Gardens; see Table 5.1. Yet, broken down by the gender of respondents, the results were remarkably balanced. Of the women who responded to this question, 34.4 percent described the Gardens as "safe", a result almost identical to that for men: 35.0 percent. That there is no significant difference by gender suggests that the Gardens may begin to reverse the character of public space as a gendered geography of violence. This conclusion is supported by the testimony of a young woman living in Strathcona but not a member of the Gardens, who told me that she valued the Gardens as a place of security. Even late at night, she said, she came alone to the main gardens to relax and think. Neither exclusively public nor exclusively private, the Gardens may hint at geographies beyond patriarchical violence. However, turning to the description "threatening", 9.4 percent of women chose this word, while no man did. One woman gardener reported avoiding the Gardens by night out of fear. In themselves, the Gardens cannot undo the dominant, gendered

construction of space.

I wouldn't want to make categorical conclusions on the basis of what are subjective and individual comments. Nonetheless, both the intimate, personal viewpoint of Ellie's journal and the more removed view of the survey responses suggest that the Gardens project has been singularly successful at arousing a strong and varied attachment to place. Members value the Gardens in aesthetic and emotional terms; but these subjective bonds are intimately linked to physical, bodily processes of labour, development, and growth. Joanne Hochu's phrasing is suggestive: in cultivating common ground, "[y]ou have a sense of owning—not owning, but becoming part of what's going on around you . . . ." The communal, non-commercial character of production at the Gardens is essential in overcoming alienation and empowering members to feel that this part of nature, this site of production is home.[2]

To trace senses of place in temporal and spatial forms, I turn now to analysis of Garden maps.

5.2 Map Cogitating

> pondering the eastern edge where new plots shd start - where will the fire be - a nine-tree grove - the kids' sand pen -
> i sit all evening with the plan map cogitating -
> need iron for the stove - (Epp 1986-1987: 17)

This fragment of Ellie's journal entry for April 17, 1987 conveys the intense thought, reflection, and planning that have gone into the emerging form of the Gardens. At all stages, mapping has formed part of this process. Although often invested with scientific or legal authority, maps are unavoidably interpretive; they record in graphic form *ideas* about a place or region. Indeed, the presumed objectivity of Western cartography may

[2]"The garden is my home!" one member wrote on his survey form.

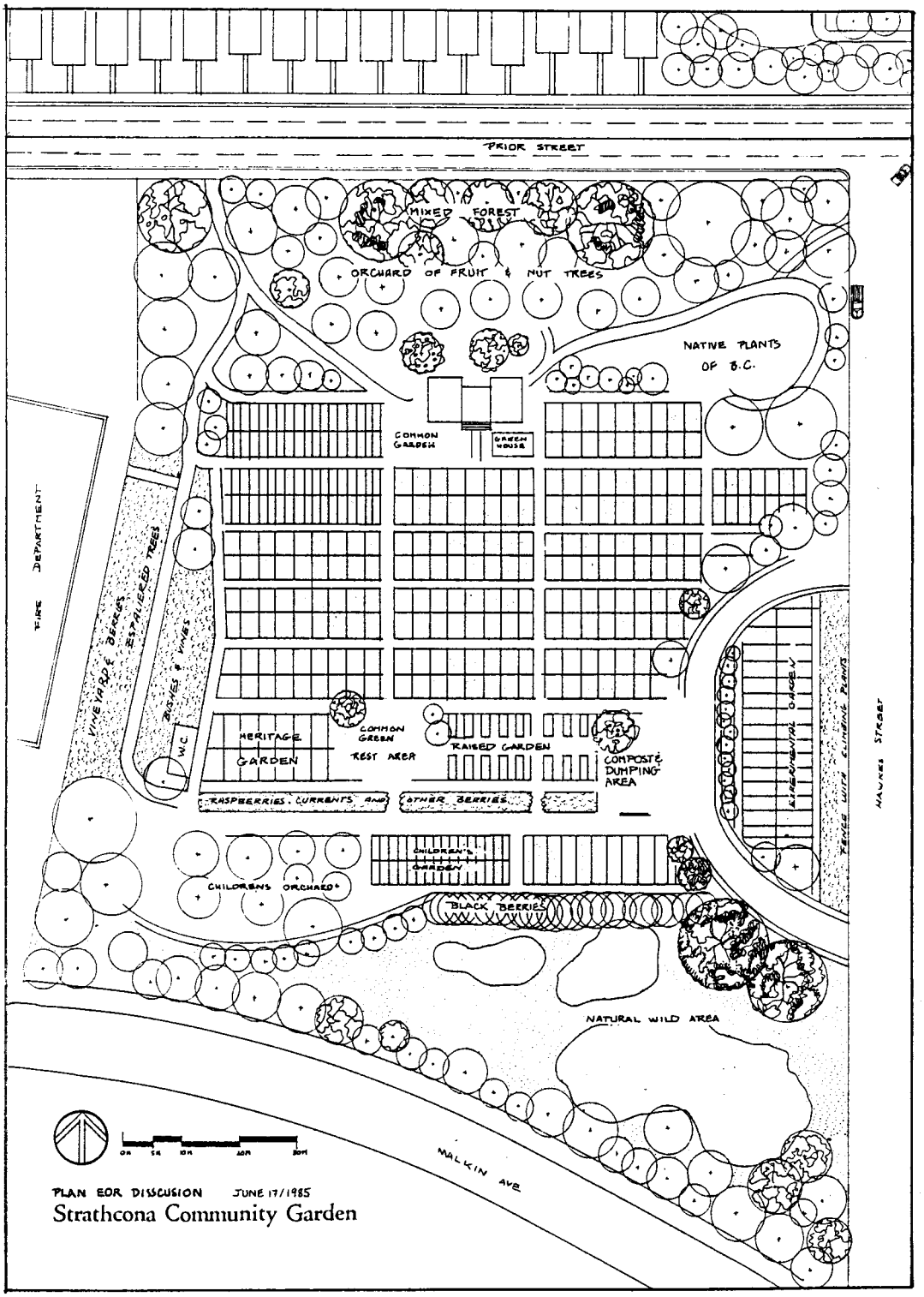
disguise the ways in which maps "can reinforce or legitimate the *status quo*" (Harley 1989: 14). Yet, as Doug Aberley showed in *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment* (1993), mapping may also play a role in reclaiming locality; maps may both reflect ideas of place and form a basis for transformative action. In this section, I want to explore maps made and used by the gardeners as a source of insight into evolving senses of place at the Gardens.

Maps have been composed and used by Gardens members for a range of purposes: as personal and group planning tools, as reference materials, and as publicity devices. Maps of the gardens mix past, present, and future, featuring what once existed, what is here now, and what might be created. Reading surviving maps in temporal sequence, we can interpret senses of place at the Gardens as they emerged and changed with the evolution of the sites.

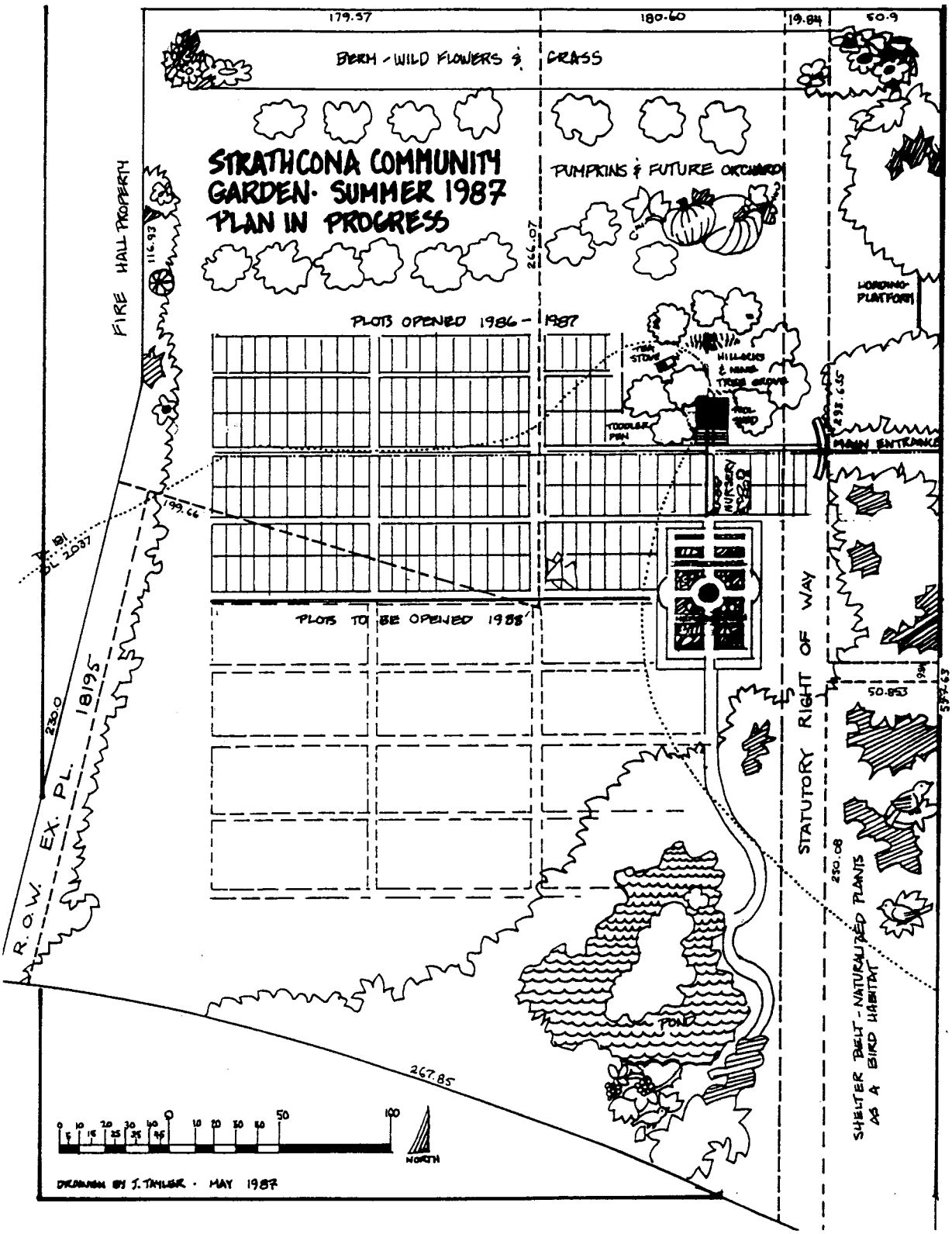
The earliest map of the Gardens, completed on June 17, 1985, was composed by member Joan Tayler, drawing on community input, and presented as a plan for further discussion (Map 5.1). At the time this map was drawn, the site was still a mixture of rubble, grass, and bramble. Rather than outlining short-term steps, it pictured the gardens in an imagined mature state, and so served more as a tool for envisioning possibilities than as a concrete plan of action.

While many of the areas featured were never constructed, this early map nonetheless conveys certain outlooks and relations that would characterize the site as it developed. Like what actually emerged, the envisioned gardens mix individual plots (shown shaded), common areas (e.g., the "common garden" and "children's orchard"), and naturalized regions (the "natural wild area" and the area devoted to "native plants of

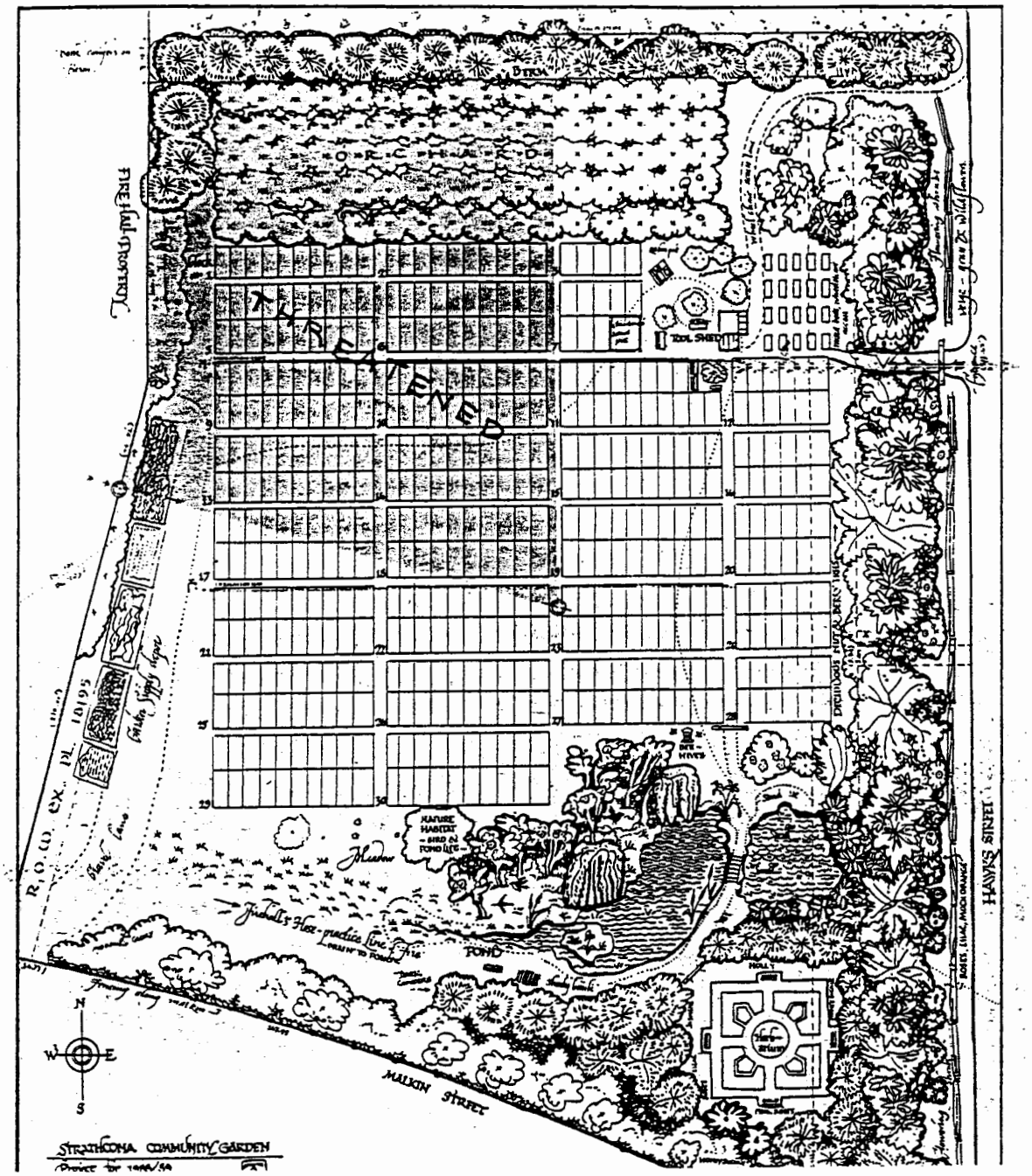
Map 5.1: First Plan for the Strathcona Community Gardens, 1985



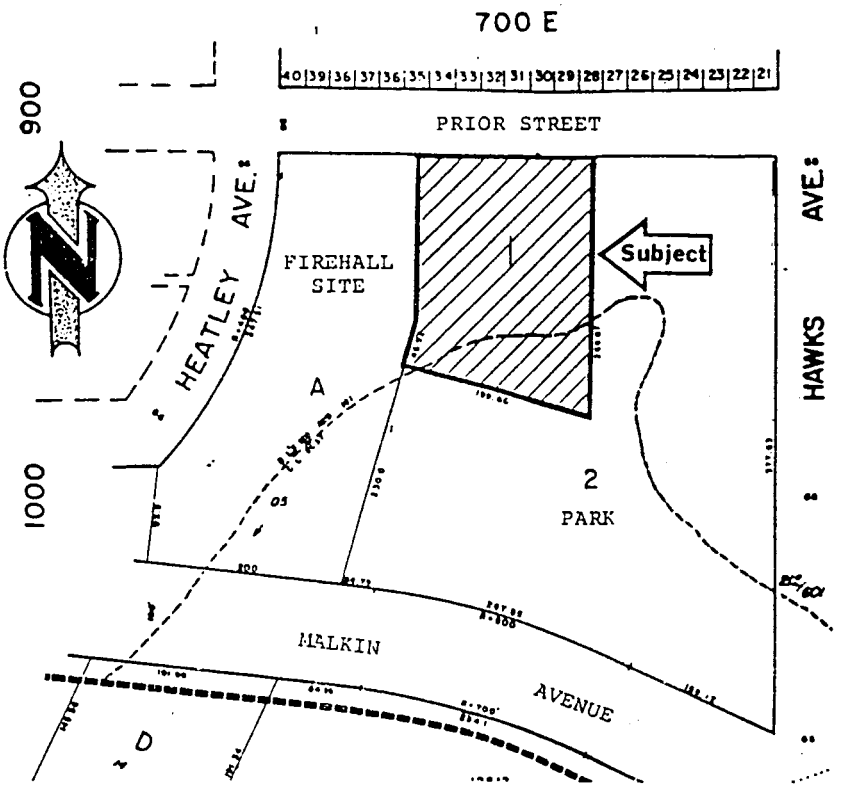
Map 5.2: Plan for Strathcona Community Gardens, 1987



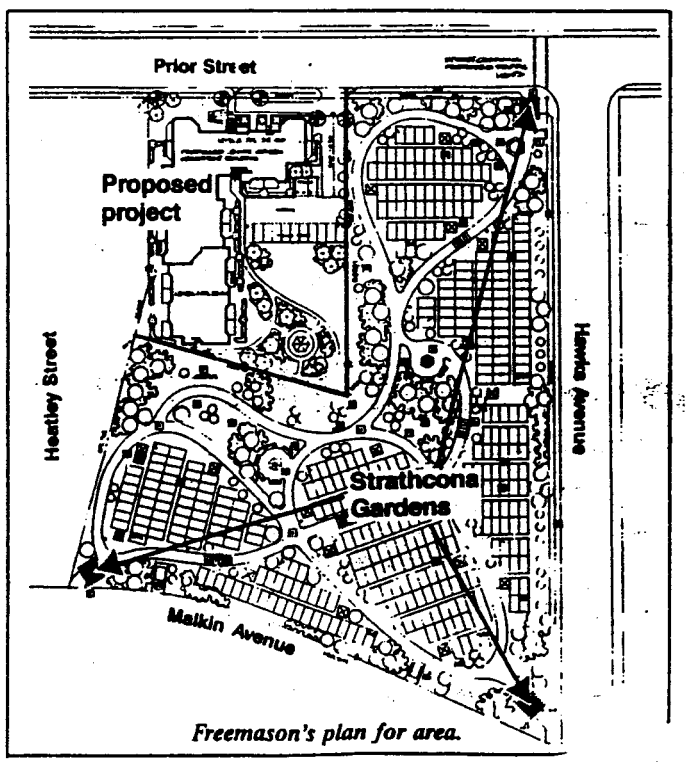
Map 5.3: Plan for Strathcona Community Gardens, April 1988



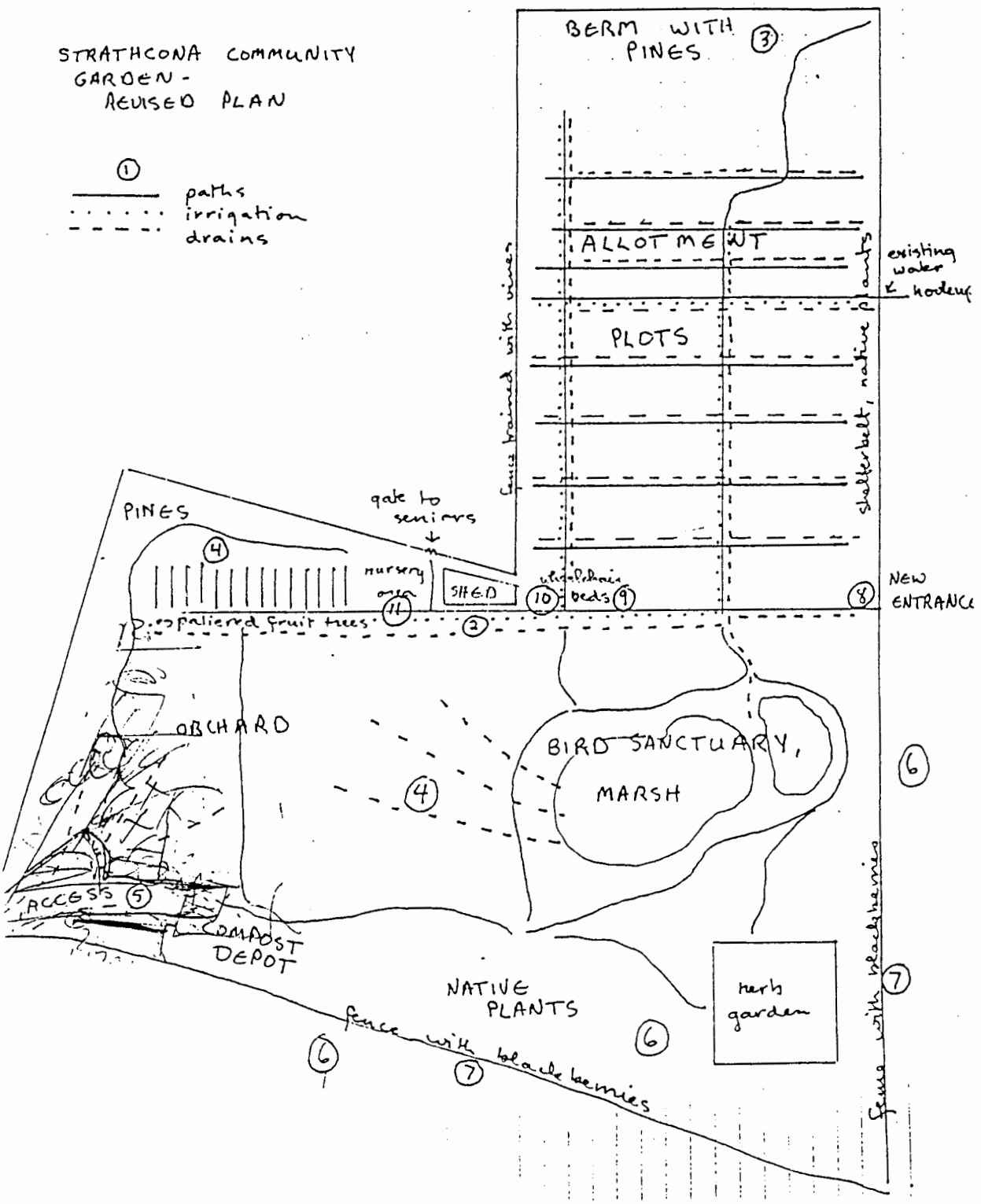
Map 5.4: City of Vancouver Map of Contested Site, 1988



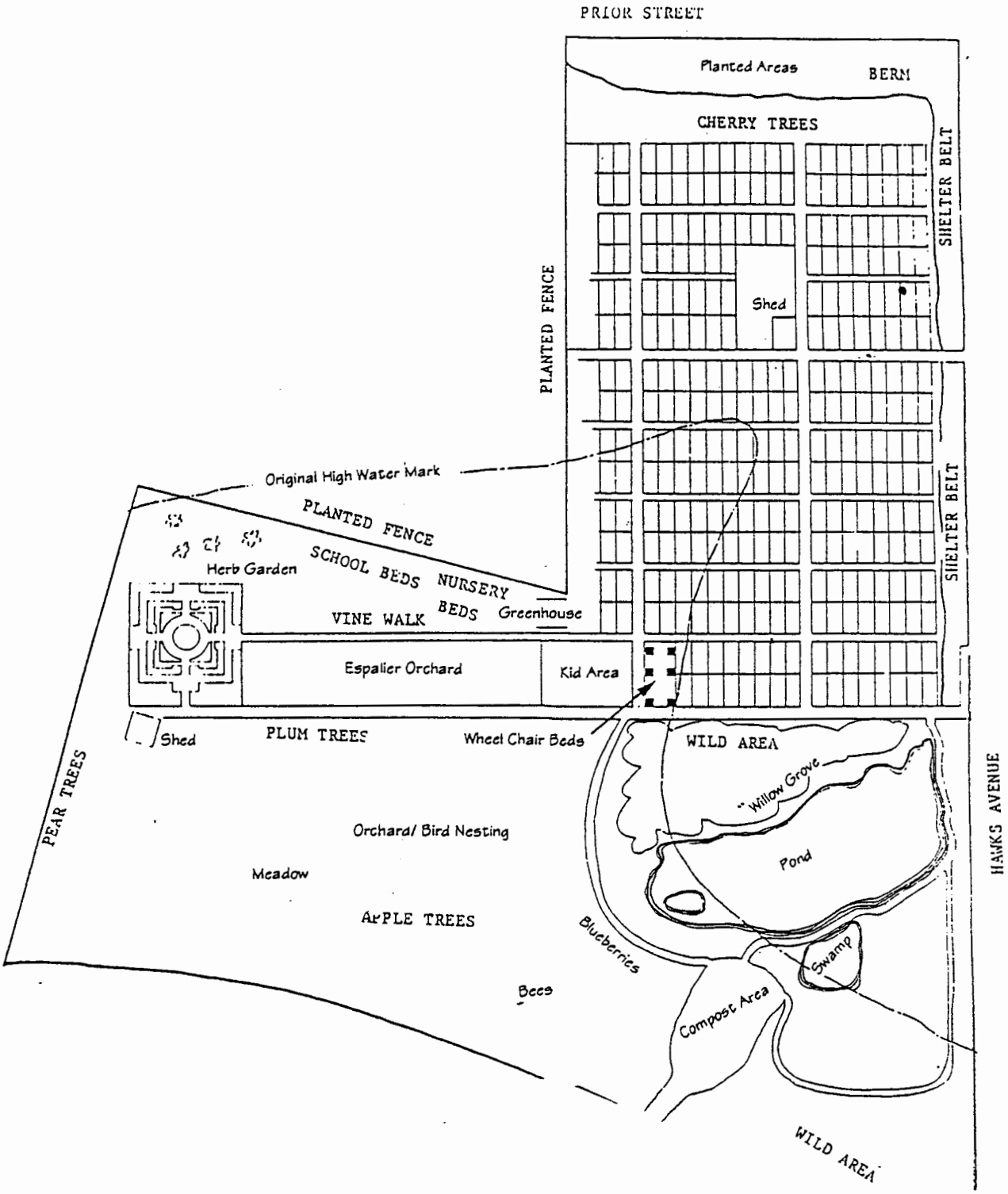
Map 5.5: Architects' Plan for Strathcona Community Gardens, August 1988



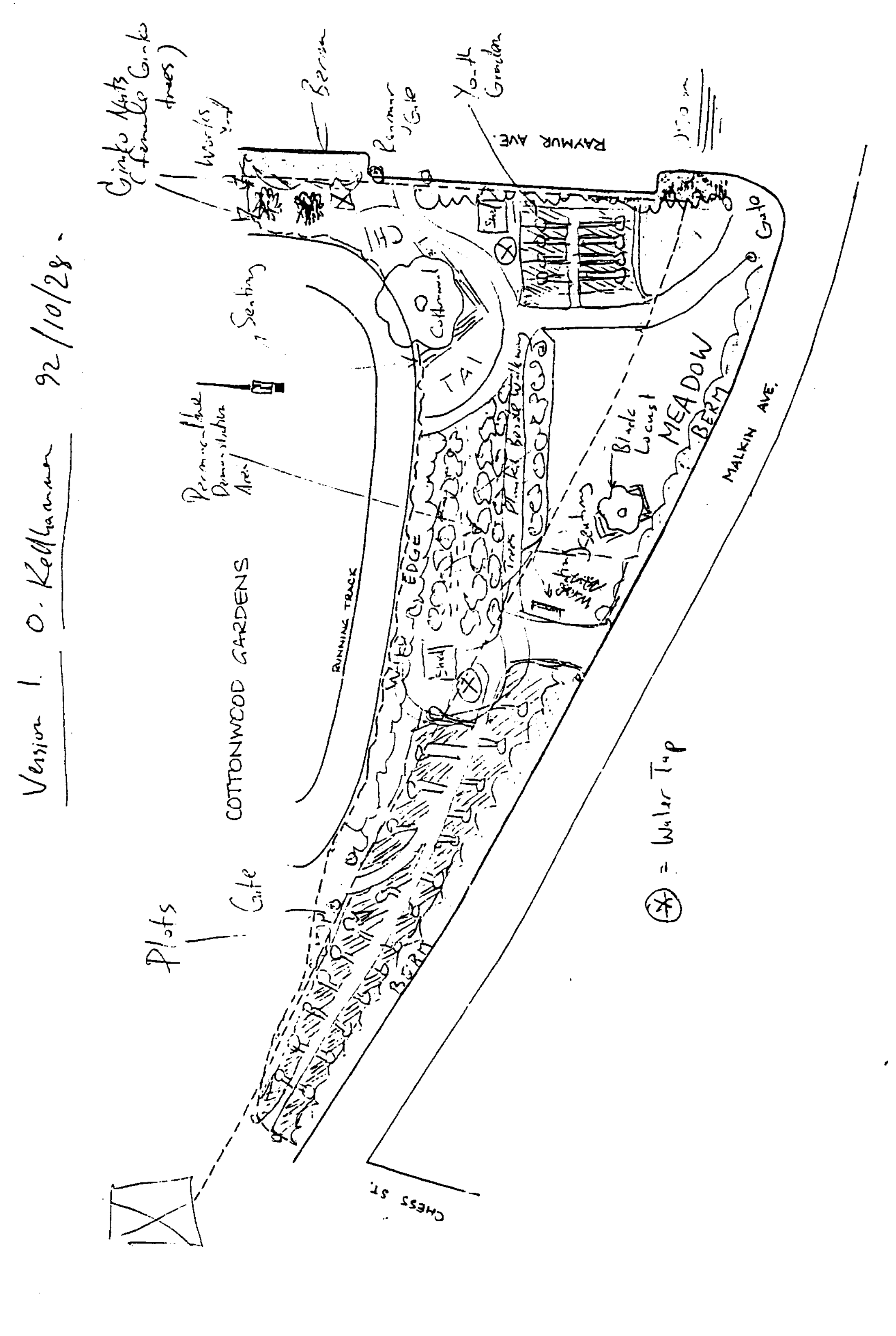
Map 5.6: Plan for Strathcona Community Gardens, August 1988



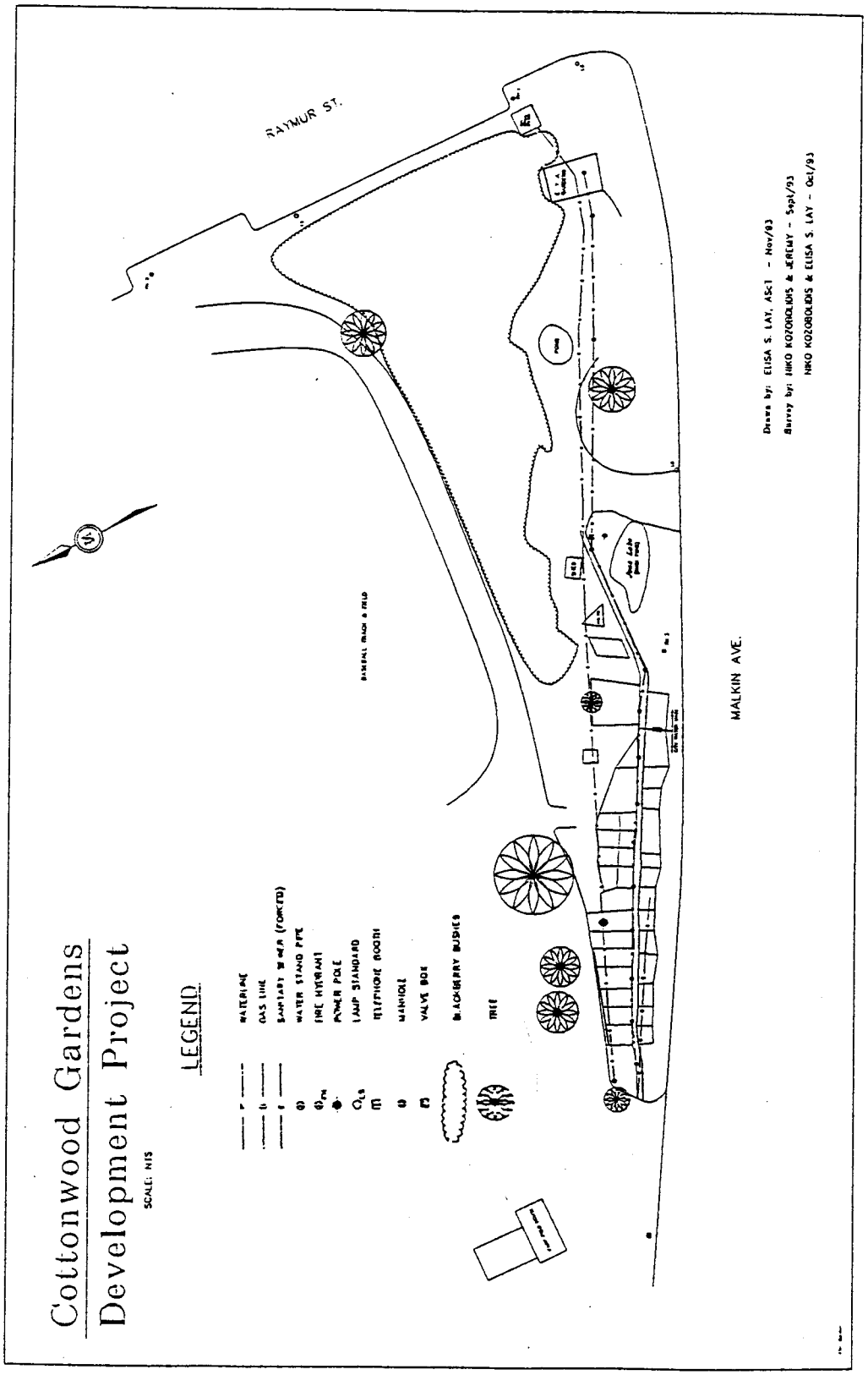
Map 5.7: Strathcona Community Gardens, 1990



Map 5.8: Plan for Cottonwood Community Gardens, 1992



Map 5.9: Cottonwood Community Gardens, 1993



B.C."). From the first, the site was viewed as a basis not only for individual, but also for communal production. "Natural" features were valued enough to be retained and enhanced in this vision of a mature site.

In May, 1987, Tayler drew up a new map conveying a "plan in progress" (Map 5.2). Here, the individual plots featured in the first plan have been largely constructed (they are shown in solid rectangles), while additional planned plots are sketched in dotted outline. (Only in the area of the hillocks, where the tool shed had been placed, does the configuration of constructed plots differ from that of the first plan. This reflects an awareness of the potential hazards of the site; as noted in Chapter 4, the hillocks had tested high in lead content, and so had been set aside as a non-gardening area.) Just west of the hillocks a toddler pen is featured, reflecting the priority given to the needs of parents and their children. A planned herb garden is shown in the first of two tentative placings that will precede its actual location in a third area. The wild area in the southeast corner has taken firm hold, recognized as a bird habitat and already featuring the pond (work on which was then beginning).

Perhaps the most striking contrast with the first plan is a new focus on edges. A berm has appeared on the northern border with Prior St., serving to protect the Gardens from the noise and emissions of this busy arterial street. The three remaining perimeters are likewise sheltered: on the western edge with the Fire Hall is a line of shrubs, on the eastern edge with Hawks a designated "shelter belt", and on the south the wild area. These borders have practical uses: they block out sound and pollution, discourage theft, and serve as a visual barrier. But, like the wall surrounding a medieval city of Europe, they also suggest symbolic meanings. The Gardens are being set apart as their own place, distinct in atmosphere and feel. Crossing over the naturalized borders, visitors will enter a form of sacred geography, removed in time and space from surrounding forces.

Also, unlike the first map, this one features the property lines that transect the

Gardens site, most notably a statutory right-of-way paralleling Hawks St. and the line separating City from Parks Board land. Composed two months after the gardeners were apprised of the potential threat to their tenure posed by the Freemasons' project, this map seems to convey a new attentiveness to the legal geography of the site. By demarcating the invisible lines of power running across their land, the gardeners may have hoped to forestall any further surprises. In this map, the curve of the former high tide mark has appeared, but only in the guise of a property line (separating DL 181 from DL 2037).

A revised plan for the Gardens was prepared in April, 1988 (Map 5.3). Here, in contrast to the previous plan, existing and potential features are freely mixed, with no attempt to distinguish between them. Detailed and ornate decoration is lavished on the wild area, which appears lush and vibrant. The most prominent new feature planned here is an area of raised beds accessible by wheelchair; like parents and children before them, people using wheelchairs are being encouraged to participate through facilities designed to meet their particular needs.

Laid over the original plan, shading demarcates the portion of the gardens threatened by the City's support for the Freemason project. This shaded version of the map was published in a broadsheet entitled "Save the Gardens". To the gardeners, it illustrated compellingly how the proposed project would destroy the integrity of their site. Indeed, in a presentation to City Council opposing the transfer of the Gardens to the Freemason project, one Gardens member held up this map and cut out the threatened quadrant, a gesture intended to illustrate graphically to Council members the extent of potential loss. (The drama of the gesture, however, seemingly was lost on most City councilors.)

In the period of conflict over the City's quadrant of the gardens, both the City and the architectural firm employed by the Freemasons produced maps of the land parcels occupied by the Gardens. Comparison between these and the maps created by the

gardeners reveals contrasting visions of the site. The City map (Map 5.4), produced to highlight the parcel of City land under dispute, represents solely the legal geography of the site. Here the emphasis is on control and the rights of ownership, rather than actual use. Even the portion of the Gardens not under dispute is designated only by its legal status, park. This map of generic space contrasts sharply with the gardeners' intimate maps of place.

The map drawn up by the architectural firm contracted for the Freemason project features a design for the Gardens as well as one for the proposed project (Map 5.5). It was presented to City Council and to members of the Gardens and published in the local press as evidence that the Gardens site could support the existing number of individual plots even without the City's quadrant. However, this plan took no account of existing features, instead redesigning the site from scratch. Also, the site is represented as consisting only of individual plots, with no common or "natural" areas. The only partial exception is a tidy, meandering, tree-lined pathway (located, notably, on the border with the Freemason project). When presented with this plan, several Gardens members reacted with indignation; not content with the City's quadrant, the developers were redesigning the rest of the Gardens as well! In contrast to the gardeners' own representations, the architects' map presents an individualized vision with no reference to common areas or to the existing character of place.

When the fight to retain the northwest quadrant of the Gardens ended in failure, Ellie drew up a new plan for the Gardens (Map 5.6; see discussion of this map in Chapter 3). While she included existing facilities (e.g., plots and the water hookup), the map was mainly concerned with outlining extensive new facilities to be developed. The orchard, lost to the Freemasons' project, was moved to the lower corner.

Finally, a map of the main gardens drawn by John Atkin (co-coordinator of the "wild area") in the summer of 1992 conveys a confident and maturing sense of place (Map

5.7). Comparing this map with the first plan prepared seven years earlier (Map 5.1), there are a number of common features. The wild area has maintained its place. The common green, children's orchard, and espaliered trees imagined on the earlier map are remarkably close to the actual location of similar facilities in the latter one. The difference is existential. For the first time, this map says nothing of what might be; it is a record of what is. (The only exception is the past high tide line, now recognized for its natural rather than its legal significance.) With this map, the main gardens has reached a level of maturity in which what has been accomplished outweighs what remains to be done. This is a map of home.

So it is no mere coincidence that, only a few months after Atkin completed his map, the first map was composed of the Cottonwood site, where, in contrast, everything remained to be decided (Map 5.8). Like the first map of the main site, this is a depiction of a projected mature state; yet there are important differences. Most notably, an innovative method of mapping achieved active participation from members in composing the plan. At a planning meeting, each member was provided with an outline of existing facilities at the site and invited to sketch in additional facilities that they would like to see developed. The resulting maps were laid one over another to seek common features, which were then distilled into a composite map drawing on the vision of all participants.

A second map of Cottonwood, composed in November, 1993 by Elisa Lay (not a Gardens member), conveys a new concern with abstract spatial precision (Map 5.9). Prepared with the aid of a computer and on the basis of survey data collected by members, this map gives a technically accurate portrayal of existing features at the site, abstracting enough from the intimate viewpoint of participants to include foreign features such as the underlying gas and sewer mains. It is intended both as a reference tool and as a basis for ongoing planning. The objectivity of this representation contrasts sharply with the colourful vernacular of Map 5.8. Yet at the same time the two complement each other, revealing opposing poles in a spectrum of senses of place. And a little vernacular

nomenclature has crept into the computer cartography; the duck pond is dubbed Juan Lake, for the lively Basque member who began work on it.

The individual plots (located in the easterly portion of the site) appear in a mosaic of shapes and sizes. In part, this variability in plot arrangement reflects the irregular shape and slope of the site; yet it may also reveal characteristics of the gardening group. Compared to the uniform grid of the main gardens, the variability at Cottonwood hints at a more adaptable and individualized approach.

At both the main gardens and the Cottonwood site, maps have both reflected and helped to shape evolving senses of place. By focusing imagination, maps have served as a point of contact between vision and reality and vision. Surviving maps convey common senses of group identity linked to place and local nature. Yet the maps also hint at differing senses of place at the two sites, a question I will explore in the next section.

5.3 Conflicting Senses of Place

As I have suggested, there may be multiple, conflicting senses of place attached to a particular geography, as differences in perspective and social power are translated into differing perceptions, goals, and desires. In the case of the Gardens, such differences may produce divergent senses of place between the gardeners and other groups in the locality, and similarly within the gardening group itself. By exploring conflicting senses of place, I hope to deepen analysis of the intersection of place and social relations.

5.3.1 Place and "Race": the Freemasons' Project

In 1987, when the Chinese Freemasons Benevolent Society revived its claim on the City land occupied by the northwest quadrant of the community garden, a conflict ensued which drew in opposing elements of the locality as well as extra-local groups and interests. On the side supporting the proposed seniors' complex were the membership of the

Freemasons and other prominent Chinese Canadian organizations and individuals. On the side supporting the Gardens were the largely non-Chinese Canadian membership of the Gardens and other largely Euro-Canadian organizations and individuals.

The Freemason vision of the site as a seniors' facility extended back as far as 1980 (see discussion in Chapter 3), and survived at least one major permutation, from a proposed intermediate care facility to a residential complex. In comparison, the gardening initiative was relatively new. The intended beneficiaries of the planned facility - principally, Chinese Canadian seniors - shared with many members of the Gardens a place on the margin. What they didn't share was simple: "race". On the face of it, then, the land conflict appears to have been based almost exclusively in racial divisions.[3]

The split along lines of "race" is most strikingly illustrated in the speakers list for an August 25, 1988 public hearing held on the question of rezoning the contested site. In April, 1988, City Council had agreed to lease the site to the Freemasons; at the hearing, Council was considering a bid by the Freemasons to have zoning on the land changed from Industrial District to Comprehensive Development District, the latter zoning permitting development of the proposed seniors' housing. An estimated 500 people attended the hearing, among them a large group of Chinese Canadian seniors carrying placards produced by the Freemasons with captions including, "Support Freemasons Project" and "Housing Benefits Community". Of the 84 speakers, 19 were in favour and 55 opposed to the rezoning application (which Council nevertheless granted). However, of those speaking in favour, thirteen had Chinese surnames and a further three were associated with Chinese Canadian organizations. In contrast, only one of the speakers opposing the rezoning had a Chinese surname, and none identified her or himself with a Chinese

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[3]In this section, I often use the term "*race*" in the place of *ethnicity*, although the identities I describe are socially rather than biologically derived. I do so because it seems to me that the neutral term *ethnicity* disguises the relations of power that underlie social divisions. In Strathcona, these divisions are a legacy, not merely of ethnic differences, but of a century of state-sponsored racism (Anderson 1991).

Canadian organization. Chinese Canadians were on one side of the issue, Euro-Canadians on the other.

Yet, on closer examination, it becomes clear that tensions based in "race" or ethnicity intersected in complex ways with other tensions, no less local in nature. A fuller account of conflicting senses of place surrounding the Freemason project has to extend analysis to address the role of the local state (which owned the contested land and controlled zoning) and potentially contradictory questions of gender and class.

The intersection of "race", class, gender, and state power in the construction of place is explicit in Epp's journal entry describing an early meeting between representatives of the gardeners, the City, the Freemasons, and the developer:

> meeting with jessop [of the City's social planning department], the chinese freemason & his hired whites - they try to guilt us - we turn the tide part way - most of the hired guns are silent - it's mr. blackmore we have to be our foil - his best can't best up - at times i'm silenced by the stupidity of a non sequiter from our chinese businessman. esther or muggs step in deftly behind me - oh the women so acute, so right, so beautiful & experienced - we space ourselves so we have men between us & cover more points of the compass - at the end it's morgan in the east whose patience has ended, 'i'm *sure* you understand,' with contempt - 'but we have a democratic process here.' the chinese businessman smiles over his paunch with the last button of his shirt separating - come to my restaurant i'll buy you all dinner - everyone including his guns gets up in silence. how stupid can you get - the developer by that time has taken his beautiful down overcoat & left - but he's there in the corridor when they caucus after. (Epp 1988: 7)

The member of the Freemasons is described as Chinese ("race"), but also as a businessman (class and gender). He and his "hired whites" or "guns" represent to Epp an aggressive and repulsive commercialism, epitomized by the cynical attempt to buy off the gardeners with a free meal. The male opponents (seemingly, including the City representative) are clumsy and employ tactics of guilt, stealth, and bribery. In contrast are the powerful women of Epp's group, "so acute, so right, so beautiful & experienced". Their placement at the points of the compass suggests an invocation of the powers of a sacred geography, as well as an attention to the spatial dynamics of group interaction. In Epp's view,

seemingly, the question of race is a screen for conflicts rooted more truly in gender and class.

Crucially, members of the gardening group portrayed the primary conflict as being with City Council and associated commercial interests, not the Chinese Canadian seniors. This position was argued by Maxine Gadd, Recording Secretary of the Gardens at the time of the conflict. In notes she wrote for herself in preparation for the rezoning hearing, Gadd reviewed the history of the Chinese Freemasons as a group "who fought against oppression in China and against racism and discrimination here in Canada." On this basis, she argued that the gardeners and the Freemason membership shared class-based interests that transcended differences in ethnicity: "We probably have many positive values in common and should be working together to develop a stable and harmonious multi-racial community, not creating bitterness by picking each other off to the evil glee of greedy profiteers." City Councilors - most of whom were "related to land dealers of some sort or another" - defended the interests of trans-local elites over marginalized local peoples. Community divisions, including "conflict between the races", served the interests of capital, since, "[i]f a community is in conflict then people are apt to want to leave or withdraw into their own private worlds and not notice what's happening to the community." Divisions between the gardeners and the Chinese Freemasons only furthered the interests of a moneyed elite, and their representatives on City Council.

Indeed, following the hearing, supporters of the Gardens could hardly be blamed for concluding that the decision had been made in advance. At the time the Freemason project was revived, the polarized City Council was controlled by the pro-development Non-Partisan Association (NPA), with a minority from the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE), a left party with ties to grassroots organizations and organized labour. The Mayor, Gordon Campbell, had launched his political career on the basis of strong links with development capital in the city and was a consistent supporter of real estate

development projects, often over the objections of local area associations. The NPA's basis of political support was in the more affluent West side of the city. Meanwhile, the East Side organizations tied to the Gardens (e.g., DERA, End Legislated Poverty) were already associated, to varying degrees, with COPE. It seems clear that all of these factors pre-disposed the NPA majority on Council to support the Freemasons development project over the Gardens.

In supporting the Freemason project, local Chinese Canadians spoke with a seemingly united voice. In part, this reflected a long-standing failure by the gardeners to incorporate Chinese Canadians into their membership and organizational structure. Yet the specific content of the discourse supporting the Freemason project may also have reflected complex local politics of ethnicity. Incidents like the demonstration at the rezoning hearing, where Chinese seniors were outfitted with commercially produced placards, suggest that the supposed beneficiaries of the project were not always speaking with their own voice. Events surrounding the land conflict may, in part, echo a pattern that has been repeated many times in the histories of Chinatown and Strathcona, in which an economic elite has managed to present its own goal as the shared vision of Chinese Canadians as a whole.[4] This success, in part, reflects the politics of "race" and locality, in which an oppressed "community" is expected to speak with a common voice—usually, that of an elite.

Most basically, perhaps, analysis of the land conflict highlights dangers in the politics of places on the margin. In conditions of capitalist modernity, in which capital and the state produce space to their own purposes, the margin is indeed a potential site of resistance. Yet, unlike imagined geographies, material places on the margin are subject to multiple, overlapping, and competing claims. Given the complex and conflicting ways in which individuals are marginalized, marginality is not necessarily a site of unity. Confined

[4]Several examples of this pattern are presented in Anderson's study (1991), though she herself focuses little attention on the question.

to a common margin, groups with distinct interests may indeed turn on each other, "to the evil glee of greedy profiteers."[5] Even the margin is claimed by property owners or the state, and the ability to reward one group over another, or to deny all, is a powerful factor in reinforcing relations of power.

Years after the events, the controversies surrounding the land conflict continue to reverberate. When the Freemason project was constructed, it included a high fence topped with barbed wire facing the remaining Gardens, a symbolic artifact, perhaps, of lingering animosity. It seems likely that the Gardens' continuing failure to attract more than a small number of Chinese Canadian members reflects, at least in part, latent tensions. And, for its part, the NPA continues to exploit the conflict for political payoffs. In a large ad run in all the local papers in its successful 1993 civic election campaign, the NPA included "The Chinese Free Masons Seniors Housing" in a list of several projects supported by the NPA but opposed by COPE, presumably in the hope of garnering support from seniors and Chinese Canadian voters.

5.3.2 Cottonwood vs. the Main Gardens

Conflict over the definition of place between the Gardeners and proponents of the seniors project both reflected and contributed to the reproduction of complex contradictions of interest within the surrounding locality. In this case, such contradictions took the form of conflict between the gardeners and external groups; yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, social contradictions also penetrate the gardening group itself. They have contributed in particular to differing and potentially conflictual visions of place between participants at the main gardens and those at Cottonwood.

Late in 1993, a series of lingering tensions between key participants at the main

[5]As Shields notes in *Places on the Margin* (1991: 61), "[o]pposed groups may succeed in generating antithetical place-myths . . . ."

gardens and those at Cottonwood began to break out into open conflict. The key point of contention involved the use of waged vs. volunteer labour. A grant from the Vancouver City Savings Credit Union (VanCity), which was secured for the Cottonwood group, had included positions for paid coordinators. Several longtime members at the main gardens strongly objected to this plan on ethical grounds, arguing that the introduction of waged labour would upset the integrity and balance of relations within the gardening group.

However, it was soon clear that other factors were entering into the conflict. Some of the gardeners at Cottonwood had surrounded their plots with high fences, a development viewed with apprehension by several main gardeners. Muggs Sigurgeirson of the main gardens group expressed concern that decisions affecting the Cottonwood area were being made by a relatively small group with little accountability either to the general membership or to the broader community. Ellie Epp objected to the image conveyed by a photo of the Cottonwood group printed in a VanCity bulletin (and subsequently used in an advertising campaign for the credit union), which pictured four men and one woman.[6] For their part, Cottonwood members expressed among themselves resentment at attempts by main gardeners to shape decisions at the Cottonwood site. Although technically a single group, in practice participants at the two sites were moving in different directions. This fact was reiterated at the March, 1994 annual general meeting of the Gardens society, which was attended by only three members of the Cottonwood site.

Differing approaches between participants at the two sites took the form, in part, of diverging senses of place. Individually, members began to develop attachments to one site or another, rather than the Gardens as a whole. Oliver Kellhammer contrasted the relatively unified approach at the main gardens with what he called a "fluid" aesthetic at Cottonwood, one more open to divergent practices and design elements.

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[6]The photograph is printed on page five of the December, 1993 issue of the VanCity publication *Working Dollars*.

In part, differences between the two sites may have reflected the difference between heartland and frontier. While the main gardens was largely settled, the Cottonwood site was just being opened up. On the frontier, new arrivals could stake out extensive plots for themselves—and some did. And while, at the main gardens, the design of gardening areas and group facilities was mostly complete, at Cottonwood there was room for innovation and growth.

It seems likely that tensions also reflected a lack of organizational continuity between the two groups. Among the key organizers at Cottonwood, only Kellhammer had a history with the main garden group. It was easy for new members at Cottonwood to look at their own project as an autonomous effort, overlooking the many ways in which the years of work at the main gardens had made the Cottonwood expansion possible. (These included, for instance, forging relations with the City, winning community profile and support, establishing financial accountability, and assuming ongoing responsibility for administrative tasks.) Meanwhile, core members at the main gardens were reluctant to relinquish their accustomed roles in making decisions affecting common areas. In these ways, divergent senses of place at Cottonwood and the main gardens reflected the particular history of site acquisition and group membership.

However, issues of gender also entered in. As noted in Chapter 4, women played leading roles from an early stage in the main gardens group. By contrast, at Cottonwood most of the leadership positions were filled by men. Among the coordinators listed on a February, 1994 Cottonwood newsletter, for instance, men outnumbered women eight to four. To Epp, this development represented a potential threat to existing balances in gender relations among the gardeners. Specifically, she related increasing involvement by men to a stage in the development of the organization at which the Gardens could serve as a power base:

So I think as the garden got more developed, and as it started to attract attention.

> there started to be more of the ambitious sort of men who would be joining up. So it means at this stage we have to be a little careful that the power balance doesn't go the other way. And as long as we're conscious of it, I think that we can keep it so there's a balance. But I think that if we lost consciousness of it, for one summer, we would lose it. We're at the stage where there's enough to be gained from being associated with the gardens so that men are interested. This is speaking rather cynically about men, I know. But I think that, in terms of the garden, in terms of the politics, like local politics, this is kind of the way it works. People will join when it's clear that something has been made that you can use as a base, a sort of power base for something else.

To an extent, these comments applied to the Gardens as a whole; but they related most specifically to conditions at Cottonwood.

While they might challenge valued balances, gender differences between the main gardens and Cottonwood could also open new possibilities. When I talked with Leslie Scrimshaw, who had been a co-founder of the Gardens but who was, by 1993, only peripherally involved, she described developments at Cottonwood as suggesting a positive masculine energy. Through their involvement at the Gardens, men were realizing new forms of masculinity not based in relations of dominance.

In an attempt to resolve tensions between participants at Cottonwood and at the main gardens, core members at the main gardens proposed and, at the March, 1994 annual general meeting, achieved the creation of a new executive body to oversee developments at the two sites. Composed of representatives of each site, the new body was presented as a means to avoid conflict by achieving balance and coordination between the two groups. In some ways, this structure is reminiscent of the "commune of communes" often proposed in anarchist theory as a means of achieving coordination among autonomous bodies. However, in this case, the structure was created over the objections of the two Cottonwood members present, who disputed its necessity. In August, 1994, Ann Talbot of the Cottonwood group, a member of the new executive, expressed to me dissatisfaction with the workings of the structure in its first six months.

Conflicting senses of place between members at the main gardens and at

Cottonwood reflect both particular histories of Gardens development and the influence of social divisions. There is a possibility that ongoing tensions could destabilize the group, especially if they were reinforced further by divisions in the locality. Yet there is an underlying degree of cooperation and commonality of purpose that makes that eventuality seem unlikely. And the very tensions may themselves prove fruitful, as they spur the gardeners to explore new roles and new forms of cooperation, ones that transcend the difference between places.

5.4 Beyond Locality

As I've argued, the Gardens have played an important role in their immediate locality; yet they've also had broader influences. Extra-local objectives were listed among the primary aims in the Gardens' constitution: "To serve as a model for other communities wishing to undertake similar projects through outreach, special events, publications, and other appropriate forms of help." In this section, I want to explore some of these influences to see how far the Gardens have pushed beyond the limits of locality. I'm focusing on three examples, which move from the specific to the general: a particular campaign (around herbicides in city parks), city-wide effects (the promotion of other community gardens), and broader influences (representations of the Gardens in print media).

5.4.1 Ecological Politics: Ending Herbicide Use on Parks

Through the 1980s, the playing fields in Strathcona Park, across the street from the main gardens and bordering the future Cottonwood site, were sprayed regularly with herbicides including dicambra and metaprop. This was part of a city-wide spraying program conducted by the Parks Board and intended to keep out "weed" species (i.e., anything other than Kentucky bluegrass) from playing fields.

Use of chemical herbicides and pesticides by the City was opposed by the gardeners as early as October 1, 1987, when they group addressed a letter to Ald. Don Bellamy regarding a proposed pesticides notification bylaw. Bellamy was asked "to consider for a moment, the total eco-environmental impact [that] continued production and use of these substances will have on future generations". Similarly, Gardens Corresponding Secretary Joanne Hochu addressed a letter to Parks Board commissioners on May 26, 1989 urging them to consider alternatives to chemical pest and weed control. She pointed to the Gardens as proof that such alternatives were possible.

But it was in 1991 that the gardeners led a specific campaign against herbicide use. The campaign was spurred in part by a July, 1991 application of the herbicide Roundup to an area adjacent to the Number 1 firehall, intended to control growth of mare's tail. Gardens members registered a complaint with the Parks Board, citing the danger of possible contamination of garden plots. In response, the Board assigned a committee to assess the city's pest management program and make recommendations.

Meanwhile, working together with the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, the gardeners continued a public campaign against spraying in city parks. They produced and distributed a poster with the heading "Poison in our Parks!", intended to mobilize public action against the spraying. The poster listed specific hazards associated with dicamba and metaprop, noting that both could remain active in soil for a period of months and that dicamba was known to persist in ground water. Citizens were urged to communicate their concerns to Parks Board commissioners and city councilors. While they concentrated on Strathcona Park, Gardens members also identified other city parks targeted for spraying and took steps to mobilize groups in other neighbourhoods.

A key focus of the campaign by the community gardeners was the hazard to garden produce posed by local spraying. Rather than endangering an abstract "nature", spraying in Strathcona Park threatened a very immediate food supply—and, as the gardeners noted,

the wild birds using the Gardens sites. It seems that this argument, based in geographical proximity, influenced the decision arrived at by the Parks Board. Late in 1991, the Board bowed to pressure and promised to discontinue herbicide spraying, not only at Strathcona Park but throughout the city.

Though it began with local concerns, the gardeners' anti-herbicide campaign effected change involving the broader municipality; "Their example of community organizing was instrumental in stopping herbicide spraying in all Vancouver parks" (Strathcona Community Gardeners 1992: 118).[7]

5.4.2 A Network of Community Gardens

As I noted in Chapter 3, the Gardens began as part of a project sponsored by City Farmer to achieve a "network" of community gardens throughout the city of Vancouver. The network was in part intended to address difficulties faced by individual local groups attempting to establish gardens. In addition to the Strathcona garden, one other was established during the duration of the project: a rooftop garden at the Manhattan housing cooperative in Vancouver's West End. But no "network" emerged.

Since the founding of the Strathcona garden in 1985, however, three other community gardens have been established in the Vancouver area, all aided in part by the visible example in Strathcona. When residents of the east side neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant lobbied the Parks Board for access to an underutilized park area, they were able to point to the precedent of the Strathcona Gardens, also on Parks land. Mount Pleasant Community Garden organizers contacted the Strathcona group for advice and assistance. Later, groups in Kitsilano and at a student housing complex at the University of British Columbia were able to point to the successful municipal examples of Strathcona and Mount

[7]In another example of trans-local organizing, "The gardeners helped spark a five-neighbourhood coalition that successfully killed a city plan to build a high-tech, environmentally unfriendly garbage-processing plant in Strathcona" (Strathcona Community Gardeners 1992: 118).

Pleasant to support their successful bids for access to land.

The Strathcona gardeners have served as a model for similar efforts in the extended locality, and have provided direct aid to other nascent gardens. In some ways, then, the Gardens has itself fulfilled the functions of the envisioned network. In 1994, this work was ongoing, through avenues such as discussions between members of the Cottonwood garden and groups wanting to establish a community garden at Hastings Park, a large park on Vancouver's east side recently returned from provincial to municipal jurisdiction. And there was talk again (still?) of formalizing a community gardens network, a project that, with the participation of Strathcona gardeners, may yet see fruition.

5.4.3 Powers of Place: Literature on the Gardens

Through force of example, the Strathcona Gardens have aided the creation of new gardens in the Vancouver area. Yet they have also served more broadly as an example of the potential of local organizing. Information about the Gardens has spread through many media, including word of mouth and radio and television coverage. Here I will focus on two of the many written accounts of the Gardens.

The Gardens achieved local, regional, and national press coverage even before they were established. Files kept by the gardeners included, by 1994, more than sixty press accounts relating to the Gardens. While a number of those dating from the period of the Freemason land conflict were critical of the gardeners, the majority of articles portrayed the Gardens as an inspirational example of the potentials of local land management. (A number of such articles were written by Bob Sarti of the *Vancouver Sun*, himself a longtime associate of the Gardens.)

Probably the most prominent press account of the Gardens was a May 13, 1994 article in the Vancouver weekly *Georgia Straight* entitled "An Eden in the Eastside" (Sinclair 1994) and highlighted with a full-page front cover photo. Sinclair focused on the

local, working-class roots of the Gardens, and on their success in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of local residents. She also highlighted the power of imagined geographies. Describing the "long-buried cement blocks and rusted machine parts," the "hookers and johns who leave condoms scattered among the blackberry bushes," she said:

> Once it must have been impossible to imagine this bleak piece of land any other way. *Impossible*. Unless you were one of the allies of the Strathcona Community Gardeners Society. For a decade, they have simply refused to give up the fight to establish a community garden in this neighbourhood, which has the lowest per-capita income of any in Canada . . . . (Sinclair 1994: 9)

The Gardens realized the potential for common people to ground their dreams.

Another account of the Gardens was included in a book on community land management (Meyer and Moosang 1992b) that aimed to show "how restoring the earth begins at the community level" (Meyer and Moosang 1992a: 1). The article on the Gardens focused on their role in politicizing both their own membership and the broader locality.[8] Members of the Gardens tended not just "to grow their own food, but to become involved in the wider social and environmental concerns of the community" (Strathcona Community Gardeners 1992: 115). This contention was supported by descriptions of the Gardens' democratic structure and role in local environmental campaigns. The role of the Gardens in opposing capitalist social and ecological relations was highlighted in a quotation from Joanne Hochu:

> We think people should move away from buying produce and begin growing in their own backyard. We don't have to depend on foreign markets for our fruit and vegetables. It's not ecologically sound, and the way agriculture is now, every time you buy something you are starting a chain of exploitation. (1992: 118)

The Gardens, then, illustrated the potential for a localized institution of mutual aid to challenge dominant social forms. The editors suggested in their introduction to the piece

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[8]This article drew in part on one that had appeared previously in the Vancouver anarchist newspaper *Open Road* (Durutti 1990).

that "[g]rowing among the vegetables and sunflowers is a complex, active, and political community, empowering itself and others through the initial act of planting seeds" (1992: 114).

Participation in the Gardens has awakened among members powerful bonds to place, which suggest that the ability to create common geographies plays an empowering role in overcoming alienation. Analysis of the Freemason land conflict and tension between members of the two Gardens sites demonstrates that these renewed bonds to place don't emerge in a social vacuum, but interact in contradictory ways with social divisions in the locality. But the work of the Gardens is not bounded by place. Through civic campaigns and through assistance to other gardening groups, the Strathcona gardeners have added their influence to broader currents of social change. More generally, in the form of personal and media accounts, the example of the Gardens has diffused outwards, standing as testimony to the revolutionary potential of common labour.

C H A P T E R 6

CONCLUSION: A MODERN COMMONS

We have a funny idea of what land is in North America. We've kind of lost that whole idea about what the commons is, which is a very traditional English or European idea. In North America, we're very much into the private ownership of land. Areas like this are really important, because they're not owned, they're just used by a community. For us, that's the bottom line, is that we're the community. We were disappointed to see the land abused . . ., [but] we've reversed that trend a little bit, and that's a good thing. It's created a space that people can use that are interested in improving their community. Grow their own food. Low income people can develop a certain amount of self-sufficiency. . . . So it's a positive thing for psychology as well as the diet of people.

—Oliver Kellhammer, member of Strathcona Community Gardens, 1994

6.1 Beginning Here

1.
years of living and only these hints to remind you
fading photos, the trace of a scar on your palm
the webs of friendship, breaking in places with the strain

but then holding improbably, delicately;
the child's love and demands, the hours
consumed in the everyday cycles of reweaving life

years of labour and you are left with only this:
the circles of wisdom, the strength in your hands,
and the power that comes from knowing your enemy too well

forces veiled and latent, waiting, waiting—
but in some other world this charged silence could break out
exploding with the radiance of a sun

half-consciously you search out a place to ground your dreams
the power to create something new.

2.
it would be so easy to turn your back on these streets
with their dismal fears, their hidden violences,
streetcorners heavy with the generations of dead

to turn away from the siren heat and noise—
what fool would plant seeds in this desert?
and make your home in the shade of some green valley

it would be so easy to turn your back on these people
broken by years of labour and lottery dreams
twisted by booze and needles and desperate hope

or by the strain of seeing the world too clearly.
when spring returns to pasture and forest glade
it would be easy to leave all this behind

to slip into the comfort of a dream like a summer lake, saying
this is my right, i need this warmth.

3.
instead you begin here with this well worn soil
littered with rubble and decay
composed of the refuse of generations

slowly you turn it over, pick out bones and old bottles
and find there is life here still.
you begin the slow work of regeneration

instead you begin here with these well worn people
for their lined hands, their scarred bodies
reveal images of your own history, or your future

together you will argue over the plans,
painstakingly, and with many mistakes
but you will return to correct them, again and again

no time for pastoral dreams
for these are your streets, your people.

4.
the earth is black and rich
the hot sun, sweat running down your back
the greens sprout and swell, and you consume them

here in the mud, where the lost coast line curved
in some half-remembered past, you mould the earth
and now the waters swirl, and ducks return

in the land and in you its people
some lost power is slowly resurfacing.
years from now you will dream of this place

the flames of colour, the scent of broom on the wind
hidden desires now fixed in the form of the land
and know that the labour was not lost

spring has come, the apple orchard blooms
not in some green valley, but here.

6.2 Reclaiming the Commons

Against Hardin's (1968) thesis, Gary Snyder warned:

> There will be no "tragedy of the commons" greater than this: if we do not recover the commons - regain personal, local, community, and people's direct involvement in sharing (in *being*) the web of the wild world - that world will keep slipping away. (Snyder 1990 36)

In their small way, the Strathcona Community Gardens begin to realize this vision of a modern commons.

Among the people with whom I've discussed my research at the Gardens, several discounted the validity of the Gardens as a potential example of transcendental change. From one direction, people argued that an area with so limited a spatial extent and such a socially modified ecology could reveal little of relevance to the destruction of nature at global scales. From another direction, people dismissed the Gardens as a quaint but superficial diversion, far removed from the serious business of political economy. To an extent, such criticisms are well founded. In the decade since they began, the Gardens have directly involved less than a thousand people. Even those individuals have remained primarily tied to other systems of production and reproduction, meeting only a tiny portion of their material needs through production at the Gardens. Even if successful, revival of ecological health at the Gardens would do almost nothing to counter the destructiveness of dominant relations. At best, the Gardens are a marginal form, subsumed in the

surrounding forces of capitalist modernity.

Yet, as hooks suggested, marginality may be itself a crucial site of resistance. Viewed from the lofty vantage point of critical theory, the Gardens may seem unimpressive; but, measured in local, emotional, and ethical terms, their value is far from trivial. I want to remember Kropotkin's thoughtful appraisal in *Ethics*, the work he left unfinished at his death: "we have to study [revolutionary] tendencies . . . which exist at the present moment—in the form of the timid attempts which are being made, as well as in the form of the potentialities concealed in modern society . . ." (Kropotkin 1992 [1925]: 23). At least, the Gardens count as one such "timid attempt", one that affirms Wagner's (1982: 9) appraisal of the place of community gardens:

> Community gardening is a small but serious challenge to many current policies and practices. It challenges the economically and ecologically destructive policies of agriculture and local politics, which put profit before human needs—greenery, open space, fresh food. Community gardening challenges the social and economic structures that keep a vast number of urban and rural people from owning land and from gaining a small measure of control over their own lives.

Remembering Kropotkin, it is entirely fitting that the seeds of this agricultural challenge are to be found in the heart of the modern metropolis.

Against the claim that place-based balances have been irretrievably lost in the maelstrom of modernity, my findings strongly support the view that they can be reclaimed, and at a higher level. Yet local or "community" control are in themselves not enough. A successful return to place must address the *structural* sources of alienation, while being alive at the same time to power relations in the processes of change. My research has revealed the Gardens project as strikingly successful in promoting cooperative relations, enhanced senses of place, and ecological revival. Many members have emerged highly politicized and empowered. Social processes have gone hand in hand with ecological regeneration—diversity of species, soil health, wildlife habitat. Key factors in this reclamation of place, I argue, are production for use, communal control, attention to power

relations within the group, and direct democratic decision making. The facts that production is for use rather than profit and that the land is communally controlled have infused Gardens processes with an ecological logic of local self-reliance and mutual aid. Close attention by key members to issues of gender and class relations, in particular, have maintained a high degree of cooperation and equality. Together, these factors have begun to produce both a diverse and revitalized ecology and a powerful community.

But social divisions have not simply disappeared. Contradictions of "race", of gender, and of class linger beneath the surface, affecting intra-group relations and shaping who has effective access to decision-making power. Some of these contradictions entered into latent tensions between participants in the main gardens and those in the Cottonwood annex. The persistence of such tensions shows clearly how structural factors need to be reinforced by conscious agency. It also suggests that limited, local politics can challenge but cannot, in itself, resolve contradictions in the broader society. To do so, it would need to be woven into a broader revolutionary project.

As seen specifically in the process of mapping, the Gardens have been a site of imagined geographies. Here is Ellie dreaming of new lands: "imagining sitting in summer under the trellis with moving people, backs, sides, at small distances, absorbed in their own earth" (Epp 1986-1987: 11a). With Rose (1993), Gardens members have imagined an "elsewhere" beyond the violences of patriarchy and capital. But they haven't stopped there. Mixing dream and labour, they have begun to ground metaphor. The gardeners are cultivating the power to make their imagined geographies real.

The Strathcona Community Gardens are "not owned, they're just used by a community", as Oliver put it. The similarities I noted between the Gardens and a traditional village common are by no means limited to surface appearance. The essential characteristics of the Strathcona project - production for use, communal endeavour, the reweaving of the social and the natural - replicate key ingredients of "traditional" society.

This replication reinvents a process wedding ecological regeneration to needs satisfaction.

But the essence of the Gardens is not mere replication of a past form; it is potentially progressive. One key difference from traditional systems is the embedding of this system within a much more complex set of interdependencies. Members are not bound by law or custom to this place, but come together freely; they meet their needs through both local and global interactions. Related to this, a second key difference is one of consciousness. To a degree, members of the Gardens have consciously challenged dominant relations of power. They have begun to forge new relations based on a particularly modern consciousness, the result of interlinking struggles of resistance. To the extent that community gardeners are aware of the inner dynamics of their work, and of their key differences with dominant forms, their project acquires a crucial self-consciousness generally lacking in traditional society. The late Marx envisioned "the return of modern societies to a higher form of the most archaic type—collective production and appropriation." In small ways, the Gardens begin to realize this vision, synthesizing tradition and modernity.

Synthesis. I'm thinking of some of the dualisms discussed in Chapter 1:

private	public
nature	society
rural	urban
feminine	masculine
body	mind

I think that the Gardens begin to contest these dualisms, on theoretical but also on very practical grounds. They are a private but also a public space. They reweave social process with nature. They are an image of the countryside in the heart of the city. They achieve some balance in female and male design. They meld manual labour and mental creation.

There occurs to me a further dualism bridged by the Gardens: that of ecology/economy. Ecological struggles in the industrialized North pit the self-identified

protectors of nature against the workers whose livelihood depends on commercial access to natural materials. The most intense struggles centre around bringing land out of production by setting it aside as park or reserve. Understandably, workers whose jobs are threatened by this process view environmentalism as a threat. Yet the exclusive focus on "wilderness" itself reflects an alienated, dualistic view of nature as external and pristine. As Hecht and Cockburn (1989) noted in relation to the Brazilian Amazon, reserves may, by definition, lack a local population materially committed to their protection. The example of the Gardens shows clearly that production can be harmonized with ecological regeneration. Indeed, the successes of the Gardens begin precisely with bringing land *into* production.

The potential of place is important to Northern, industrialized peoples searching for alternatives to industrial capitalism. But it may be an even more pressing concern in the South, where revolutionary movements are being forced to reconsider not only strategy, but basic analyses. Is the conquest of state power any longer a realistic goal? If so, is it desirable? The apologists of capital interpret the decay and collapse of state socialism as proof of the moral triumph of the "free" market. Following Kropotkin, this collapse is more convincingly interpreted as the final failure of state domination and the industrial conquest of nature as means to general emancipation. Against the old models, rank and file activists are searching for other possibilities, and looking in particular at the potentials of local, direct democracy. Such possibilities will emerge necessarily from the specific circumstances of each place and struggle. But the example of the Gardens suggests, at least, that the praxis of a revitalized revolution may centre on the reweaving of ecology and community as an immediate aim, not as the eventual outcome of some disembodied dialectic.

The potential for community modes of production to contribute to an ecological socialism is supported by experience with community gardens in Cuba in the 1990s. One response to economic crises sparked by the collapse of trade with Eastern Europe was the

wide-scale creation of community gardens associated with particular neighbourhoods, organizations, schools, and workplaces. The comments of a team of agronomists, agricultural economists, and farmers who studied community gardens in Cuba echo many of my conclusions regarding the Strathcona Community Gardens:

> Localized production alleviates the problems of transportation and post-harvest storage. Small-scale production relies on human resources, as opposed to heavy machinery and other energy-taxing inputs. With the Cuban diet quite low in vitamins and minerals, produce from urban gardens can help alleviate these deficiencies. The crop diversification common to small-scale gardening also greatly reduces vulnerability to plant diseases and pests. Finally, through urban gardening, individuals are empowered as they work to resolve their problems of food availability, instead of looking to the state or the black market to supply their needs. (Rosset and Benjamin 1994: 93)

Reuniting people with the nature they depend on, community gardens achieve a degree of local autonomy by bypassing markets and the state. Reclaiming the commons may begin to resolve contradictions of state socialism as well as capitalism.

6.3 Implications

My findings suggest a number of lines of further research, and of action. I want to highlight some of these, moving in each case from the particular to the general.

6.3.1 Research

At the Strathcona Community Gardens themselves, my study has perhaps raised more questions than it has answered. I see room for more detailed research in most of the areas I've examined. Taking soil health as an example, a new set of soil analyses might provide a quantitative basis for firmer conclusions regarding changed soil composition. A second example is nutrient and energy cycles, which could be traced in much finer detail than the generalized form that I have presented. More detailed analyses of this sort might confirm my findings, but they could equally well challenge them, calling for more careful

and specific interpretation. And there are a number of important questions I didn't get to. One that occurs to me now is the food value of production at the Gardens. (In fact, I collected some data on this question, but didn't get around to using it.) Understanding of social relations at the Gardens could be enhanced by expanding analysis to include the area of sexual orientation. Another question is the extent of internal dissent. How are differences in vision worked out in practice?

As I have emphasized, outcomes at the Gardens reflected very local and particular interdependencies. For this reason, these outcomes can't be taken as necessarily representative of community gardens as a whole. Comparative analysis could contrast the Strathcona Community Gardens with other examples of the form. Such analysis could ask, for instance, whether similar dynamics arise in community gardens that have been set up by state agencies, rather than arising more spontaneously. It would also be valuable to compare the community garden to the more individualized form of the European-style allotment (in which areas of communal production are generally absent). Both are forms of use-value production, but allotments lack the communal and often the local characteristics of community gardens. Would social and natural relations reflect this difference? Finally, the Gardens are structured intimately by their location in a core capitalist state. Analysis of community gardens in regions of the periphery could challenge and deepen theoretical conclusions regarding the revolutionary potential of place.

Community gardening could also be instructively compared to other forms of commons systems. One example would be community forestry (Hammond and Hammond 1992), which I mentioned in Chapter 1. Clearly, community gardening and community forestry are separated by differences of scale and complexity. Recapturing use-value production at the forest level would also imply difficulties not present in food production. Research on community forests (as found, for instance, at Geraldton, Ontario) might suggest potentials for recapturing the commons under differing conditions and at larger

spatial scales.[1] From another direction, there is room to analyze surviving commons systems in terms of their potential as sites of resistance. These might include remnants of commons regimes in Britain (Wilson 1993), *ejidos* and *allus* (indigenous communities) in Mexico and the Andes, or Native reserve lands and traditional territories in Canada and the U.S.

At the level of theory, my study calls for much more careful work on the interpenetration of social relations and relations with nature in the construction of place, from both green and left perspectives. Directions for such research are suggested in both the strengths and the weaknesses of my theoretical account (Chapter 1). Ecological theorists have to address in much more subtle ways the role of social domination in reproducing alienation from nature. Left theorists must acknowledge the importance of relations with nature and the potentials of place. Above all, we need to continue to explore geographies in between, already hinted at in a range of critical work.

And "[l]anguage is also a place of struggle" (hooks 1990: 145). I have struggled throughout this study to speak in my own voice, in a language free of exclusive terms, unnecessary abstraction. In doing so, I struggled against my own years at the university, where I began to master the dead languages of theory. It was here, in the discussion of theory, that I was most keenly aware of my failings. We need to put ourselves back in our work. We need to continue the struggle to form our theory in everyday words—to "dream of a common language" (Rich 1978). We will succeed only by continually linking our ideas to action in the world.

6.3.2 Action

What are some implications of my research for members of the Gardens? Here are

[1] A beginning place here might be Patrick Matakala's work on social and natural outcomes of community forestry, conducted through the University of British Columbia's Department of Forestry Resources Management.

a few that occur to me. In examining cooperation in production and distribution at the Gardens, I noted that the institution for sharing seeds, seedlings, and produce - the "free table" - was not matched in the area of labour sharing. Given that the free table was widely used, some formalized institution for labour sharing for individual plot production might be of value. In the case of further challenges to land tenure, the historical context outlined in Chapter 3 could prove useful. Steps could be taken to address divisions of ethnicity at the Gardens. For example, the organization could consider reserving a percentage of plots as they become available and allocating them for distribution through Chinese Canadian community organizations. Conducting specified social and decision-making meetings in Cantonese rather than English, or in both languages, might further encourage active participation. A lingering cause for concern are divergent senses of place at the two sites. The executive structure adopted at the March, 1994 annual general meeting could be reexamined in terms of whether it is meeting the needs of members at both sites, and modified or replaced as necessary.

It seems to me that there is room for establishing firmer links between community gardens and other grassroots movements, and among community gardens in diverse neighbourhoods. Of course, no one is looking to go to more meetings. But in Vancouver, and elsewhere, the establishment of a formalized network of community gardens might help to spread the influence of the form, and to assist new groups in overcoming barriers to accessing land.[2] Also, conflict with institutions of the local state might be avoided by achieving the direct participation of municipal government in such a network (although this could also change the nature of the Gardens).

Regarding related forms of commons regimes, my research suggests the crucial importance of addressing conflicting interests and relations of power. Returning again to

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[2]Examples of successful groups are the Grow T.O.gether Community Gardeners in Toronto (Bailey 1993) and Seattle's P-Patch (Eckdish Knack 1994).

the example of community forestry, advocates of this form would do well to study in detail divisions of class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability in their chosen locality. Social contradictions in the locality can be expected to intimately penetrate the alternative form (as was the case at the Gardens). If revived commons regimes are to serve as sites of resistance, they must challenge relations of domination through both conscious action and structural change.

More broadly, my research calls for a critical reappraisal of the role of locality in revolutionary politics. I have placed this study among traditions committed to revaluing our everyday, common experience as workers, parents, lovers, friends, and participants in movements for change. Capitalism is a global system, and in the end it must be challenged at that level. But revolutionary politics cannot ignore the everyday, local reality of here and now. Politics of resistance can - must - be conducted on many fronts at once. Reclaiming communal nature is one important strategy. Pockets of resistance like the Strathcona Community Gardens meet our common needs, raise consciousness, and give us glimpses of the worlds we're struggling to achieve. Capital, too, had its own modest beginnings.

At the December, 1993 meeting of the gardening society, two videos were shown relating to the Gardens. The first, a segment of a television gardening show, painted an idyllic image of the Gardens as a place of beauty and harmony, a refuge from the rigours of life on the East Side. While they were evidently pleased at the positive coverage, Gardens members couldn't help squirming in their seats. This tame, white, sanitized view denied the intensity, complexity, and conflict that made the Gardens a dynamic and changing place. The second video was three segments from a work in progress on the Gardens by members Ellie Epp and Louie Ettling. I want to close my study with images from that work.

In the first segment, Epp and Ettling introduced the locality through a series of streetcorner shots: people hanging out on the front steps of Carnegie Centre, a man in the

doorway of his old, Strathcona house. The second segment, "Curly Kale", was one long, slow pan of a kale copse, juxtaposed to the quick, dazzling reflections of a Gardens member describing his place in the world. The third segment was the herb garden at dusk: voices, the dark outlines of foliage, birds calling, motors.

Reinventing logics of the past, the Strathcona Community Gardens hint at possible futures, even as they transform - in small but significant ways - the contradictory present.

Strathcona Community Gardens Questionnaire

THE INFORMATION GATHERED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE will be used in writing a masters thesis on the Strathcona Community Gardens. Individual responses will be kept confidential. If there are any questions you prefer for whatever reason not to answer, please leave them blank. Please fill this out with pen. If you have any questions, give me a call (not later than 9 pm) at 733-8447. Thanks for your help; I hope that the research findings will be valuable to the Gardeners.

Nedjo Rogers

Your Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

A. Your Plots

1. How many standard size plots (that is, 7 feet by 15 feet) do you have at the gardens? _____

2. Which garden(s) do you have a plot in? (check one or both)

___ Strathcona ___ Cottonwood

3. Roughly, how many species of plants did you grow in your plots this last year (Sept. 30, 1992 to Sept 30, 1993)?

Number of vegetable species: _____.

Number of herb species: _____.

Number of flower species: _____.

4. Of the vegetables, please list your five highest yielders, including, if you can, a rough estimate of how much you harvested. *examples:*

name	amount harvested
bush beans	5 lbs.
zucchini	20 medium

name	amount harvested
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

5. About how many months of the year do you have crops in your plots (not including perennial plants)? _____ .

6. Do you save any seeds to use the next year? (circle one) Yes / No

7. Are insects a problem in your plot? (circle one) Yes / No

If Yes, what techniques do you use to deal with them? (check off)

___ chemical pesticides

___ soap or other biological substance

___ removal by hand

___ intercropping

other: _____

8. What substances do you apply to maintain fertility? (check off)

___ chemical fertilizer

___ compost

___ mulch

___ bone meal or lime

___ manure

other: _____

B. You and the Gardens

1. What was your first year of membership in the Gardens? _____.

2. Did you have previous gardening experience?

___ none ___ 1-2 yrs. ___ more than 2 yrs.

3. Are you now, or have you been in the past, a coordinator, secretary, treasurer, or chairperson in the Gardens? Yes / No

4. About how many blocks away from the Gardens is your home? (Count north-south blocks as one-half, east-west blocks as one.) _____.

5. What areas of the Gardens did you work on in the past year (Sept. 30, 1992 to Sept. 30, 1993)? Check off, and include, if you can, an estimation of how much time you spent. Also, check off if you are a member of the committee for this area.

area	# hours	committee member?
___ bees	_____	___
___ children's/social	_____	___
___ compost	_____	___
___ espalier orchard	_____	___
___ fences	_____	___
___ greenhouse	_____	___
___ herb garden	_____	___
___ path maintenance	_____	___
___ wild orchard	_____	___
___ [illegible] irrigation	_____	___
___ wild area	_____	___
other _____	_____	___
___ meetings/paperwork	_____	

6. Which of the following applies to you? (please check one)

___ employed ___ self-employed
___ not employed ___ retired ___ student

7. Besides you and other members of the Gardens, how many people worked regularly in your plot in the past year?

___ none ___ # family members ___ # friends

8. This past year (Sept. 30, 1992 to Sept. 30, 1993), did you:

Yes / No Share seeds or seedlings directly with another gardener?
Yes / No Receive seeds or seedlings directly from another gardener?
Yes / No Give seeds or seedlings to the "free table"?

Yes / No Receive seeds or seedlings from the "free table"?
Yes / No Get help in your plot from another gardener?
Yes / No Work on another gardener's plot?
Yes / No Get help in your plot from a friend who's not a Gardens member?
Yes / No Share produce directly with another gardener?
Yes / No Receive produce directly from another gardener?

Yes / No Give produce to the "free table"?
Yes / No Receive produce from the "free table"?
Yes / No Share produce with a friend who's not a Gardens member?

9. How would you describe the block you live on? Check off as many of the following words as fit.

___ friendly	___ passive	___ relaxing
___ bland	___ colourful	___ depressed
___ messy	___ draining	___ cheerless
___ energizing	___ drab	___ healthy
___ threatening	___ lovely	___ idle
___ expansive	___ welcoming	___ ugly
___ shabby	___ constricted	___ jarring
___ blighted	___ elegant	___ safe
___ peaceful	___ tense	___ tidy

10. How would you describe the Gardens? Check off as many of the following words as fit.

___ energizing	___ drab	___ healthy
___ threatening	___ lovely	___ idle
___ expansive	___ welcoming	___ ugly
___ shabby	___ constricted	___ jarring
___ blighted	___ elegant	___ safe
___ peaceful	___ tense	___ tidy
___ friendly	___ passive	___ relaxing
___ bland	___ colourful	___ depressed
___ messy	___ draining	___ cheerless

Would you be willing to participate in a short interview about the Community Gardens? _____.
Thank you again for taking the time to fill this out. Please return the questionnaire by **Nov. 30** (or as soon as you can after that) to: Nedjo Rogers, 3279 W. 8th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6K 2C6.

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