

**PhD THESIS**  
**Abridged Thesis**

Zsuzsanna Fácányi  
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Szent István University

**The Interpretation of Budapest's Community Gardens from the  
Approach of Landscape Architecture and Sociology**

**PhD THESIS**

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2017

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## RESEARCH HISTORY

### The significance of the topic

While the spread of community gardens across Europe took place at a blistering pace, their emergence in the cities of East-Central Europe, in contrast to Western European countries, came relatively late, only at the beginning of the first decade following the turn of the millennium, a development quite probably brought about by the opening up and novel use of urban spaces as it can recently be seen in Budapest as well (Polyák, 2012, p. 15). The above developments reflect a change in the relationship to the physical and built environment in addition to the increased importance of local identities, the sense of community belonging and the growing need for public spaces and green areas available for use by local communities (Kocsis, et al., 2017).

Gardening, that is, the experience of growing food, finding relief and solace in a garden is a primeval basic need as is reliance on the community (Alexander, 1979). As a result of such a strong and sustained demand, gardens are being established offering excellent opportunities: the city dwellers that cultivate them, either consciously or without being aware of it, shift their focus from collective gardening to creating a social community thus allowing urban gardens to evolve into scenes of community building. The gardens of Budapest cannot assume a key role in food supply, however, they show great strength in provoking thought and shaping views, they are capable of sensitizing and inspiring urban gardeners to take action (Fácányi, et al., 2016).

The sheer number of the gardens (approximately 40) established in Budapest over the past five years reflects a strong interest and urban demand. Nevertheless, exploratory research into the topic in Hungary remains scarce. Since the use of urban space heavily depends on the particular culture and society (A. Gergely & Bali, 2007, p. 147), the interpretation of international research findings in the Hungarian context has been long overdue.

Numerous studies have offered convincing evidence for the value of the function that community gardens represent, e.g. (Bitušíková, 2016, pp. 32-44) (COST European

Science Foundation, 2012) (Carrot City Research Group, 2014) (Gavriliadou, et al., 2015, pp. 60-85) (Madlener, 2009, pp. 21-44) (Müller, 2012, pp. 22-54) (Rosol, 2006, pp. 281-296) (Tappert, 2016, pp. 16-441). Regarding the impacts of Hungarian community gardens on the heavily atomized local society (Valuch, 2005, pp. 98-118), key importance is attributed to their capacity to establish small communities and to influence the shaping of the neighbourhood through collective effort. Further importance is attached to the novel communal use of open space through newly established community gardens (Studio Metropolitana Urbanisztikai Kutató Központ Kht, 2006, pp. 73-75).

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are formulated once the specific topics related to community gardens are identified and narrowed down.

Since the concept „community garden” is used as a broad term referring to considerably different types of gardens not only in common parlance but also in the academic literature in the field of urban planning, urban design and urban sociology, it is necessary to first give an overview of the use of the concept and then offer a definition for the specific type of gardens studied in the present research. Available international literature focusing on *community gardens*<sup>1</sup> is comprehensive, see for example (Halder, et al., 2011, pp. 266-278) (Madlener, 2009) (Pudup, 2008) (Solnit, 2012) (RUAFA, 2001). The main focus of this study is on community gardens that are located in Budapest, connected to residential areas, gardened collectively by a group of at least 30 persons producing fruit and vegetables. These gardens do not include ones practising animal husbandry. Such community gardens have also been in operation in several rural towns outside Budapest since 2010<sup>2</sup> (KÉK, 2017) but the gardens located in the capital city offer greater room for comparison due to their diverse context-related scenes. The selection of a specific type of garden is followed by the overview of the gardens to offer a basis for interpretation, for the selection of the gardens most suitable for in-depth study and to

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<sup>1</sup> When the expression is used as a broad term, it is in italics.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the cities of Debrecen, Eger, Győr, Kecskemét, Miskolc, Pécs, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szekszárd, Tata, Tatabánya.

provide ground for further comprehensive studies. In sum,

***Objective 1* Providing a definition. Creation of a database and documentation of community gardens established in Budapest in the period of 2010-2017.**

As a novel form urban space use, community gardens are related to the new phenomena that emerged at the turn of the millennium and have transformed the society of Budapest since then. The previously prevailing tendencies that had foreshadowed a decreasing and ageing population coupled with the formation of slums in downtown areas have been replaced by the new trend of gentrification marked by the influx of younger and more affluent social strata into inner city areas, a change also reflected in a new approach to the use of public spaces (Kocsis, 2007, p. 187). The above re-urbanization process has brought about the revival of parts of the inner city zone and the influence of the appearance of the new and transformed use of urban space has now become visible outside the city centre as well, i.e. in the emergence of community gardens in transitory zones and suburban districts among others. The creation of community gardens has led to a novel, restricted form of open space use which represents a unique value in the capital due to its communal maintenance. However, as a result of their uncommon function, these gardens do not always smoothly fit into the urban texture even though they are well-tended and neat in most cases. Thus, the aim is to interpret their landscape value and urban embeddedness through the approach and means of landscape architecture, In sum,

***Objective 2* A detailed analysis of the open space design of selected community gardens of Budapest**

Budapest's first community gardens were initiated and organized by two non-governmental organizations whose ranks were completed by a few district governments in 2014 followed by the appearance of corporate support and initiative. The study here focuses on exploring the motivation and differing work methods of the above actors at the same time investigating the correlations between the ways community gardens are organized and operated. Special attention is paid to the interpretation of the role of local governments who employ the concept of community garden as a part of open space

development and the social rehabilitation of housing estates. Hence, to fully comprehend the community gardening phenomenon, it is necessary to consider a particular type of Western European practice, i.e. community gardens established with the aim of fostering social inclusion such as the so-called intercultural gardens that target the integration of refugees and migrants or gardens that facilitate the occupational inclusion of the socially disadvantaged (Müller, 2002, pp. 15-21) (Nomadisch Grün, 2012). The issues relating to the adoption of such approaches also present a highly topical subject but their in-depth study lies beyond the scope of the present thesis.

The impact of community gardens on shaping views is considered to be quite remarkable in the Hungarian environment: they may assume an increasing role in the process of creating a sustainable urban life, raising environmental awareness and a recycling economy<sup>3</sup> (Müller, 2012, pp. 38-40) . In sum,

### ***Objective 3* Detailed analysis of the social background of selected community gardens in Budapest**

In Western European countries, urban gardens originally established with the purpose of producing food have been further developed and evolved into a creative form of collective urban farming. These projects have their roots in the idea of community gardens, though with a different aim, i.e. economically efficient production. Since in Hungary rural production areas and conditions for the supply of cities are available, priority shall be given to the issue of the development of local food supply chains and to the improvement of a more conscious consumer attitude with regard to food supply. Thus, while the introduction of production-oriented urban gardens is needed with a view to assessing the production potential of community gardens, the present study does not engage in the examination of the specific ways they are implemented in Hungary. With regard to Budapest, the establishment of community gardens is primarily related to inner city areas and housing estates. On the one hand the appearance of community gardens in areas occupied by housing estates can be understood as a result of an increased need caused by construction deficiencies. On the other hand, it may be interpreted as the

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<sup>3</sup> A reference to the train of thought of sociologist Christa Müller.

outcome of the strong interplay between the conscious intentions of establishing gardens and territorial development. These gardens offer a considerable extension of living space to the participants, an important issue to consider against the backdrop of the size and design of residential blocks in Budapest (Egedy, 2005, pp. 246-247) and the use of green urban areas (Studio Metropolitana Urbanisztikai Kutató Központ Kht, 2006, p. 73). The gardens established in the inner city areas that are being transformed as a result of gentrification may also become the means of green area development and social mobilization. Regarding the city itself, a definitely positive ecological impact is recognized in the function of these gardens as the means of low-cost open space development<sup>4</sup>, since while employing only moderate amounts of initial investments they make use of existing frameworks, social support and participation mobilized through civic initiatives and agents. In sum, considering the set of criteria of the first three objectives:

***Objective 4***    **The interpretation of the impact of Budapest’s community gardens on the use of urban spaces**

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<sup>4</sup> They are considered to be low-cost developments with regard to the moderate amount they need both for the initial investment and their maintenance.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Reasoning and Logic**

The spread of community gardens in Hungary is a relatively young social phenomenon. The civic process by which they were established and the diversity of community initiatives call for an inductive, exploratory approach to move towards generalizations and theory instead of a deductive reasoning to test hypotheses based on existing theories. Within the exploratory social scientific approach, the study applies the so-called *grounded theory* that can also be interpreted within the framework of landscape architectural analysis allowing the convergence and harmonization of the research methodology of these two disciplines (Babbie, 1995) (Charmaz, 2006). The above research process starts with the formulation of deliberately open-ended questions that become more specific with the advancement of the research process. The aim of this particular approach is to methodically interpret the empirical data and phenomena observed with a view to the acquisition of new theoretical knowledge. In the course of the above process significance is attributed to the discovery of „categories” instead of the number of cases examined. The author in her capacity as researcher takes part in each type of investigation occurring during the research which is based on the constructivist perspective of the grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). According to this approach, research is interpretive in nature and „*takes account of the fact... that both the researcher and the participant of the research (informant) interpret meanings and actions*” (Kucsera, 2008, p. 104).

### **Data Collection and Processing**

The first phase of data collection consists of the critical overview of the relevant national and international literature in the course of which the interpretation and systemization of data collected from primary and secondary sources are conducted. Primary sources include the organizers and websites of community gardens while secondary sources contain previous research into community gardens and the data collected therein. The next step is the physical inspection of the gardens completed by the survey of some of

the gardens through questionnaires. Data is recorded in a comprehensive table of Budapest's community gardens which is subsequently used in several sections of the thesis in accordance with various contextual requirements. The table presents all the active, defunct and planned community gardens of Budapest that the author was aware of until July 2017; gives an overview of the organizers as well as the parameters related to the establishment of the gardens and the use of the plots. Based on the above data, the sites of case studies are selected. Quantitative data is then collected by conducting a questionnaire containing questions that investigate the following issues from a broad perspective: the motivations of gardeners, their personality, the use and quality of the community gardens and the green surfaces of the local living spaces. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, the questionnaires are not representative, the correlations revealed are used as information representing tendencies. The responses to the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire are assessed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software for statistical analysis. The qualitative data related to the garden communities is collected through field work and the interviews conducted with the members, organizers and designers of the gardens are complete with the open-ended and closed-ended questions of the questionnaire. Regarding the landscape analysis and evaluation, mechanical data collection is employed in the course of which different considerations are stressed in the case of each individual garden.

## **Structure of Thesis**

The thesis is divided into three main sections. The first chapter of the *Research Topic* section is the *Introduction* focusing on the significance of the research topic, its broader context and the way it is narrowed down to foster the fulfilment of the aims of the research. The second chapter entitled *Research Objectives* outlines the aims of the research and the hypotheses drafted as its starting point. This is then followed by a chapter on *Materials and Methods*. The last chapter, *Literature Review* includes the analysis of the issues inevitable for the interpretation of the establishment of community gardens: the longing for nature in cities, changes in rural and urban life, the topic-related concepts of the use of urban space as understood by landscape architecture and sociology, the related urban structures as well as the multi-faceted character of urban

farms called community gardens. The first chapter, *An Overview of Community Gardens in Budapest* of the second **Data Collection and Processing** section of the thesis offers an analysis of the territorial division and use of gardens followed by *Grouping of Community Gardens* that reveals the connection between the need reflected by the gardens and their organizers. The *Case Studies* chapter includes the detailed analysis of eight gardens in Budapest. The third section, **Findings and Conclusions** outlines the theoretical results, i.e. the theses, as well as the practical results in the form observations in addition to the summary of all scientific findings.

## FINDINGS

Some of the initial assumption did not allow for the formulation of sufficiently evidenced results. Thus, the intention to create a typology of gardens based on the cooperative interaction of distinct sites, participants and organizers could not be realized in the planned form. Furthermore, the testing of some of the assumption requires research that includes the comprehensive study of all the gardens in Budapest which lies beyond the scope of the present PhD thesis. That may though serve as the basis of further research as it is proposed at the end of the study. In the following section the theoretical results are summarized in the form of a list of *theses* while practical results are outlined in the form of *observations*.

### Theses

**THESES 1** **The community gardens established in Budapest in the period from 2010 to 2017 are defined as a novel form of urban space use which involves the development of communities and/or green areas through urban fruit and vegetable production. This type of gardens as public gardens of restricted use manages both urban production areas and social resources.** The community gardens investigated in the thesis offer a venue and room for cooperation, their influence on the use of open space and on society in general is remarkable. Regarding the use of the concept and its possible interpretations, it was established in the course of reviewing the academic literature that it is imperative to consider the broader meaning of the concept of

„community garden” at the same time clarifying which particular type of garden it refers to since it may denote significantly different urban gardens as it is evident from the fact that both in common parlance and in the Hungarian and English-language academic literature focusing on urbanism within the discipline of urban sociology it is used as an umbrella term.

**THESIS 2 Over the past five years the intention of non-governmental organizations and actors as well as district governments to establish community gardens in the vicinity of housing estates and the inner city gentrification areas of Budapest has brought a strong public need to the surface. Above need may be directed either at the community or at the individual.** In the course of the survey of Budapest’s community gardens, it was revealed that through the cultivation of individual beds the opportunity to satisfy direct individual needs remains, thus the original needs and demands are sustained, even if there is no community experience. The results of the interview made with the leaders, organizers and members of the gardens show that no community garden has been closed in Budapest through lack of applicants, there is a constant flow of new applicants for abandoned beds. The continuous presence of public demand is evidenced by the fact that the gardens keep working even in the face of serious problems that could potentially undermine the use of the gardens, for example the lack of source of water for several months (*Apollón Garden* and *Grund Gard3n*), the lack of proper storage space for tools (*Békási Garden*, *Apollón Garden*), the tight deadline of only a few weeks for moving to another site (*Grund Gard3n*).

**THESIS 3 The primary aim of fruit and vegetable production in Budapest’s community gardens is not to build up savings through becoming self-sufficient but to engage in the community, nature, new experiences, to find a sense of achievement and relax. Thus, they chiefly serve recreational purposes.** In the course of the survey, a total of 144 questionnaires completed by garden members were assessed representing 22 community gardens in Budapest. The initial aim of building up savings was only marked by a few respondents (12%) even though the majority (92%) considered the consumption of individually grown fruit and vegetables important. Hence, the growing of produce by members might be considered as the source of pride and experience. In addition, 84% of the respondents thought at the beginning that it was important for them

to create something within the community that would make all the members proud. With regard to further motives, more than half of the respondents (67%) selected closeness to land and nature; while environmental awareness, the opportunity for new form of land use and hope for variety was selected by 59%, 64% and 55% of the respondents respectively. An open-ended question was designed to find out about the most important benefit of an operating community garden. The answers subsequently classified are as follows in the order of frequency: community experience (40%); production, vegetables grown for own consumption (32%); connection to nature (19%); useful leisure activity, experiences, entertainment (15%); relaxation (13%); sense of achievement (11%); healthy exercise (8%); teaching of children (7%). There was no single respondent marking savings or self-sufficiency. In sum, it can be stated that community gardens offer participants the opportunity to satisfy individual recreational needs. Through their recreational value, community gardens extend the existing functions of the green network system.

**THESIS 4 Community gardeners do not tend to have any experience in agricultural production.** Based on the questionnaire-based survey conducted in 22 community gardens in Budapest, it can be concluded that 23% of the respondents had no previous experience in gardening, 51% had some knowledge of gardening learnt in the gardens of their parents while 14% acquired some gardening skills in their own holiday homes. Further optional responses to the above question did not bring any significant result, no other current gardening activities were marked by respondents. With regard to gardening skills and experience, rural descent and the gardening activities performed in the gardens of parents are the dominant factors. No correlation may be detected between previous gardening experience and the quality of maintaining the community gardens.

**THESIS 5 In some cases community gardens fail to fully become an integral part of the surrounding urban environment due to their atypical function and the scale of their use of land area. With regard to the above issue, the selection of the site, the provision for a transition of scale between the garden and its immediate environment and the vertical layering (stratification) of plants have an increased significance.** With a view to the harmonization of the scale and structure of the garden

with its close proximity, it is more advantageous to apply a transitory function and arrange the vegetation in different layers (e.g. floor, herbaceous, shrub, understorey, etc.) to provide a smooth transition and devise a vertical plant structure in the case of gardens occupying tracts of larger-scale open spaces. In contrast, in the case of community gardens established on building or vacant plots, it is easier to solve the problem of their integration into the environment through their connection to and leaning on existing plants and the built structure which in turn offer protection for the gardens. The issue of the integration of the new function into the environment, however, only emerges when the organizers and the members of the gardening community deliberately wish to establish a connection to the surroundings, an effort that is not present in some of the case study sites (e.g. *Kisdíófa Garden*, *IBIS Garden*). The above gardens are formed in a way that prevents passers-by from glimpsing into the garden, they offer no information for the public, thus the issue of their integration simply does not arise.

**THESIS 6 Community gardens are suitable to encourage the use of open public spaces in the areas between the plots of individual buildings of housing estates as a result of which urban gardeners can intensively use and maintain the territory as public spaces of restricted use.** Parts of open public spaces that previously had been scarcely tended by local residents for the very reason that they were public and thus belonged to just anyone are now taken over by local urban gardeners and become intensively used, collectively maintained and safe green areas. Five out of the sample gardens in the case studies are located on housing estates. They include the following: *Első Kispesti Garden*, *Békási Garden*, *Órmezei Garden*, *Apollón Garden* and *Lőrinci Garden*. Before these areas were turned into gardens, they had been grassy surfaces without a definite function, except for *Lőrinci Garden* and *Apollón Garden* where certain parts of the site had been covered by asphalt. Based on the questionnaire responses given by the members tending the gardens on housing estates, certain trends in their garden use can be detected. According to the results of the survey, members visit the gardens 2-5 times a week spending there an average of 1-3 hours per visit, while the members of *Lőrinci Garden* and *Apollón Garden* spend even more than the average (2-3 hours per visit, 4-5 times a week). The above figures reflect an intensive use of green surfaces. The survey also reveals that these gardens are maintained by the garden communities. Based

on their answers to the question on what type of assistance they expect to receive, it can be stated that the members of active, smoothly operating gardens expect no or very little help with the maintenance of the gardens.

**THESIS 7 Community gardens may be cradles of small communities that carry the potential of, or in several cases prove, the formation of active communities that hold progressive ideas regarding the use of urban spaces.** As a result of the analysis of the garden communities in the eight case studies, it can be established that in each of them, except for *Apollón Garden*, there was a demand to create a small community which demand has been met while operating the garden. Almost 60% of the respondents of *Első Kispesti*, *Grund Gard3n*, *Lőrinci* and *Őrmezei gardens* described their community as rather cohesive. The survey also revealed that these communities are active not only in organizing programmes closely associated with the gardens but also in designing public events. *Békási Garden* and *Első Kispesti Garden* tend to focus on programmes on gardening; the organization of educational and other civic events are characteristic of *Első Kispesti Garden*, *Őrmezei Garden* and *Lőrinci Garden*. *Grund Gard3n* is the most active of all with a variety of actions that reflect a unique civic momentum – a strength also evidenced by the establishment of their third community garden. They offer community celebrations, gardening and educational programmes and further events typical of civil society associations. Activities performed in the gardens and the formation of a progressive approach to the use of urban space go hand in hand as it can be seen in the practice of waste disposal and composting; the collection and reuse of rainwater, maintaining contact with the district leadership, maintenance management companies and educational institutions. An active, well-organized garden community offers its members a sense of security and pride. This is reinforced by the quality of the open space as defined by the design of the gardens that offers the experiences of expediency, protection, familiarity and attachment to locality which in turn foster open-mindedness.

**THESIS 8 The direct social benefit of community gardens is the extension of the network of acquaintances of the members the extent of which depends on the public activities of the community.** The results of the questionnaire unambiguously prove the considerable extension of the network of acquaintances. The responses to the question

on how many persons they know by name in their neighbourhood brought the following result: most respondents (34%) know 5-10 persons in the building where they live; less than 5 persons in the neighbouring building (37%) while more than 20 persons (31%) in the community garden. Most gardeners (34%) know only by sight and greet more than 20 persons in their own building; less than 5 persons in the neighbouring building (27%) while more than 20 persons (38%) in the community garden. By comparing the gardens, it can be stated that the lowest degree of network extension is characteristic of *Apollón Garden*, *Kisdiófa Garden* and *IBIS Garden*. Regarding these, *Apollón Garden* does not constitute a community in any sense while the community gardens of *Kisdiófa* and *IBIS* are less active and less open towards the public, they show little initiative and operate as rather inward-looking, closed communities.

**THESIS 9 The creation of an active community out of the members of a community garden requires active community development activities the intensity and methods of which may vary while the sufficient scale of these activities depends on the social status of the members.** Garden communities do not reflect the exact social composition of their respective residential areas. The spread of news of a newly forming community garden, consequently, the persons who apply are closely related to the organizing process: the way of announcement, the targeted group and the specific intentions that lie behind the initiative to establish a community garden. According to the survey findings, it is concluded that urban gardeners tend to have completed secondary or tertiary education and come from more active social strata. The sustainability of the gardens relies heavily on the way the gardens are used and on the scale of community activity. Based on the analysis of the results, it can be stated that active community gardens are usually characterized by either conscious community development activities (as it is in the case of *Első Kispesti Garden*, *Békási Garden* run by VKE, the Association of Urban Gardens as well as *Grund Gard3n* and *Lőrinci Garden* driven by civil societal action) or higher social status (*Örmezei Garden*).

**THESIS 10 Within the context of the use of open spaces in Budapest, community gardens bring about a new quality due to their tidiness, the underlying personal motivation, community presence and caring.** The initial value of the gardens as objects of open space design is defined by the concept behind the garden, the intention

and extent of its integration into the local environment and it also depends on the quality of implementation and maintenance. The tidiness of certain sections of open spaces tended both individually and collectively is further enhanced by the traditional order of planting. In case the different layers of plants are proportionate and they are able to grow mature, urban gardens will become more balanced, thus cosier and homely, as household gardens are supposed to be.

## **Practical Results**

The practical results of the present research are conclusions that can be of assistance when interpreting and designing community gardens. These practical conclusions are outlined below as *observations*.

**Observation 1** The combined application of the respective approaches of sociology and landscape architecture in the course of the interpretation of community gardens was effective. The methods of these two approaches complemented each other, a fact underlined by the above integrated theses associated with the two disciplines.

**Observation 2** Previous research into community gardens has been already conducted but most of these studies do not get published. To encourage the novel use of urban space represented by community gardens, it would be expedient to create a public knowledge base that offers a comprehensive overview of these gardens.

**Observation 3** As part of social mobilization, a well-organized community garden is an efficiently employed soft element among the rehabilitation tools aiming at the improvement of the status of residential areas with important consequences regarding green urban areas.

**Observation 4** Based on the analysis of the history of *Grund Gard3n* that operates within the framework of a temporary land use permit, it can be underlined that the new community garden function of the area works well as a solution for temporary utilization. When applying such a solution though, it should be considered that potential changes of sites would be simpler through a mobile design let alone the considerable amount of financial, intellectual and mental savings it could offer.

**Observation 5** The main role of community gardens does not reside in the territorial expansion of the green surface system. Since the original scale of green surface areas was not known, the previous forms of use of the sample areas were recorded based on the interviews with organizers and gardeners, then the ratio of biologically active and inactive areas was defined by methods of estimation and calculation for the earlier and present use of the sample areas respectively. The result demonstrates that the size of biologically active areas is decreasing due to the covering of surfaces for transport, a trend that highlights a decreasing ratio of green areas across the ground plane. In the gardens under examination considerable amount of green surface area elsewhere than on the level of the ground plane has not appeared.

**Observation 6** When designing community gardens, it is worth considering that the application of raised grow boxes built for walking around create an atmosphere that is alien to the urban environment. Due to their size and proportions, local residents in the close proximity of several sites seems to refuse them since they associate the sight of these boxes with graves resembling cemeteries. This impression is further strengthened by their solemn, monumental arrangement and the gravel used to cover the paths in between them in certain places. In contrast, in a garden it would more natural to create beds on the ground level that are not separated. Over time though, raised-beds will mature as well as the plants reach their various natural heights.

### **Summary of New and Novel Scientific Findings**

In the course of the research the definition of *community garden*<sup>5</sup> was clarified since it may denote various, essentially different types of urban gardens. When using and interpreting this term, its broader meaning needs to be taken into consideration and unambiguity is desired to make it clear what specific types of garden it refers to. In line with the above, a particular group of gardens of a single type was designated as the subject of the study with the aim of meeting the objectives of the research.

A comprehensive database of community gardens in Budapest was created that served as the basis for defining the research questions and selecting the case study sites for in-

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<sup>5</sup> Here the term is used in its broader sense.

depth research. The database can be expanded, restructured and used as a starting point for further research into the topic. It may also be compared with the database recently set up by KÉK (Contemporary Architecture Centre) and these two databases may complement and rely on each other. (KÉK, 2017).

The correlations between the demand for community gardens in Budapest and the intentions leading to their establishment were revealed which made the interpretation of gardens founded by district governments through a top-down effort as well as the role of active non-governmental organizations possible. Based on the above interpretation, the opportunities for the appearance of new organizers or for the support of new community garden projects within the Hungarian context may be detected both at the level of organizers and that of those locals who may wish to buy into the idea. This particular knowledge may also be applied in a broader spectrum in the case of similar small community projects.

Characteristically, the gardens in Budapest has employed the same concept in the past five years and the research revealed the usefulness, background and effects of the above concept. Based on the survey of Western European examples, it is concluded that they represent new tendencies with regard to the function of community gardens and in the field of similar initiatives, the adoption of which raises exciting issues and call for further research. The data for the present research – due to its exploratory nature – was collected on a large scale, thus the background of the gardeners, their methods to access information, their motivation, opinions about the neighbourhood and their proposals for development may also serve as a basis for future research.

Furthermore, the results offer a guideline for the interpretation of the phenomenon and role of community gardens for both disciplines. They draw attention to the new quality created by community gardens highlighting the potential thereof that lies in the differentiation of open public spaces, their availability for restricted use and the small communities thus generated. The Western European features of community gardens forecast the potentially increasing demand for the communal utilization of open spaces within the East-Central European context. The rehabilitation of areas occupied by housing estates include social development which also takes place through the important method of improving residential communities, encouraging their activities and inspiring

them to take responsibility for their own immediate environment. The present research into the interpretation of community gardens introduces a possible way of doing exactly that and it may lead to the adoption and development of new projects inspiring new communities. Nevertheless, this research does not aim to create community gardens in each piece of open land or vacant plot on housing estates but the approach itself is exemplary and worth further consideration. The main reason for the latter is that this is an area where the cooperation of the representatives of local communities, district governments and the profession has been realized which is considered to be an inevitable contribution to the solution of the present challenges of urban development by the author.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS**

On the basis of the research objectives and results, the phenomenon of community gardens is a topic worth further research the plan of which is outlined as below.

As part of their internship, the students of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Eötvös Loránd University are conducting a questionnaire-based survey of gardens selected for case study. The survey started later than planned, so it is expected to end in November. Their tasks also involve the survey of the environment of the community gardens by interviewing the residents of the buildings within the immediate neighbourhood of the gardens. The first phase of the interviewing process focuses on quick interviews collecting opinions about the gardens which is then followed by a more comprehensive questionnaire based on the first responses.

With regard to the community gardens, conducting a questionnaire on what both gardeners and local residents think of the potential ways of utilizing green areas and open spaces on housing estates could be very informative. It is assumed that people within the close environment of the gardens think differently than those living at other parts of housing estates since they are more sensitive and creative as a result of the presence of the gardens.

With the participation of the Institute for Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences research within the framework of international cooperation is under preparation

aiming to conduct a comparative analysis of several East-European countries to find out the correlations between the use of urban community gardens and allotments from an interdisciplinary approach. The primary aim of the above research is to deepen, renew and harmonize the methods of interpretation of the social-economic environment of urban gardens in areas occupied by housing estates. The objective is to develop a new assessment method that enables the comparison of various forms of urban gardens using spatial and sociological models and to expose the underlying reasons for the differences involving the disciplines of landscape architecture, urban planning, sociology and geography. The planned cooperation is expected to be the extension of the existing professional collaboration that would continue and further increase the cooperation between the present German, Czech, Polish and Hungarian research teams with the aim of supporting local decision-making considering the results.

The professionals of the fields of landscape architecture and urban planning are quite divided on the issue of community gardens. Future interviews with the experts engaged in urban issues might contribute to the interpretation of community gardens. These interviews should include the following questions: *What makes a community garden well-integrated into its environment? Are community gardens sustainable on the long run? What is the role of district governments with regard to the function of community gardens? Which type of community garden brings about a new urban quality and what are its main features? What factors feed the need for community gardens: the instinct to grow food or the attractive idea of taking urban space into community use? What other types of communal use of land may have power and thus a role in urban renewal?*

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