Understanding guerrilla gardening: an exploration of illegal cultivation in the UK

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of guerrilla gardening. It begins with a history of unlawful growing before investigating why individuals take part in guerrilla gardening. The paper uses a variety of case studies to show how guerrilla troops form, conduct their action and how the researcher is able to interact with illegal groups. Finally the paper concludes by examining guerrilla gardening in relation to social movement theory. The information used all derives from first-hand experience: the author has spent several years interacting with guerrilla groups and individuals, building up a portfolio of observation notes and interview data.

Key words: guerrilla gardening, informal land use, urban foord production, social movement theory

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The development of guerrilla gardening

Currently the main force behind this illegal growing in Britain is guerrilla gardening. Guerrilla gardeners are networks of volunteers; the prefix 'guerrilla' makes them sound more vicious than they really are. In the traditional context, guerrillas create turmoil (Asprey, 2002); they are rebels who actively aim to disrupt the main powers of a certain area (Caldwell *et al*, 2005). Guerrilla gardeners do share certain traits with their 'military brothers'. Members, if they wish, are given 'troop numbers', they aim to operate at night in order to avoid detection and they are known to use an arsenal of weapons, which includes the strikingly named 'seed bomb' (Reynolds, 2008). In its most basic form, guerrilla gardening is the *'ILLICIT CULTIVATION OF SOMONE ELSE'S LAND'* (Reynolds, 2008, p.16).

When exploring the concept of guerrilla gardening, it is vital to acknowledge work by Richard Reynolds, who is seen as the father of this particular movement in the UK (Hardman, 2009). Reynolds (2008) explains that the act's purpose is to conquer orphaned land; he argues to the reader that gardening can be used as tool for change. Reynolds owns and operates guerrillagardening.org, a virtual network that enables guerrillas to communicate, plan their action and eventually meet face to face. The guerrilla gardeners who use this website have a variety of reasons for their action, ranging from a lack of land to political issues, such as highlighting the abuse of our environment or the lack of maintenance by a local council (Hardman, 2009; Reynolds, 2008). One of the key misconceptions when researching guerrillas is that they are all the same, but groups vary in their aims (just for fun or more serious action), type of sites, their structure (hierarchal to anarchist) and even the land they transform (Hardman, 2009).

Reynolds' description of today's guerrilla conjures up the image that these individuals are against authority. Reynolds persistently uses examples where city authorities have destroyed beautiful projects, such as when New York City's ruling body decided to demolish a 15,000 square foot garden to make way for housing (Reynolds, 2008). Throughout Reynolds' book he uses these examples seeking to align the reader's views with those of his guerrillas; 'fighting to reclaim land from enemy forces' (Reynolds, 2008, p. 20). Reynolds stops short of naming who these 'enemy forces' are, but feels that the city is becoming more regulated with the guerrillas constantly battling 'little Napoleons' (Reynolds, 2008, p. 20).

There is a severe lack of literature that concentrates on guerrilla gardening (Hardman, 2009). The majority of information can be found in magazines or daily newspapers rather than in academic papers. Since the introduction of guerrillagardening.org, this media interest has grown, with large mainstream news groups now also reporting on the unlawful act (BBC News, 2009; Fox News, 2008; Sky News, 2009). This media

interest, combined with the introduction of Richard Reynolds' virtual networking forum, where a guerrilla can 'enlist' in a 'troop' (guerrillagardening.org, undated) appears to have resulted in more members joining the ranks and a rapid expansion of the activity.

Guerrilla gardening existed before the creation of Reynolds' virtual network; the activity has been around for centuries, so long that the exact origins cannot be determined. The modern movement began in New York with the abruptly named 'Green Guerillas' (*sic*: Guerrilla spelled with one 'r'). The Green Guerillas started a grassroots movement in 1973; initially they would use seed-filled-condoms to beautify inaccessible abandoned spaces (Paul, 2009). These condoms were lined with a fertiliser and left untied so that on impact they would spread. The Green Guerillas would then throw the bombs over neighbourhood fences into these derelict buildings (*See Magazine*, 2009).

The group continued their underground war, developing new techniques and growing larger. Today the 'Green Guerillas' have rebranded themselves; now more mainstream and less covert they aim to educate residents about the benefits of community gardening (Green Guerillas, undated). The green guerillas appear to have set the bench mark for modern guerrilla gardening, with many of their techniques being employed and customised by present-day troops.

Figure 1: Seed bombs moulded to look like hand grenades (author's photograph).

An example of this is the condom-filled seed bomb, which was used by the Green Guerillas and has now been adapted and made the symbolic tool for many of the guerrilla troops featured on Reynolds' virtual network (see Figure 1). The idea is that these seed bombs can be thrown into inaccessible spaces so that life can be introduced in restricted areas. The bombs in Figure 1 contain different seeds along with instructions on which ones to use and how quickly it will take for them to germinate. Seed bombs can be made easily from home and Reynolds' website directs would-be guerrillas on how to construct one from scratch.

Taking this one step further, large commercial companies have also adopted the idea. For instance, a state of the art 'Seed-Bomb' has taken over from the Green Guerillas improvised condom device. Much like an explosive device used in war, the bomb is dropped from the air but on impact, instead of exploding, the capsule melts away allowing the seed to sprout (Yanko Design, 2008). Yanko Design (2008) intends to use this variation of the seed bomb to tackle 'arid areas' and breathe life into desert

landscapes. Parallels evidently exist between the guerrilla's use of the low-tech version (Figure 1) and Yanko's concept, with both aiming to introduce vegetation to spaces which lack life, albeit that Yanko goes about it legally.

> "the guerrilla gardener is not a man
> the guerrilla gardener is not a woman
> planting is done in unison
> hands dressed up in gardening gloves"
> (Borson, 1999, p. 84)

Reynolds' network has enabled the act of guerrilla gardening to be opened up to a large variety of people from a number of different backgrounds (Hardman, 2009). Guerrilla gardening appears to have developed into an activity that attracts a variety of actors. These actors, as Borson's poem suggests, become known as 'guerrilla gardeners' regardless of their gender, racial background or social position.

Reynolds creates the impression that guerrilla gardening has developed into an act that does not exclude. He argues that it involves a wide variety of people interested in gardening for necessity, gardening for self-sufficiency or even gardening for stimulation (Reynolds, 2008). Contrary to Reynolds' views, Hardman (2009) argues that Reynolds' concept of guerrilla gardening, whether intentionally or not, is exclusive.

Since Reynolds' guerrillagardening.org is based solely on the internet, the majority of guerrilla groups follow suit and utilise the web to recruit; developing an array of complicated forums and social sites that exclude based on technical knowledge (Castells, 2009). Furthermore, some of the guerrilla groups that operate from Reynolds' site only allow people similar to themselves to join their ranks and vet would-be guerrillas via e-mail before permitting them to attend a meeting (Hardman, 2009). Although guerrilla gardening is apparently developing into a mainstream activity, more work will be needed to advertise and attract those who do not fit current criteria. The exclusive culture sometimes operated on Reynolds' site will need to alter to keep pace with demand.

The purpose of guerrilla gardening

> "Substitute the word Lawns for Bombs...Guerrilla gardens beautify the neighbourhood, increase local diversity, and provide food for people, animals, and insects" (Flores, 2006, p. 241).

Promoters of modern guerrilla gardening speak of the close link they share with communities (Flores, 2006; Reynolds, 2008), although this varies depending on the group in question (Hardman, 2009). There is evidence to suggest that some, now legal community groups were once embedded in the guerrilla gardening movement. Rosa Rose (a German community group) began by occupying land illegally. The group then applied through the correct channels for lawful lease of the disused space (Rosa Rose, 2007). The members of Rosa Rose continued to operate legally on the land until the lease expired; at which point Rosa Rose reverted to its former guerrilla state and refused to move from the land.

Figure 2: A suburban guerrilla food-producing alleyway for the community,
located in the West Midlands (author's photograph).

Guerrillas do not necessarily have to be part of a group, for instance Figure 2 shows a guerrilla food corridor created by a lone gardener. The individual transformed the council-owned-alley into a food producing corridor; beans, tomatoes and herbs that are now freely available to the community who live in the immediate area. Like Rosa Rose, the purpose of this project was to provide access to fresh produce for local residents. However, unlike the German group, this project remains illegal.

This particular food alleyway is a perfect example of Flores' view of guerrilla gardening. The corridor provides resources for local residents (who have access), provides vegetation for animals and insects whilst also beautifying the once-unmaintained alleyway. This particular project has not run as smoothly as it may initially appear: some residents have reacted angrily to the guerrilla's work in the alley by asking that vegetation be removed from near their gate. The guerrilla who constructed the illegal alley has obeyed their wishes, and placed large paving slabs over the plants; comically marking them with 'RIP' to show that life once existed in that location.

The 'shrub man' is another example of a solo guerrilla gardener. 'Shrub man' was featured on national news and is described as a 'horticultural hero' by the local population of Colchester (Sky News, 2009). Unlike Reynolds' guerrillas who usually use the cover of darkness to hide their antics, shrub man uses a green grass texturing costume to hide his image; enhancing a comparison to a superhero tackling evil. Much like the solo guerrilla with the illegal alley, 'shrub man' is attempting to help his community by maintaining hanging baskets in Colchester's town centre (Sky News, 2009).

Guerrilla gardening evidently crosses boundaries and includes various organisations, networks, individuals and action groups. Diversity also exists in the reasons why guerrilla gardeners illegally cultivate land; these reasons range from just for fun to raising serious political issues (Hardman, 2009). A recent example of alternative agendas for illegal gardening could be that of Harfleet's attempts to identify areas of homophobic violence in UK cities. Harfleet (2011) plants pansies where incidents of hostility have taken place against the gay community. He plants them without

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permission from the local authority but works with various organisations in order to identify areas and raise awareness.

The 'Reclaim the Streets' movement is another example of how guerrilla gardening has other purposes besides helping local communities. In 1996 the movement gathered several thousand activists and occupied the M41 in London – Britain's shortest motorway – in order to highlight several political issues (Jordan, 1998). Although the main aim was to oppose the increasing use of vehicles (RTS, undated), guerrilla gardening was used to get the message across.

Figure 3: A large skirt which hid the planting of saplings into the surface of the M41 (reproduced with permission from Urban75).

Jordan (1998) describes how the movement participants used large umbrella-like skirts to hide the planting of saplings into the M41's tarmac (Figure 3). Unbeknown to those who practiced this under the large skirts, they were actually taking part in an early form of guerrilla gardening; juxtaposing a baby sapling with what is usually a busy, congested stretch of motorway. Drills were used to break the hard surface of the motorway and soft membranes were implanted to help the saplings thrive. The aftermath proved costly with the local council having to root up the plants and resurface before the M41 could be reopened.

The Reclaim the Streets movement happened before the development of Reynolds' virtual network from 2004 (Reynolds, 2008). With the recent surge in guerrilla activity since the creation of this network, there has been a problem with attempting to understand why guerrillas take part in the action. Due to the sheer amount of troops involved in the activity this has become increasingly difficult, the number fluctuates daily and thus an exact number of how many active troops there are is almost impossible. However, Hardman's (2009) 'spectrum of guerrilla groups' can help to

conceptualise the reasons why individuals take part in this activity. Figure 4 shows how the spectrum is based around a simple grid plan, with the x axis representing an extreme ideology for action (i.e. political views, just for fun etc.) and the y axis the group's organisation (hierarchical or anarchist). After observations and interviews of guerrilla groups, Hardman is able to position them on the grid based on their thoughts, aims and structure. Although very basic, this helps in some way to understand the breadth of guerrilla groups operating or who have operated in the UK.
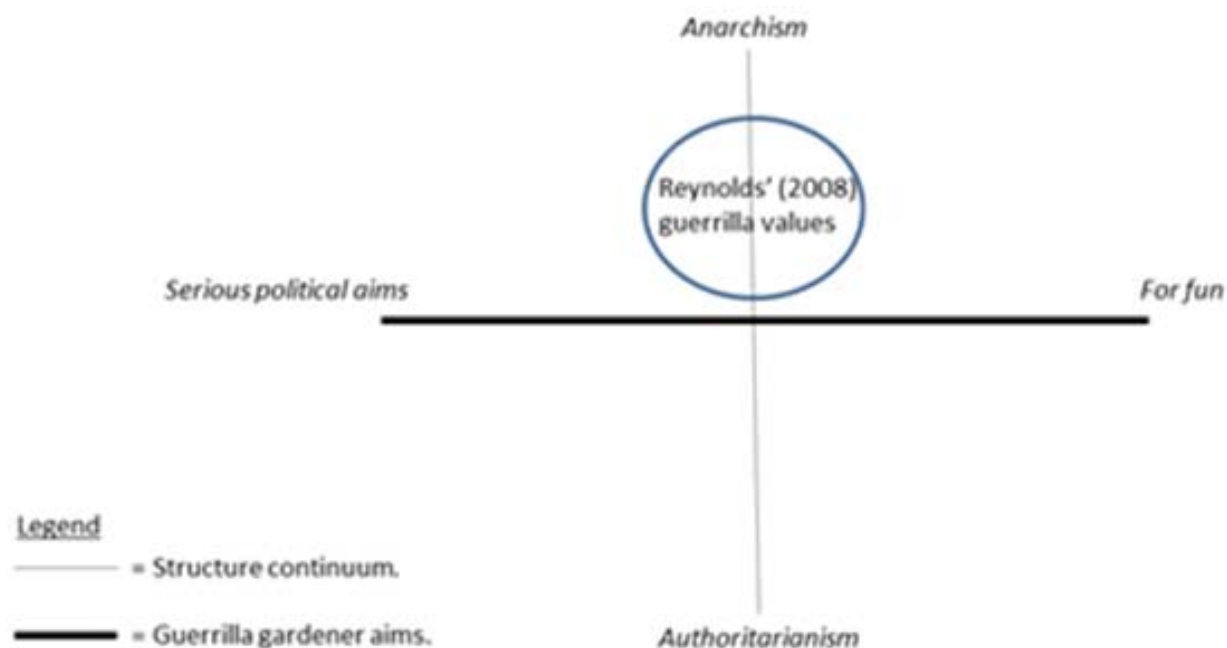

Figure 4: Hardman's spectrum of guerrilla groups (Hardman, 2009: 60).

A criticism of Figure 4 is that Hardman fails to identify the parameters for knowing whether a group is authoritarian or anarchist or whether they're just for fun or politically motivated. Due to the nature of Hardman's research, which uses an interpretive approach to understand the guerrilla's views (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Hardman, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2010; Merriam, 2009) it is virtually impossible to quantify or situate these opinions, feelings and thoughts in a rigid grid. Hardman's spectrum should therefore be seen as a loose guide to understanding the purpose of guerrilla action rather than an end product that solidly defines a group.

Case study: F Troop

If we take the example of F Troop, a guerrilla group currently being observed for the author's PhD thesis, we can see that they fall more towards the 'just for fun' and hierarchal points of the spectrum. The group's name, 'F Troop', comes from 'an obscure American TV comedy show set in the Wild West at an army base Fort Courage... they "reversed into victory"...' (Paul, 2010). There are a few reasons why F Troop would be positioned in the lower right-hand corner of Hardman's spectrum. The troop is organised by one particular member, she decides the site location, what other members should bring and what times to meet. Their actions are not politically motivated per say, since the majority of what they do is more out of enjoyment.

The ethical implications of researching a guerrilla troop

Fundamentally, guerrilla gardening is about illegally altering someone else's land (Reynolds, 2008). Although the term 'guerrilla gardener' encompasses a whole host of groups and individuals, they all share something in common, their actions can be considered illegal (Flores, 2006; Reynolds, 2008). This legal issue is by far the largest ethical consideration in the project. There was a requirement for the researcher to take this into account, decide what was morally right (Frankena, 1973) and tailor the techniques and overall method around this ethical concern (Marshall and Rossman, 2010).

It would be possible to interview the guerrillas away from the action, or ask them to fill in a questionnaire over the internet (as most students who interact with troops tend to do). Both approaches would mean that, ethically, the research would be a lot easier to justify. However, both would lack the objective angle that the researcher aimed to achieve. For instance, using an observation technique demonstrates the researcher's attempts to strive for 'truth' as opposed to personal opinions alone (Jorgensen, 1989). It was important to realise that guerrilla gardeners interact with the council's land and that this could be illegal under current UK law. Fortunately, due to the researcher's other role as a Special Constable, obtaining details of the exact legislation that applied to this situation was a little easier to come by. Since F Troop interacted with council land and merely trimmed the wild foliage, the law does not view this as an illegal act (Theft Act, 1968).

However, when F Troop dug up the wild foliage and took it away to replace it with their vegetation, current legislation would see this as both theft and criminal damage. With this in mind there was a need for the researcher to take a passive participant role in the project. This position distanced the researcher sufficiently from the action whilst simultaneously complying with Birmingham City University's regulations and the relevant British Sociological Association (BSA) guidelines. In essence, these guidelines suggest that researchers 'should satisfy themselves that the research they undertake is worthwhile and that the techniques proposed are appropriate. They should be clear about the limits of their detachment from and involvement in their areas of study' (BSA, 2004).

There was a need to alter certain details such as names and job titles; to keep some locations confidential; and to ensure that no individual can be identified in photographs taken whilst working with F Troop. Creswell (2003) stresses that the ethical code for researchers is to protect the participant's privacy and not to disclose any harmful information (job titles, real names, locations of where the participant's work etc.). In order to ensure that the guerrillas were protected, the researcher understood that certain records or other elements that may reveal the subject's true identity had to be withheld (Berg, 2004). However, it would be necessary for the researcher to disclose information on the guerrilla's occupations. To ensure complete anonymity, the specific location of where the action was taking place (i.e. the city) would not be named; rather the region (Midlands) would be referred to throughout this paper.

F Troop digs

The group operates in the Midlands region and comprises a mix of males and females apparently aged between their mid 30s and mid 40s. What was different about F Troop was that the group was formed entirely of council employees. Prior to any research taking place, the researcher had to gain admission to a group. It was

important that early research efforts concentrated on gaining this access (Jorgensen, 1989). Access to guerrilla groups is often problematic (Hardman, 2009) and the same applied gaining entry with F Troop. Even with Reynolds' guerrillagardening.org forum, gaining access to this group proved particularly difficult and needed the services of a gate keeper, in essence a local leader or organisation that would allow access to the community being studied (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

The study used an ethnographic approach, allowing the observation of the guerrilla's actions and how they carried out their activities. This approach was important when attempting to understand the group dynamics; interviews or questionnaires, merely asking members whether one individual 'runs the show', are insufficiently detailed. Being able to observe the group with minimum interaction allowed for a greater understanding of how the group was organised and operated (Savage, 2000).

The leader of the group communicated extensively via e-mail with the researcher before permitting him to meet up with the troop. Once admitted, the researcher was quick to disclose his intentions to the other group members and ask their permission to observe and interview the troop. When this was granted the researcher took up the passive participant role and observed the guerrillas whilst they went about their digs and discussions.

Ironically, the land F Troop practiced on was owned by this particular authority. The digs took place next to a busy inner-city dual carriageway. Figure 5 highlights the danger both the troop and researcher faced at a typical dig: cars would rush past in excess of 50mph whilst police vehicles would regularly pass the group.

Figure 5: The location of many of F Troop's digs (author's photograph).

Thus far four digs (labelled phases 1 – 4) conducted by F troop have been observed. The digs have all occurred in the same area, along a stretch of a dual carriageway barrier shown in figure five. The troop fluctuates in numbers between the digs, with phase 1 and 3 attracting in excess of seven guerrillas whilst phases 2 and 4 only

attracted four. The 'usual suspects' turn up in all four phases (the troop leader, her husband and her close friend).

Unlike most guerrilla gardeners, who tend to operate at night (Hardman, 2009; Reynolds, 2008), F Troop conducted their digs in broad daylight. Fortunately, one member of F Troop wore a reflective vest that made the group more visible to passing cars and added an official 'lawful' look to the group's actions. This was a conscious decision made by this particular troop member to avoid the police becoming suspicious of their activity. On occasion, however, this high visibility jacket was not brought to the digs, resulting in F Troop's actions looking less inconspicuous and less safe.

Figure 6: F Troop in action, turning the soil and planting vegetation
(author's photograph: identities concealed).

F troop's leader has considerable horticultural knowledge, having volunteered as a landscape gardener for numerous years. Figure 6 shows how other members have a basic knowledge of horticulture; in this figure one troop member is turning the soil whilst another is digging a hole for plants to be inserted. As the phases progressed, F troop became more confident and planned ahead before arriving at the dig site. The author's observation notes show that as confidence grew, time at the site was reduced and digs were completed much quicker.

> "I thought we could do the plot next to the pub this time and split some of the geranium that are already there as well as plant the rest of the things we bought. I also want to see how our peas and bulbs are doing!" (F Troop leader, 2011).

F Troop has recently formed an informal partnership with a local pub landlady. The pub will supply F Troop with water and food whilst in return F Troop will cultivate and beautify land closer to the pub. Thus far, through e-mails exchanged with F Troop's

leader, it appears that the troop will revamp the space and leave food production further away from the pub. This may be due to the leader realising that the soil could be contaminated and if pub customers eat the food, they could become severely ill. Thus 'Phase 4' was conducted further along the dual carriageway's barrier and closer to the pub.

Looking further ahead, F troop's plans are rather ambitious. Informal discussion during phases 1 and 2 highlighted that F troop's leader wished to develop a community based scheme north of the city centre. This scheme would initially be started by F troop and then handed over to local residents, providing them with access to fresh organic produce. Initially the group deliberated over whether they should take the official channels on such a project, but the leader quickly denounced this explaining that 'there's no fun in that.'

Guerrilla gardening as a movement

Understanding a 'movement'

So far, this paper has explored the basics of guerrilla gardening, its history and some of the reason why individuals get involved as well as a case study of F Troop. This next section will focus on guerrilla gardening in relation to social movement theory, in particular the 'four stages' of a social movement and Melucci's theory on acting collectively.

> "A social movement is a broad alliance or network of individuals, groups, and organisations that are united by their shared goals, aspirations, and interests. A social movement may comprise trade unions, political parties, cooperatives, neighbourhood actions groups, pressure groups, and any other collective organisations in so far as they share a common political purpose" (Fulcher and Scott, 2003, p. 781).

In its fundamental form, a movement is a practical application of ideas which can be performed by almost anyone (Gardiner, 1998; Nancy, 1998). Reynolds continually refers to guerrilla action as an 'organic movement' (Reynolds, 2008, p. 22), bringing people together regardless of their ethnicity, class or nationality. Guerrillas receive little to no support from outside bodies and tend to function alone, using the guerrillagardening.org website to communicate with others and exchange ideas (Hardman, 2009). Based on Fulcher and Scott's definition, one could argue that guerrilla gardeners, who are connected to Reynolds' guerrillagardening.org, can be classified as part of a wider social movement.

The guerrillagardening.org community is an example of a network of individuals that share common goals, aspirations and interests (Fulcher and Scott, 2003), in essence a social network which is organised and communicates via the internet. Furthermore social movements aim for change (Kendall, 2010), and these networked guerrilla gardeners, regardless of their intentions and structures, are all performing some kind of environmental alteration. Although not on a large political scale, like the earlier mentioned 'Reclaim the Streets' movement, the majority of guerrillas are going against the norm of present-day society; challenging the mundane and creating eye-catching spaces.

If we take the example of the two projects mentioned earlier; both the food alley and F Troop's digs were co-ordinated via the guerrillagardening.org forum. Although the two have not communicated, they each display Fulcher and Scott's (2003) shared goals and desires. In Figure 7, on the left, the individual who created the food alley

has planted several bean plants for communal consumption and to highlight the idea that vegetables can be grown almost anywhere. On the right is F Troop's Nasturtium display (edible plants), F Troop aimed to highlight the same issues as the individual who created the food alley way. Although they use different methods and are in completely different locations, both the groups display a common interest in changing how we think about cultivation. The two used tips and advice from the virtual network (guerrillagardening.org) and put them into practice. They are in essence part of a 'broad alliance' (Fulcher and Scott, 2003, p. 781), educating the population about where food and plants can be grown.

Figure 7: The food alley and a bean plant (left) and F Troop's 'Nasturtium' arrangement (right) (author's photographs).

> "We start from negation, from dissonance. The dissonance can take many shapes. An inarticulate mumble of discontent, tears of frustration, a scream of rage, a confident roar. An unease, a confusion, a longing, a critical vibration" (Holloway, 2005, p. 1).

Guerrillas 'tend to fall into two groups: those who are driven to beautify space, and those who seek to grow crops in it' (Reynolds, 2008, p. 28). Regardless of their intention, those involved in the social movement are motivated by various factors. As Holloway (2005) above describes, this could range from a slight 'mumble of discontent' to a 'roar'. The guerrillas, for example, may be angry with the local authority's lack of maintenance with regards to a particular space, or they could merely be digging for political reasons (Hardman, 2009). Again Hardman's (2009) earlier 'spectrum of groups' (Figure 4) shows how varied the aims are of guerrilla gardeners attached to the guerrillagardening.org social movement. This particular social movement is evidently diverse, different and varies hugely among those who are unofficial members.

The four stages

Typically, social movements emerge, identify issues, formalise and decline (Byrne, 1997; Christiansen, 2009; Della Porta and Diani, 2006). These are fundamentally the

'four stages' of a social movement in their most basic form. There are a range of alternatives, such as Della Porta and Diani's variation on this cyclical approach to understanding social movements. Their first stage is labelled 'social ferment', where much of the thoughts and actions of the social movement are unorganised (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Della Porta and Diani (2006) then explain the second stage; 'popular excitement', in essence the identification of the issues and why they are forming a social movement. Thirdly 'formalisation' takes place before the group 'institutionalise' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

Figure 8 is an adaptation of the traditional cyclical approach. The figure generalises the processes a guerrilla troop may go through before carrying out their action. In particular the figure shows how troops transition from 'virtual to reality' and 'ideas to practice'; repeating the latter several times before eventual decline.

In terms of guerrilla gardening, the emergence, identification, formulisation and decline is clearly apparent in some troops, whilst in others it is harder to spot. Figure 8 summarises the author's experience with troops and how they sometimes comply with the traditional four stages ideal. The figure was drawn from experience with several guerrilla troops.

A guerrilla group followed by the author in Manchester, Guerrilla Gardeners South Manchester (GGSM) provides a perfect platform for discussing Figure 8. The group formed from another troop that had disbanded because their leader had relocated to another part of the country following completion of their University studies (Hardman, 2009). Hardman (2009) explains that the new troop initially spoke on the guerrillagardening.org website, before moving on to a social networking site. The group then made the transition from 'virtual' to 'reality' by meeting for a few drinks in a pub (Hardman, 2009). Plans were formulated in the pub and then put into action ('ideas' to 'practice'). Hardman (2009) shows that, after several digs, the group starts to decline in numbers and eventually no more digs were scheduled. After several months Hardman received an e-mail asking for more volunteers from a member who was not the 'decision maker', thus it appears as if GGSM are repeating the process shown in Figure 8.

F Troop is recycling between meetings and dig stages. F Troop, like GGSM, met on Reynolds' guerrillagardeniong.org, and then set up a group on a popular social website before meeting face to face. F Troop's action declines temporarily during the autumn/winter months but is revitalised in the next growing season. It is anticipated that F Troop will eventually decline, through either the impending relocation of their leader or by other means.

Acting collectively

It is evident from the examples thus far explored that social movements are varied and are extremely complex to understand. The Italian social theorist, Melucci, helps to explain the way in which social movements are structured and why they are so difficult to comprehend. Melucci (1996) challenges the traditional idea that movements are rigid, and that the characters involved hold a distinct coherent role. He continues by explaining that social movements are 'fragmented phenomena, which internally contain a multitude of different meanings, forms of actions, and modes of organization,' (Melucci, 1996, p.13).
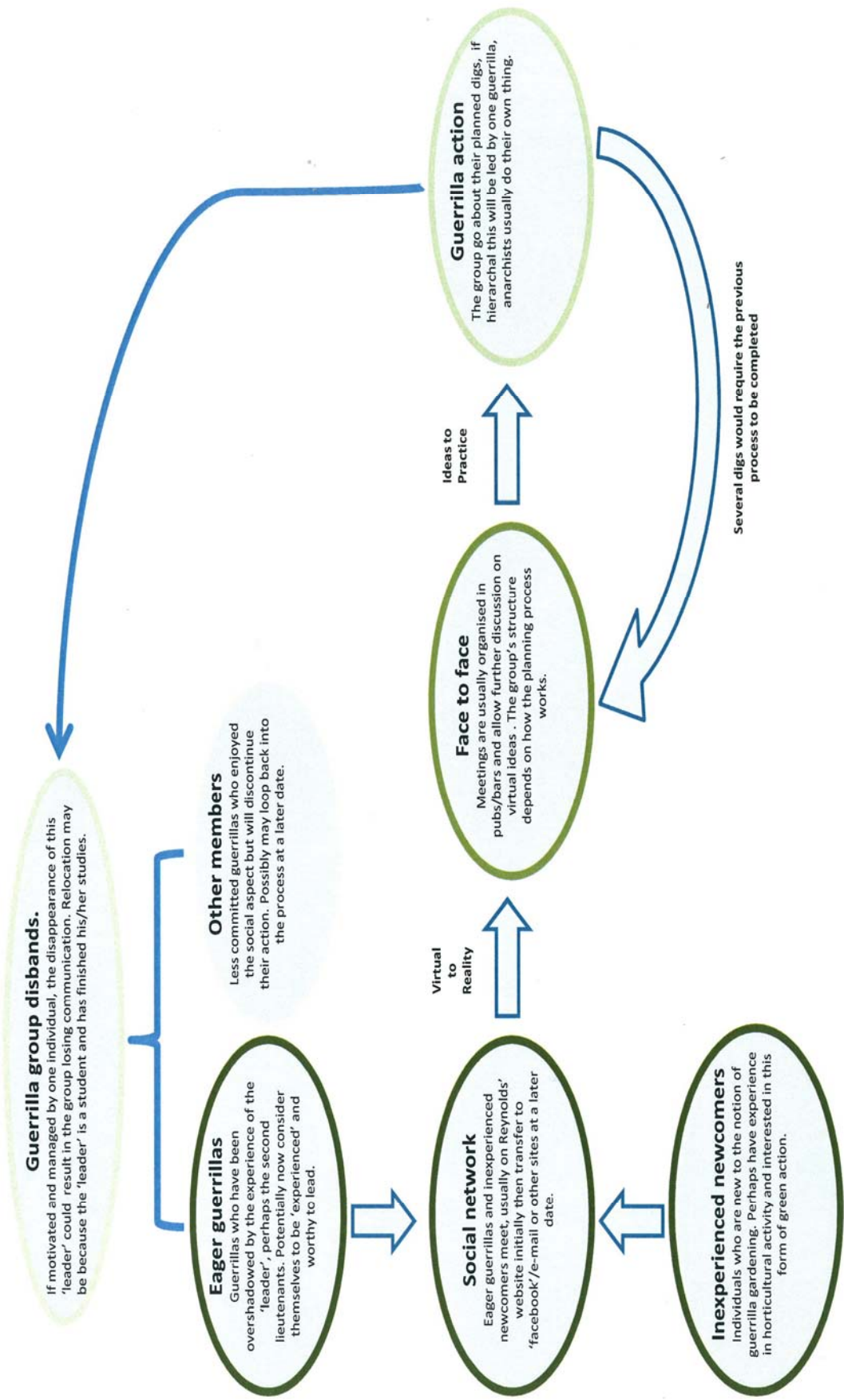
Figure 8: The four stages theory applied to guerrilla gardening troops.

Guerrilla action
The group go about their planned digs, if hierarchal this will be led by one guerrilla, anarchists usually do their own thing.

Face to face
Meetings are usually organised in pubs/bars and allow further discussion on virtual ideas . The group's structure depends on how the planning process works.

Ideas to Practice

Several digs would require the previous process to be completed

Guerrilla group disbands.
If motivated and managed by one individual, the disappearance of this 'leader' could result in the group losing communication. Relocation may be because the 'leader' is a student and has finished his/her studies.

Other members
Less committed guerrillas who enjoyed the social aspect but will discontinue their action. Possibly may loop back into the process at a later date.

Eager guerrillas
Guerrillas who have been overshadowed by the experience of the 'leader', perhaps the second lieutenants. Potentially now consider themselves to be 'experienced' and worthy to lead.

Social network
Eager guerrillas and inexperienced newcomers meet, usually on Reynolds' website initially then transfer to 'facebook'/e-mail or other sites at a later date.

Virtual to Reality

Inexperienced newcomers
Individuals who are new to the notion of guerrilla gardening. Perhaps have experience in horticultural activity and interested in this form of green action.

In essence, Melucci is unpacking the word 'movement' and suggests that the term is too generalised. He raises the idea that movements are 'in fact a product of multiple and heterogeneous social processes' (Melucci, 1996, p. 20) as opposed to a unified thing. This dismissal of homogenous movements is echoed in Melucci's core theory on acting collectively. Melucci (1996) suggests that comprehending collective action requires the understanding of five key principles: the definition of collective action, how a group forms, its components, the form it assumes and finally the collective actions must be examined. In essence, Melucci is explaining that there is no generic form of collective action; rather to understand collective action one must use the five principles to be aware of the movement in question.

The examples used in this paper show the applicability of Melucci's principles. The actors involved are different in F Troop and GGSM. On one hand is the student group of GGSM and the other one, the council employees of F Troop. Both organise their action in dissimilar ways and attribute different meanings to why they carry out digs, the only connection they share is the guerrillagardening.org website.

Furthermore, Melucci explains that movements challenge the norm and mundane. Like the examples used throughout this paper, movements do not necessarily aim for entire political change or to overthrow a governments. Rather movements resist a magnitude of relational needs, 'the recovery of fantasy and play, the symbolic relationship between humankind and nature' (Melucci, 1996, p. 359). It is evident that the latter applies to the examples used throughout this paper, each of which challenge the relationship we hold with nature. From F Troop's symbolic use of vegetables on a dual carriageway verge, to the food alley's free accessible organic produce, each is resisting the way the majority of the population perceive this relationship to work.

> "Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place" (Melucci, 1996, p. 70).

Understanding the collective identity of the actors involved in a social movement is an important process that Melucci highlights. Melucci feels that the collective actor has been taken for granted and more is needed to understand the individuals involved in a social movement. The next phase of this research is to undertake intense individual interviews with the troops who have been observed by the author. This is an attempt to further understand the actors involved in the guerrilla social movement and to investigate where the actors feel they lie in the movement as a whole. Further understanding the actor's motives, aspirations and position within the troop will enable the researcher to distance himself from taking the actors for granted and allow him to see at first-hand what they have in common along with issues they may not agree on.

Taking Melucci's thoughts on collective identity forward, understanding how a troop form and become a 'we' will be a core part of further investigation into this topic. This particular part of Melucci's theory on acting collectively has been widely used by authors attempting to discover whether a group is part of a social movement and how actors identify one another and eventually form part of a 'we'. Starr's (2010) exploration of neighbourhood cooperatives, small scale farms and other modes of local food production is perhaps the most recent of these papers.

Starr uses two key theoretical ideas to determine whether these modes of food cultivation can be linked to social movements. One of the theories she uses is

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Melucci's sustained use of the term 'we' between individuals. This helps in some way to identify whether the actors involved hold a collective identity (Starr, 2010). When combined with another theoretical perspective, this eventually helps Starr to understand whether local food production can be likened to a social movement.

In the case of the guerrilla troops which are being explored, the prolonged use of the term 'we' will help the researcher identify whether they are part of a collective identity. It is evident already from the literature reviewed in this paper that guerrilla troops linked to Reynolds' guerrillagardening.org network are part of a social movement. What have not been explored are those troops that lie outside Reynolds' virtual network. Hardman (2009) shows how there are groups who are ignorant of the guerrilla gardening art and Reynolds' network, thus Melucci's thoughts on collective identity may help with future research in understanding whether these isolated groups form part of a social movement.

Conclusion

This paper has brushed the surface of guerrilla gardening, providing a holistic view to the illegal cultivation of land in the UK. The case studies used, along with Hardman's spectrum of troops, shows how diverse and heterogenic guerrilla gardener groups can be. The author predicts that increased media exposure of Reynolds' network will result in the activity expanding even more, perhaps even transitioning from a submerged network to the mainstream.

The paper links guerrilla troops connected to Reynolds' virtual network with social movement theory, clearly showing that the guerrillas associated with this virtual network are part of a wider movement. A conceptualisation of the processes involved with guerrilla gardening, from how troops form to how they eventually disband is presented. The need to explore troops that lie outside of this virtual network is also expressed, with the author questioning whether these groups can be classed as part of the wider social movement.

Further work will explore the impact guerrilla projects have on the local community and whether troops are helping or angering nearby residents. For example in the F troop case study has anyone, besides the pub landlady, noticed that vegetables are growing next to a busy dual carriageway? Has anyone attempted to eat the vegetables, and what are the dangers of planting peas, spinach and other edible crops in a public place on potentially contaminated soil?

There is a need to delve further into the case studies and eventually improve the parameters featured on Hardman's 'spectrum of guerrilla groups'. The planned formalised interviews with the guerrilla gardeners and continued observations of the troops will go some way to developing the spectrum. The views of the local community and whether they see action as political or just for fun will also help in improving Hardman's spectrum. The spectrum can only go so far, as troops are too varied and fluid to be contained in a rigid grid plan. The author will continue to work with troops and new guerrillas to establish a method of understanding how they plan, how they carry out their action and what their individual aspirations are.

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