

Collective urban food gardens have proliferated throughout cities of the Global North, particularly over the last decade. Drawing upon, and contributing to, an increasingly nuanced discourse of urban food gardening as political ecological praxis, this thesis explores how care, as an everyday, relational and deeply political enactment is entwined with the embodied, material and affective production of socionatures. Three diverse case studies located in Edinburgh, Scotland, form the basis of this detailed ethnography, drawing upon participant observation, semi-structured and go-along walking interviews. The thesis develops an ecologies of care framework by conceptualising care in relation to urban political ecology. Incorporating a care perspective which encapsulates the affective, practical and ethical dimensions of socioecological relationships, enables an examination of people's motivations, mobilisations and practices in relation to the complexities and dynamics of the production of socionatures. I demonstrate, what urban agent's 'care about' and 'care for', shapes how the intimate urban ecologies of collective urban food gardens are cultivated, experienced and contested.

Despite their diverse modes of emergence and differential micro-political socioecological configurations, this thesis revealed three interconnected findings. Firstly, the gardens are power-laden and fragile entanglements where multiple urban agents, competing agendas, and negotiations are interwoven with a politics of care, where they are simultaneously spaces of more-than-capitalist possibility and vulnerable to neoliberal co-option. Secondly, the gardens are both affectively and materially co-produced and sustained by a multiplicity of encounters and strategic practices, entangling both human and more-than-human others, in diverse ecologies of care. Adopting a creative, experimental stance enabled gardeners to tinker, adapt, and enact care in multiple ways and in some instances, elicited a curiosity based upon openness to others by learning to be affected and therefore, make potentially transformative connections. Finally, the gardens are knowledge commons, where moments of collective experiential learning are nurtured in both spontaneous and structured formats, based on the interlacement of playful labour and vernacular creativity, in ways that have the potential to reconfigure the socioecological imaginaries of gardeners. The thesis concludes by discussing the collective urban food gardens as contradictory socionatural sites, in their capacity to both challenge and reinforce prevailing socioecological relations and their concomitant inequalities.