HOW COMMUNITY GARDENS FUNCTION: A CASE STUDY OF
“COMPLEXO AEROPORTO,” RIBEIRÃO PRETO, S.P. BRAZIL

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This thesis entitled

HOW COMMUNITY GARDENS FUNCTION: A CASE STUDY OF
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by

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has been approved for

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For this thesis I study a particular community garden in Brazil, and I examine in detail how a community garden functions. In particular, I sought to address the question of how different constituencies, including the government, social activists, and community members interact in the process of running a community garden. Additionally, I examine the obstacles that a new community garden may be faced with and I consider how these obstacles may be overcome. In order to answer these research questions I did a fieldwork study where I collected and analyzed information from different sources, including documents, survey/questionnaires, interviews, and observations. I believe that this study will help to promote new community gardens in Brazil to decrease the amount of social exclusion.

Approved:

Risa Whitson
Professor of Geography
To my parents and my husband
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Motivation

In this thesis I examine in detail how a community garden functions, in particular, I seek to address the question of how different constituencies, including the government, social activists, and community members interact in the process of running a community garden. Additionally, I examine the obstacles that a new community garden may be faced with and consider how these obstacles may be overcome. Being familiar with that information will enable other researchers to formulate a better model for the encouragement of new community gardens.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the world population growth is changing the face of the earth. Today we have about 6.4 billion people, roughly 3.5 billion more than there were in 1950 (United Nations, 2001). With the increasing number of people, an increasing demand for natural resources and food is also expected. The real problem is not the increase of the population but the fact that it is increasing more in developing countries where the social inequality and the lack of information is still a problem.

In addition to the world becoming more populated, it is also becoming urbanized. By 2003, approximately 77 percent of Latin America and the Caribbean population were living in urban settlements. As stated by the United Nations (2003), this
proportion is twice as high as those for Africa and Asia. With 39 percent of their populations living in urban areas in 2003, Africa and Asia are expected to experience rapid rates of urbanization during 2000-2030, so that by 2030, 54 percent and 55 percent, respectively, of their inhabitants will live in urban areas. By that time, 85 percent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean will be urban. Then, by 2030 the less developed regions will have 79 percent of the world urban population and 85 percent of the total world population (United Nations, 2003).

These two serious problems, population growth and urbanization, should be treated carefully. These were one of the main focuses of the Earth Summit of 1992 which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and resulted in the Agenda 21, a plan of action to be adopted to promote sustainable development (United Nations, 1993). One important aspect of Agenda 21, according to Holland (2004), is the possibility to develop sustainable level policies by working in the urban space. In this context, McManus (1996) refers to sustainability as

“a condition where economic, political, cultural and ecological practices operate to enable succeeding generations to meet their needs... (where they have no less natural capital) per capita in quantity and quality than that utilized by preceding generations” (p. 67).

To have a sustainable world we need every local place to be sustainable. There can be no sustainable world without sustainable cities. The challenge faced is whether cities can transform themselves into sustainable systems.

Every city is culturally different, which makes this task even more complicated, and for this reason a global plan of action would not work. To make it work we need
a set of local policies to help with the local sustainability. Such polices are known as the Local Agenda 21 (Holland, 2004).

Using the Local Agenda 21 as a starting point, urban agriculture can be one way of moving toward having large urban system in which the sustainability of the urban ecosystem is considered. In this consideration, community gardens, usually small plots of land used to cultivate plants, fits perfectly, bringing the food close to the people, which reduces transportation and keeps people from using empty space to dump garbage locally (Graham, 1999). Community gardens are typically developed and run by a community with or without the support of non-profit associations or governmental organizations, and they bring a lot of benefits to the community. Beyond the obvious beautification of an unproductive space, and the strengthened sense of community, they can also have a profound impact on areas such as sustainable agriculture, environmental concerns, urban revitalization, reduction of hunger and transportation of the food, generation of money for low-income neighborhoods, and crime reduction.

From an ecological perspective, community gardens may help clean the air by absorbing odors and pollutants, preventing erosion, reducing water contamination by using organic techniques, and providing habitat for wildlife (Bakker et al., 2000; Smit & Nasr, 1992). Community gardens also bring several benefits to society (Deelstra & Girardet, 2000). They provide healthy food, promote activities for the community, and increase the economic value of the area, among other things.
For this thesis I studied a particular community garden in Brazil. My focus was to understand how this particular community garden functions, how the different groups involved perceived each other, and how this affected the operation of the community garden. I also examined some of the obstacles the community garden faced and some of the perceived benefits to each individual group.

To address those points, I organize my thesis in the following form: In the Chapter 2, I review the literature about community gardens. My intention here is to give an overview of the development of the field, which hopefully, will cover the main aspects of this practice. Then, in the Chapter 3, I describe in detail the methodology I used to get my data, followed by Chapter 4, where I will present and discuss the results I obtained. Finally in Chapter 5, I present the discussion and conclusion of my thesis.
Chapter 2

Historical Background and Literature Review

In this chapter I review the literature about urban agriculture and community gardens. I describe their history, define key terms, and discuss the magnitude of urban agriculture and community gardens in some developed and developing countries.

Community gardens are a kind of urban agriculture, which has existed since the first city was established thousands of years ago and has not disappeared since then, even with industrialization. Instead, the modern world has become more dependent on urban agriculture (Castillo, 2003).

2.1 Urban Agriculture

According to (Smit et al., 1996),

“Urban agriculture is an easy-in, easy-out entrepreneurial activity for people at different levels of income. For the poorest of the poor, it provides good access to food. For the stable poor, it provides a source of income and good-quality food at low cost. For the middle-income families, it offers the possibility of savings and a return of their investment in urban poverty. For small and large entrepreneurs, it is a large profitable business.” (p. 4)
Urban agriculture is not simple to define since a large variety of urban farming systems can be encountered, with varying characteristics according to local socio-economic, geographic and political conditions. Within urban agriculture we find many kinds of crops, like grains, root crops, vegetables, mushrooms, and fruits, or animals such as poultry, rabbits, goats, sheep, cattle, pigs, guinea pigs, fish, and others. As argued by Mougeot (2001), the main objective of urban agriculture is to provide food for people, but it is also possible to find non-food products which include aromatic and medicinal herbs, ornamental plants, and tree products. The author also pointed out that the decision about what kind of products will be cultivated strongly depends on the region, since it is close related to population habits, reflecting the culture and historic aspects of the society living there. Urban agriculture can then contextually be more important in one region than in another (Mougeot, 2001).

The Support Group on Urban Agriculture (SGUA) also made an estimate of the extent of participation on the urban agriculture around the world. For example, in Argentina there is a national project called “Pro Huerta” in which about 50,000 to 550,000 people have been participating from 1990 to 1994. In Bangkok, Thailand 60 percent of the land is under cultivation. In Russia 72 percent of all urban families are engaged in raising food, and in Moscow, the share of families raising food more than tripled between 1972 and 1992, from 20 percent to 65. And in USA, the number of farmers’ markets selling locally-grown produce increased by 40 percent from 1994 to 1996 (International Development Research Centre (IDRC), 2006).
Despite its importance, urban agriculture remained unexplored by most investigators and policy markers until the 1980s, when the economic crises brought it to the attention of international development agencies, institutions of research and civil society. At that time, urban agriculture started to extend around the world, principally in developing countries (Castillo, 2003), where it was soon seen as a possible solution for problems such as the growth of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition (von Braun et al., 1993). Many authors believe that food security and malnutrition are going to be some of the most challenging problems in urban areas in the 21st century (Koc et al., 1999). Urban agriculture is motivated by such problems typical in developing countries such as those African, where the poverty is growing more intensive (Sanyal, 1985; Drakakis-Smith, 1991; Drakakis-Smith et al., 1995; Egziabher et al., 1994; Maxwell, 1995; Rogerson, 1993).

As a consequence of the economic difficulties, urban agriculture increased a lot, although as pointed out by Drakakis-Smith et al. (1995), urban agriculture in Africa experienced difficulties due to the imposition of the structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. As part of these programs, the government had to eliminate some expenses, resulting less in support for urban agriculture.

According to Mougeot (1994), urban agriculture is not a straightforward business because in some sense it requires a better technological and organizational precision than rural agriculture to survive. To produce efficiently in a small space, such as,
for example, in backyards, patios, walls (mural hydroponics), rooftops, basements, windowsills, and indoor containers, the technology must be adapted. The author also says that urban agriculture needs to be more tolerant of environmental stress, more responsive to market behavior, and more carefully monitored to protect public health.

Another country where urban agricultural is well developed is Cuba, although for different reasons. The reason for such development was the United State trade embargo. After that, agriculture in Cuba, which had been strongly dependent on imports of chemical products, had to increase their food production, which made way for the implantation of urban agriculture in Havana (Bourque & Canizares, 2000; Gonzalez & Murphy, 2000; de la Salle, 2004; Henn, 2000). Currently there are 26,000 popular gardens which cover 2,438.7 hectares in Havana, and which produce 25,000 tons of food each year (Gonzalez & Murphy, 2000).

A case study in Havana (Cuba) showed success in urban agriculture promoted and supported by government (Gonzalez & Murphy, 2000). Cuba’s urban agriculture brought and still brings many benefits to their population in many aspects such as household nutrition, food supply, relaxation, connection with nature, experience of solicitude, and also provides patriotic inspiration (Moskow, 2000).

In recent decades, industrialized countries have also started to become interested in urban agriculture. In the U.S. and Canada, this is due to concerns about food security, rather than hunger issues, as people in these countries are interested in fresh or organic food (Koc et al., 1999). In Europe and especially Britain, the greening movement has
playing much more central roles in the design of sustainable communities than it has in North America (Canada and U.S.). On the other hand, while the U.S. has focused on economic benefits, it is now increasing the comprehension about the benefits of urban agriculture for the environment (de Sousa, 2003).

Poor communities in Brazil see urban agriculture as an alternative survival strategy, because it produces food and improves household nutrition and also generates income and jobs, while additionally providing self-respect and hope for a better future. In the northern and north-eastern cities in Brazil, urban agriculture is evident in the growing of food and non-food products or raised cattle, making a contribution to improving the nutritional status of less wealthy families (Madaleno, 2000). Madaleno (2001) has also studied urban agriculture in the southeastern city of Presidente Prudente, in the state of São Paulo, where a municipal project called “Feed Prudente” promoted the cultivation of vegetable plots by low-income families.

A case study of Complex COPEC made by Aguiar and Farias (1986) in Camaçari, Bahia, Brazil, illustrated the importance of studies in industrial areas, where there is a huge amount of empty spaces which are not used and could in principle serve for urban agriculture. The authors also emphasize the need of a technical study of the condition of the areas to be used, since they might be contaminated by industrial residues.

Urban agriculture is an old practice and it is present in developing and developed countries (Castillo, 2003). Some see it as a solution for food crises and others as an
environmental benefit. Urged by the need to take environmental factors into account, after the 1990s, scholars began to look at the benefits of urban cultivation for reasons of sustainability as well (Castillo, 2003).

2.2 Community Garden

One specific type of urban agriculture is the community garden. When we talk about community gardens, we are talking about two completely different things that together form such activity, gardening and human communities. So, before defining what a community garden is, it is important to define what 'gardening' and 'community' mean. Such a mission is not easy because these concepts are not agreed on in the literature. However, Holland (2004) proposes a comprehensive definition, which will be adopted in this study. He states that a community is “a collection of people with differing but harmonious views, skills, perceptions, who with some outside intervention, develop in a cooperative way to achieve agreed outcomes” (p.288). He also adds that although they may not be physically or geographically defined, they must share the same philosophy. In fact, one of the strongest features of community gardens is the sense of community that they create. Gardening is the activity (or art) of growing plants. It differs from farming by scale and intent. While farming is generally understood as a large-scale production of foods to be sold, gardening is understood as a smaller production of food for a family or community, usually for
pleasure. Gardening uses very few tools and very little money, as opposed to farming, which expends considerable money on irrigation systems and chemical fertilizers.

Community gardens result from the combination of these two things. However, they are still not easily defined, both because there are many kinds of community gardens and because there are both similarities and differences among them. In general, however, a community garden is a small plot of land, developed and managed by a neighborhood or non-profit association in which urban agricultural activities take a place. They are often subsidized by local or federal governments, but may also be rented by individuals from an organization that holds title or lease to the land (Holland, 2004).

Because community gardens are a type of urban agriculture, they share its history. People also become involved in community gardens for many of the same reasons that they participate in others forms of urban agriculture. However, urban agriculture is not necessarily based in the community as community gardens are, and it may include large-scale farming, while community gardens normally are smaller in scale.

In a study about the purposes of community gardens in the United Kingdom, Holland (2004) classified community garden projects into eight categories according to their purpose: education, community development, leisure, skills or training, health issues, protection of an area, food provision, and business and/or job opportunities. As acknowledged by the author, sometimes these purposes overlap, and projects may be classified into two or more categories.
The implementation of community gardens offers several benefits to the community and environment, all of which have been substantiated by research in different areas, such as psychology, economics, sociology, and medicine (Malakoff, 1998). According to Relf (1973) the practice of horticulture offers some therapeutic benefits to the participants such as physical, intellectual, emotional. The physical benefits come from outdoor activity and access to a good diet. Gardening provides intellectual benefits because the individual will gain new skills. Community gardening also provides emotional benefits, as participation may improve self-esteem. Schmelzkopf (1995) also highlights that community gardens have both social and economic functions as well. They help reduce crime, increase property values, and attract businesses. In addition, because they are safe, open areas, they offer people a place to socialize and obtain nutritious food. Consequently, they also help create a positive community image for both residents and outsiders. With regards to environment, community gardens help reduce air and noise pollution, control climate, save energy, and provide habitat for wildlife (San Carlos, 1994).

There are studies showing that many community gardens form cooperatives to compete in the market. Cooperatives create a unity and solidarity between members and strengthen them to help solve their common problems and to fight against common enemies. One example of this is the formation of the Mekanissa, Furi, and Saris Vegetable producers’ Cooperative in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was inspired by the members themselves. They formed the cooperative to strengthen the members’
protection against any threat in their survival process. This has created a situation where the urban farmers will not be the most oppressed sector or the most dependent on other people. In the cooperative, the members have equal rights and responsibilities in all the activities. They have the right to elect and be elected, and earnings are shared on an equal basis. This study concluded that the participants gained knowledge and increased their self-confidence, making them become more independent (Egziabher et al., 1994). Other examples of formation of cooperatives indicate similar results in developing and developed countries (Smit et al., 1996).

Although community gardens offer many benefits, they also face several obstacles. One of the problems pointed out by Pfeiff (2001) is the lack of available land. In some places, like the Canadian cities of Toronto and Vancouver, there is very little empty space to spare for gardeners. In addition, if available, the land has to be extensively tested for toxic substances.

Another problem refers to interactions between people, which they call 'garden politics'. As highlighted by Schmelzkopf (1995), ethnic, class, and gender differences may be a source of contention among members of the community. There may also be conflict about the access to the public; sometimes members of the community who work in the garden develop a certain feeling of appropriation and privacy becomes an issue. Because of that, Rauber (1997) states that non-member residents may be discouraged from supporting the garden. Friction between members and non-members may also occur because of the smell of manure. Finally, laws eliminating or
cutting funding for departments related to community gardens have been approved by the governments of several countries.

2.3 Conclusion

Most of the studies conducted about community gardens were done in developed countries as United States, Canada and European countries, and there is a lack of studies done in countries in the process of development, principally in Latin America (with the exceptional of Cuba). To try to fill part of this need, I studied a particular community garden in Brazil. The results of this help to explain how the community gardens are formed and how they work in a developing Latin American country. This study also intends to promote future community gardens. As pointed out by Holland (2004), if we want to do sustainable development we must begin by studying the local community. Following that, a local community gardens is a perfect case to study, and in order to understand local community gardens, we need to know why, what and how people are gardening in that particular area.

Several different reasons might motivate people to join a community garden. The process of formation of a community is very complex because it engages many people from different backgrounds and personalities. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that their individual aims are also diverse. For that reason, it is necessary to identify the local community needs, income, background, and goals. It is also important to understanding the obstacles that the garden may face, how the different partici-
pant groups see the community garden, how these groups see each other, and their interactions.
Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter I describe the methodology I used for my fieldwork. I will start by presenting some characteristics of Brazil, and Ribeirão Preto. Then, I will introduce the community garden of Complexo Aeroporto, and explain the methodology I used to get my data.

3.1 Research Site

Brazil is the largest and most populous country in South America, and fifth largest in the world, with population about 186 million (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), 2000). While it is a big country (8,514,877 km\(^2\)), its population speaks primary one language, Brazilian Portuguese. The population has a vast cultural-ethnic mix of indigenous, Portuguese settlers, African black slaves, and Europeans, Japanese, and others immigrants. The Brazilian population is over 80% urban, and it has a very unequal income distribution. Only 5% of the population controls over 50% of the national income (Spence & Barbosa, 2001). According to the CIA World Factbook (2005), Brazil had the eleventh largest economy in the world at purchasing power parity in 2004. Most industry is concentrated in the south and
southeast. The northeast is traditionally the poorest part of Brazil, but it is beginning to attract new investment.

The community garden that I chose in Brazil to do my research is located in Ribeirão Preto, in the northeast of the state of São Paulo (see Fig. 3.1). Ribeirão Preto was founded in 1856 and has about 505,000 inhabitants (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), 2000). The climate is tropical. Ribeirão Preto has developed rapidly. The region of Ribeirão Preto changed a lot in 50 years from 1910 to 1960, moving from a rural and agricultural economy to an urbanized economy based on a service sector, industry, and diversified agriculture (Walker & Barbosa, 2000). After 1960, Ribeirão Preto started to grow even faster and did very well economically, becoming one of the most important cities of Brazil (Walker & Barbosa, 2000). Because of its magnitude in the agro-industries and sector of services in the 1980s, Ribeirão Preto was known as a “California Brasileira” (Brazilian California) in analogy to one of the most developed region in the United States. Ribeirão Preto produces 18% of the sugar cane and 26% of the alcohol produced within, and it is also the major producer of orange juice in the country, producing more than half of total Brazilian production (Walker & Barbosa, 2000).

Ribeirão Preto is also nationally known for its important trade, hospitals and universities. In spite of the richness, Ribeirão Preto has a lot of poverty and elevated number of favelas (slums) (Walker & Barbosa, 2000), which is typical of the big cities in Brazil.
Figure 3.1: Map of Brazil (left) and São Paulo State (right) showing where the community garden is located.

Ribeirão Preto, because of its importance at the national level, its elevated degree of poverty in the periphery areas, and its similarities with other big cities, is an ideal place to study community gardens in Brazil, which could provide an important contribution to the expansion of community gardens all over the country.

The community garden “Complexo Aeroporto” occupies an area of 10,000 square meters at the corner of Aguaí and Anhembi streets, number 445, in the village Salgado Filho 1. It is situated in the north of Ribeirão Preto, and has the name of “Complexo Aeroporto” because it is located near the Ribeirão Preto airport (Complexo Aeroporto Project, 2004).
The Complexo Aeroporto made up of 11 villages with a lot of favelas (slums), and the poorest areas of that region are Salgado Filho 1, Vila Hipica, and Jardim Aeroporto, which together have a population around 7,500 people and which is where the garden is established. In addition to poverty, that area has a lot of violence, prostitution, and joblessness (Complexo Aeroporto Project, 2004).

The community garden “Complexo Aeroporto” began in April of 2004, and its first crop was in July of the same year, when it produced many kinds of vegetables, herbs, and fruits (see Fig. 3.2), as for example: lettuce, chicory lettuce, carrot, watercress, green kale, cabbage, yucca roof - manioc, okra, scarlet egg-plant, corn, spinach, radish, mustard, squash, radishes, arugula, Italian parsley, scallions, onion, garlic, mint, lemon grass, banana, mango.
The vegetables are sold in the garden (see Fig. 3.3) for R$1 (1 Real) per kilo, and/or R$1 each, as for example one head of lettuce cost R$1 real, one head of cabbage cost R$1, and one pint of parsley cost R$1 (about US$0.40). The vegetable that they grow there are decided according to the workers and neighbors taste and/or demand. The workers said that they like to grow what the whole community likes to eat, and their favorite vegetable is lettuce.
The garden was protected from intruders (animals and human) by a very beautiful fence made of trees. In the garden there was a small house with three small rooms (restroom, kitchen, and living room). In the kitchen there was a stove, a little table, and a small sink. The workers used the sink to wash the vegetables and herbs before selling them. In the small living room there were some chairs used to rest. The living room was also used to store the gardens’ tools. The part of the garden used to plant vegetables was covered by canopies, which create shade for the plants and protect them from the sunlight. In the garden there was also a small green house, but, unfortunately, it was destroyed by a storm. Under the mango tree there were some seats made of wood, where the workers and the coordinators used to get together for the meetings.

3.2 Methodology

In order to answer my research question, I collected and analyzed information from different sources, including documents, survey/questionnaires, and interviews.

I spent two weeks doing my fieldwork research, from December 5 to 16, 2005. Through my first week of research, I stayed at the community garden each morning distributing and collecting the questionnaires, and also interviewing and observing the workers. During the evenings of the same week, I also interviewed some of the neighbors and one coordinator. In the first week I also attended to a local meeting, which took a place every Thursdays at 5:00 pm, in the Base de Apoio Comunitário
(BAC - Base of Community Help), where the coordinators, workers, and leaders of the villages got together to talk about issues of the community which included the community garden, local issues, problems, and future goals.

During my second week of fieldwork, I interviewed the other two coordinators. I also went to the Base de Apoio Comunitario of the Complexo Aeroporto, where I had access to internal documents of the community garden, such as meeting minutes, memos, initial proposal. I also walked around the Complexo Aeroporto to have a better feeling of how those people lived there. The last thing I did was to look for information in the public libraries, local news, and from the local government.

The methodology I used was partially based on Holland’s (2004), and Saldivar-Tanaka’s (2004) articles. Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny (2004) utilized observation-interview and document analyses to determine the role Latino community gardens play in community development, open space, and civic agriculture. On the other hand, Holland (2004) utilized survey questionnaires and interviews to gather data to understand the contribution of community gardens to local sustainability. Other authors such as Madaleno (2000), who studied urban agriculture in many places of the world, and Ferris at al (2001), who studied the implementation of the local Agenda 21 and sustainable development policies which use the green space in towns and cities of the United States, collected their information by visiting the areas. Ferris et al. (2001) visited many community gardens in the U.S and Madaleno visited many areas around the world, including Brazil, to get data about urban agriculture.
3.2.1 Documents

During my fieldwork I had access to the internal documents of the community garden, including the initial proposal, memos, meeting minutes, newspaper, and brochures.

By analyzing those documents mentioned above, I verified the exact size of the community garden. I also found out the information on the formation of community garden, who and how many workers were involved, how much money they had at the beginning, how they got money to start the project, and how much the garden was producing at the beginning. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.2.2 Survey/questionnaire

I created a simple questionnaire. The survey was composed of 17 questions. Its purpose was to discern the general life style of the people involved in that particular community garden. For this reason, I included in the survey questions about age, gender, place of origin, marital status, education, family income, time of involvement in the community garden, how often they worked in the garden (hours a day and days per week) and how often they got vegetables from the garden, if they did. Based on Holland’s questionnaires (2004), I also included one question to identify what the interests of the people involved in the community garden were, such as job opportunities, food provision, leisure, health, protection of the area, skills, education
or other reasons. From the answers I determined the general characteristics of the people involved in that project and what their goals were. A copy of the questionnaire in both English and Portuguese can be found in the Appendix A and B.

I distributed the questionnaires to all workers present during my fieldwork. At that time there were five workers present of a total of eight workers (3 of them did not show up at the community garden or meeting during my fieldwork). All workers were female with ages ranging between 29 to 47 years old. They were all married and had formal education only through elementary school level. All the five workers were very poor with family income about US$360 monthly.

3.2.3 Interview

I interviewed the participants (some workers and all coordinators) involved in the community to get more detailed information about their goals and also to obtain more characteristics about the garden. I also interviewed eight neighbors to learn what they thought about the community garden in the region. Through the interview I was able to get a better feeling of the real status of the community garden and to confirm the survey results.

The garden actually had around eight workers and I interviewed five of them. The others I could not interview because they did not go to garden and neither did they go to the weekly meeting during my fieldwork. Most of the interviews with workers (four of them) were conducted in the community garden during their work time, and
only one of them was conducted during the weekly meeting in the BAC (Base de Apoio Comunitário - Base of Community Help).

I felt it was not necessary to record the worker’s interviews because they were very shy and I thought if I recorded them they would not feel comfortable telling me details about theirs goals and about the community garden. I believe this was the case because the workers told me that many people “appeared” there just to take pictures and film them and did not do anything for them. So, I did not want to be just another of this type of person.

Through my research in the garden with the workers, I tried to ask indirect questions to let them speak. During the conversations, I also took field notes. Only in some cases I did ask more direct questions following the protocol described in Appendix C and D.

During the workers’ interviews, I attempted to listen to them and not ask defined questions with expected answers, because I did not want to be an intruder there. I tried to be polite and respect their space. I did not stop their work at any time. I noticed that they were very comfortable with my company. Sometimes we were interrupted by the people that went there to buy vegetables, and then I used the opportunity to get information about the neighbors, who were the majority of the consumers. I also had the chance to talk to one previous worker, who was a neighbor and who went to the garden to buy vegetables, too. In this way I was able to get some information about why she stopped working there.
During my time in the garden, the workers did not have much to do because they were waiting for one of the coordinators to bring them seedlings to plant. As a result we had a lot of opportunities to talk.

At the end of my research, the workers were more confident about me and they even asked me to take pictures with them. We had become friends, and I also was invited to come back there in the future.

In the interviews with the coordinators, I tried to act at same way by asking them as few questions as possible to let them to speak. My goal was also not to make the interview stressful. Two of them were interviewed at their place of employment, and one during the weekly meetings. For the two coordinators who were interviewed in their work place, the time was set up according to their schedules to make the process more convenient for them.

I tape-recorded only two of the three coordinators’ interviews. I did not record one of them because I did the interview in a public place, where the coordinator works, and I did not want to be an inconvenience. During our conversation, I got a lot of information about the initial goals of the community garden.

The second coordinator’s interview was also carried out in the workplace. I recorded the interview, which was a very nice conversation and from which I could obtain detailed information about the community garden, its history, and their initial and future goals.
The third coordinator was interviewed at the weekly meeting. That coordinator confirmed all the details provided by the other two coordinators, and added some details about the current local government administration.

I participated in the weekly meeting, where members talked about the community garden and also about food security. In that meeting other people related to the public health were also present.

Through my fieldwork, I also interviewed eight neighbors of the garden to learn their opinion about it. I did not record those interviews for the reasons similar to those listed above. I asked some direct and indirect questions (see the appendix C and D). I interviewed three of them at the garden, when they went there to buy vegetables. The other five I interviewed in their residences. I interviewed only neighbors (adults) who were standing in front of their homes.

During my fieldwork, I also took some field notes as an observer to facilitate my understanding of the interviewees’ answers and the place. By doing that I got a better feeling of the people involved. By performing my fieldwork research using qualitative methods, such as questionnaire, interviews, and observation, I was able to get detailed information about the motives which led people become involved in the community garden, and I also had the pleasure of enabling marginalized people to bring out their voices (Whitson, 2005).
3.3 Limitation of Study

It is important to mention that my research has some limitations. Perhaps the most significant is the short period of time that I had to do my fieldwork (two weeks), restricting it to a limited environment, a particular community garden in Brazil. My study is thus very specific and narrow in terms of numbers of participants and aspects studied. As a consequence, the result may not be representative, if we take in consideration the number of available community gardens to be studied.

In addition, my own perspective might have colored the interpretation of the results because once we interview and observe in a fieldwork context, we are not completely immune from our emotions and personal points of view. In other words, the results I present here represent a qualitative study and might be subject to other interpretation.

In spite of the limitations of my study, I do consider that it provides a primary basis for future research on the interaction between the members of the garden, on why people become involved in this kind of practice, what the benefits are for the people involved, and what they believe the impacts of it to be in the local environment and community.
CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

In this chapter I present and discuss the results of my fieldwork research in the Complexo Aeroporto community garden located in Ribeirão Preto, S.P., Brazil. First, I do a brief presentation of the general characteristics of the people involved in my research. Second, I talk about the background of Complexo Aeroporto, describing how it started, what has been done in the past and how it is now. Third, I describe the obstacles encountered in each stage of the process and how they have interfered in the growth of the community garden. Fourth, I present and discuss how the community garden is seen by the different participant groups, and how these groups see each other. Then, I discuss how these different perspectives affect the operation of the community garden. Finally, I briefly conclude the chapter stating how these different aspects of running a community garden, for example, the support and initiative from the members of the community and the participation of local government, can contribute to the possible success or failure of the project.

4.1 General Characteristics of the Involved

According to my fieldwork research, in the current stage of the community garden, I can classify the stakeholders involved into four different groups: workers, coordi-
nators, neighbors, and the local government. At the time of my research there were only eight workers and all of them were females. Of these, I interviewed and collected questionnaire answers from five (three of them did not show up at the community garden or meetings during my fieldwork), and I also interviewed all three coordinators of the community garden and eight neighbors. All workers interviewed ranged in age from 29 to 47 years old. They were all married and had studied only up to elementary school. One of them came from Maranhão (northern Brazil), another from Espírito Santo (southeastern Brazil), and the three others were originally from Ribeirão Preto. Only one of them grew up on a farm and learned how to take care of a garden with her parents. All the five workers were very poor, with families composed of five to seven people and income of maximum US$ 360 month.

There were three coordinators in the community garden. One of them represented the Ministério Público (MP-public ministry, the public prosecution service), one was a social worker who works in the Base de Apoio Communitaria (a part of the local government), and one was one of the leaders of the Village Residents Associations who was also working for the local government. All the coordinators were volunteers in the community garden.

The third group of stakeholder involved was the neighbors, eight of whom I interviewed. Some of them were apparently poor (considering the house in which they lived) and the socioeconomic status of others I could not discern because I interviewed them at the community garden.
The last stakeholder involved was the city government. During the history of the Community Garden it was represented by two different political parties: at the beginning, the government was directed by the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores - the Workers Party), which stayed the power until the end of 2004. The Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), was elected in October of 2004, and is currently in power.

4.2 Complexo Aeroporto Community Garden Background

The Complexo Aeroporto Community Garden started as a joint initiative of the Village Residents Associations, social workers, and the Ministério Público (MP-public ministry, the public prosecution service) of Ribeirão Preto, Brazil. The three coordinators with whom I spoke each represent one of these organizations. While they each work with the people of Ribeirão Preto in an official capacity as government employees, their work in founding and running the community garden was and continues to be voluntary.

It is important to understand the function of the MP because of the key role it played in forming the community garden. According to one of the coordinators, the MP is the entity responsible for keeping everything in the country running in the right way. It looks into jurisprudence, the democratic system, public morality and social and individual rights. Unlike other countries (in some countries it is a
part of another branch, such as the Executive or Judiciary), the MP in Brazil is an independent institution. It has autonomy in relation to the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches. Its main obligation is to verify the application of the law and the conduct of its members, acting as defenders of social rights. The MP does not only have a focus on criminal activities, as in many other countries, it also defends the collective rights and acts in defense of the democratic system.

The Ministério Publico of Brazil has fought a lot to solve problems such as the rights of consumers, the rights of the children and the elderly, and environmental problems. In a more recent initiative, the MP is fighting in favor of agrarian reform and the right to have food. Usually the promoters of the MP stay in their office, but, according to one of the coordinators interviewed, the promoters of the MP of the Ribeirão Preto go to where the problem is and try to solve it as fast as possible. They go to the peripheries and other poor areas of the city to see what is happening and put in practice their major goal which is “social inclusion” of the marginalized and excluded people. So, the MP goes there to work in community by showing those people that they have rights, bringing hope to them.

Work with community requires time, dedication and a good understanding of their problems. With this in mind, the MP decided to choose one region of Ribeirão Preto named Complexo do Aeroporto, which is one of the poorest area of the city, and look for alternative approaches to try to minimize their problems, with the idea that if this worked, could be expanded to other regions in the city. One of the reasons for
choosing this particular region was the fact that the people there already had some organization in the form of a Village Resident’s Association whose leader is elected by the local inhabitants which could facilitate the success of the program.

The help of the local leadership was important. They started to work together, and in 2003 the current coordinator of the community garden, who at that time represented the MP, started to go to the Complexo Aeroporto once a week to assist the local people. They saw the enormous demand of the people to be included in the compensatory program from the government (programs from the government that give food or financial support for people living below poverty line, such as the provision of food, milk and other items), but not all of them could be included, as the government sent limited amount of resources for that region. In many cases they had to wait about two years to receive some food. Seeing that, the MP and the leaders of the village, together with the local social workers, made the decision to go speak with the person who was responsible for the compensatory program at the local government. They wanted to see if there was a possibility to increase the amount of support destined to that village or if there was some other alternative to solve the hunger problem. The answer was negative and they continued by saying that there were no alternatives to solve that problem simply because there was no money for it.

After that the MP, the leaders of the village, and social workers began to think about others alternatives. According to the point of view of one the coordinators, that decision was “good” because those compensatory programs are just to solve
urgent problems, like hunger, and they only make the people more dependent on the
government. In the case of Brazil, those programs assist only the people who are
excluded from the “economic model” and society, people living below poverty line,
people that do not have money to buy even food and do not participate in any social
event. As one the coordinators said,

“the compensatory programs only help people who in some sense had their
“civil death” declared, and in most cases they will never have a social life
and will always depend on it to survive.”

An individual who has a civil death declared is a person who does not participate
in the society, and does not have a social life.

4.2.1 Initial Phase

Trying to solve the problem in the poverty of the area, the coordinators started to
think about some alternatives. Looking around and analyzing the Complexo Aero-
porto’s area they saw that there were a lot of empty spaces that were not being taken
care of properly by the owners (see Figs. 4.1 and 4.2 for example). Those areas were
being used for dumping garbage as shown in Fig. 4.2, generating environmental and
health problems. Then, the organizers had the idea to form community gardens in
those areas. With that the coordinators could, in principle, solve three big problems
of the village, hunger, unemployment and environmental degradation, at once.

In November of 2003, the coordinator representing the MP, the leaders of the
village, and a social worker who, from this time forward, worked on a voluntary basis
with the community, in November of 2003, went to talk to the city government to ask for support to initiate the project. The city government, whose Mayor was from PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores - the Workers Party), agreed to help them, saying that this fit perfectly in the list of objectives that he had planned for his government (Complexo Aeroporto Project, 2004). In his government he implemented a program called “Ribeirão Trabalhando na Frente,” which was a program to help unemployed people to have a better life and help them to find new jobs. The program, which lasted nine months, was divided into two parts. In the first part, the unemployed took classes about citizenship and, in the second part, they took some skills classes to help them get a new job. During the nine months in which an unemployed person was in the program, he/she received R$ 260 monthly (about US$120) to help him/her buy food. Within this program, the Mayor agreed to provide 25 workers chosen by the local government for the community garden, so that the unemployed would learn about urban agriculture. The Mayor also agreed to provide water to irrigate the community garden, decreasing the final cost.

In February of 2004, the 25 workers selected, of whom only 3 were men, started to take classes at the College Moura Lacerda about agriculture techniques. They also had to attend some seminars about citizenship. This initial phase took two months. At the same time the coordinators started looking for places to initiate the community garden. After a more detailed study of the area, the MP contacted the owners of the areas chosen to make a contract to use it without having to pay rent. The arguments
for that resided in the fact that the area would be used for a non-lucrative purpose and that this could actually be a very good deal for the owner since he/she would have the area cleaned and it would probably increase its value by the end of the contract. The owner verbally agreed to the proposal.

Everything was going well, the workers were trained, the area was chosen, and the coordinators also received some support from the industry Laticínios Leite Nilza,

Figure 4.1: Photo showing some empty spaces in the neighborhood of the community garden Complexo Aeroporto.
which donated some tools. Some business people from the village donated fences, and also some tools. The Netafin (an company specialized in irrigation systems) donated material to irrigate the garden. The Secretary of the Agriculture of the State of São Paulo donated the seeds (Complexo Aeroporto Project, 2004). They had everything ready to start with the garden construction, but unfortunately the owner of the area changed his/her mind when it was time to sign the contract and
that delayed the beginning of the cultivation because the organizers had look for other places. The workers were disappointed with that problem and some of them abandoned the project. The coordinators found a new place and the contract was made for two years with the possibility for extension if the parties agreed.

In April of 2004 the community garden Complexo Aeroporto started its activities. According to the coordinators’ interviews, the community garden started very well and its first crop was in July of 2004. It produced about 70 kg per week of vegetables. The crop was helping the workers and their families, and also 50 additional families by giving them one basket of vegetables weekly.

The initial support was good, but it was not enough. In the search for alternative support, the coordinators started writing proposals for funding agencies. They got funded in August of 2004 by the association of the Banco do Brasil, which gave them some money (Complexo Aeroporto Project, 2004). This money was used to buy seeds, tools, and the cover for a green house at the community garden.

4.2.2 Cooperative Phase

The coordinators were aware that the supported provided by the local government was for limited time and also that it was only a provisory solution for the poverty problem. Then, they started to look for alternatives. This motivated the coordinators of the garden to study the Economy of Solidarity: “all the practices and plans in which the goals are the sustainability, social and economic justice, and democracy” (Arruda,
The Economy of Solidarity is governed by principles of solidarity, such as work co-operation, democracy, self-administration, participation, self-sustenance, and human development. A good example of this practice is the cooperative system. The Gramsci Seminars are regular meetings where the goals are to promote socio-political discussion of important facts related to current political situations. The seminar is named in recognition of the ideology of Antonio Gramsci. Once a week all the coordinators, some of the workers, and invited others got together to study and discuss the economy of solidarity and other social topics.

After some months of study they came up with other alternatives to help the people involved in the community garden. One alternative was to transform the community garden into a cooperative system, where the workers would work together, sell the vegetables and the money obtained would be divided between them. The cooperative would still have the support of the coordinators and volunteers. This cooperative system, which is based on the Economy of Solidarity, was established in August of 2004, and then the Community Garden Complexo Aeroporto start to be called Cooperverde. The reason for choosing this approach was the hope that people working in the community would start to become stronger and more independent. Everything that they produced would belong to them, and they would also learn how to take care of their own things. This was hoped to generate the emancipation of the marginalized people as they would start to see the world from a different point of view. So, the Gramsci Seminar founded the support group to encourage the workers
in the garden by giving them incentives to continue to work there, because in the opinion of the coordinators the Cooperative is seen as an alternative way to achieve the social inclusion of those people.

4.2.3 Current Phase

According to the coordinators, everything was going very well, but when the new government was elected in October of 2004, it cut financial support for the community garden of Complexo Aeroporto. This new government was still in power at the time of my fieldwork research. Because of this, the garden started to face some financial and related problems. In addition, some other institutions also did not help the garden as they had promised. For example, the College Moura Lacerda only helped at the beginning, and afterwards, they stop teaching techniques on how to plant and how to take care of the garden. According to one of the coordinators, the motive was the fact that the person responsible for that in the College wanted to use chemicals (fertilizes and pesticides) in the garden, which was against the goals of the coordinators, who wanted to provide food of quality for a minimum amount of money. The coordinators also wanted to protect the environment, which implied the non-use of chemicals in the garden.

According to my observations, the coordinators of the community garden knew that the garden was facing many problems, but they were also confident that those problems would be solved, and that this would make the cooperative stronger. They
also argued that the cooperative system is a kind of project from which the return can only be obtained in middle and long run.

In addition to the insufficient support from the local government, there was also a money shortage, not enough volunteers, and a strong storm that destroyed part of the greenhouse and canopy. The garden was also facing some internal conflicts, such as bad relationships and gossip among workers, which even made one of the workers stop working there, according to one ex-worker and some neighbors interviewed. Authors such as (Schmelzkopf, 1995), pointed out that ethnic, class, and gender differences may be a source of contention among members of the community garden. Similar to that article, I also found some problems related to gender. For example, one of workers said during an interview that the men that were working in the garden did not like to do hard work and they left that for the women. She continued by saying: “we need men here to do hard work, such as digging the garden and carrying some heavy stuff.” On the other hand, in the opinion of the other workers, there was no difference between men and women; for them women can do what men do and that was not a problem. In the garden the women did everything, including digging to make a “bed” to plant the vegetables and to irrigate. Besides working in the garden, the women also had to take care of their houses, children, and other things. They all worked at the garden to have some food, and also earn some money to help their husbands. All the coordinators were very proud of the women that were working in the community
Figure 4.3: Photo showing the workers preparing the vegetables to sold in the community garden Complexo Aeroporto.

garden (see Fig. 4.4). They called the women in the garden “guerreiras” (brave women) because they never gave up fighting for their dreams.

Another current obstacle faced by the community garden is the small number of voluntary workers. They are restricted to a few people and the coordinator, who usually visits the community garden during the weekends. Because of that, one of the workers complained that there were no people to bring the seedlings and cow’s compost for them to plant (the seedlings were grown in other place by professionals). Those seedling were paid for with the money obtained by the Banco do Brazil project. So, they have to wait for someone to go there to help with the transport, and that sometimes makes it too late for them to grow the vegetables. Therefore, those facts (no transportations for seedlings and cow’s compost) delay the planting and develop-
ment of the vegetable crops. Those factors also contributed to the discouragement of some workers, and finally their decision not to work in the garden.

All these problems and obstacles discouraged the workers who slowly stopped working in the garden. The number of workers reached a low of four, then increased again, and during my fieldwork research there were eight workers. According to the coordinators, considering the size of the community garden and the amount of money they make, this is the ideal number of workers for it to be self-sustainable.

Even with the problems encountered, the model used here has served as an example for other communities in Ribeirão Preto, according to one of the Coordinators. This also motivated the coordinators to expand the project to other regions of the city. They believe that the project is good and should not be restricted to a single village within Ribeirão Preto.

Another important factor favorable to the expansion of the project is that, according to the Coordinators interview, the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agraria (INCRA, National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform), a federal organism, is going to begin to implement, in the State of São Paulo, a project of Urban Agriculture, and Ribeirão Preto is going to be one of the first places where it is going to be implemented. This will benefit numerous families and will help to advertise the urban agriculture as a way to provide opportunity and better food. According to one of the coordinators interviewed, the program proposed by the INCRA will give financial support to families involved in urban agriculture until those families achieve
their "autonomy" (until they have the financial return to work by themselves). According to the point of view of the coordinators, horticulture is good because their product will be easy to sell and also easy to grow. As they said, horticulture has few risks, the climate of Ribeirão Preto is good, and food without chemicals will have a lot of demand in the future.

4.3 Different Participant Groups and Their Points of View

According to my fieldwork research and observation, in the community garden there were four different groups of stakeholders involved: the workers, the coordinators, the neighbors of the garden, and the local government. As depicted in Figure 1, every group had its own perspective and idea about the community garden and about each other. All of them desired to obtain something, directly or indirectly, from the community garden or from the individuals involved. Each of those groups have goals to be achieved.

4.3.1 Local Government

According to my fieldwork research, the coordinators see the government in general as the one responsible for the social exclusion, and they believe that the goal of government was simply interested in form voting blocks to support their election. It
is important to mention that this may not reflect the opinion of the local government since I was not able to interview any representant of it.

In relation to my observations and interviews, there was some disagreement between the coordinators and local government. The local government at the beginning of the community garden was represented by the PT, and it was more open to helping the poor population. An example of this was the creation of the program “Ribeirão Tabalhando na Frente.” The coordinators’ ideas were more “socialist,” while the
current government, which is from Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), had others thoughts and objectives, in disagreement with the coordinators.

According to the coordinators, the local government sees them as a threat to its objectives. They believed that the local government fears that their ideas, which are more socialist, will make the people more open minded and as consequence, independent, destroying possible voting blocks.

The workers, according to my observations, see the local government as the solution for everything, because they depend upon it, or want to be dependent on it. They see the state as a "father", who will never let them down. They have some reasons to think like that, since the Brazilian government is paternalistic, which makes people more dependent and submissive. In a similar way, the workers see the coordinators of the garden as bosses. They have not internalized the idea that the garden is a cooperative and belongs to them, and that the coordinators are only people that want to help them. From what I could observe, the coordinators want to help the workers to achieve their freedom in the current society.

According to the point of view of one of the coordinators, the cultural obstacles are one of the biggest problem for the people (workers) involved in the community garden. He/she mentioned that those people, who were excluded from the actual economic system, had incorporated in their mind the feelings of exploitation, submission, and oppression, and all these things made it hard for them to understand the cooperative system and that the cooperative is owed by them. From the point of view of the
workers they are still employees. As an example, during the interview, one of the workers said: “here we need a boss to give orders, to say what we have to do; otherwise this is not going to have future”. So, those words provide evidence that they are still submissive and that they do not believe in their capacity to solve their own problems.

In the opinion of the coordinators, to try to solve those problems the workers will need a long-term education. The workers will need to have a lot of help from the coordinators, so, the coordinators will try to look for other volunteers (psychologists and others) to work in the community garden to minimize the need for a person to guide them. This is not going to be an easy task. It is important to remember that Brazil has a long history of dependence, beginning with its colonization. It has always been and continues to be exploited by developed countries, and that has made the Brazilian people grow used their oppression. Besides, the Brazilian government has intensified the paternalistic neo-liberal system, creating a nation of even more dependent people. So, it is not easy to erase 500 years of enculturation.

One of the coordinators also argues that the economic model, which is neo-liberal, is not solving important problems such as the poverty and the bad income distribution, problems which affect the majority of the population in Brazil. The problems are actually getting worse. For the coordinators, it is necessary to do something to change this situation, they have to start thinking locally, using alternatives such as working in communities creating cooperative systems and supporting voluntary work.
From the point of view of the coordinators, the local political leadership does not want groups such as the Complexo Aeroporto community garden to exist. According to them, this could result in the end of their voting blocks and also stop the formation of new ones, and because of that, the political leadership always tries to boycott their ideas, and the marginalized people do not have any chance in the actual economic system. In the actual system they have only two possibilities which are the integration into the Compensatory Program (because of hunger) and/or criminality.

4.3.2 Neighbors

The second group that was indirectly involved were neighbors. During my fieldwork I interviewed eight of them and all interviewed said that they liked very much having a garden nearby their homes. They like it because they can go there to buy cheaper and fresh vegetables, and the garden has transformed the area, a place that before was used to dump garbage, into a very beautiful place. One of the neighbors interviewed, said:

“There we have a beautiful and clean area, where our children can play nearby without being in danger. Before I was afraid to let them to go there to play because of the big rats, and the dumped garbage.”

The neighbors also pointed out that there is only one bad thing about the garden and it is that the garden only is open in the mornings from 8 to 11A.M., and sometimes they want to buy vegetables in the evenings but there is nobody there to sell them. They also said that some people, mainly children and teenagers, have thrown stones
Fig. 4.5: Photo showing some stones that were thrown into the community garden by some teenagers. 

into the garden, destroying it, as show in Fig. 4.5. They emphasize that when they see that this is happening, they try to protect the garden by telling to those children and teenagers to go away. They continued saying that if there was somebody there during the whole day, that kind of thing would not happen.
4.3.3 Coordinators and Workers

There are many possible reasons that induce people to become involved in a community garden, including education, community development, leisure, skills or training, health issues, protection of an area, food provision, and business and/or job opportunities (Holland, 2004). During my fieldwork research I detected three main points that encouraged people to participate either as volunteers or workers in this kind of activity. They were related to food, social reasons and environmental issues. I will discuss all of them from different perspectives as seen by the coordinators and workers, and from my observation.

Food Provision

One important way that the perspectives of workers and coordinators differed was in regards to food. Most workers were concerned with job opportunity and leisure. It was a surprise that only one of the workers mentioned in the questionnaire food provision as one the main reasons to get involved. On the other hand, during the interview, four of five workers cited food provision as one of the main reasons to get involved in the community garden. When interviewed, all coordinators cited food provision to the poor as one of the main motivations to get involved in the community garden. Actually, the desire of the coordinators was to provide food for the poor people involved in the community garden, free food for families in poverty
in the village, and also cheaper food for the poor neighborhood. This is related to social reasons, while the workers really want food to supply their need to survive.

The quality of the food in terms of freshness and organic food security results from community gardening, and this is seen by the coordinators as one of the main benefits of the garden. It is important to point out that the majority of the workers were not concerned about the quality of the food or with the environmental degradation. They liked the food because it tasted good, they could get it for “free,” and it supplied their needs.

The majority of the workers interviewed said that they liked fresh food because it looks good and tastes much better than the food they buy at the grocery store and for coordinators the fresh food is high in nutrients and vitamins that are essential for human health.

In addition to fresh food, one of the goals of the coordinators was also to provide organic food which is high in quality and also good for the health because it grown without the use of synthetic fertilizer or pesticides. According to CODEX Alimentarius Commission (2004) definition, organic agriculture is

“a holistic management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity.” (p. 5)

The workers in general were not concerned about the food being organic or not, but they actually said in the interview that by using organic compost, the food tasted better and even grew faster and more beautifully. In sum, they don’t like
to use fertilizer or other chemicals. For their food to grow better, they liked to use cow manure compost which is donated by some farmers around Ribeirão Preto. It is important to note that the cows do not eat just organic products, so their compost might not be totally organic. They don’t use much cow’s compost because it is somewhat hard to obtain due to the difficulties in getting it transported to the community garden. According to the workers, in the beginning of the community garden’s formation, access to the organic compost was easier, and, because of that, they could put more on the plants.

These results are consistent with a recent study that compared organic, conventional and integrated pest management apple production in Washington state over a six years period which found that the organic system was more profitable, had similar yields, better tasting fruit, and was more environmentally friendly and energy efficient than the other two agricultural systems (Reganold et al., 2001). Another reason, not mentioned by stakeholders, to support organic farming is that it reduces pesticide exposure (Greene & Kremen, 2003), which has been shown to be associated with many acute and chronic illness in humans (Alavanja et al., 1996).

According to Okuda (1997), who did research in a farmers market of the Parque da Água Branca in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 41 (36%) of organic products sold were cheaper than conventional non-organic products. Another 36% were more expensive because they were products which needed special care due to plagues, such as, for example, potatos and tomatos. The other 28% presented similar prices (organic and not or-
ganic). It is interesting to note that in another survey, done by the UNESP RURAL (1998) in the São Paulo city, around 60 percent of the population interviewed would be willing to pay up to 20% more for the organic products if all them were available in the market. Although, there are not many organic products available in the city, people like them and are even willing to pay more to have them.

**Social and Economic Reasons**

According to the questionnaire answers and interviews, the main reason for the involvement in the community garden was social and economic. Job opportunity was the most cited in both interviews and questionnaires by all workers as one of the main reasons to get involved. It was an expected answer if we take into account that they were all poor people. Another answer cited, which is also related to social-psychological reasons, was leisure and relaxation. One of the workers said during the interview that she likes to work in the community garden because she can relax and forget about the problems at her home. She also said that they do not make a lot of money in the garden, but they have a lot of fun.

From the point of view of the coordinators, social reasons were also the main reason for the workers to get involved with the community garden, but in contrast to the workers, they initially had the objective to provide social inclusion for people without any hope.
These results about Complexo Aeroporto are different than those of Armstrong (2000), who surveyed twenty community garden programs in upstate New York in order to identify characteristics that may be useful to facilitate neighborhood development and health promotion. The most commonly expressed reasons for participating in gardens were access to fresh foods, to enjoy nature, and health benefits. In Holland’s survey (2004) in the United Kingdom, the main reasons for people’s involvement in the community garden were education, community development and leisure.

In the community garden Complexo Aeroporto, Ribeirão Preto, S.P., Brazil, the major reason to get involved in the community garden were job opportunities and food provision. As a result, while developing countries still are facing unemployment and hunger, the developed countries, are more worried about education and environmental concerns. As pointed out by Giddings et al. (2002), we cannot separate the environment, society and the economy, if we want to work sustainably.

Environmental Concerns

According to my fieldwork research, the workers do not know about the environmental degradation and its consequences, and as a result, they do not care about it. Their main objectives, as I already said, were jobs opportunities and food provision to supply their immediate needs. For them, the organic food taste better and there is no need to use “veneno” (poison/chemical); they actually affirm that the vegetables
growth better without them. As I said, most of the workers are not concerned about environmental problems of the region, but they know that the use of chemical fertilizers is not good for the quality of the vegetables, and also not good for their health. They said that the area now looks beautiful and that before it was used as a garbage disposal. Therefore, the results of my research emphasize that the workers do not have knowledge about environmental issues, but they can see the modifications of the area that benefit the environment. According to the interviews, they learned much of this information related to environmental issues during the weekly meetings and with their co-workers while working in the community garden. They are gaining other knowledge, such as, health, food quality, economy, politics and social integration, and we can see that this is perhaps one of most significant gains for those involved.

During my interviews with the coordinators, they made very clear their concern with environmental issues. They were really worried about the environmental degradation of the region caused by the dumped garbage which was being deposited in unoccupied areas in the city (see for example Fig. 4.2). “That brings a lot of problems to the environment and public health, and the consequences of that can be really serious,” said one of the coordinators. It can, for example, contaminate the area, making it smell bad and bringing diseases.

Not mentioned by the coordinators, but evident from the geographical aspects of the region, is that when it rains, the garbage can flow into the river nearby and contaminate other areas, even areas used for food production. The trash in the river
also increases the probability for flooding which brings even more serious health and economic problems. So, to try to solve the environmental problem and also deal with hunger within the region of the Complexo Aeroporto at the same time, the solution was the creation of community gardens.

One of the ideas of the coordinators was to use organic compost collected in the community in the garden as a natural fertilizer. To be able to use the organic compost as a fertilizer, it needs to be stored in containers for a period of time, which were available in the community garden. The initial idea was to exchange organic compost for vegetables for the poorer population of the community. This would reduce the amount of trash produced in the community and make the population aware of the environment degradation. This was actually not implemented yet, although as one of the coordinators said, they plan to do it in the future.

One aspect that was called to my attention during my research was the “problem” of the water which was pointed out by one neighbor during the weekly meeting. According to him, the water in Ribeirão Preto is very expensive and the poor people cannot afford to pay for it to start a community garden. He believes that the local government should supply cheaper and/or free water for future community gardens (it is important to remember here that the water is now the only support given by the local government to the Complexo Aeroporto community garden). His thoughts generated disagreements between the coordinators over issues related to the poor use of the water, since that one of the goals of the coordinators was to protect the
environment by preserving natural resources. For many people the water is the most precious good of the earth and should be preserved. The coordinators also think that there is a need to look for some alternatives to preserve the water, such as some techniques to use the water in the right way. They know that techniques like that are expensive and that they do not have money for that.

Another important aspect regarding environmental issues is the fact that the city of Ribeirão Preto does not have the Local Agenda 21, which in the opinion of one of the coordinators, would not survive in Ribeirão Preto because of the big sugar cane industries. That coordinator also said that he/she does not believe in Agenda 21 as a possible solution because it was made with political/governmental intentions/goals, which is a plan of actions that start from the top; rather he/she believes in plans that start locally.

4.4 Conclusion

A lot of social benefits were observed in the local community by the coordinators, and by the workers, according to my fieldwork. Important factors such as job opportunities, the reduction of hunger, food quality, and health concerns were the primary perceived impacts. Once getting a job in the garden, the worker will have some money to meet their primary needs to survive. Also, working in the garden, they can get food to eat at home without spending money. The food that the workers get in the garden is fresh and also without chemicals which is very good for their health, and,
as consequence, they will not get sick frequently, as they are having a better diet rich in nutrients.

In addition to hunger reduction, job opportunities, food quality, and health benefits, the community garden also brings some other benefits, such as solidarity, relaxation, decrease in criminality, and also environmental awareness. Once working in groups, the solidarity between people tends to increase. They start to learn to share their space, their production, their problems, and mainly their knowledge with each other. Then, they become more confident with each other, and the workers in the garden become more pleasant.

They have a lot of fun by talking and joking with each other during working time. I clearly could observe that during my fieldwork. According to one of the coordinators and neighbors’ perceived observation, there was also a decrease in the criminality of the region. They said that before the establishment of the garden, the area was used for the trafficking of drugs and also for prostitution. Nowadays, the area is clean and that protects the community from these kinds of criminality. In the interview with the neighbors, all of them were very enthusiastic about the existence of the garden, mainly because the area was cleaned and no longer a place for dumping garbage, which is very good for the local community and for the environment.

The process of running a community garden may face a lot of obstacles before the goals of participants are achieved. Problems such as money shortages, not enough volunteers, insufficient support from the local government, and conflicts of interests
between the stakeholders can lead to failure. In the case of Complexo Aeroporto, I believe that the main factor that caused the majority of the obstacles was that there was not direct participation of local community in the formation of the garden. Although the idea started locally, after accepting the government support, the responsibility for organizing the garden was transferred to outsiders, as the workers and families participating in the garden were chosen by the local government. This could be one of reasons which the workers did not feel that the garden belonged to them, even after the establishment of a cooperative system; the workers were selected to work and receive money in the garden as employees. The idea of the coordinators to ask for help from the local government was necessary because it is hard to start a garden without any money, but the form in which the money was invested in the garden was problematic, as the coordinators did not have the control of it. From my point of view, which is also shared by one of the coordinators, the nine months of support from the local government was yet another compensatory program for the poor people which did not help in making them become independent. This makes it difficult for the garden to move from relying on government funding to being self-sustaining.
CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusion

In this thesis I describe a particular community garden in Brazil, and I examine in detail how a community garden functions. In particular, I sought to address the question of how different stakeholders, including the government, social activists, and community members interact in the process of running a community garden. Additionally, I examined the obstacles that a new community garden may be faced with and I considered how these obstacles may be overcome. In order to answer these research questions I did a fieldwork study where I collected and analyzed information from different sources, including documents, survey/questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Analyzing this data, I it is clear that the main reasons to get involved in a community garden were, for the workers, job opportunity and food provision, and for coordinators, social inclusion and environmental concern. I also found out some perceived impacts on the local community, and local environmental. In the local community the following social benefits were evident: reduction of hunger, food quality, job opportunities, more solidarity, less criminality in the area, increased environmental and health awareness, and increased protection of the area. In the local environment
people believed that the area had become more beautiful of the area. As the area was no longer used as empty space for garbage.

Ribeirão Preto does not have a Local Agenda 21, therefore the community garden of Complexo Aeroporto was not motivated by such polices. In many developed countries, the number of community gardens grew a lot, such as in the United Kingdom, in consequence of the creation of the Local Agenda 21 (Holland, 2004). However, according the coordinators, due to the presence of the big sugar cane industries in Ribeirão Preto, it will be impossible to have such local policies to protect the environment.

In spite of the benefits, some problems and obstacles were also found in the Community Garden of Complexo Aeroporto, which were not a surprise according to my review on the topic. The problems I found there have been reported in many other community gardens around the world. Problems such as vandalism and conflicts of interest between those involved are actually a common problem. I also found less common problems such as insufficient support by the local government and also a low number of volunteers, which may be typical for developing countries.

An interesting aspect of this particular community garden is how the different participant members see each other and what they desire from the community garden. For example, the coordinators see the local government as a cause of the problem, a growth of the oppression of the marginalized people (workers), or as a possible source of help, depending on which political party the mayor is from. At the same time, for the coordinators, the government sees them as an obstacle to the formation of voting
blocks, which could potentially be formed by the workers and other village inhabitants. From the point of view of the workers, the coordinators are the bosses and the local government is like a father, which will always help them. They see the community garden as a source of income and food, while the coordinators see the garden as a way to reintegrate the marginalized people to the society, fight against the hunger and protect the environment. They also believe that the work in community, based in the cooperative system, will make people more independent, and as a consequence they will stop depending on the government food provision. In the cooperative system they learn how to take care of their own things, administrating the money obtained by selling vegetables in the garden, which in the end is divided equally between the workers. So, all these things are believed make the community stronger, less submissive, and more confident. As a result, the effects of their oppression may begin to minimize, and they may begin to believe in themselves more.

The process of changes in the garden is a slow process, mainly because it involves people with different backgrounds. Others difficulties such as money shortage and insufficient support from local government can provide a margin for failure as many participants in the community garden give up because of these problems. The solution for this kind of problem is not simple and would require carefully treatment by all the members of the community. Work in group is a kind of art, where the final result is obtained by the collective work of many hands. Everybody must to do their part, being careful and helpful because, the probability of making mistake also increases, as
people with different backgrounds will think and act differently in similar situations. On the other hand, results can be reached more quickly with the collaboration of many people. If this is able to occur, each person involved, and also all surrounding community, will be benefited.

I conclude that community garden Complexo Aeroporto, in spite of the many problems and obstacles experienced, offers a lot of benefits to society and to the environment. As pointed out by Holland (2004), a view which I also share here, there are many other goals being accomplished, aside from the food provision and job opportunities, which we cannot be summarized here. I believe that this study may help to avoid failure and to promote new community gardens in developing countries, decreasing the amount of social exclusion.

5.1 Recommendations for Future Research

This study certainly does not cover all possible researchable issues dealing with community gardens. My research was only concerned with a specific community garden located in Ribeirao Preto, S.P., Brazil and restricted to the analysis of the interaction of members involved and the process of running a community garden.

Since one of the limitations was the restricted environment, and also because each community garden has its specifics characteristics, it is necessary to study other sites to know their features to have a better understanding of how, in general, a community garden functions.
The majority of studies about community gardens and urban agriculture focus on food security and economic aspects of these processes. Gender, race, class, and age have only been studied minimally, yet these are important characteristics that might contribute to the failure or success of a community garden, as we have seen in this thesis. Because of that, these factors deserve special attention with further studies, in order to understand how the interaction between different types of members affect the community garden, and also to learn who does this type of practice.

From the results I present in this thesis it is very clear that the government plays an important role in the success or failure of a community garden. This is an interesting topic yet there have been almost no studies about it, especially in Latin America, with the exception of Cuba.

Historical, cultural and economical aspects of a region are other important factors in the understanding how community gardens function. The state plays a very important rule in the practice of urban agriculture in Cuba, which is successful, but behind that success there is a long history, and large amounts of research. So, by knowing those many aspects of a region or country and its past we are able to understand its present and future.

A few studies have pointed out the influence of economic globalization, defined by Keeling (2004) activities that “transcend the political state system,” and neoliberal politics in the decrease of urban agriculture in some countries and the increase in others. For this reason, studies are needed to clarify this issue, because globalization
is taking place and it can play an important role in encouraging or discouraging urban
agriculture around the world.

Some studies indicate that after the establishment of Local Agenda 21 (Earth
Smith, 1992) there was a large growth in the number of community gardens around
the world, mainly in developed countries. However, there are almost no studies
regarding this topic in developing countries, mainly in Latin American countries. In
Brazil for example, I do not known any study which relates the increase in the number
of community gardens to Local Agenda 21. Also, it would be important to know how
the community garden functioning is affected by having or not having a local Agenda
21 present.

To conclude, other case studies on community gardens and urban agriculture in
general are needed. The collection of such studies would enable us to understand the
topic better and would help promote the expansion of this practice.
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Appendix A

Survey/Questionnaire

Survey on Community Gardens of the Complexo Aeroporto de Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil.

Investigator: Maria Lúcia Soares Villas Bôas, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, U.S.A.

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about people involved in community gardens. This information will be used in the completion of a study which will explore the reasons why people become involved in community gardens and the impacts of community gardens. The information that you provide in this questionnaire will be used only for purpose of this study and will be kept strictly confidential. Completion of this survey implies that you consent to the use of this information for these purposes.

1. Age: _________

2. Gender:
   □ female  □ male

3. Marital status:
   □ married  □ single  □ other
4. Are you volunteer in the community garden?

☐ yes    ☐ no

5. Do you get vegetable from the garden?

☐ yes    ☐ no

6. If yes, with which frequency?

☐ Once a week    ☐ twice or more a week

7. Total family income:

☐ under 1 salary minimal    ☐ under 3 salary minimal

☐ more them 3 salary minimal

8. How many people depend of this income?

R.:__________

9. Education:

☐ never studied    ☐ elementary school    ☐ middle school

☐ high school    ☐ undergrad school    ☐ other ________

10. Where did you live most of your life?

☐ rural area    ☐ urban area

11. For how long have you been participating in the community garden?

☐ less then 1 mounth    ☐ 1 to 6 mounth    ☐ 6 mounth to 1 year

☐ more
12. What are your interests in the community garden?

☐ job opportunity   ☐ food provision   ☐ leisure   ☐ health
☐ protecting the area   ☐ skills   ☐ Education   ☐ others ________

13. Do you make money from the garden?

☐ yes   ☐ no

14. How often do you work in the garden?

☐ Every day   ☐ 3 times a week   ☐ 2 times a week   ☐ once a week
☐ others

15. How many hours do work in the community garden?

☐ 1 hour per day   ☐ 1-2   ☐ 3-4   ☐ more than 5 ________

16. Did you notice any reduction in the criminality in the area after the creation of the community garden?

☐ yes   ☐ no

17. Is there any other benefit that you would like to mention?

R:________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Survey/Questionnaire (Portuguese Translation)

Questionário sobre a Horta Comunitária do Complexo aeroporto de Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil Pesquisadora: Maria Lúcia Soares Villas Bôas, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, U.S.A.

Este questionário é designado para coletar informações sobre as pessoas envolvidas na horta comunitária. As informações serão usadas para completar um estudo, o qual irá explorar as razões pelas quais as pessoas se envolvem nas hortas comunitárias e os benefícios das mesmas. As informações que você fornecer neste questionário serão usadas somente para o objetivo de estudo e as mesmas serão estritamente confidencial. O preenchimento deste questionário significa que você consente o uso das informações para este propósito.

1. Idade: __________

2. Sexo:

□ feminino       □ masculino
3. Estado cível:

  □ casado       □ solteiro       □ outro

4. Você é voluntário na horta comunitária?

  □ sim       □ não

5. Você recebe verduras e vegetais da horta?

  □ sim       □ não

6. Se recebe, com que frequência você as recebe?

  □ 1 vez por semana       □ mais de uma vez por semana

7. Renda familiar total (de todas as pessoas juntas):

  □ até 1 salário mínimo       □ até 3 salário mínimo

  □ mais de 3 salário mínimo

8. Quantas pessoas depende desta renda na sua família?

  R.:  ________

9. Grau de escolaridade:

  □ nunca estudou       □ 1ª a 4ª série       □ 5ª a 8ª série

  □ colegial ou curso técnico       □ faculdade       □ outro ________

10. Onde você morou a maior parte de sua vida?

    □ zona rural       □ zona urbana
11. Há quanto tempo você participa desta horta comunitária?
   □ menos de 1 mês   □ de 1 a 6 meses   □ de 6 mese a 1 ano
   □ mais de 1 ano

12. Qual é seu interesse na horta comunitária?
   □ oportunidade de trabalho   □ alimentação   □ lazer   □ saúde
   □ proteção da área   □ adquirir experiência profissional   □ Educacional
   □ outras ___________

13. Você recebe alguma renda (dinheiro) da horta comunitária?
   □ sim   □ não

14. Com que frequência você trabalha na horta comunitária?
   □ todo dia   □ 3 vezes por semana   □ 2 vezes por semana
   □ 1 vez por semana   □ outras

15. Quantas horas você trabalha na horta comunitária por dia?
   □ 1 hora por dia   □ 1-2 por dia   □ 3-4 por dia
   □ mais de 5 ___________

16. Você notou alguma redução na criminalidade no bairro após a criação da horta?
   □ sim   □ não

17. Houve alguma outra melhoria que você gostaria de mencionar?
   R:___________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

For volunteers workers I asked: “I am here to interview you and about you why you are here?” Then, if I did not get the desired answer (their goals) I asked more detailed questions to try to obtain the answer required. Therefore, my possible questions in case I did not get the answer with the indirect question was:

1. What are your goals for participating in this project?

2. What are you benefits for participant in that community garden?

3. In your opinion, what are the real benefits for the community and participants?

4. How and when did you get to know about this project?

I also interviewed the coordinators of the project and the place of the interview was scheduled according to their time to make the process more convenient for them. My objective by interviewing them was to know more detailed answer about the project. The possible questions was:

1. What motivated the establishment of the project?

2. When the project was created?

3. How did you get money to start the project?
4. Does the project receive donations? If yes, is it from non-governmental or governmental institution? What kind of donation does the project receive?

5. How many people were involved in the project at the beginning?

6. What organizations were they from?

7. Why were they involved?

8. How many people are involved in the project now, including coordinators, volunteers and workers?

9. How did they acquire the area?

10. Is it difficult to form a community garden in Ribeirão Preto? Why?

11. In your opinion, what are the real impacts for the community and participants?

12. Does the garden effects the community economically?

13. Did the local politicians give some encouragement to the formation of the project?

I also interview the neighbor’s of the community garden Complexo Aeroporto. I asked the following questions:

1. What is your opinion about that community garden?

2. Do you know how many people work there every day?
3. How long do they work each day?

4. How often do you buy vegetables there?

5. Are the vegetables expensive?

6. How about the quality of the vegetables?

7. How was the place before the community garden?

8. Was garbage dumped there?

9. How about the crime in that area?

10. Did it decrease or not?
Appendix D

Interview Protocol (Portuguese Translation)

Para os trabalhadores voluntários eu perguntei: “Estou aqui para entrevistá-lo, e você, porquê você está aqui?” Então se eu não obtivesse a resposta desejada (seus objetivos) eu fiz perguntas mais detalhadas para obter a resposta desejada. Desta forma, as possíveis perguntas que fiz no caso de não conseguir uma resposta através de perguntas indiretas foi:

1. Quais são seus objetivos pessoais como participante des projeto?

2. Quais são os benefícios de participar da horta comunitária?

3. Em sua opinião, qual é o benefício real para a comunidade e os participantes?

4. Como e quando você ficou sabendo deste projeto?

Eu intrevistei também os coordenadores do projeto e o lugar e horário escolhido foi de acordo com os horários e disponibilidade dos coordenadores de forma a tornar a entrevista mais convincente para eles. Meu objetivo em entrevistá-los foi adquirir respostas mais detalhadas sobre o projeto. As questões perguntadas foram:
1. O que motivou o estabelecimento do projeto?

2. Quando o projeto foi criado?

3. Como você conseguiu dinheiro para começar o projeto?

4. O projeto recebe alguma doação? Se recebe, é ela de orgãos não governamental or governamental? Que tipo de doações o projeto recebe?

5. Quantas pessoas estavam envolvidas quando o projeto começou?

6. De quais organizações elas faziam parte?

7. Porque eles se envolveram?

8. Quantas pessoas estão envolvidas no projeto agora, incluindo coordenadores, voluntários e trabalhadores?

9. Como vocês conseguiram a área para a horta comunitária?

10. É difícil formar uma horta comunitária em Ribeirão Preto? Porque?

11. Em sua opinião, quais são os impactos reais para a comunidade e os participantes?

12. A horta comunitária afeta a comunidade economicamente?

13. Vocês receberam alguma forma de apoio de políticos locais para a formação do projeto?
Eu também intrevistei alguns vizinhos da horta comunitária Complexo Aeroporto.

Eu perguntei as seguintes questões:

1. Qual é a sua opinião sobre a horta comunitária?

2. Você sabe quantas pessoas trabalham lá todo dia?

3. Quantas horas eles trabalham por dia?

4. Com que frequência você compra verduras lá?

5. As verduras são caras?

6. O que você acha da qualidade das verduras?

7. Como era a área antes da horta comunitária?

8. Havia lixo lá?

9. Como você vê a criminalidade na área?

10. Ela aumentou ou não?