"Connecting People and the Earth":
The Occupational Experience of People with Different Capabilities Participating in an Inclusive Horticultural Social Enterprise

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By
Simone Coetzee
Department of Clinical Sciences
College of Health and Life Sciences
Brunel University London
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Abstract

Social enterprises have responded to personalisation of social care with enthusiasm as they aim to improve communities, investing profits into social or environmental aims (The Plunkett Foundation 2010). Personalisation has, likewise, heightened interest in services offered to people with disabilities, beyond those offered by local authorities and the NHS.

The goals of the social enterprise in this study reflected the values of green care, which enables engagement with nature to produce health, social and education benefits (Fieldhouse & Sempik 2014). Green care and personalisation can both be understood from an occupational perspective, based on the idea that occupation sustains well-being in individuals. If social enterprises can create person-centred occupational experiences for people, they can play an important part in bridging the gap between traditional care settings and community participation.

This research examined a social enterprise involved in food growing using a permaculture approach (Holmgren 2011); addressing the question: What is the occupational experience of people with and without disabilities participating in an inclusive horticultural social enterprise?

This qualitative research used participatory action research (PAR) and critical ethnography as methodologies to build a case study of the social enterprise. Methods used were photography, mapping, and other accessible modes of data collection. Two PAR groups involving twenty-two people were convened, followed by six key-informant interviews. A reflexive log was maintained throughout project planning and PAR processes. Participants contributed to data analysis, identifying early themes, and interviews added context to the three final themes: Exclusion within inclusion; choice, transformation and ownership; and people, place and participation.

As a result of the study the author considers that there are a number of governance and power challenges within green care social enterprises but these

organisations have a role in addressing marginalisation through reducing bureaucratic barriers to social change and increasing skills for resilience and sustainability.

Presentations, publications and awards

Publication

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Conference Presentations and Posters

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Coetzee S.; McKay E.A., Bryant, W., Nicholls, L (2016) Coetzee S.; McKay B., Bryant, W., Nicholls, L (2016) 'The participation of people with a learning disability in a horticultural social enterprise', *Growing Towards Recovery Conference*, Kent, 12 – 13 July 2013.
Coetzee S.; McKay E.A., Bryant, W., Nicholls, L (2013) 'Growing Places': The participation of people with a learning disability in a community market garden', Brunel Graduate School Poster Conference, Brunel University, 30 April 2013.
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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
DOH	Department of Health
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
PAR	Participatory Action Research
STH	Social and Therapeutic Horticulture
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WFOT	World Federation of Occupational Therapists

Confidentiality statement:

The name of the research site and all the names of participants have been changed in order to respect the confidentiality of those who took part in the research. Those who consented to participate agreed to the inclusion of images of themselves in this thesis and other publications or presentations. Images chosen were those identified by participants as being acceptable representations of themselves. The author holds copyright of the photographs to ensure ethical and agreed use of these and requests that they not be shared beyond the boundaries of this thesis by any other person or organisation.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter sets the context of the study and examines the motivation behind the research completed with The Forest Garden Co-operative and gardeners at The Forest Community Garden in East London. It outlines my own experience of health and social care services as a worker, leading to my interest in researching the experience of occupation and inclusion in this social enterprise.

The reason for the research was an attempt to look beyond statutory services at other options for people living with a disability in the community. People living with a disability are often competing for time-limited, community services which are increasingly scarce or privatised and therefore influenced more by market than social priorities (Darby 2016). They rely on the third sector for access to such community resources (Watt 2013) and for establishing a sense of identity and a role within local groups of interest to them, in voluntary activity and for exploring access to paid work (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011).

1.1 The Journey: Personal, professional and political context

In 2009, I completed an MSc in Global Health and Development with a focus on Disability Studies. This was a pivotal experience, reconnecting me with work and ideas I was passionate about and had first learned about as an occupational therapist in South Africa, particularly community-based rehabilitation. It also opened up a world of international social and health policy and behaviour, specifically relating to people with disabilities, that I had not made time to critically consider before, within the context of the UK or other countries. This course made me rethink, for example; whether charities supported or undermined government services; the power relations between health professionals and service users; and the impact of cultural awareness and role of the community in facilitating disability awareness. The course had a strong focus on inclusive practice and rights-based approaches that was strengthened by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (United Nations General Assembly 2006) which

had recently been published. Another influence were the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly 2005), promoting equality, health equity and including a focus on environmental sustainability: yet causing controversy due to their lack of acknowledgement of disability and its impact on poverty and participation (Groce 2011).

Inclusion of people with disabilities was a concept I embraced, having worked in rehabilitation for years with people who faced frustrating and unnecessary barriers to participation in everyday life, even where resources were arguably more advanced and available through an established welfare system. I understood that if there was a legal basis to uphold people being included in every aspect of society, then individual needs would have to be more closely assessed and services implemented and consequently including people with complex needs in community-based activities would become routine, rather than extraordinary.

The disability movement in the UK, spurred on by evidence of cash payments being made to American citizens to enable more control of their own services, lobbied for similar payments for people with disabilities in the UK (Riddell et al. 2005) . This was eventually made law in the 1996 Community Care (Direct Payments) Act (Department of Health (DOH), 1996) and was the start of a movement towards people making choices relating to their own care and participation, independently.

Self-directed support, where people are given a personal budget to purchase their own assistance and services developed later, from an initiative driven by the social enterprise In Control (Poll et al. 2006), giving people the power and the responsibility to transform their own care from a traditional 'care package', to a more personalised service. Further legislation has been passed since with the aim to transform services for people of all ages and needs (Department of Health 2007; Department of Health 2009; Department of Health 2012b; Department of Health 2014b) from general 'one-size-fits-all' packages to more personalised services, chosen by the individuals themselves

In my own work context at the time of my interest in the emergence of personalisation of care, there was a wide-spread move toward reduction of services that were block-purchased or contracted by social services. In the older peoples' day services where I worked, people who had been referred to the day centres as many as ten years before were being reassessed, with recommendations to try voluntary or other third-sector services if they were considered '*able*'.

Other day services for young adults with learning disabilities were being told that their day services were closing and that they would need to attend other general day services if they demonstrated eligibility and did not want a personal budget to purchase alternative services. Transformation of adult care towards a more personalised model was presented as enabling and empowering, but for many concerned about the reduction of, or unjust tiering of services, the move towards personalisation remained under criticism (Ferguson 2012; Beresford 2008; Leece & Leece 2006).

This was the culture and atmosphere of social care when I started volunteering at Forest Garden, a community market garden on the borders of London in 2009. The challenge of working full time in a jointly funded health and social care service had seen me taking time out once a fortnight to work in this community garden and I found the environment immediately welcoming and accessible to a number of people similar to those I had seen struggling to hold onto their places in statutory sector services. I had time to talk to people, understand their ideals and see what they were capable of in an environment that allowed for steady mastery of diverse occupations. Only a handful of people who needed assistance held a personal budget and these were people who had the social or family support to help manage their budgets. Others had fought to get to this point, where they were doing something they valued, having experienced many other occupational options less appealing to them, along the way.

As an occupational therapist, I found the variety of activities available to participate in within the garden, warehouse and kitchen on site, fascinating. In my statutory sector work, organising meaningful, non-tokenistic occupation for people in an

authentic environment was difficult and only rarely achieved successfully and sustainably. At work we had always strived for *client-centred* occupations, in that the person was interested in the task, could make decisions related to it and wanted to participate in it to achieve certain goals (Creek 2003). Seldom, however, did the activity or occupation effectively reach past the person, their hospital bed, home or family and place them within a wider framework, into a *community,* as effectively as work in this garden appeared to do.

I was also inspired by the social aims of the co-operative team who ran the garden. Their focus was on social change and justice through constructive action and building a resilient, sustainable network of people who could contribute valuable skills and knowledge to their local communities. This felt like a revisiting of my values as an occupational therapist. These were values deeply embedded in my education as an occupational therapist but they felt at risk in the largely target-focused, individual-orientated services that were the growing reality of health and social care practice.

The co-operative ran the garden as a *social enterprise*, balancing the risks of entrepreneurship and relevance of local food growing with this urban community's need for a slower, more connected way of living following the financial fallout of 2008. The term *social enterprise*, an organisation with social aims that reinvests its profit back into the organisation (Addicott 2011; Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011), was being used by a wide range of groups, notably New Labour and then the coalition government in promoting more autonomy and space for innovation for health providers (Addicott 2011). It was also being used by leftist, beliefs-driven social entrepreneurs with community and environmental aims at heart (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011).

The co-operative founders of the Forest Garden were values-driven, applying environmental and horticultural learning and philosophy to growing healthier communities. I was fascinated by the two worlds I found myself in, with a strong desire to understand the success of the garden being both a seemingly inclusive space for a diverse group of people as well as an occupationally-focused one.

1.2 Food growing, occupation and action research

"…I arrived at (the garden) half expecting to find the equivalent of a sapling in the central reservation of a motorway. I discovered, if not the Garden of Eden itself, then that rare, distinctive scent of growth, at once fertile and powerful, between the good nature of people, the vast, bewildering colonies we have formed and the one earth we all have to inhabit."

David Ransom on the Forest Garden (Litherland & Organiclea Co-operative Growers 2014, p.3)

The above is an example of the sensory impact Forest Garden had on people on first sight of it and on reflection of work done and time spent there. Occupation, in this study, is about being able to participate in this work in a non-tokenistic way that upholds dignity; reinforces identity and a sense of belonging to groups that have meaning to individuals; and underlines one's right to equal citizenship, independent of capacity and level of contribution.

Wilcock's definition of occupation as: *"all that people want, need or are obliged to do; what it means to them; and its ever-present potential as an agent of change"* (Wilcock 2006) resonates with this project due to the references to being driven toward occupation as human beings, through obligation and due to the perceived potential of the occupations involved in gardening to enable change.

Gardening and particularly food growing represents life: cycles of change, nourishment, skill, companionship and celebration. It also represents waiting, disappointment, frustration, inaccessibility and at times, isolation. Learning to grow and prepare food alongside people who feel able to acknowledge the above complexities and how they reflect their own life journeys is an opportunity for emotional learning not available in many health and social care settings. Research

in this setting is a way of capturing this and other learning, but the design needs to be aligned with the people and the place.

Gardening as a group, demands both participation and action and the design for this project was never much in doubt. Early thoughts about capturing the experience of different people working in the garden were discussed with co-operative members. They were concerned with ensuring a voice for as many as possible, using occupation to understand experience and incorporating the garden's growing cycles and needs into structure of the research. Participatory action research was discussed with co-operative members as a possible way to ensure meeting all of the above requirements, and unwittingly, it seemed the research had already begun.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The literature review which follows details and critiques some of the key areas already highlighted and works towards an understanding of the reason the research question was developed. The methodology explores the philosophical perspective, the qualitative approach to the study, further explanation for the choice of participatory methods and need for a critical ethnographic component to the research.

The methods chapter outlines the research participants and recruitment processes, gives insight into the types of data collection used and the data analysis journey over the three stages of data collection, leading to the final themes for each phase. Additional insights were added from reflexive logs documented throughout the research journey.

There are three findings chapters, one for each stage of data collection. The discussion chapter combines these three findings chapters to make sense of them in in relation to the experience of food growing as an occupation; issues of choice,

acknowledgement and connection; and considerations of governance, sustainability and the relevance of growing as therapy.

The limitations of the research, as well as final reflections on the research process follow the concluding ideas emerging from this study. This final chapter ends with recommendations for future areas of investigation; implications for practice and education; and proposed dissemination of the research findings.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Three main topics form the basis of the background literature discussed in this chapter: *Green care*, *social enterprise* and the impact, on *personalisation of care* on the use of third sector enterprises. These three topics were chosen because they were pertinent to what was happening in social care, health and politics at the time the study was proposed. Since then (2011) these topics have undergone transitions in definition, knowledge base and levels of public and political interest, largely due to changes in the leadership of the United Kingdom (UK) and the popular growth of both social enterprise and green care. There is a focus on learning disability in one section of the research and for this reason literature relevant to this topic has also been included in order to explore the impact of gardening on the lives of people with a disability. References to permaculture have also been made throughout due to the primary importance of this philosophy to the organisation at the centre of the research.

The permaculture and personalisation sections were completed in the form of a structured commentary due to the dearth of literature in permaculture and the large amount of emerging literature in personalisation. The topic of social enterprise has evolved over the period the research process took place and so literature included in this critique represents early contextual information, literature from the time the data collection took place and, where relevant and important, recent evidence to facilitate relevance to future practice. Following these sections there is a more detailed and structured literature review on green care and how this relates to the context of social enterprise and social care. The search strategy for the green care section is noted below, however similar databases and strategies were also utilised in an ongoing, inductive manner when new issues and topics arose that required examination in the other two sections.

2.2 Search and selection of the literature

In 2011 an initial *building blocks*-type literature search (Bates 1989) was undertaken using health and social care databases accessed online through the Brunel University London online library in order to examine the main topics of research in more detail, and as mentioned, particularly *green care*, an emerging area of health impacting on the study of human occupation. AMED, Academic search complete, CINAHL Plus and Web of Science were searched using the terms listed in table 2.1. Key words, as seen in table 2.1, were searched and then combined using relevant Boolean operators (Onwuegbuzie & Frels 2016).

The table demonstrates a further search of similar databases done in 2015 in order to update the previous review and highlight any further pertinent research in the rapidly emerging topic of green care and the shifting focus of social enterprise. This search brought up a number of new studies and reviews, many of which were included in this section.

Evidence from the 2005 to the present was included; however older texts were considered where they were deemed important to the history or cultural context of the review. The table below demonstrates search terms and exclusions that were used in the early and later search (table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Table of search terms from 2011 and 2015, databases accessed and terms excluded from the search

Search Terms	Garden, horticultur*, therapeutic, green care,	Exclusions: Children Dementia Non-English papers Care farm (unless specifically relevant)
	social enterprise; co-operative; occupation	
	Learning disabilit*; intellectual disabilit*;	
Databases	AMED; Academic Search Complete; CINAHL Plus; Web of Science; Summon; Google scholar	
Other searches	Berry picking including: hand searches, citation and footnote searches; journal run and author searches (Bates 1989; Booth 2008)	

The scientific and academic literature used was from peer-reviewed journals or printed books. Only a very small number of articles considered grey literature were used where it was necessary to represent current context or an issue not represented in an academic context.

The term *mental health* was not specifically included in the search, however much of the literature pertinent to green care or gardening was linked to mental health and wellbeing. The links to health were studies that included mental health issues

and were also relevant to disability and marginalised populations in general (Sempik et al. 2014). Literature relating to green care was commonly written within the context of occupational therapy – not necessarily carried out by occupational therapists, but published in occupational therapy journals or conducted in occupational therapy environments. Although this may have brought some bias to the literature review, it does enable gardening and food growing to be primarily examined through the lens of human occupation as opposed to other specific horticultural or biological lenses.

Articles explicitly relating to gardening and *dementia, children, refugees* or other specific groups were screened for relevance but not necessarily included due to the participants in this research being adults and the marginality issues relating primarily to learning disability and some mental health conditions. Care farming demonstrates some similarities to community gardening although these sites are larger working farms by definition and are focused specifically on using agriculture or livestock farming to promote health and wellbeing among a variety of vulnerable people (Hine et al. 2008a; Hine et al. 2008c) . Due to the high numbers of people with learning disabilities attending care farms in the UK (83%) (Hine, Peacock and Pretty, 2008b) some relevant literature relating to care farming has been included in this review where appropriate.

The updated database search in 2015 yielded a small number of articles that had not already been obtained via ongoing online database alerts (Google scholar, Web of Science), hand searches (Greenhalgh et al. 2005) and "berry picking" techniques as described by Bates (1989) and Booth (2008). Due to the extended timeframe over which the research and write-up took place, *berry picking* was the most useful form of literature search tool alongside networking and interest group alerts to new literature. This technique, although not systematic, does allow for the changing flow of literature and topics with evolving political or social importance, such as *personalisation* and *social enterprise* in this study (Bates 1989).

Specific types of berry picking used were *citation searching, journal run or* hand searching relevant journals, sometimes facilitated by online journals themselves

(Bates 1989; Booth 2008) and *snowballing*, which involved subject searching and reference or index tracking existing papers and using judgement to choose relevant articles (Greenhalgh et al. 2005; Booth 2008). Personal knowledge and networks were also useful in keeping up to date with new publications on applicable topics (Greenhalgh et al. 2005). In order to appraise the relevance and validity of systematic reviews and empirical research papers, principles from the relevant Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists (CASP UK 2013) for different study methodologies were utilised when reviewing papers.

The section on green care was based on a review of eleven papers that were specifically reviewed to understand the important elements of green care that emerge in similar contexts to the one the research took place in. These are detailed in appendix A. Three of the articles reviewed were critical or systematic reviews. The other eight were based upon primary or secondary data research analysis and there was a mix of qualitative and quantitative research, although qualitative methodologies dominated. There was a mix of large studies, including multiple sites and large numbers of participants (Sempik et al. 2014; Hale et al. 2011; Parr 2007) as well as single-site, small scale projects (Whatley et al. 2015; Granerud & Eriksson 2014; Parkinson et al. 2011; Diamant & Waterhouse 2010)

In synthesising information from various literature and evidence sources it was important to reflect both my own and the cultural perspectives that the literature sources are embedded in during the lead up to the research and while it was taking place: The rapidly changing politics from New Labour to Coalition government to Conservative; fluctuating world and local emphasis on the environment and global warming; the Occupy movement highlighting a desire for international social change (Gamson & Sifry 2013); financial and structural instability in health services (Ham 2014) and a revived focus on prevention services in the NHS Five Year Forward View (NHS England 2014), to name only a few influences. This review attempts to convey the literature in a way that is culturally competent and progressive (Onwuegbuzie & Frels 2016) in order to enable a clear portrayal of the context the research took place in.

2.3 Outline of the literature review

The review is divided into three parts, although each overlap as depicted in figure 2.1, demonstrating the influences of these main topic areas (*Personalisation, green care and social enterprise*) on *permaculture*, the philosophy of practice held by the Forest Garden co-operative.
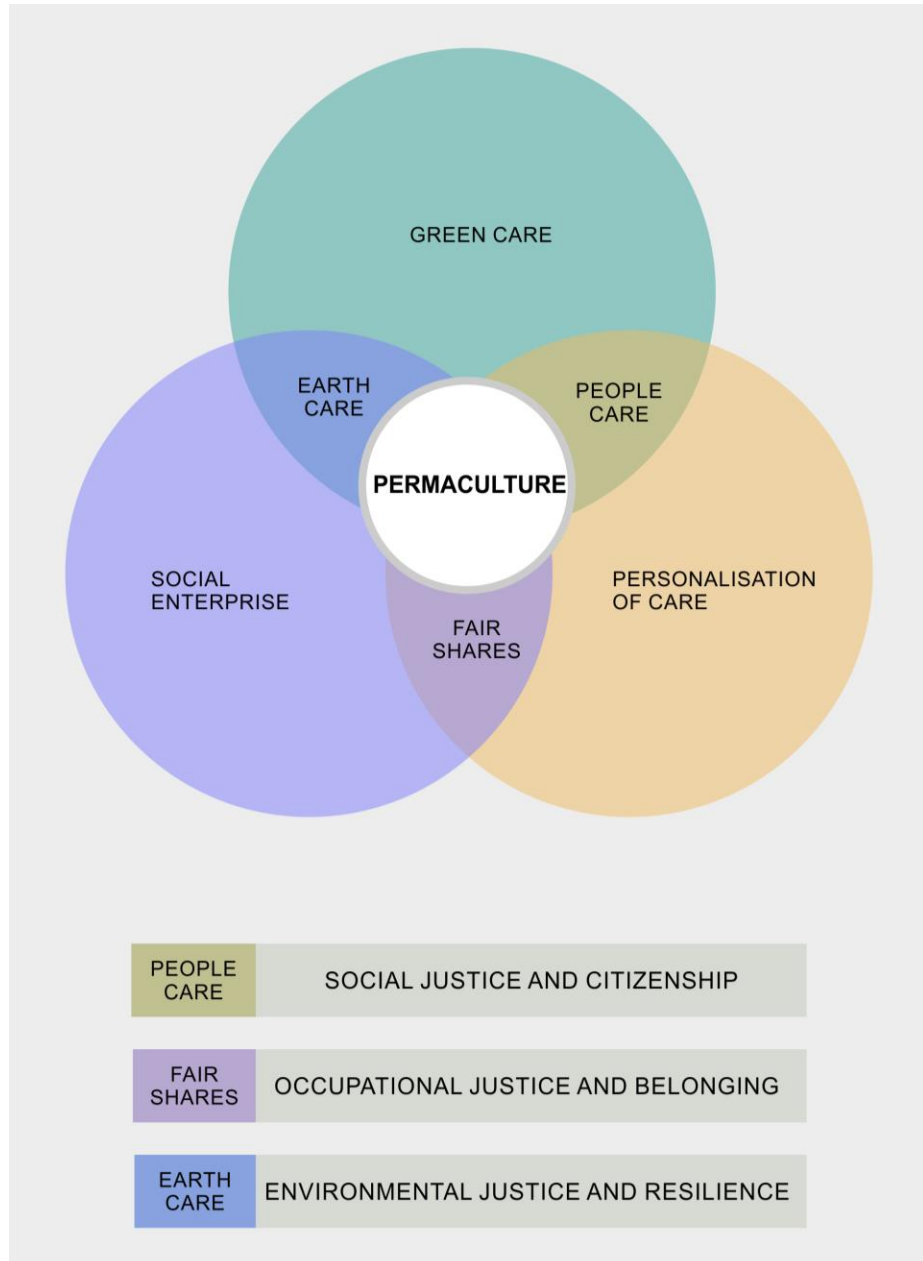
Figure 2.1 Summary of the contextual themes for discussion within the literature review

Permaculture and its three ethics, People Care, Earth Care and Fair Shares (Holmgren 2011), are at the centre-point of the discussion throughout and will be defined and discussed in detail in the next section (2.4). These have been used as bridges between the main contextual literature themes because they relate to common issues the themes share, in particular those related to *social, environmental* and *occupational justice*. These bridging areas not only highlight the links to permaculture, but in the context of this research, make important reference to literature and knowledge added from the field of *occupational science* (Yerxa 2000). Personalisation of care is a key aspect of discussion relating to both *people care* and *fair shares*, or access to resources.

Personalisation of care (discussed in section 2.5) is offered as a solution to many of the challenges faced by people with learning disabilities living in the community (Carr 2012) and this review investigates the authenticity of this presumption as well as the potential it offers for increasing participatory opportunities within the context of social enterprises and other voluntary sector organisations. Personalisation as a concept is difficult to define (Slasberg et al. 2012; Ferguson 2012). Even the formal definition appears broad and open to multiple interpretations in saying that: *"Personalisation means recognising people as individuals who have strengths and preferences and putting them at the centre of their own care and support."* (Carr 2012, p.2). Individual care and support has been a focus in the early stages of this research, and for this reason, consideration of how changes in care, i.e. personalisation and self-directed approaches, will be introduced and critiqued in terms of promotion of inclusive practice; individualism versus community participation; and the facilitation of new dimensions of citizenship based on individual capacity.

The permaculture ethic of *people care* (section 2.6) will be considered in the context of how personalised care could or should enable social justice and inclusion for people with learning disabilities. The Capabilities (or Human Development) approach (Nussbaum 2011) and the concept of citizenship will be

discussed and related to social justice and our approaches to care and the move towards care within alternative environments, such as *social enterprises*.

In section 2.7, social enterprise will be expanded upon in the context of the study. Insight into co-operatives as a type of social enterprise and the emergence and role of social enterprise in social care and health will be developed. There is a brief critique on literature in relation to people with learning disabilities and their current engagement in social enterprises, considering the sustainability of social enterprise in the current political climate and the effect that engaging with statutory services might have on smaller organisations with a focus on community development and the generation of social capital and social change.

The ethic of *earth care* (section 2.8) binds the social or environmental aims of social enterprise to those of green care by considering the feature that many critique in relation to smaller, non-government or commercial ventures – that of sustainability. *Earth Care* considers the sustainability not only of third sector run public services but also considers the impact social and health care services have on the environment and explains the importance of taking a more globally-orientated approach to wellbeing – of caring not only for people but also for the earth (Wilcock 2006). This promotes engagement in understanding of where our food comes from as part of our approach to wellbeing services and how important this is in understanding balance and creating resilience within a finite system. This section outlines links between occupation, *environmental justice* and introduces the concept of belonging, i.e. how important it is for people to establish a sense of belonging to place and the earth, in order to understand aspects of conservation occupation (Wagman 2014; Aoyama 2014; WFOT 2012; Wilcock 2006).

Green care will be discussed in section 2.9, in the context of community gardening and food growing. As mentioned, much research has been done in relation to social and therapeutic horticulture (STH) or care farming and people with mental health problems or dementia however there is little empirical research in relation to people with learning (or intellectual) disabilities and gardening or green care in general. A key finding within green care research is the improvement in social integration and sense of belonging generated through participation in growing food

and other green care occupations (Simo 2011; Diamant & Waterhouse 2010; Sempik et al. 2005).

The final of the three permaculture ethics, *Fair Shares (section 2.9)*, relates the concept of engaging in green care social enterprises to occupation, social inclusion and belonging. This section introduces the topic of *occupational justice* and highlights how this theory is evident when promoting the engagement of people with learning disabilities in community-based food growing social enterprise. The conclusion makes links between the use of permaculture ethics and principles as guiding principles in promoting occupational, social and environmental justice and addresses considerations of the methods of research that might be suitable when covering such a wide spectrum of topics.

2.4 Permaculture: the core philosophy

Permaculture is the philosophy upon which the Forest Co-operative chose to establish and manage of the Forest Garden Community Nursery. According to Veteto & Lockyer (2008), permaculture is a movement committed to ethical, grassroots development and sustainable practice in all aspects of culture and agriculture. The ethics and principles of permaculture are based on observation of patterns, designs and connections in nature and a collection of empirical knowledge gained from applying these findings in different field (Ferguson & Lovell 2014; Veteto & Lockyer 2008). The principles are therefore both dynamic in meaning and adaptable to different situations, as described by Rachel Kaplan (Kaplan 2014, p.42): *"One of the most important things about permaculture is that it is founded on a series of principles that can be applied to any circumstance— agriculture, urban design, or the art of living. The core of the principles is the working relationships and connections between all things."*

Important to this review are the key references throughout permaculture literature, to *relationships, designing sustainable systems* and *community development* (Ferguson & Lovell 2014; Birnbaum & Fox 2014; Veteto & Lockyer 2008), all of which were important in considering the application of permaculture to a food growing enterprise developing people care services in an urban community. These three aspects resonated with the research context and aligned to themes of affiliation, sustainability and the importance of belonging that are discussed later in this review.

Permaculture is not well documented in scientific journals but is comparatively popular when searched for in general literature and electronic resources (Ferguson & Lovell 2014), demonstrating its populist roots and alternative perspective on agriculture and cultural development. The wide-reaching application of permaculture design and lack of scholarly evidence for the theory behind it has, however, given critics the opportunity to label permaculture a pseudoscience or a cult, eliciting critique about over-simplification of complex systems, particularly in the agricultural arena (Miller 2014; Ferguson & Lovell

2014; Harper 2013). For others, permaculture offers a systemic and nature-based approach to designing resilient, diverse environments and in the case of this research, enterprises (Fox 2015; Birnbaum & Fox 2014; Macnamara 2012; Veteto & Lockyer 2008).

The three essential ethics in permaculture are seen as equally important to the creation and sustainability of the organisation or activity that permaculture philosophy is being applied to at any time (Holmgren 2011). *Earth care* relates directly to respect for and preservation of the diverse living organisms on the planet and the habitat the earth creates for all these organisms to live in relation to each other (McNamara, 2012). The earth is seen as a system in which an imbalance through extinction, neglect or disrespect may tip us all into environmental disaster (Veteto & Lockyer 2008). The ethic of *earth care* refers to our behaviour regarding the finite resources of the earth and the answer to the question, *"Will the earth be in better shape after my stewardship?"* (Holmgren 2011). The concept of *earth care* also aids in the critique of the impact of capitalism and the focus on excessive productivity and consequent land destruction (Jackson 2009; Holmgren 2011)(Jackson 2009), promoting responsible collective ownership of land and the ethical care of the biodiversity of life.

Earth care has been linked to consideration for environmental justice in our work as health professionals and planning for sustainable *people care* services through the modes of practice we use, arenas we work within and influence we have on future service provision. Tim Jackson (2009, p.203) calls for collective action rather than approaches that are too individualistic in his book, Prosperity without Growth, saying: "*In short, the cultural drift that reinforces individualism at the expense of society, and supports innovation at the expense of tradition, is a distortion of what it means to be human*".

People care in permaculture has a broad focus but common themes include ensuring that all people have access to resources to live and flourish and that there is recognition that we are all interdependent, encouraging an

acknowledgment of responsibility not only for our own wellbeing, but for those in our field of influence or locality as well (Fox, 2015; Holmgren, 2011). Although permaculture teaches an element of self-sufficiency in order to develop skills and engage people in taking responsibility for their own wellbeing, the idea of sharing collective knowledge and resources is held in higher regard (Jackson 2009). The concept of being interconnected and interdependent with the earth emphasises the need for balance between these two ethics, highlighting the challenges in providing equal care for both earth and humans in order to ensure one is not prioritised or neglected.

Fair shares relates to humans and the earth on one level but also maintains a focus on ensuring that resources are exchanged fairly and equally and that there is recognition of all participants' contributions to the whole(Holmgren 2011; Jackson 2009). *Fair shares* also reflects the way the organisation in this study and many other permaculture enterprises are run, promoting a flat structure over a hierarchical leadership; a rejection of dominance approaches in the way the people systems within the organisation are designed (Fox, 2015).

Fair shares introduces the topic of occupational justice through consideration of what it means to be a citizen; to have choice; and equitable chance to contribute to society according to ones' capability (Nussbaum 2006; Nussbaum 2011) and a renewed understanding of the definition of productivity (Jackson 2009; King 2008; Lister 1998).

Permaculture is viewed as an enabling design process that promotes inclusion and diversity according to people's strengths and capacity (Macnamara 2012). People have adopted the principles and applied them beyond agriculture, using them as guidelines to create healthier, more self-sufficient, sustainable living spaces (Birnbaum & Fox 2014). They have been applied to communities in generating solutions to everyday challenges and building resilience(Fox 2015; King 2008). The principles, such as "use the edges and value the marginal" and "integrate rather than segregate" (Holmgren, 2011) are inherently inclusive of marginalised populations, seeing those on the edges as the people who tend to

bridge communities, bring diversity and in so doing, promote the longevity of a place or population.

There is evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of these principles within gardening, housing or environmental design (Veteto & Lockyer 2008; Birnbaum & Fox 2014), in business (Akhtar 2014) as well as community development projects and some health promotion (Fox 2015; King 2008), however there is little or no research relating to the application of these principles within health or social care. The challenge with empirical research in relation to approaches or philosophies is isolating the application of these principles from other forces at play within organisations, such as naturally common values and beliefs. Permaculture spaces have many parallels to the intersectional spaces Morrow & Hardie (2014) describe. They defy homogeneity of issue or analysis (Morrow & Hardie 2014) and attract people who bring with them a wide range of interests and concerns to be applied to permaculture principles.

Permaculture philosophy, in this research, provided a lens through which to analyse the health and social care trend toward personalisation as well as the opportunity to consider the capacity one growing space could have for managing a number of different priorities for individuals, a community and the earth at one time.

2.5 Personalisation of Adult Social Care: The impact on people with learning disabilities

A critique on the personalisation of care is presented here, relating it to its aims of improved quality of life, social inclusion, enablement of choice and increased control for people with disabilities, specifically those with learning disabilities.

Personalisation is a broad term, and is what Slasberg et al. (2012) term the "overarching ambition" to create an alternative to generic social care services, in the hope of providing people with greater control over their lives. It is driven by a process called *self-directed support* in which a person is given a *personal budget* in order to purchase his or her own social care as an empowered consumer (Slasberg et al. 2012). Self-directed support had its first conception in the UK as the Community Care (direct payments) Act (Department of Health 1996). Direct payments were lobbied for by disability activists wanting more control over how their community care was purchased and what it was spent on (Pearson 2000; Stainton & Boyce 2004). Examples of success in individual cases and eventually with small groups of people alongside predicted financial benefits to the state, prompted a questionable decision to roll-out of self-directed support to all people receiving care and support from local authorities (Beresford 2008).

2.5.1 Personalised care and people with learning disabilities

The white papers *Independence, Wellbeing and Choice* (Department of Health 2005), *Our health, our care, our say* (Department of Health 2006) and *Putting People First* (Department of Health 2007) introduced the concepts of individualised care and support, outlining the move from institutionalised, prescriptive care to purportedly more person-centred care and more community-based living for people with disabilities. *The Care Act* (Department of Health 2014b) along with the white paper, *Caring for our Future: Reforming Care and Support* (Department of Health 2012a) are more recent policy documents highlighting the government's

focus on promoting personalised care relating to a person's individual health and wellbeing, based on a person's strengths and capabilities.

Furthermore*, Valuing People: a strategy for learning disability services in the 21st century* (Department of Health 2001) was the key document promoting more inclusive, person-centred care for people with learning disabilities and it focused on four principles: legal and civil rights, independence, choice and inclusion, declaring : "*we can no longer tolerate services which leave people isolated and marginalised*". Unfortunately, as Burton & Carolyn (2006) commented on Valuing People, the vision outlined in the document disregards the complexities of making choices with an intellectual disability.

The emphasis on promoting more personalised care was centred around a move towards deinstitutionalisation of people with disabilities and on increasing resources for care and improved participation within the local community (Hall 2005; Department of Health 2001). Some critics maintain that personalisation has the potential to move the responsibility for care even further away from the state, focusing it on the home and the individual and, for many people, returning them to isolation despite the rhetoric of social inclusion within personalisation policy (Hall 2009; Milligan et al. 2007; Scourfield 2007)

A key issue for people with learning disability was the care professional's instinct to manage risk (Wehmeyer & Bolding 2001). Policy has evolved through piloting of individual budgets and experience to provide theoretical support for a person's ability to make choices and be in control of their lives, however the historical sense of accountability felt by social workers and evidence of on-going abuse of vulnerable adults continues to undermine real personalised care for learning disabled adults (Ellis 2007; Leece & Leece 2006).

These concerns are not unfounded, particularly where resources have been a barrier to people being adequately supported in planning or managing their own are. Many reports highlight the issues people have found with setting up the care plan, hiring personal assistants and arranging the financial aspects of it (Hall 2009; Glendinning et al. 2008; Burton & Carolyn 2006) . People with disabilities have in

many cases essentially become small business owners and employers of staff overnight. This would be a daunting situation for most people but for those living with learning disability or supporting someone with a learning disability, the additional administration and risk often outweighs the promised benefit (Hall 2011). The evidence suggests that the increase in choice and control has been matched by an increase in anxiety around managing employees, budgets (Hall 2011; Glendinning et al. 2008) and identifying suitable resources in the community in which to engage with (Brindle 2008). This supports Beresford's (2008) point on the irony of personalisation proponents' claims of the policy supporting user involvement when very few users with learning disability have had any input into the development of personalisation at local or individual level (Beresford 2008).

The intention behind *Valuing People* (Department of Health 2001) was to promote social inclusion and independence and increase the potential for equality for people with learning disabilities (Burton & Carolyn 2006). Doubt is cast over whether deinstitutionalisation and the instigation of self-directed support has truly managed to aid social inclusion for those with learning disabilities or whether more abstract issues need to be dealt with before this can be achieved. Some issues that have been identified are: The need to re-define the concept of citizenship to one acknowledging realistic participation (Hall 2011; Gilbert et al. 2005; Lister 1998); valuing human capability and participation over economic contribution (Hall, 2005; Bates and Davis, 2004); and promoting individual choice but not at the expense of community (Hall 2011; Burton & Carolyn 2006). The following sections will investigate these issues in more detail.

2.5.2 Social inclusion and citizenship

Social inclusion is a subject fraught with intention, assumption and expectation (Clifton et al. 2013; Pereira & Whiteford 2013; Spandler 2007; Labonte 2004). It is used as an elastic term within literature and policy-making and is illusive as a normative value due to the numerous definitions applied to various populations over a long period of time.
Bates & Davis (2004) propose that the development of social capital and the building of bridging relationships into a diverse community enable a more equal

existence in society and identification of reciprocal qualities within those relationships. They define social inclusion with reference to people with learning disabilities as "*ensuring that people … have full and fair access to activities, social roles and relationships directly alongside non-disabled citizens*" (Bates & Davis 2004). This definition concurs with the more recent development in inclusion as discussed by Johnson et al. (2010), who document the changes in definition of social inclusion over the past three decades for people with learning disabilities. They note the initial focus on integration into the community, followed by a focus on individual needs and more recently, they suggest that definitions have centred on relationship building and emotional wellbeing (Johnson et al. 2010). This final definition leads more directly to the building of connections between people and encouraging networks within communities beyond ones' own in order to develop social capital and move towards the goal of a "good life" (Johnson et al. 2010; Hall 2005).

An aspect of involvement is added to the definition of social inclusion from Whitehead and Pereira (2012), focusing on participation as "*being centrally concerned with people and populations having opportunities to participate in society and to enact their rights of citizenship in everyday life*". Hall (2005) points out that definitions of social inclusion are mostly contextual, rather than relating to "absolute positions", reinforcing the aforementioned elasticity of the term and encouraging alertness to what environment, culture or policy change may bring to places that may embody positive social inclusion.

In efforts, for example, to promote social inclusion for people with disabilities through work and welfare reform (Department of Work and Pensions 2007; Department of Work and Pensions 2006) the well-meaning but essentially economically driven legislation may merely have moved what Hall (2005) terms "the geographies of exclusion" to different spaces (Redley, 2009; Hall, 2005). Forcing people out of institutional spaces, into the community or into non-statutory run services may be enabling a shift from heavily-burdened social care resources onto society (Brindle 2008), but it is also reducing the development of specialist, accessible and enabling services in areas where they are appropriate and

necessary (Brindle 2008; Spandler 2004; Bates & Davis 2004). This is possibly enabling for some, but further excludes people who relied on those services for participation and social networking.

Key aspects of the definitions of social inclusion discussed are *relationship building*, *being a citizen alongside non-disabled citizens* and *being able to contribute to social capital in a community*. The rhetoric surrounding the word citizenship, however, requires further investigation as it is a word that has been adopted by a number of different political positions and the definitions vary, as with social inclusion, according to the case and context presented (Hall 2005; Gilbert et al. 2005; Redley 2009)

2.5.3 Personalisation, citizenship and participation

"*Self-directed support is a practical response to the reasonable demand of disabled people that their need for support be met in a way that doesn't put their citizenship at risk*"

(Duffy 2010, p.257)

Simon Duffy, one of personalisation's leading architects proposes that personalisation and its "technologies" (personal budgets, direct payments and person-centred planning) are underpinned by a new version of social justice, termed the *Citizenship Theory* (Duffy, 2010). In this theory, citizens of a fair society all treat each other with respect, as equal citizens; the grounds for respect are defined to enable everyone to achieve citizenship; and the society is organised so that everyone is sufficiently supported to be able to achieve effective citizenship (often through personalisation technologies) (Duffy, 2010). There is a strong focus on the service user as a *liberated consumer* and little notion is given to practicalities, for example the support workers employed by the new service user consumers and their rights to citizenship, fair distribution of resources and respect (Ferguson 2012).

Challenging this perspective, Ferguson (Ferguson, 2012), depicts Duffy's idea of personalisation as a consumerist, neo-liberal, over-positive version and suggests that personalisation, far from creating fair and equal participation in an interdependent society, may result in enforced isolation of people with disabilities due to closure of collective spaces (Ferguson 2012; Brindle 2008; Ferguson 2007; Spandler 2004). Ferguson (2012) also suggests that the Citizenship Theory proposed by Duffy (2010) neglects the constantly changing wider socio-economic and political context in which the technologies of personalisation could become money-saving technologies as easily as they became labelled as tools of empowerment.

Abbott & McConkey (2006) suggest a practical approach to locating social justice within the personalisation agenda, particularly for people with learning disabilities, who are likely to require different types of support at different stages in their lives in a flexible and responsive manner. With regard to enabling participation and development of a sense of citizenship, focus on carers who provide *support* rather than *care* and who are advocates, rather than risk managers, may instigate a shift in power (Abbott and McConkey, 2006). This is reiterated by Slasberg et al. (2014), highlighting the importance of holistic, well-resourced and flexible care. This would ensure the best acknowledgement of a person's capabilities relating to everyday tasks and interactions, rather than focusing on impairment and barriers to participation.

2.6 People Care: Social Justice and Citizenship

The permaculture ethic of *people care* in the context of this research focuses on the equal development of opportunities to choose and to act (or *substantial freedoms*) for participation in every aspect of life (Nussbaum 2011). Capabilities are a combination of the abilities that a person has and the opportunities created by personal ability and the political, social and economic environment (Nussbaum 2011). Nussbaum refers to the active outcome of one or a combination of capabilities as *functionings* (Nussbaum 2011). Burchardt (2004) analyses the capabilities approach in the fields of disability and economics and situates the terminology more clearly within these landscapes. Burchardt (2004) describes

functionings as states of being or activities and a whole set of functionings relating to one person, including those that a person might be capable of achieving but may not want to, are known as a capability set. Sen (2005) links opportunities and capabilities and the rights of people to participate as citizens to the *process* of creating freedom, which must be safeguarded and facilitated by those in authority (Sen 2005).

Social justice is therefore viewed by Nussbaum (2000; 2011) through a person's capabilities (or substantial freedoms) and the opportunities offered to them by the society they live in. In this case, social justice can be promoted through providing opportunities within communities that are available to a diverse population who can access and participate in these enterprises to the extent that they are able, demonstrating productivity as both an individual and in the collective sense. There are ten threshold or *central capabilities* that Nussbaum (2011) claims are a bare minimum in order to achieve a dignified level of citizenship. These central capabilities include life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions, practical reason, affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment. These are defined in more detail in appendix G, however affiliation and practical reason are considered below in relation to their importance in promoting relational networks for people with disabilities and with respect to the development of agency in individuals through opportunity and contribution.

2.6.1 Capabilities, affiliation and practical reason

The Capabilities Approach, particularly relating to people with disabilities upholds the criticism of individualist approaches to care and support by proposing that one of the central capabilities is affiliation. Affiliation in this context is being able to live with and towards others and demonstrate empathy to any extent as well as having social bases for dignity and self-respect on an equal basis to others (Nussbaum, 2011). Affiliation organises other capabilities due to the social and relational nature of this capability, positioning other capabilities within relationships at home and in other social surroundings. Affiliation is likened to interdependence and is held as an important concept by the Independent Living movement, ensuring a collective responsibility to support people in different ways (Ferguson, 2012). This

reasserts the need for a balanced and flexible approach to provision of personal support as described by Brindle (2008) and (Slasberg et al. 2014), encouraging community-based resources and the building up of society (Burton & Carolyn 2006), but also ensuring that people have the necessary statutory resources to enable participation in the range of community opportunities available.

Practical reason is a further 'organising' capability that influences other central capabilities. Being enabled to enact practical reason with regard to a way of life, health or ones' wellbeing is essential for dignity, authentic choice, agency, co-operation and participation (Nussbaum 2011; Burchardt 2009; Alkire 2005).

The above two central capabilities are important when considering the meaning of autonomy and agency for people with learning disabilities. Recognising interdependence (Johnson et al. 2010; Burton & Carolyn 2006; Hall 2005) as a social norm but ensuring that practical reason is engaged and reflects the individual's values is an essential part of assessing attainment of autonomy. Furthermore it is a step towards citizenship in the context of learning disability as well as a culture in which independence is not a primary aim (Cardol et al. 2002).

2.6.2 Citizenship, participation and social justice through contribution

The capabilities approach signals a move towards defining citizenship according to capacity, rather than economic contribution, which is a key ideological transformation in terms of social justice (Gilbert et al. 2005), however the approach has come under criticism for its neglect of social solidarity (Dean 2009). Nussbaum's (2011) recognition of the central importance of affiliation and support for institutions upholding peoples' capacity to participate in affiliation and assembly lacks emphasis on the desire to belong and focuses more on freedom of choice (Dean 2009).

This criticism also reflects discrepancies with Croft & Beresford (1995) and Ferguson's (2008) *democratic* model of citizenship as opposed to the *consumerist* model of citizenship. In a democratic model there is a focus on the collective and collective action, not just on individual partnerships; and its aims are toward a

wider transformation of social justice, rather than individual participation. In the consumerist model of citizenship, those who are unable to regularly contribute economically to government through taxes, engage in military service, or take out a mortgage, loans or insurance within a consumer-orientated society (Redley 2009; Gilbert et al. 2005; Hall 2005) are disenfranchised. Paid employment in particular, appears as a strong indicator for citizenship in the consumerist model, with contribution to local community and society through unpaid or voluntary employment not valued within a capitalist-led society (Barnes & Mercer 2005). This prompts further investigation of Bates and Davis (2004) earlier proposal that identifying social capital rather than earning potential is a way toward valuing a person's willingness and capacity to contribute. This opens the door to those who are able to participate through voluntary work, pointing out that that volunteering "*builds community, trust and reciprocity*" (Bates and Davis, 2004). Independent living and gaining paid employment are not, in themselves, poor aspirations and changing these as general aims within society is not necessarily the factor that will bring people who find these difficult to achieve, closer to social inclusion or a sense of citizenship.

Oliver & Barnes (2012) and Clifton et al. (2013) highlight, however, that many learning disabled people or those with long term debilitating mental illness who have tried to live independently in the community or have found employment, have found the experiences negative, have been bullied, ostracised and eventually isolated – a stark contrast to the inclusive intentions of both of these aims. Again, recognising the relational aspects of citizenship as more important than the economic and independence-orientated aspects may, however, go some way toward including not just people with disabilities, but all people (Hall 2005; Redley 2009). Hall (2011) expresses this version of citizenship as a "*shared accomplishment by disabled people in interdependent relationships with others… focused less on accomplishment and self-sufficiency and more on collective interests*".

Social justice approaches help us to see how this altered view of citizenship is important in creating a more equal society. The opportunity to interact with other people to produce a positive outcome within the community is much more likely to

be open to all of society than the opportunity to contribute financially as an individual (Wiesel 2009; Hall 2005). Social enterprises such as the one at the centre of this research are focused on returning investment to the community and building social capital (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011) are therefore more likely to promote democratic citizenship than traditional business models.

The essence of social inclusion with respect to this research will therefore be defined through attainment of citizenship by participating and contributing to society through reciprocal relationships with others and according to realistic participation in line with one's capability and opportunities (Redley, 2009; Nussbaum, 2006; Hall, 2005). These elements of social inclusion are important in this research due to the prominence of issues of inclusion for people with learning disability as well as the focus on social justice by the Forest Garden social enterprise.

2.7 Social Enterprise: social capital, ethics and sustainability

Social enterprise is defined as: "*business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners*" (Department of Trade and Industry 2002). The interest in social enterprise as an organisational structure has become more popular over the past decade, particularly since the establishment of the *Office of the Third Sector* in May 2006, which has since became the *Office of Civil Society* in 2010 (The Innovation Unit Ltd 2012). Alongside the development of the self-directed care agenda at the end of the nineties, the New Labour government demonstrated an interest in social enterprise as a means toward combating social exclusion and promoting community development (MacLeavy 2008; Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011). In 2002 the Labour government formally set up the *Social Enterprise Unit* within the Department of Trade and Industry, demonstrating a political commitment to increasing the resources of community organisations within the third sector to aid and diversify service delivery and address issues of social exclusion (MacLeavy 2008; Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011).

Sceptics observed this political move from "government to governance" (MacLeavy 2008, p.1659), blurring the boundaries of state, public and private sector. They were concerned about the shift of responsibility for welfare onto the community and individuals using language such as flexibility, independence and choice (MacLeavy 2008; Graefe 2005) and labelled the process neoliberalism. Social enterprise in some of its more United-States-style, market-orientated guises (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011), although espousing a commitment to addressing social issues, did demonstrate parallels to some of New Labour's *self-governing entities* and Third Way ideals (Miller & Millar 2011; MacLeavy 2008; Levitas 2004).

In 2010, The UK Coalition Government continued to support social enterprise as a means to relieve public services, promoting the idea of the Big Society (Baggott & Jones 2015; Big Society Capital Ltd n.d.). As one critic observed, this passed the responsibility of many public services on to private and third sector businesses

while austerity cuts were being delivered to address the national deficit (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012).

This move was intended to promote a localism agenda through reducing regulation of local authority resources, freeing these up to promote creative, local and entrepreneurial services that people could spend their personal budgets on (Stickley, 2014; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). Shifting the responsibility of important health and social care agendas into the community, and in particular third sector services, was seen as a form of empowerment (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012), however Mohan & Stokke (2000) had already warned that a localism agenda may distract from an economic and political transfer of responsibility and can limit learning from international experiences (Mohan & Stokke 2000). For this reason, social enterprise is often viewed cynically by many proponents of reduced austerity and the rebuilding of public services, however social enterprises have also been known to deliver authentic and innovative services for many who seek alternatives to what statutory care and support can provide (Roy et al. 2014).

Social enterprises appear to present a middle ground between services offered for specific groups of people and larger for-profit businesses. There is some debate in texts regarding whether a co-operatively run organisation can be a social enterprise (Borsaga & Defourny 2004), however Ridley-Duff & Bull (2011) see a co-operative as one of a number of types of social enterprise on a spectrum of different socially-orientated, non-profit enterprises. Ridley-Duff and Bull (2004) present four definitions for social enterprise, including the one issued by the Department of Trade and Industry (Department of Trade and Industry 2002) which states that "*a social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.*"

The EMES (European Research Network for Social Enterprise) gives a broader description of what social enterprises should offer. As well as those outlined in the

Department of Trade and Industry (Department of Trade and Industry 2002)definition, they include:

- an initiative launched by a group of citizens;
- decision-making power, not based on capital ownership;
- a participatory nature;
- a high degree of autonomy and risk and minimum paid work.

The above definitions both leave the scope of social enterprise open to co-operative working as well as the inclusion of voluntary, paid and apprenticed roles within the group.

2.7.1 Social Capital

Social enterprises have the potential to offer opportunities for development of skill and empowerment through voluntary social action (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011; Rothschild 2009). In line with the democratic model of citizenship (Ferguson 2012; Croft & Beresford 1995), this focus on the development of social capital has been linked to growth of trust, goodwill, civic interest, solidarity, co-operation and, most importantly, reciprocity between individuals, communities and public services (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011; Bates & Davis 2004). The advantage for people seeking a space to participate within an organisation that claims to develop social capital is that in these there is a focus on relationships between citizen and community, rather than 'service user' and 'worker'(Bates & Davis 2004). From a social justice perspective, this change in focus towards collective engagement in occupation demonstrates a move towards equality alongside development of personal skills and empowerment. This shift moves us closer to the definition of social inclusion proposed earlier by Bates and Davis (2004) of people with disabilities having equal access to activities, social roles and relationships.

Social enterprises often aim to promote access to work, both paid and voluntary, for specific communities, particularly those seeking to integrate into work after long periods of unemployment or no experience of work (Spear 2002). Ridley-Duff et al. (2011) and Osti (2012) propose that governments may view social enterprises as a way in which to engage 'hard to reach' communities, and in this way, to rebuild

the social capital within these groups. This creates a view of social enterprises being beneficial organisations, promoting positive citizenship, however some also see social entrepreneurs as mavericks (Ridley-Duff & Bull 2011; Spear et al. 2009; Spear 2002). This ambiguous front allows for much creativity in offering choice and opportunity for different occupations to people, for example, using a personal budget to access an alternative service.

A sense of trust, however, needs to be developed if these organisations are to participate successfully within the welfare market. The high degree of autonomy and risk in social enterprises (Osti 2012; Spear 2002), may make them interesting and more politically favourable but further evidence is needed to gauge whether they might become optimal alternatives to the government-led community support systems Hall (2009) and Spandler (2004), propose as long term support options.

Roy et al (2014) undertook a systematic review of evidence relating to existing social enterprises involved in health and wellbeing, investigating what these enterprises were specifically involved in and the impact they had on health outcomes and their social determinants. They analysed five international studies over the time period of 2003 – 2013 and were able to find evidence of positive outcomes in physical health, mental health and improved social determinants for health (Roy et al. 2014). They conclude that although the empirical evidence for social enterprise in this sector is still minimal and of varying quality worldwide due to context differences and small sample sizes, the evidence is overwhelmingly positive. The organisations studied all contributed to individual and community wellbeing through improving vocational skills; addressing social exclusion through reduction of stigmatisation; and improving health behaviour (Roy et al. 2014). Their review demonstrated how social enterprise can as an intervention at the level of the individual or at a community level, bring about improved health and well-being through applying a service with a social mission and producing and maintaining various assets or social capital (Roy et al. 2014).

The main critique of social enterprise within the field of health and wellbeing promotion is the lack of governance relating to outcomes and the dearth of accountability measures within these organisations (Connolly & Kelly 2011; Dahles

et al. 2010; Rothschild 2009; Spear et al. 2009). Roy et al (2014), however, consider social enterprises valuable in their ability to enhance skills and employability, promote self-reliance, reduce stigmatisation and build social capital, particularly within marginalised communities.

2.7.2 Ethical influences

From the perspective of permaculture, social enterprises could be viewed as important organisations for the application of an ethical framework that includes *people care*, the development social capital through investment in individuals and groups; *earth care*, the environmental or social causes at the heart of these organisations (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011; The Plunkett Foundation, 2010); and *fair shares*, demonstrating a capabilities approach to individual acknowledgement and promotion of a democratic model of citizenship and leadership. Application of an ethical approach such as permaculture in the governance of a social enterprises can enable the production of *ethical capital*, which is social capital created when ethical values are used develop it (Gupta et al. 2003; Ridley-Duff et al. 2011). Ethical capital is generated when the ethical principles; *transparency, accountability, reciprocity and fair treatment for both human and non-human lives* are used to govern an organisation (Ridley-Duff et al. 2011, p.94; Gupta et al. 2003). These qualities are reflected in interpretations of the permaculture ethic of *fair shares* (Fox 2015; Holmgren 2011; Veteto & Lockyer 2008) and the organic farming ethic of *fair trade* (La Trobe & Acott 2000)*,* promoting a more resilient and sustainable economic approach and casting a light on other areas of ethical practice and sustainability within these enterprises.

2.7.3 Sustainability

The permaculture ethics can also be seen to correlate to the three pillars of sustainability (Boström 2012; Murphy 2012). Figure 2.2 below demonstrates this correlation, linking *earth care* with the environmental pillar, *people care* to the social or socio-cultural pillar and *fair shares* to the economic pillar. The pillar

largely discussed up to this point has been the social pillar, which, in sustainability literature is also the most challenging pillar to conceptualise or measure due to ambiguities and interpretations relating to the definition of social (Murphy 2012; Boström 2012). This issue is notable considering the dilemmas discussed in relation to lack of equity, social injustices within health and social care and dualism relating to citizenship. The other two pillars will be discussed in more detail as this review progresses; however these can be linked to the resilience formed in a community that is brought together through issues of environmental justice and sustainability (Murphy 2012) and the sense of belonging created within such a community when engaging in shared occupations with a similar outcome, such as food growing.

Direct and indirect global threats to sustainability of the environment and the economy have the potential to impact detrimentally on the social pillar (Dennis et al. 2015; Murphy 2012). Murphy (2012), in his development of a framework of analysis for the social pillar of sustainability, proposes that much closer links need to be made between the social and the environmental pillars in order to close the gap between the three pillars and start to highlight specific areas of concern locally and internationally (Murphy 2012). Murphy's social-environment framework includes four concepts that resonate strongly with this research; equity, participation, awareness for sustainability and social cohesion (Murphy 2012). These directly link to aspects of social justice previously discussed and those of environmental and occupational justice, still to come. They also directly relate to emerging literature on the importance of including environmental issues that have an impact on health and wellbeing and our ability to engage in occupations, in public health campaigns (Dennis et al. 2015; Burger & Christen 2011).

Environment	Social	Economic
• Earth care • Environmental Justice • Resilience	• People care • Social Justice • Citizenship	• Fair Shares • Occupational Justice • Belonging

Figure 2.2 Three pillars of sustainability, permaculture ethics and related themes from the literature

2.8 Earth Care: Environmental Justice and Resilience

Burger & Christen (2011) consider sustainability through the capabilities approach and in so doing, start to bridge the gap between social and environmental concerns highlighted by Murphy (2012). They highlight their concern about the interrelation between these two pillars of sustainability as follows: *"We have to ask how social systems can maintain their capacity to realise justice with limited resources and within fragile ecosystems"* (Burger & Christen 2011, p.792).

There is some concern, however, that the capabilities approach falls short of addressing ecological concerns as a central human capability (Holland 2008), and rather ambivalently refers only to "*being able to live in concern for and relation to animals, plants and the world of nature*" (Nussbaum 2006, pp.76–78). Holland (2008) emphasises that an indifference to a specific capability relating to ecological concern demonstrates a worrying lack of acknowledgement of the provision the environment makes for all other capabilities to be enacted into a variety of occupations essential to life.

(Lovelock 2010) suggests that a history of social exclusion, living in dependent care situations and non-environmentally considerate behaviour demonstrated by care staff has influenced negative environmentally sustainable behaviour witnessed in people with severe disabilities. Considering, as Holland (2008) suggests, sustainable ecological capacity as a meta-capability, not only highlights that ecological systems are unique in having all other systems reliant on them, but reinforces the importance of knowledge and capability in this area in developing skills for resilience (Schoon & Bartley 2008; Christine A. King 2008). In other words, understanding the environment and issues affecting it is important for all humans in building their capacity for relationship with the earth in a meaningful and reciprocal way.

The above sentiment is reiterated in the *occupation-focused eco-sustainable community development approach* by Wilcock (2006). Wilcock (2006) expressed concern about the lack of consideration of life-threatening environmental issues and the individualist approach within healthcare and how this will impact on our most basic occupations. Whittaker (2012) and Wilcock (2006) both assert that a shift towards more community-orientated occupationally-focused and accessible projects beyond the boundaries of public health systems are needed to raise awareness of the impact of global climate change on communities and individuals.

The approach proposed by Wilcock (2006), Whittaker (2012) and more recently, Simo Algado & Townsend (2015) and Dennis et al. (2015) is preventative and educational and is supported by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) in their publication of the Position Statement on Environmental Sustainability, Sustainable Practice within Occupational Therapy (WFOT 2012). These movements towards community-based, participatory endeavours indicate the role for ecologically aware, ethical and occupationally-focused social enterprises in the development of Holland's (2008) *sustainable ecological capability* in general, and particularly for people who may not be exposed to pro-environmental behaviour.

2.9 Green Care

The above argument, centred on developing opportunities for people to gain a more knowledgeable connection with the earth through a reciprocal and therapeutic relationship with it (Hale et al. 2011), is one of the most fundamental bases of green care (Sempik et al. 2010). Green care is described by Fieldhouse & Sempik (2014) and Sempik et al. (2010) as *a wide variety of nature-based activities that are intentionally utilised as health and social care interventions*. In theory, green care can include anything from structured social and therapeutic horticulture or animal-assisted therapy to more vocationally orientated care farming and less structured eco-therapy or wilderness therapy (Sempik et al. 2010). In this study, however, the focus is on occupation within horticultural (food growing, allotment gardening or community gardening) settings.

Eleven studies were considered in the development of an understanding of the use of horticultural settings as spaces for therapeutic occupation. The search strategy for this critique was briefly described in section 2.2. Three papers out of the eleven found were themselves literature reviews. The first was a systematic review of ten papers of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies by Genter et al. (2015), focusing on the contribution of allotment gardening to health and wellbeing. Although bearing common themes to the other two reviews of developing a sense of community and improving personal and vocational skills, this paper emphasised allotment gardening as opposed to larger, more group-work focused, community or market gardens, highlighting a limitation of the relevance of this literature to research at Forest Garden.

Clatworthy et al. (2014) did a critical review, appraising 10 papers, also of multiple methodologies, and included growing spaces not limited to allotments. This paper was, however, limited to relevance for mental health intervention, although similar results were discovered. The authors of this paper concluded that gardening reduced anxiety, improved mood and sleep quality.

The final review by York & Wiseman (2012) considered four qualitative research papers using a meta-ethnographic approach which is specifically useful for

analysing qualitative research (Britten et al. 2002). This study focused on gardening as an occupation with a broad range of people who were considered marginalised or vulnerable. Although there were fewer studies discussed in this analysis, results concurred with the development of new skills and social networks found in the previous reviews and added that gardening enabled development of agency and identity for participants.

Further critique and discussion of the empirical evidence reviewed is included throughout the sections below. Here the literature has been divided into themes of *health and wellbeing*, *social inclusion and citizenship* and the development of *community and a sense of belonging*. Other relevant texts have been added to supplement papers and add detail to the discussion on this rapidly developing field.

2.9.1 Health and Wellbeing through Horticultural Occupation

Development of health, wellbeing and resourcefulness through learning to grow food and manage other aspects of gardening, is a theme prominent in most of the literature relating to therapeutic horticultural aspects of green care (Genter et al. 2015; Clatworthy et al. 2014; York & Wiseman 2012), with evidence showing that even though the environments can be unpredictable, challenging and the tasks sometimes repetitive (Parr 2007); the positive outcomes outweigh the often transient negative aspects of gardening and food growing in almost every case. This was common in all studies, whether large cohorts or smaller case study sites.

The key study explored here was by Granerud and Eriksson (2014), who used a qualitative design, based on grounded theory, and only included participants with mental health conditions. The number of participants was satisfactory for a study of this methodology and it also attempted to obtain a good balance of views from men and women. People associated gardening and working in nature with reduced anxiety and depression; better temporal orientation and habituation; and increased motivation (Granerud & Eriksson 2014). They felt enabled to engage in occupation due to the flexibility and diversity of gardening tasks, generally being

able to find a task that embodied a sense of being 'just right' (Granerud & Eriksson 2014) in terms of being challenging but still enabling success, a key feature in successful occupational performance (O'Toole 2011). Whatley et al. (2015), Hale et al. (2011) and Parr (2007) support these findings in their studies, all largely with participant groups managing mental health conditions.

Genter et al. (2015) add to the above health and wellbeing findings, stating that not only were these mentally stimulating, they also provided physical exercise and sensory input that enabled a holistic sense of wellbeing. In a qualitative study by Hale et al. (2011), focusing specifically on the relation between engagement in food growing environments and health behaviour, recommendations urged those designing urban food growing spaces to involve communities actively and passively in all aspects of the garden. Their findings from interviews and focus groups highlighted that it was the interactional relationship with the environment, the people in it and the food growing process, that contributed to sustained wellbeing and health-related lifestyle choices (Hale et al. 2011). The participants in this study were from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, but due to their urban, community-based setting, the outcomes of their research are relevant to this study. The same study also reports connection, through gardening, to cultural traditions and local and personal heritage, two less obvious aspects of social inclusion and citizenship that horticultural occupation contributes to.

2.9.2 Social Inclusion and Citizenship through Horticultural Occupation

Participants in many of the horticultural sites discussed were users of health services or had been signposted to the garden through vocational services or charities. Hester Parr (2007) in her qualitative study of gardening with people with mental health conditions, describes their reticence, in attempting to take on the commitment of any kind of formal work due to negative associations with it, embedding their sense of social exclusion. Parr's (2007) comparison of two different organisations from the perspective of staff and volunteers, highlights the role of community gardening enterprises in aiding peoples' transformation from excluded, under-skilled and stigmatised to skilled, more confident contributors to

the community . She presents the issues these enterprises deal with, particularly balancing the therapeutic and vocational aspects of gardening and the different responses these require of volunteers. Although very descriptive and case-study orientated, this research offers detailed insight into the development of capacity-based citizenship through green care.

Parr's research in the mental health and horticulture field is supported by Whatley et al. (2015); Diamant & Waterhouse (2010) and (Parkinson et al. 2011), who all made distinct links to occupation and inclusion in their studies. Whatley et al. (2015) and Parkinson et al. (2011) again focused on gardening as a mental health intervention; however Whatley et al. (2015) used an ethnographic design, while the other study used a mixed methods approach. Both had small samples, although this was appropriate to the qualitative design use in the projects.

The study by Parkinson et al. (2011) also had a quantitative component, using a validated observational rating scale alongside another validated qualitative interview tool that focused on the impact of work environment on performance. The small study size meant that further research using similar tools would need to be done to make results significant. In this study, however, important observations about the different focus for men and women in gardens emerged, emphasising that both were motivated to attend for different reasons, but that men in particular appreciated gardening as a therapeutic intervention due to the lack of other occupational options available to them (Parkinson et al. 2011). In terms of finding routes into citizenship, horticultural enterprises provide opportunities that are valuable to both men and women (Granerud & Eriksson 2014; Simo 2011; Parkinson et al. 2011).

One of the most common themes within literature, as mentioned above, is the development of knowledge and competence within the natural environment (Whatley et al. 2015; Fieldhouse & Sempik 2014; Clatworthy et al. 2014; Parr 2007; Sempik et al. 2005). The development of new personal resources that matched a persons' abilities and interests and were useful to the community around them often motivated people who are struggling to find work (Clatworthy et al. 2014; Parr 2007). The time people spent developing these skills and creating

new social networks had an impact on their inclusion into the gardening community and often the wider geographical community associated with it (Sempik et al. 2014; Simo 2011). This was true for people with mental health conditions as well as those with learning disabilities, where those who spent more time on the gardening sites experienced social interaction for longer periods and established better quality relationships (Sempik et al. 2014).

The horticultural work people engaged in contributed to the local community and economy and enabled people to engage with Burchardt et al.'s (2002) four dimensions of social inclusion: Consumption, Production, Social Interaction and Political Engagement. This is described by Sempik et al. (2005) in their mixed methods research project evaluating the impact of social and therapeutic horticulture on people living with mental illness, learning disability and other marginalising conditions. They identified occupation in the garden that enabled them to meet all the dimensions of social inclusion. Opportunities were provided to develop skills formally and informally; to retain and cook with goods that they had grown (production and consumption); the opportunity to participate actively in decision-making with regards to how the project ran (political engagement) and social interaction on a daily basis with fellow project workers (Sempik et al. 2005). The researchers in this project modified their data collection techniques from semi-structured interviewing to more structured interviewing and photographic data in order to be more inclusive of those less confident or able to speak. This provided a wide range of data that was more complex to analyse, but, allowed for engagement of a broader range of participants than most studies in this field.

Many organisations in the statutory and third sectors have identified spaces they are responsible for, that could be used to promote wellbeing and social inclusion through formal therapeutic horticulture (Hine et al. 2008a). Green care often finds its place in social enterprises as both of these entities aim to reduce social exclusion in vulnerable groups and promote wellbeing (The Plunkett Foundation 2010). There are three ways in which green care can be provided through social enterprises: the first is through social enterprises set up specifically to provide a health and social care service through a type of green care; the second is through an existing social enterprise that diversifies its service to include a green care

service and the third is where a social enterprise inadvertently offers a green care service through merely continuing with its day-to-day activity (The Plunkett Foundation 2010). This research is largely interested in the latter two combinations due to evidence that already exists regarding the provision of horticultural therapy within the study site, for example specific skill development and volunteer opportunities for people with learning disabilities alongside the day-to-day management of a large market garden.

Empirical evidence for work specifically with people with learning disabilities within the green care framework is still minimal but growing, with care farming literature contributing extensively to this evidence base (Care Farming UK 2016; Hine et al. 2008b; Leck 2013). Larger amounts of evidence exist for the use of green care with people with mental health needs, as mentioned previously, however if we are to understand how green care can be used as a medium for enabling citizenship and inclusion, a more detailed understanding of the issues for different populations is necessary.

The study by Sempik, Rickhuss and Beeston (2014) is one of the few recent studies in the UK that includes people with learning disabilities as participants alongside others with mental health conditions. Importantly, the study demonstrates differing results for participants with mental illness and those with learning disabilities, highlighting that although the parameters being investigated were shared (out of four possible areas: social interaction, motivation, communication), the participants developed competencies and habituated to the garden at different paces (Sempik et al. 2014).

Parr (2007), however, highlighted an important finding that is transferable to all marginalised and potentially vulnerable populations of people working in community-based gardens and other horticultural sites. These spaces are often run by under-resourced staff, are values-based and often under-funded and rely on these populations on the edge of society to sustain them with free labour and goodwill. This fact alone requires more recognition and consideration in future research.

2.9.3 Community and Belonging

The communities referred to above, that often include diverse and sometimes marginalised populations with differing experiences of life and access to occupation beyond home or institutions (York & Wiseman 2012; Hale et al. 2011) are important in the sense of belonging they provide participants (Fieldhouse 2003; Diamant & Waterhouse 2010). The co-operation required to plan, maintain and harvest in a food-growing space naturally absorbs people into groups sharing similar interests, skills and symbiotic abilities (Hale et al. 2011).

Participants in Hale et al.'s (2011) study describe co-creation of useful and aesthetic spaces, as well as a sense of affirmation for their efforts from other people and when seeing the result of their work. Affirmation from the group and wider community following gardening work also featured in reflections of staff working with people in a social and therapeutic horticulture setting reported by Diamant & Waterhouse (2010). This was a workshop with three participants, rather than a research study, but outcomes linked directly to Sempik et al.'s (2005) description of participants' sense of belonging in a safe environment, while working side by side with others, not necessarily requiring conversation, but quiet affiliation.

Granerud & Eriksson (2014) found that people valued feeling that they belonged and also that the work had meaning to themselves and a shared meaning with the others they worked alongside. This sense of meaning and co-creation is important in preventing occupational alienation into work that is unsuited, inaccessible or marginalising (Creek 2014; Bryant et al. 2004).

2.11 Fair Shares: Occupational Justice and Belonging

Occupational justice is an emerging concept that runs parallel to social justice, focusing more on the 'doing' aspect of relating to people and participating in occupations for living than on the social conditions or relations of social justice (Stadnyk et al. 2011). Occupational justice emphasises the focus on participation for a diverse range of individuals and groups within society and highlights the impact of health and occupation on quality of life (Stadnyk et al. 2011; Whiteford & Townsend 2011; Townsend & A.Wilcock 2004). In brief, *structural factors* such as the values and policies influencing occupation and the instruments of occupation, such as transportation; alongside the *contextual factors*, such as personal and geographical attributes combine to create either an occupationally just or unjust outcome for an individual or a group within society (Stadnyk et al. 2011). An unjust outcome might result in one of four occupational injustices, impacting on a person or group of peoples' ability to or opportunity to engage in occupation that is meaningful to them (Stadnyk et al. 2011).

The emphasis is therefore on enablement, participation and inclusion (Whiteford & Townsend 2011; Stadnyk et al. 2011) to prevent four key outcomes of occupational injustice:
Occupational imbalance, where one aspect of a person's occupational life limits occupation in other areas (Stadnyk et al. 2011); *occupational deprivation*, where a person is prevented from participating in occupation that is necessary or meaningful for a prolonged period (Townsend & A.Wilcock 2004); *occupational alienation*, in which a person is forced to undertake occupation that is not meaningful or enriching (Townsend & A.Wilcock 2004); and *occupational marginalisation*, a state in which people are unable to participate in decision-making relating to their occupational participation (Stadnyk et al. 2011).

Empirical evidence is slowly emerging in the application of occupational justice theory and there is little specifically in relation to occupational rights and justice for people with learning disabilities. Channon (2014) undertook a literature review of 28 papers and one published report into the opportunities offered to people with learning disabilities to realise their occupational potential. In her search, she

chose to focus on literature that emphasised occupational engagement and opportunities for people with moderate to severe learning disabilities due to the significant visibility of publications for those with mild learning disabilities (Channon 2014), a gap corroborated by others in the learning disability research field (Atkinson 2005; Gilbert 2004; Mahoney & Roberts 2009). This review was not systematic but rather a "preliminary investigation" (Channon 2014, p.446), and is as such, not providing a complete global perspective on the issue. The review was undertaken from an occupational perspective and was therefore interested in the contributions made by the field of occupational science to this topic, however these were unfortunately few, with the main contribution coming from the disability studies arena (Channon 2014).

Findings from this review do, however, relate to issues in previous sections of this chapter, such as a focus on capabilities being not just about ability but about opportunity (Nussbaum 2011; Channon 2014) and those opportunities being diverse enough to provide people with a range of abilities, with occupations that are fulfilling, rather than merely keeping them active (Channon 2014; Granerud & Eriksson 2014). Finally, that occupation of the right kind can reduce risks to physical and mental health, particularly for those with more severe disabilities (Channon 2014; Hale et al. 2011), at the same time promoting positive adaptive health behaviours and routines (Channon 2014; Hale et al. 2011).

Channon (2014) highlights the issue of those with moderate to severe learning disabilities being subject to occupational deprivation and marginalisation due to the level of assistance offered not being sufficient for the level of need. This results in reduced opportunity and capabilities in most contexts, and particularly in what health equalities theorist, Venkatapuram (2013) suggests as a meta-capability, that of bodily health. In a philosophical critique of occupational justice, Bailliard (2016), an occupational scientist, reinforces the social and contextual factors impacting on the capability to be healthy, which he feels is an expression of all other capabilities, and is therefore an indicator of social justice (Bailliard 2016; Venkatapuram 2013). This concept of health as a meta-capability is linked to mental wellbeing by Townsend (2012), who outlines three lessons in relation to considering the importance of promoting health through occupational justice.

These three lessons include ensuring social accountability for advancing justice; upholding inclusive freedoms, such as the capability to express emotion and to engage in practical reason; and finally, that "*justice advances when societies organise universal rights*" (Townsend 2012, p.18). This final lesson involves creating systems that enable full participation in control of their own environments and wider environments they engage in (Townsend 2012).

Participation, in the context of occupational justice and promotion of universal rights, has been synthesised by Hammell (2015) to include a sense of autonomy in enacting occupational choices, a feeling of achievement and sense of belonging through doing, the opportunity to contribute to and support others, and in so doing, to have reciprocal relationships (Hammell 2015). Both Townsend (2012) and Hammel (2015) consider the capabilities approach an effective means through which to promote occupational justice and rights for people with disabilities due to the emphasis on the context, available resources and provision of opportunities that do not restrict but promote participation, health and wellbeing.

In considering participation and its indicator of reciprocal relationships, occupational science theorists have explored the concept of co-occupation (Pierce 2003; Pierce 2009; Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow 2009). Co-occupation is a way of two people participating in one activity, sharing physical, emotional and intentional aspects of the occupation (Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow 2009; Mahoney & Roberts 2009). All three elements are necessary for occupation to be classified as co-occupation, although the two separate parties might experience each element at different levels eg. One may experience emotionality more and the other a more focused sense of physicality. Intentionality implies that there is a shared goal and understanding of each other's role in the occupation (Mahoney & Roberts 2009).

A qualitative study by Mahoney and Roberts (2009) carried out in the United States of America, aimed to examine the meaning of day programme activities for a group of adults with learning disabilities between the ages of twenty to fifty and for staff working with these people, focusing on whether co-occupation played a role in engaging those involved in the day programme activities. Service users in the study had complex disabilities resulting in them requiring behavioural and/or

physical assistance to participate in day programme occupations, which ranged from arts to community outings and sheltered workshop activity (Mahoney & Roberts 2009). In this phenomenological study involving ten service users and ten staff members, recruitment of staff was through verbal and written advertisement and invitation; however recruitment of service users was through recommendations from participating staff. While the reasoning for this is possibly practical, it did present an issue of inequality, especially since the concept of co-occupation represents a move towards widening participation in decision-making through joint intentions (Pierce 2009; Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow 2009). The researchers used semi-structured interviews, which were adapted to include a wide range of accessible methods and an observation tool to rate the motivation or volition of people unable to participate in interviews or written questionnaires. This demonstrated a clear attempt to ensure that engagement in the occupations were noted, however the fact that in-depth interviews were more prevalent from staff indicates the complexities of attempting to ensure equity of contribution from the whole participant group.

The outcome of the study highlighted the impact of reciprocal interaction between staff and service users, where mutual satisfaction and meaning was gained from successful efforts at communication and engagement in tasks. Staff mood was found to have both positive and negative effects on service users taking up opportunities to participate. Finally, when service users were offered interaction that was respectful and provided them with choices, they responded more positively in the occupations they were participating in (Mahoney & Roberts 2009). This study was only undertaken in one setting and with a small number of people and is not a broad reflection of the contribution co-occupation makes to participation for people with learning disabilities, but it adds to our understanding of participatory citizenship, as explained by Fransen et al. (2015).

Participatory citizenship involves upholding the rights of people who may have limited access to social and political recognition, who might experience marginalisation through lack of representation or choice and therefore experience a form of disabling citizenship (Fransen et al. 2015). Franzen et al (2015) urge collaborative approaches and partnerships, highlighting the importance of the

ongoing study and understanding of concepts such as co-occupation to enable active participation in citizenship. This will ultimately strengthen partnerships and broaden understanding of capability, providing opportunities to improve social belonging and impact positively on health determinants (Fransen et al. 2015).

2.12 Conclusion

Personalisation of care has been promoted as an agent of transformation, promotion self-directed support and empowering people to take control over the choices available to them (Carr 2012; Department of Health 2001). Many who fought for the right to a say how money is spent on their care, have applauded this as a true step in the direction of a *rights-based* approach to care (Spandler 2004). A dominant critique of personalisation, however, is that of the level of focus on the individual and whether this can concurrently aid in the social inclusion desired by many (Beresford 2008; Ferguson 2012; Hall 2005).

Government-run facilities that previously supported people with learning disabilities to gain access to both voluntary and paid work, have had funds reduced in the wake of personalisation (Redley, 2009). Similarly, contracts previously organised by local authorities for groups to access third-sector care have been dissolved as people may now technically access any service or organisation they wish, using individual budgets (Redley 2009; Hall 2011). This has, positively, resulted in individuals taking responsibility for developing their own resources, which is important from a capabilities approach to social justice, but has disbanded some of the strength behind collective response and action also required for maintaining and promoting further equality and justice (Hall, 2011; Burton and Carolyn, 2006). This individualistic approach to care has also, to some extent, shifted the responsibility of care onto the service user without ensuring that there are adequate resources and means to access these (Lloyd 2010).

In terms of developing an individual's sense of citizenship, it appears that the situation is more complex than merely changing how a person is supported to participate in society. A political and societal paradigm shift from valuing people for *what* they can contribute economically to valuing people for *how* they

contribute, despite their personal situations, to the best of their capability, is in order if citizenship and social inclusion is to be realised by those who seek it (Burton and Carolyn, 2006; Nussbaum, 2006; Hall, 2005).

Citizenship can be developed through many different pathways, including participation in voluntary work or skills development based in socially-orientated non-profit organisations. If these organisations, namely social enterprises, can be reinforced with political backing and community trust, they offer diverse opportunities for people with disabilities to access work, social interaction, education and skills development through personalised care pathways.

An important consideration, however, in the use of third sector organisations, particularly organisations with their own aims for social change, is whether, as Hogg & Baines (2011) propose, we are weakening the power of these organisations to implement their social visions by imposing on them the responsibility of upholding public sector services (Hogg and Baines, 2011). Green care offered through social enterprises, present people with the possibility to make choices affecting their wellbeing and quality of life (Sempik, Aldridge and Becker, 2005). In particular, green care brings back the community and relational aspect of care that threatened to lose its way in purely personalised or individualistic care. Lloyd (2010) emphasises the need to acknowledge these relational aspects of care, appreciating that care is a shared responsibility and that interdependency is a fact of life as we are all dependent or vulnerable, and requiring support from others, at some point in life.

Communal care approaches, such as horticultural therapy and other forms of green care have been demonstrated to improve social inclusion as well as develop vocational skills, both areas that personalised care for people with learning disabilities hopes to promote (Sempik et al. 2010; Hine et al. 2008b; Sempik et al. 2005). An effective and consistent partnership between local social care authorities and such enterprises stands to provide individuals and communities with capacity-building services, social enterprises with increased financial resources and volunteer, student or worker populations and local authorities with sustainable and trustworthy third sector services to present when wanting to

provide people with a choice. This partnership, however, relies on respect for political and organisational culture differences, which have yet to be fully explored. The use of permaculture as a philosophy within a green social enterprise offering green care services may offer a more sustainable and resilient option for promoting social inclusion and this research proposes to explore this theory through participatory and ethnographic research.

The above literature has demonstrated a need for further research into the experience of participating in contexts of green care and in community-based organisations beyond the boundaries of statutory health and social care provision. For this reason, the research question for this study is:

What is the occupational experience of people with and without disabilities participating in an inclusive horticultural social enterprise?

Aims of the research:

1. To examine the occupational experience of people with learning disabilities and their support workers participating in a food growing social enterprise.

2. To examine the experience of governance and participation for people managing and volunteering in a food growing, co-operatively run social enterprise.

3. To explore the influence of permaculture on the occupational and social experience of participating in a food growing social enterprise.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology is expressed here in a purpose statement, which articulates the goal of the study and the pivotal theoretical perspectives, methodological approach and socio-cultural context (Johnson & Parry 2015a) in order to signpost the reader to primary elements at an early stage. The purpose statement also reflects how the research question and objectives at the end of the previous chapter have been addressed.

> *Overall, this qualitative research, utilising participatory action and critical ethnographic methodologies aimed to capture the occupational experience of people participating in a social enterprise known to be involved in both social and environmental justice causes.*
> *The research aimed to collaboratively explore the experience of people with different capabilities engaging in food growing and other related occupations on a site using permaculture design as its guiding philosophy. Finally, the primary researcher, acknowledging the feminist, social-constructivist and critical theory perspectives influencing the design and implementation of the study, aimed to reflexively interpret the experience of people participating in this organisation, thus framing the research within an organisational case study.*

I have outlined the personal context and positionality brought by myself as the primary researcher in the introduction. This is an expansion of that chapter, leading to an explanation of the paradigms and approaches utilised within this research. The early part of the chapter is reflective and so is written in the first person.

The methodological choices of PAR and critical ethnography are discussed and the decision to use organisational case study is justified in order to consider the

systemic influences, challenges and possibilities of the social enterprise within the wider social, economic and political context in which it exists. Ethical aspects of the research are discussed and, lastly, aspects of quality considered within this research process are outlined.

3.2 Research paradigm

3.2.1 The Self

"A concern for positionality is a reflexive ethnography; it is a turning back on ourselves. When we turn back on ourselves, we examine our intentions, our methods and our possible effects"
(Madison 2005, p.16)

This section is a reflection of decisions made at the outset of the research and throughout the process and describes the worldviews the research was built upon. Cousin (2010) describes self as "*the tool, intimately connected to the methods we deploy*" in qualitative research.

My prior involvement in the garden and the organisation as a volunteer shaped my decision-making. From the start I wanted to ensure that the work would be collaborative with organisation leaders and participants as they were interested in evaluating participation in the organisation. The research had to be action-orientated so I could understand the experience of involvement for a wide range of individuals. I also wanted it to involve an ethnographic aspect that would reflect the political stance and culture of the organisation and utilise my personal positions of occupational therapist, community gardener, activist and researcher as a reflexive resource (McKay et al. 2003; Finlay 2002).

The occupational therapist in me initiated the research, being struck how occupation on the gardening site drew people together towards community-orientated goals. This meaningful activity appeared to transcend the usual barriers of communication or ability. As a therapist, and an activist, who supported the idea of social change through community-based action in this setting, it was

encouraging to witness what I felt demonstrated the concept of praxis, or personal and social change through undertaking everyday activities (Magalhaes 2012). Discussion about the potential research with founding members of the co-operative, coincided with their own interest in obtaining feedback on their position and performance as a social enterprise working locally with participants with a wide range of capabilities. Their own political beliefs in social and environmental justice supported this project based on occupation within the garden with knowledge co-constructed by participants and workers within the organisation.

The gardener and activist within me was inspired by the philosophy of permaculture, which takes both an environmental as well as a social justice stance, inviting ideas of a different way of doing things both personally and more globally (Macnamara 2012; Holmgren 2011). The clear focus of permaculture on including marginalised people, while still considering what would be best for the planet, with its finite resources, mirrored personal and professional conflicts that have arisen throughout my career. This issue of multiple concerns and representation of numerous identities within one context has been highlighted by feminist theorists(Johnson & Parry 2015; Ropers-Huilman & Winters 2010). It brings up the concept of intersectionality and different ways of knowing, within one context and considers how this might both be a barrier to and give direction to transformative action (Ropers-Huilman & Winters 2010).

These multiple ways of understanding place and action demanded a critical stance from myself and others involved, to recognise how meaning-making varies according to identity and personal cause, within one system. This critical stance enabled us to act, reflect on, synthesise and represent thoughts, occupations and ideas relating to the influence of prevailing social and political systems and policies; the organisation; and its participants. The critical approach also matched my theoretical interest in the Capabilities Approach (Nussbaum 2011), promoting social justice through development, based on where and how opportunities for action are created that match and promote the capabilities of all human beings.

On their own; the two chosen methodologies of participatory action research and critical ethnography pointed to an in-depth, detailed and insightful investigation of

the experience of participation, outlining areas of tension, power, creativity and vulnerability. In order to pull together this collaboratively constructed knowledge and the individually expressed ideas, I developed a case study of the organisation (Creswell 2007) . A case study allowed for visualisation of all the information together as a living system with its own capabilities and limitations in the landscape of institutions and other identified influences, understanding its culture, its habitus or patterns (Cutchin et al. 2008) and its considerations for future sustainability as a social enterprise.

3.2.2 An evolving paradigm

Considering a paradigm for this research was challenging due to the unpredictability associated with initiating a participatory action research (PAR) project (Wimpenny 2010; Koch & Kralik 2006). All that could be planned for was uncertainty of outcome. I understood that developing trust, relationships within the group, agreed-upon action and effective reflection would be a challenging and "messy" process, as signified by (Grimwood 2015, Wimpenny 2010). My hope was that this process would allow time for communication, action, understanding differences and dissecting issues of power, while at the same time producing a shared outcome that was meaningful to the group itself and useful from an evaluative perspective for the organisation to take forward. From this perspective, a social constructivist paradigm (Mertens 2015, Lincoln 2001) was adopted in relation to the development of the participatory action research groups.

I was also drawn to the concept of creating the *communicative space* Kemmis (2008) describes in which communicative action could explored (Kemmis 2008; Habermas 1996). Participant-researchers who bring a wide range of skills, ideologies and future plans to the research might require a more defined space to consider the depth of their roles and sense of agency both within the group and the wider organisation. Kemmis' (2008) idea was developed further, into a communicative *action* space, encouraging action and exploration within the group but reducing the pressure to move action beyond the group until they were ready. This was also another means of emphasising the importance of the garden as a

space for learning and creativity as well as its functional role as space for growing food.

Finally, I adopted a critical theory paradigm (Wimpenny 2010; Kemmis 2008; Madison 2005) for a number of different reasons. The social constructivist paradigm was useful as evaluation, while the communicative action paradigm allowed for an emphasis on facilitative space and development of relationships, all key to creating an environment for collaborative learning with meaningful outcomes. These two paradigms, concerned with process and outcome, had potential to be limited unless a critical perspective was adopted alongside them. Critical theory facilitates an analysis of power, inequality and exclusion perpetuated by capitalist influences beyond the control of the organisation or participants (Kemmis 2008; Madison 2005). Critical theory upheld the proposed methodology of critical ethnography (Rose 2015; Madison 2005) but also supported PAR. It enabled participant-researchers to acknowledge that knowledge generated through critique and reflection of their action in context could have emancipatory effects at different levels of their participation, within the organisation and beyond its boundaries (Freire 1970).

3.3 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory action research has been defined by some as a process that involves researchers and participants working together to overcome a problem or situation of inequality (Grimwood 2015; Wimpenny 2010). Thus PAR focuses on the process of dialogue and collaborative relationships that transforms self-esteem, motivates people and builds solidarity within a group (Koch & Kralik 2006; McArdle & Reason 2006). PAR, due to its roots in overcoming oppressive, often patriarchal situations (Fals-Borda 2001; Freire 1970) was adopted as a feminist approach (Grimwood 2015) thereby demanding research methods that were reflexive, collaborative and demanded reciprocity and respect within the researcher-participant relationships (Wimpenny 2010; Huisman 2008).

In this study, the social problem behind the research emerged from the issue of reduced services for people with any type of different ability, wanting to actively participate in a community-based organisation that was not a generic, statutory day service. Referring to the concepts of occupational justice, particularly occupational alienation (Stadnyk et al. 2011; Bryant et al. 2004), discussed in the literature review, the social problem reflected a lack of spaces for people with diverse abilities and skills to go where they felt engaged and included as part of the whole.   The focus here was on participation, which Creek (2010) defines as involvement in the activities and situations of living within a social context. This definition has activity and a social context as determinants of participation and this is what the food growing community aimed for; that people coming to the garden would be active participants of the community and not service users or visitors with a passive role. This was also what they wanted to explore, in terms of the depth of experience people had on site, and the range of abilities the site could cater to and cope with sustainably.

In traditional PAR, the researcher's aim is to work in partnership with those directly affected by the issue raised within society (Smith et al. 2010), however in this case, the participants were gardeners with a range of abilities as well as co-operative members and other paid workers, all hoping to add their experiences of working within this social enterprise to create a full picture of the complexities and opportunities if offered. The aims of the research were therefore initially plotted out by myself, as primary researcher and interested co-operative members, as people who wanted to further social transformation through being critical, not only of the wider social context the organisation functioned in, but of themselves and how they could work to improve better engagement and participation. This is an example of what Kemmis' (2008) describes as "communicative action", as mentioned above, when people agree to work together to explore practice, situations and perceptions in a critical and participatory manner (Kemmis 2008).

PAR seeks to enable people to become aware of their own abilities and resources through collective action and reflection (Grimwood 2015; Koch & Kralik 2006), which was the intention of this project from the start, having identified that action within the garden had already anecdotally motivated people toward positive

transformations in their lives. Those initiating the research all held the intention that those who would traditionally not have been included in research, should play a key role were they were interested and able to, in line with PAR tradition (Grimwood 2015; Smith et al. 2010) , as well as the activist nature of the organisation. This ensured that the participants were not "the researched", but rather the researchers, active at all levels of the knowledge production process (Grimwood 2015; Smith et al. 2010). The possibility of shared power in the production of data meant that there was also a possibility of transformed conventional or oppressive relationships both within and beyond the organisation. PAR also seeks to ensure some form of social and personal transformation for the participants (Grimwood 2015), a shifting of power to ensure that those engaged in the research understand their abilities, their contribution and that these are acknowledged beyond themselves(Aldridge 2007; Grimwood 2015; Smith et al. 2010). The following chapters will enable an understanding of the small and larger transformations that took place, both inside the organisation.

In this research, it was acknowledged that there would be a focus on what it means to contribute to a community according to one's capabilities and therefore to live with dignity an equal citizen (Nussbaum 2011, Nussbaum 2006). Disability theorist Johnson et al.'s (2010) considerations on what it means to experience a "good life", played an important role in deciding on the methods used within the action-reflection cycles in the PAR process. Through the development of tools and products of their own, participant-researchers gained new identities as researchers and as members of a collective, focused on the development of their own agency as well as the organisation's role within the community.

A distinguishing feature of PAR, is the spiral of planning-action-reflection cycles that drive the process of action and transformation forward (Grimwood 2015; Wimpenny 2010; Koch & Kralik 2006). The challenge for the primary researcher is at the start of this process, where power needs to be relocated to the participants as researchers, to gain momentum and to develop of areas for action, reflection and change. In this research, this was most difficult to predict with the first proposed PAR group, involving people with learning disabilities and their support

workers. This was due to institutional habitus relating to authority, education and paradigms relating to the creation of meaningful knowledge (Cutchin et al. 2008).

Participation in this collective, iterative and reflexive process can be both tiring and overwhelming for people at times (Wimpenny 2010). The risks participants cannot predict in scale involve heightened emotion, anxiety around decision-making and exhaustion from active and deeply personal sharing and learning though social practices (Wimpenny 2010, Koch, Kralik 2006). These risks, along with additional concerns regarding consent, development of dependency and some practicalities have, in the past, persuaded people to avoid the participative approach with people with moderate to severe learning disabilities (Atkinson 2005). These issues have largely been reconsidered in recent years and evidence is mounting that this patriarchal attitude perpetuates exclusion and prevents important voices from being heard through participatory, capabilities-focused research methods (Nind 2011; Aldridge 2007; Gilbert et al. 2005; Walmsley & Johnson 2003). Not including people due to the nature of their disability also reduces the quality and relevance of the research, particularly when it affects those peoples' lives (Nind 2011; Gilbert et al. 2005; Walmsley & Johnson 2003).

It is acknowledged that within PAR there is methodological variation (Smith et al. 2010; Koch & Kralik 2006; Grimwood 2015), with the focus being on "engaging, adapting, innovating and learning through methodologies to facilitate transformation" (Grimwood 2015, p.224). This research deviated from traditional PAR in some ways, for example in facilitating action for the group of people with learning disabilities, where this might traditionally be expected to be more participant-driven. This was partially due to the abilities of the group members and partially due to the ethic of the garden, to focus on tasks that were required for the season. The positive aspect of this was that it lent a structure to this group that would otherwise have been difficult to establish and maintain for a number of action-reflection cycles.

Community-based participatory action research(CBPR) is similar to PAR in that it also aims to promote partnerships within the research process and jointly generated knowledge (Wallerstein & Duran 2006; Grimwood 2015). This type of

research was considered as one of the key areas CBPR focuses on in reducing health disparities within communities (Wallerstein & Duran 2006). The use of a case-study approach (as discussed later) over a defined period of time in the case of this research was one reason the CBPR approach was not used, as it relies on the development of relationships between different organisations and community members of a long period of time in order to have a significant impact on inequalities within certain sectors (Wallerstein & Duran 2006; Grimwood 2015). This approach felt not irrelevant, but more of a possibility as a next step, once the organisation had established an internal level of equity and acknowledgement and this could be powerful in collaboration with external agencies in a larger community transformation process.

3.3.1 PAR and people with learning disability

The above statement, however, does prompt some consideration of the safeguarding of people with learning disabilities in the research context. Atkinson (2005) and Walmsley and Johnson (2003) highlight the importance regarding both clarity of purpose (Does it matter to the people doing the research?) and clarity of roles (primary researcher, facilitator, co-researchers, rather than teacher, pupil, therapist).

Issues relating to institutionalised hierarchies were predicted in this study and highlighted a concern regarding power dynamics within the group of people with learning disabilities and their support workers. The concern over whether some people with learning disabilities would feel autonomous and confident enough to influence the direction of the PAR process if or when they wanted to, was acknowledged (Walmsley & Johnson 2003). The use of facilitation and reflection in the PAR sessions were means by which this could be countered.

One final concern related to the previously alluded to "messiness" of PAR (Grimwood 2015) and the various spaces the research would take place in, possibly making the process of research and inquiry difficult to understand or

follow. Wimpenny (2010) describes the use of reflective meetings as "anchor points" along the continuum of the reflection-action-planning cycles in order to both consider what has gone before and plan the road ahead, qualifying the use of meetings and reflective sessions during PAR in this study.

Gilbert (2005) suggests a number of methods to enable people with learning disabilities to contribute more openly and reliably. One method was to avoid using open questions in individual and group settings and another was to utilise creative means of data collection through which non-verbal communication could be expressed, such as symbols, photographs and other creative tasks. These could then be interpreted by the individuals and their co-researchers. A wide variety of accessible methods of data collection were considered in the build-up to this project and many of these methods will be discussed in chapter four.

Finally, a reflexive approach was taken by myself, both in active reflection and in attention to my thoughts in unguarded moments. This is suggested by Atkinson (2005) to promote my own self-awareness of my influence on the PAR process. To do this, I took field notes and wrote in a reflective diary throughout the planning, data collection and analysis phases of the research. The use of critical ethnography alongside the PAR process enabled this reflexive approach to occur overtly as part of the research design (Madison 2005). It allowed for critical observation of participant behaviour and relationships as well as interaction with place, therefore enabling an understanding of the barriers to and facilitators of accessible and meaningful experience.

3.4 Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography is traditional ethnography with a political edge (Thomas 1993) and a focus on social justice and advocacy (Madison 2005). It requires the ethnographer to look beyond assumptions of researched contexts in order to expose contradictory aspects of power, relationship and stance (Madison 2005). The decision to utilise a critical ethnography methodology alongside PAR sprang from the desire to more thoroughly understand the various dynamics at play within

the organisation and those participating in it. For example, the co-operative founders expressed dedication to social and environmental justice issues and an interest in the use of occupation within the garden as a tool to promote inclusion for marginalised people. This was hampered by a constant tension regarding funding and desire to ensure the sustainability of the garden site as a productive market garden. These, at times, conflicting desires were evident in the approach to working with people with learning disabilities and to including people in decision-making in general on a broader scale.

The need for a critical ethnographic approach became clearer in the consideration of how to promote participatory research that might both be critical of aspects of the organisation, while also giving voice to those who *lived* the organisation on a daily basis and for whom it was an extension of their political and occupational beings. Madison (2005) outlines the ethical responsibility of critical ethnographers to "*address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain*" (Madison 2005, p.5). Critical ethnography acknowledges that multiple realities exist but that where dominant realities exist, power imbalances also reside (Rose 2015). This methodology was chosen in the hope that it would enable myself and co-researchers/participants to understand how deep-rooted, institutionalised or political beliefs manifest themselves in places that aim to transcend these concerns.

Madison (2005) expresses the importance of acknowledging ones subjectivity in relation others and considering how this informs and is informed by our relationships with those we engage with in research. In being a reflexive researcher, awareness of one's own sense of power and privilege must be evident in the ways we reflect on and represent the systems we critique (Rose 2015). The emphasis in critical ethnography is on interpretation of culture and related behaviour within contexts in a way that might shed light on issues of marginalisation taking place. This process of getting to know and understand the different cultures or standpoints existing in one place, and interpreting the result of these interactions, has a similar aim to PAR, but approaches the intended outcome of highlighting inequalities from the perspective of observation,

experience, interpretation and even advocacy (Madison 2005), rather than through collaborative action-reflection cycles.

Methods utilised in critical ethnography in contexts such as the market garden included participant observation and key-informant interviews as key areas of data generation, while also considering the interpretation of artefacts such as maps, drawings, writing, diagrams and other creative work contributed by participants within the garden and the PAR study (Madison 2005; Rifkin & Pridmore 2001).

3.5 Case Study as an approach to understanding organisation

In research where multiple phenomena are being observed in one real-life organisation, a case study approach to gather the findings from these phenomena together, in order to interpret and make sense of them, was appropriate (Salminen et al. 2006).

In this context, an organisational case study was proposed, focusing on the organisation as a whole and the phenomenon of inclusive (or exclusive) experience for all participants within the organisation. Seeing the organisation as one case or social enterprise within a wider landscape of social enterprise, green care organisations and social care institutions, allowed the researcher to situate the organisation in relation to its aims, its performance and its external influences; political, social, financial and environmental (Creswell 2007).

In addressing social justice issues, Lashua (2015) considers a case study approach to organising data useful in that the act of considering the data as a case is driven by the researcher's desire to understand and address the controversies, complexities or problems that contextualise that boundaried case. The case study of this organisation was built following analysis of data from PAR groups and ethnographic diaries, notes and other artefacts.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Madison defines ethics as "*both a philosophical enquiry and a way of being in the world*" (Madison 2005, p.96)*.* She goes on to describe that consideration of ethics in research is to understand the social and political action that needs to take place to close the gap between what *is* and what *ought to be* (Madison 2005)*.* Participatory action research goes some way to explore and, in some cases, address this gap but research involving collective action and 'messiness' often falls short of acknowledgment in more traditional scientific circles.

Herr & Anderson (2005) argue that the dynamic nature of PAR and the broad possibilities of its outcomes do not fit well into traditional positivist ethical frameworks. Zuber-Skerritt & Fletcher (2007) also address this issue, highlighting that the open-ended, collaborative, situation-specific characteristics of PAR are at risk right at the start of the research process when having to predict and formulate a process that is inherently unpredictable.   The result of this is that there is often a forced or imagined direction predicted when applying for ethical approval through institutional research committees, unless the committee has insight into and experience with this type of qualitative research.

Predicting ethical considerations prior to the initiation of a qualitative research project is challenging and Macfarlane (2010) compares ethics to jazz in that there is often more to it than the music on the sheet presents. Managing ethical dilemmas in a qualitative project involves being able to interpret mood and situation changes, as well as an ability to improvise when these transitions occur. In the case of this research, there was some initial discomfort in applying for ethical approval in that questions and objectives normally evolve within the PAR process, however the ethical approval was due prior to any work could be done with the organisation. This forced the formulation of a broad question and direction in order to be able to predict and consider ethical issues that may arise and how these would be dealt with. Approval to undertake research with the social enterprise was requested from the co-operative members. Once this was granted, a request for ethical approval was then submitted to the Brunel University Ethical Review Board and approved. (See appendix B, ref: 12/04/PHD).

The ethics committee were open to and mostly understanding of the dynamic trajectory this research might take, however the documentation proforma and some of the stipulations in retaining ethical approval remained in contrast to the collaborative and reflexive pathway of both PAR and critical ethnography.

Her and Anderson (2005) propose that the primary researcher, when considering ethical issues in action research, should expect to face ethical dilemmas and should be prepared to manage them on an ongoing basis as they arise, using continuous professional judgement. A key concern for this research was ensuring that research materials and information documents, including consent forms, were accessible to people with potential literacy difficulties, communication limitations and learning disabilities. Regarding consent, it was important for the integrity of the research process that people did not feel compelled to consent. The initial challenge was that the first PAR group was proposed (by the organisation) to take place during a ten week basic gardening class for people with learning disabilities. This posed the first ethical dilemma of the participatory process as there was a concern over what to do if 'class' participants did not want to participate in the research. Would this end in their being excluded from some activities or would people feel unable to opt out of the research for fear of being offered an occupation or job set apart from the rest of the group. This was dealt with by ensuring the sessions allowed for people to continue to participate in the gardening aspect of the classes, however their actions or reflections would not be recorded with the others. This, however, did not happen and all class participants agreed to participate in the research.

Cameron and Murphy (2007) proposed a number of considerations with regard to consent and readiness for participation in research, which were applied to this research project throughout the data collection and analysis process:

- Increased time was allowed for working through initial information about the research project and the participant's intended level of involvement.

- An individualised communication strategy suitable for the individual was utilised when undertaking face to face explanations of research information and, where complex information was given, a close and trusted individual may was useful in aiding the process. I was aware, however, that this might introduce unwanted power relationships into the challenging terrain of voluntary participation. In this research, where people wanted their support workers present during the research explanation, this was granted, although other means of judging consent were also utilised, such as non-participation (Cameron & Murphy 2007).

- Non-participation, where a participant removes themselves during an activity or does not arrive for the activity, is used as a clear message that there was an issue with the participant's willingness to participate. Frequent non-participation is said to impact on the validity of consent at times when the participant does participate. This guideline around non-participation was adhered to and in a couple of cases, it was noted that participants had removed themselves from an activity when they were tired or uncomfortable (particularly in cold weather). When this happened, participants were asked if they wanted a break or wanted to leave the session, and their request was granted. There were no incidents of repeated non-participation in either of the groups.

- Support worker participants who attended the group with people with learning disabilities were aware of consent procedures and encouraged not to try to persuade participants with learning disabilities to be involved where they do not want to be.

- Information sheets were adapted appropriately using accessible media such as pictures and symbols where these are evidenced as being more suitable.

- Consent was ongoing throughout the research for all participants, i.e. I, as primary researcher did not rely on the initial discussion only as consent but checked continuously at the start of each session, reminding participants that their presence and contributions were voluntary.

- Ways of developing, continuing and ending the research relationship and managing expectations regarding ongoing participation were considered at

the start of and throughout the research process (Huisman 2008; Cameron & Murphy 2007).

Finally, acknowledging my multiple roles within the organisation prior to and at times, alongside that of researcher, for example, volunteer, consultant and friend to both staff and participants, forced me to consider how I would manage the need for distance and perspective if and when this was required. This was a key consideration as I hoped to continue working with the organisation following the research as I respected their work and the people who had founded the organisation. Huisman (2008) assisted in understanding the dilemma of maintaining relationships while ensuring a voice for all participants and an integrous outcome for the organisation as a whole and the participants as individuals. She reminds researchers that there is no easy answer but that PAR and relationships are evolutionary and the process and outcome of being within these are both unpredictable and full of value (Huisman 2008). My experience of this throughout the research process was a constant awareness of and concern for the integrity of the findings and honesty in relating to participants and others in the garden. I used reflective diaries and academic supervision to shape the understanding of my own position within organisation as well as outside of it. This enabled me to find a balanced and critical voice with which to facilitate, analyse and write about the research.

3.7 Summary

This chapter considered the paradigms brought to the research in consideration of its development, design and the context in which it evolved and emerged. Three paradigms relevant to this research were discussed; social constructivist, communicative action and critical theory, all of which lend structure and a framework for consideration of issues of power sharing and collaborative knowledge generation that might lead to social change both within an organisation and beyond this.

This discussion was followed by an argument for the proposed use of PAR and critical ethnography as methodologies that not only match the political and social

leanings of the organisation, and therefore instil a sense of trustworthiness in design and implementation of the research, but also provide a mechanism through which people can critically consider their roles and their journeys to date and possibilities for the future.

The next chapter explores the methods used in the data collection and analysis of the research. These methods were chosen due to their focus on action and creativity and to ensure that a wide variety of modalities were available to ensure accessibility. Matters of quality and trustworthiness relating to design and analysis will also be discussed.

Chapter 4: Methods

The previous chapter outlined the methodologies and the supporting ideological frameworks underpinning this research. Participatory action research and critical ethnography both have transformative aims and in this way, lend themselves to occupation-orientated, creative and reflective methods. In the context of this research, where including people with a wide range of capabilities was the intention from the outset, methods that were both accessible and did not always require verbal or written language, were chosen.

This chapter explains the research design: looking at the phases of the research; the participants and how they came to be part of the research; the methods used in data collection and how these were drawn together and analysed. Finally issues relating to research quality will be discussed.

4.1 Description of roles and spaces in Forest Garden

The following descriptive information aims to give insight into the main spaces people worked in on site and the formal occupational roles existing in Forest Garden. A map in figure 4.2 demonstrates the variety of different types of growing spaces in Forest Garden, from the Old Kitchen Garden, to terraces, orchards and a vineyard. Spaces left wild or protected from too much human involvement were scattered around the garden in line with the permaculture guidance of encouraging wildlife to exist alongside food growing spaces. The apiary and the oak tree grove in the centre of the garden were such spaces, encouraging bird life, pollinators and other wildlife that would manage pests and aid growing naturally. Spaces for gathering, such as the workshop, kitchen, picnic area and magical realm (a shaded, quiet area near the kitchen garden) were often based in the central part of the site, while large growing areas, like the orchard, the terraces, the vineyard and

the kitchen garden were further away. The whole site was largely surrounded by wood or nature reserve and the entrance was in a cul-de-sac at the top of a long road, ensuring a sense of seclusion, although this sometimes made it difficult to find.

Figure 4.1 Main occupations for volunteers in Forest Garden

Volunteers participated in a wide variety of growing, food preparation and site maintenance occupations, largely done in small teams of approximately five or more people (see figure 4.1). There were smaller tasks that required fewer people and larger ones that required the focus of all the volunteers at different times of the year. These were written up on a board at the start of the volunteer day so that people had time to consider what they would like to be involved in before and after lunch time. There were three volunteer days, with Wednesday being the most frequently attended, meaning larger tasks were often planned for this day. A lunch with ingredients mostly harvested from the garden, was cooked by volunteers and served on Wednesday too. The days were divided into morning and afternoon sessions with an hour lunchtime in-between to allow people to eat, socialise and rest.
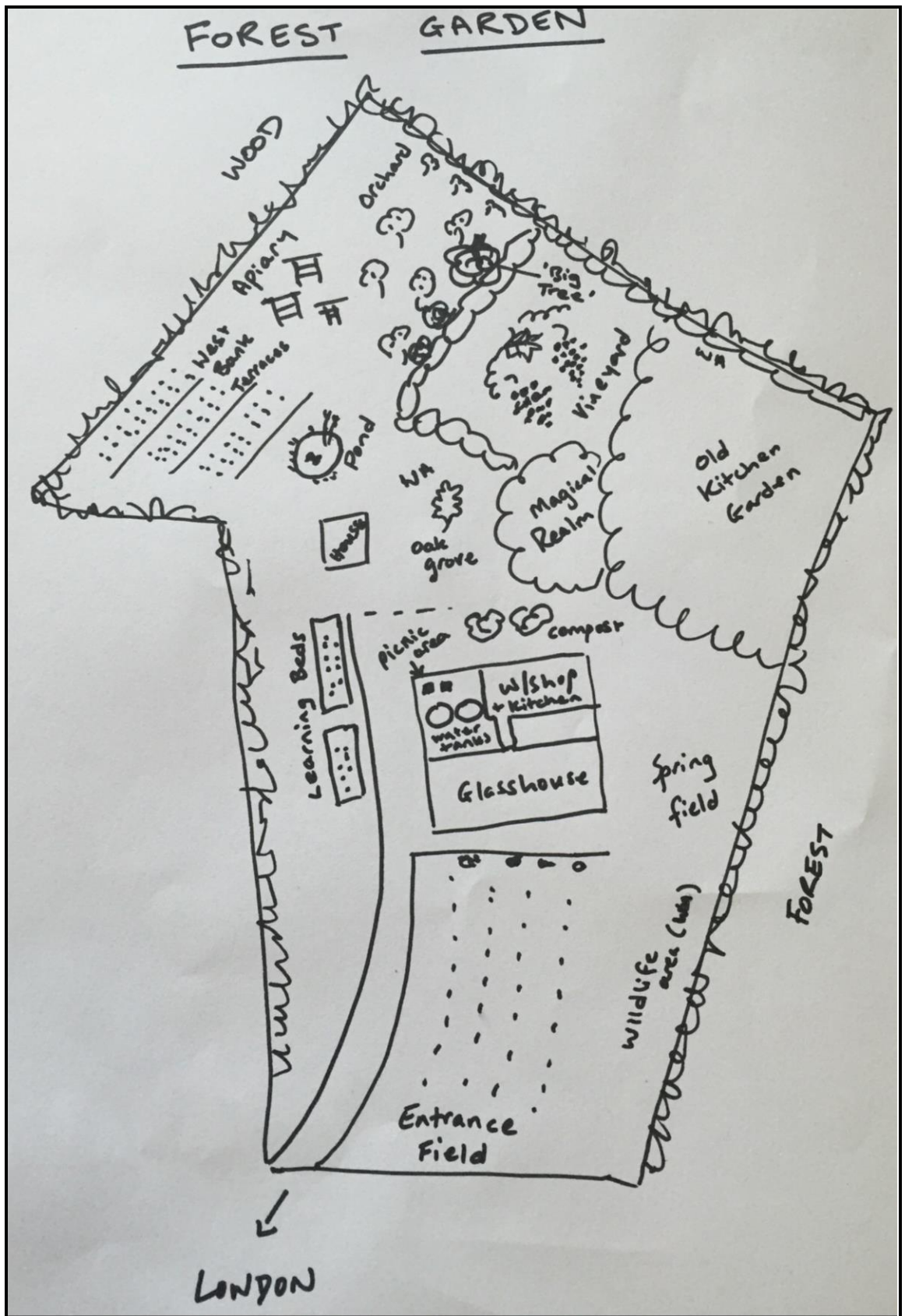
Figure 4.2 Photograph of a map of Forest Garden drawn in September 2012

The indoor growing tasks included sowing and potting-on, mixing composts and planting plants that thrived better in the glasshouse. This task was often favoured when weather made it difficult to do things outside. Some maintenance tasks were done indoors, particularly in winter, such as cleaning and fixing tools and glass-house repairs. Outdoor maintenance tasks tended to be larger tasks, such as turning compost, cutting wood, tending to drainage, making or weeding paths and mulching growing areas. Vegetable box packing was done in the workshop area and required a consistent team who understood the different vegetable boxes and how to weigh and label items. The cooking group were also consistent and they knew where certain herbs and vegetables were grown around the site and stored in order to harvest them when required. Some people favoured specific areas such as working in the vineyard or tending to the bees in the apiary.

People held different roles in the garden, as described in appendix I. The worker roles varied from volunteer, committing to one to three days a week or even part of a day, to co-operative members, who might have played a role in setting up the garden and were paid a salary. There was a paid apprenticeship role which lasted a year and trainee positions, which were unpaid, but were set up to give people experience in particular areas of horticulture in order to improve their prospects for finding employment in that area in the future. There were also often students on site, attending informal courses on food growing and nature-related topics as well as accredited gardening skills and permaculture design courses. The permaculture association (Permaculture Association 2016) accredited the permaculture courses, while a local adult education college and national vocational training institution accredited some of the other formal courses offered by Forest Garden.

With this detail of the organisation in mind, the following section will outline the research phases, from early discussions of the research through to analysis and write-up of the outcomes.

4.2 Phases of the Research - a summary

This section gives an overview of the study from initiation of the research, through the two stages of PAR, the interviews, and stages of data analysis. The process the PAR followed is discussed in more detail in the following sections and also depicted in Figure 4.3 which visually demonstrated the stages of the PAR and ethnographic research process from early exploration of the problems relating to social inclusion and what the organisation could offer, to the final analysis and write up stage. The two PAR processes, the Sowers and Growers group are explained in section 4.4 and section 4.5, and visual accounts of the processes for each are depicted in figure 4.6 for the Sowers and 4.7 for the Growers group.

Overall for both groups there was an initial recruitment phase, where participants were given clear and accessible information regarding the research, with handouts to take home and consider with a trusted relative, carer or friend outside of the organisation. The problem or research purpose phase was negotiated within the first few sessions, and the methods of data collection were also demonstrated and discussed, in an accessible way. The Sowers group took longer to start generating data, but had a longer period in which to collect and discuss their data and findings. The Growers group had less time together, but generated a large amount of data between and within sessions. The Sowers group did their action and reflections cycles on site, in the sessions and the Growers group used the action they were participating in naturally on site and spent group time mostly reflecting, analysing and creating a joint piece of visual data that expressed their own journeys and transformations brought on through involvement in the garden.

The participant reflection and analysis took place largely within the group sessions, although the Growers group did reflect on their own action as well as some themes already developed from the Sowers group, in the intervening period between meetings. The following sections are laid out in order to discuss the wider process and then the two individual group processes in detail.

4.2.1 Establishing Trust: Groundwork for the study

I have already discussed the groundwork for the study to some extent in the previous chapter, outlining how my own and the participants' confidence and relationships evolved alongside the production of knowledge as we moved through stages in the research process. My previous involvement as a volunteer in the garden meant I had an established working relationship with many people in the garden, giving strength to the research at different stages of the study.

The importance of maintaining this trust and conveying to participants that we were researching experiences collaboratively, rather than me researching them, was always present for me. This was made more challenging by the unpredictable nature of PAR and ethnography. I already knew that the relationships I held with the people running the organisation and those participating in the research would require all the elements Macfarlane (2010) suggests of a qualitative researcher and more: courage, respectfulness, resoluteness, sincerity and humility. It was with this need for transparency and trustworthiness in mind, that the research was initially discussed with people who I counted as friends, colleagues and fellow volunteers within the organisation.

The initial stage of the research, as depicted in Figure 4.3, demonstrates my own role of *researcher as participant*, and acknowledges my position at the start, as an "insider in collaboration with other insiders" (Herr & Anderson 2015, p.67). This was an important stage in the research as it was the start of an ongoing planning-action-reflection cycle (Kemmis 2008; Koch & Kralik 2006) that ran throughout the project. It allowed me to declare an interest and involvement with the organisation and its wider participant community prior to the research being formally initiated.
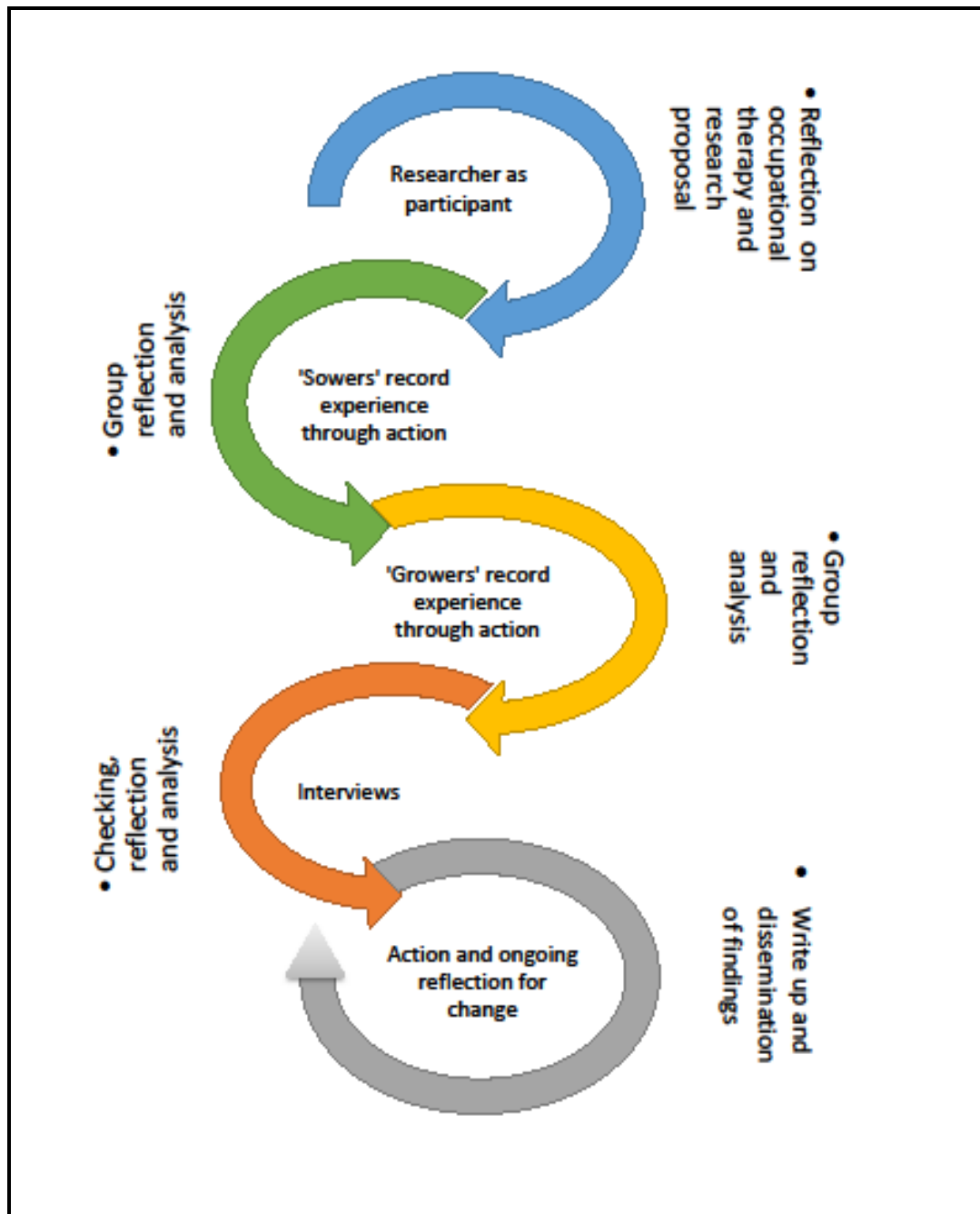
Figure 4.3 Stages of the Research Process: Phases of Data Collection, Analysis and Write-up

Acknowledging involvement in the organisation permitted me to bring experience and previously established knowledge of the researched situation into the research process, rather than distancing myself from the research. Madison (2005) encourages us to use and respect the knowledge, resources and privileges we have at our disposal to help find the voices and experiences of participants. Discussion with the people in the organisation led to an agreement that the research would be of use in the development of knowledge relating to green care and alternative models for promoting community wellbeing and sustainable living. It would also facilitate an evaluation of the experience volunteers and students were having through engagement with occupation on this particular food growing site. They acknowledged the value of building knowledge from within the organisation, encouraged by the participatory methodologies proposed through building a case study of the organisation using ethnographic, observational methods alongside action research methods.

Participatory action research is, as mentioned in chapter three, a cyclical form of research design (Koch & Kralik 2006), starting from the initial ideas generated by primary researcher and, in this case, the co-operative members at Forest Nursery about their work with volunteers and food growing. Gardening, due to its seasonality, follows this cyclical model of ongoing planning, doing and reflecting and for this reason, the methods used to generate data were consciously constructed around occupation that would occur naturally and temporally in the field.

The initial phase of the research not only considered my position as researcher but encompassed consideration of and application for ethical approval, reviewing of the relevant literature and refining the methodology in discussion with co-operative members and other volunteers in the garden.   This phase took approximately twelve months, liaising with the garden participants with regards to research methods, ethics and practicalities and at the same time attempting to see how research could fit subtly into the busy world of a working community plant nursery.

During this phase, outsider involvement in the research was increasing in the form of assistance and consultation with university supervisors, ethics advisors as well as other academics regarding appropriate methods of data generation and collection. This information was taken back to the garden site and reflected on with colleagues in the co-operative and fellow garden participants, moving my involvement beyond the garden and more into a role of "insider in collaboration with outsiders" (Herr & Anderson 2015), acknowledging that although knowledge was generated and owned by the participant researchers in the project, research is not immune from external influences and nearly always benefits from the experience of those who have gone before.

4.2.2 The Messy Bits – designing and generating data together

The second stage of the research saw the initiation of the first of two cycles of participatory action research (PAR). This stage, the 'Sowers' PAR stage, explored the experience of people with moderate to severe learning disabilities in participating in growing-related activities on site. The name *Sowers* was given with reference to the exploratory nature of seeds as they land on the earth, taking root if the soil was fertile or in this group's case, if the experience was meaningful; or being brushed aside if the experience is tokenistic, not meaningful to the participants or not workable as part of the greater growing plan on site. This round of PAR generated interesting insights into the experiences of the participants, people with learning disabilities and their support workers; and also into the power of the process of PAR when working with people with learning disabilities.

The third stage, the Growers PAR cycle, was made up of a group of four volunteers, all of whom had been involved with the site for more than a year. The name 'Growers' was chosen due to their common interest in developing the site, making it sustainable for years to come and increasing its influence in the local community. Their interest and response was due to a desire to reflect on their own personal journey to, and experience of, the plant nursery community. They also wanted to consider how permaculture design influenced the way the organisation was run and to explore whether this approach had an impact on their own lives. This group had varied knowledge of permaculture design, from basic

theory accessible through written information on site and the internet, to experience of being on a full five-day permaculture design course.

The fourth phase of the research entailed reflection on initial findings from the previous two phases and compilation of broad questions for interviews with key informants (Creswell 2007). These people added to the dialogue about the organisation's to working with people, communities and the earth, their engagement with statutory healthcare and education bodies in the borough and their personal experience of inclusion and leadership within the organisation.

4.2.3 Harvest time – analysing and shaping the findings

The final phase was a drawing together of the cycles of PAR, information gained from the interviews and review of the field notes and vignettes written throughout the year. Participant observation notes were recorded over the course of the data collection period and included observations on events within PAR sessions, events in general gardening activities on site and field note descriptions of relevant interactions on site. Throughout the PAR cycles, participants had been part of the reflection and early analysis process, a recommended and important aspect of ensuring quality within PAR (Zuber-Skerritt & Fletcher 2007). This ensured participants had time to confirm that ideas conveyed were authentic and reflected their experiences and to contribute the thematic analysis. Member checking (Kvale 2007) was also done for the interviews where interviewees had an opportunity to confirm or change things they had said during the key-informant interviews as a form of validation. Final analysis of the group and interview transcripts and accompanying notes was done by myself, as lead researcher and the process of this will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.3 Data Collection

The timescale for data collection was twelve months, starting in September 2012 and finishing in August 2013, as seen in figure 4.4 below.

Sept – Dec 2012	Jan – May 2013	May – Aug 2013
Sowers PAR Group	**Growers PAR Group**	**Key-Informant Interviews**
Exploration of Inclusion, Occupation and Experience	Exploration of Journeys and Philosophy of Permaculture	Exploration of Authority, Intention and Policy

Participant observation and research notes
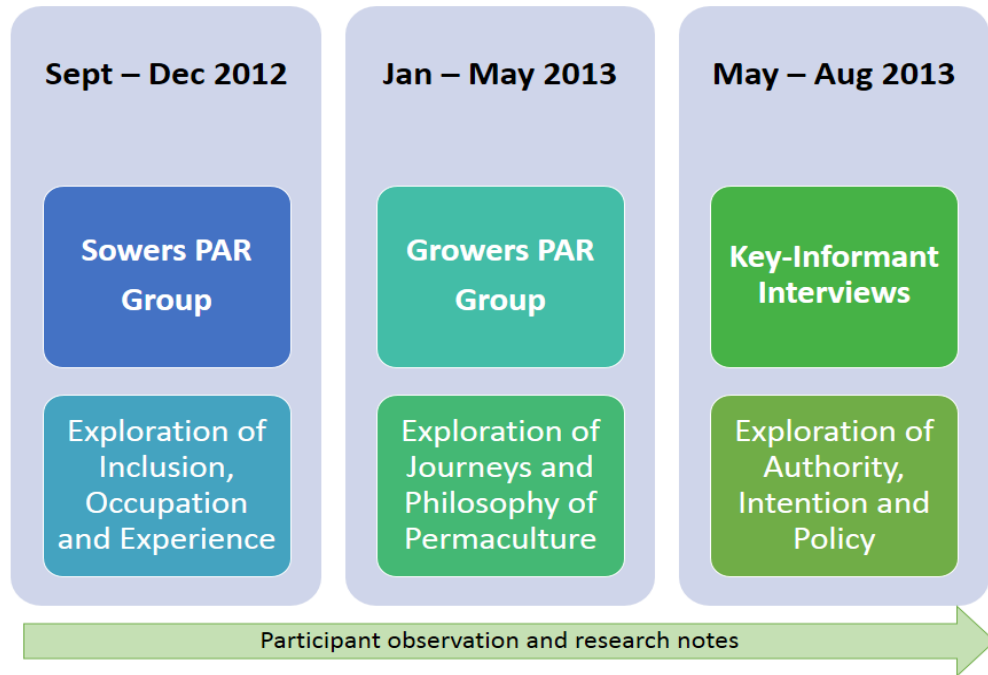
Figure 4.4 Data Collection Stages from Sept 2012 to Sept 2013

The process started with a bright autumn and the beginning of a new academic year. The data collection time was influenced not only by the weather due to the outdoor nature of the site and the work done there, but also by adult education running on the site throughout the year which competed for the limited space available indoors, particularly in cold weather. Data collection occurred throughout the growing year and, as demonstrated in some of the data, this had an influence on where and how we met and the activities we chose as part of the research. This meant that participants came from all groups of people on site; volunteers, students, co-operative members, apprentices and trainees.

4.3.1 Participant observation, field notes and reflective writing

In keeping with the ethnographic methodology of this research, I used participant observation as a method, writing field notes following the PAR group sessions as well as outside of PAR groups, when I was on the Forest Garden site. A participant observer is described by Bryman (2016) as being someone who participates in the group's main activities, but not as a full member, or; as Johnson & Parry (2015a) explain; someone who observes the people, activities and context of a social situation to better understand the reality of those experiencing it. They

describe participant observation as being an insider and an outsider simultaneously (Johnson & Parry 2015a). This is in keeping with the blurred boundaries the researcher might experience as described by (Kemmis 2008) when using action research as a method, allowing the primary researcher to be present and engage in the action aspect, while also allowing for the group to forge its own direction.

Participant observation as a method enabled me to take an active role of the group when required, for example, to facilitate discussion or explain or take part in an activity, but also to pull back when I was not needed, in order to observe the context of action, social interaction and dynamics between other participants. Writing field notes immediately after the groups and making notes at other times, when I was reflecting on specific incidents or group processes, encouraged me to examine situations and accounts more critically and from different perspectives (Herr & Anderson 2005). Field notes took different forms, for example jotted notes (Alan Bryman 2016) taken briefly during PAR group sessions or other on-site activities where key words or phrases were noted in order to expand upon after the session. Once the session or day was over, full field notes and at times, methodological notes, were written up (Alan Bryman 2016). These detailed field notes were as chronological as possible and, in addition to the description of what occurred, included sensory or emotional aspects of the observation.

Initial analytic thoughts were often included in my field notes, particularly during the Sowers PAR group phase, where accounts of their experiences were largely expressed through pictures, short phrases, and photographs rather than dialogue that could be recorded for later analysis. Many of the PAR group sessions and all the interviews were audio recorded and the recordings and the field notes together helped to build more trustworthy pictures of the experiences of participants where, as an active participant myself, I might have missed, misconstrued or misheard something.

Alongside, and often within, the field notes that I wrote following group sessions, interviews and other observations, I also wrote critical reflections. These helped to capture my own subjective experiences; reactions, contentions, problems and

epiphanies; and to think about them in the context of the political, social and methodological context these were taking place in. Johnson & Parry (2015a) propose that this reflexive process enables the researcher to understand and justify decisions taken and interpretations made in the course of the research.

4.4 First Stage of Data Collection: The Sowers group recruitment and summary of PAR

The initial aim was to recruit participants from the general Forest garden volunteer population for the first PAR group, purposively selecting people with disabilities in order to explore specific experiences in relation to place, opportunity and accessibility of tasks. However, on discussion with the staff, it was thought that this would be difficult due to irregular attendance and unreliable transport arrangements resulting in participants not attending consistently enough for them to work together effectively.

The population of people with disabilities who attended volunteer sessions on their own were often faced with much greater challenges in getting to the venue than those attending the gardening group set up for people with learning disabilities. Those who were not eligible for or who did not need a support worker, had to manage their own travel arrangements to the site, which is a 20 – 30 minute walk from the nearest train station or a moderate bus journey (about 30- 40 minutes) from the nearest central bus station. Those who were eligible for social service assistance or who lived with their parents or in a supported living home, had much better access to transport, funding to pay for it and support workers to assist with arrangements when necessary. This was to be confirmed repeatedly throughout the data collection period from people with disabilities themselves, their support workers and from staff involved in running the volunteer programme.

The group identified was one that, on a practical level, was most consistent to work with as they were supported to attend the garden by their families or paid support workers. This group was also one that the organisation hoped to include more in wider gardening activity on site in future, rather than the time-limited

sessions available to them during this course of ten weeks. This desire for wider inclusion was not only organisation-based. Many of the group members who had attended previously had expressed an interest in becoming more regularly involved in the site, in both gardening and other areas of occupation on site, such as cooking. This formed part of the purpose or problem for the research for this group; exploring their current experience and engagement, and enabling them to contribute thoughts as to how this could be realistically and sustainably increased in future.

The participants had enrolled in a gardening class specifically for people with moderate to severe learning disabilities. A number of them had previous experience of the site prior to the research period as well as some having worked alongside me in my capacity as a volunteer prior to the project. Some had attended this particular course before; however, as it was a ten-week seasonal gardening group, the tasks in the autumn term were different to those in the spring term.

The group objectives in relation to it being a gardening 'class' were flexible and reflected a number of useful experiential opportunities for the group to explore their participation on site in creative ways through different modes of occupation, as seen in box 4.1 below.

Overview of class objectives for Introduction to gardening course for people with learning disabilities:

- Use gardening tools correctly and safely.

- Make up sowing and potting mixtures.

- Label and identify basic vegetable and herb plants.

Box 4.1 Overview of Forest Garden's 10 week programme objectives for the gardening group for adults with learning disabilities

Anna, a gardening apprentice and also a researcher by background, helped to facilitate the group from the start. Anna was on site all week and so better positioned to liaise with me about tasks the group could be involved in that were part of the general growing plan, materials and resources we could use or needed to prepare. She also kept the group together if I needed to give one or more participants more individual attention. Anna's research background meant that she was open to facilitating different methods of data collection and was, importantly, aware of both confidentiality and consent issues relevant to this group as co-researchers. Anna's informal observations and feedback after the group sessions were invaluable as she brought the garden-insider perspective into our reflections, keeping us focused on growing-orientated action but allowing for exploration and learning through creative and useful activities that contributed to the site.

The participants will be introduced in more detail in the following chapters. There were sixteen participants overall in the Sowers group and some relevant demographics are depicted in Table 4.2.

Age Ranges	<25 (4); 25 – 35 (5); 36 – 55 (3); >55(3)
Ethnic Background	2 Caribbean; 7 White British; 4 African; 1 Asian; 1 Polish
Roles	7 people with learning disabilities enrolled for basic gardening class ; 8 support workers; 1 assistant facilitator (staff member)
Gender	5 female; 10 male
Mode of Transport	1 walk; 3 bus; 5 housing transport; 3 private vehicle; 2 dial-a-ride; 1 bicycle

Table 4.2 Researcher-participants in the Sowers PAR group

4.4.1 Data Generation Tools used in the Sowers PAR group

The PAR process with the Sowers group spanned ten weeks, although we did not meet for two of these due to holidays. There were weekly action-reflection cycles as well as some longer reflective cycles when reviewing the group progress half way through and at the end of the ten weeks. The weekly sessions lasted two and a half hours (10h00 – 12h30) with a fifteen minute comfort break in the middle. The morning included an active outdoor (or indoor if raining) session and after the break, a more reflective session where we reviewed the previous week, the earlier activity done, added to ongoing data (the mapping and photograph displays) and contributed thoughts to take through to the following week.

The diagram in figure 4.6 represents the research process of the Sowers PAR group. The action included site-based activities relevant to the seasonal growing plan of the organisation as well as some additional explorative activities such as site walks and map-making. The reflection and analysis elements utilised visual material the group had produced to explore experiences and to link action and knowledge. Contentious issues that were brought up by any of the participants were discussed and, where possible, included in visual form on the map, for example transport to the garden. The action spaces allowed for experience of connection with the earth, with other people and with the idea of risk-taking, in some activities (for example, using cutting tools or larger pieces of gardening equipment). Lorenzo (2010) describes these action spaces as places where collective change and power can be generated, while the reflective, listening or discussion spaces are those where self-confidence and affiliation can be fostered.

Key methods used for data generation and collection were photography, mapping, food growing and garden maintenance, discussed further below. Mapping and photography, although actions in themselves, also assisted with the analysis process as the products of these activities could be discussed and linked to further action. Harper (2002) maintains that using photography in interview situations assists the memory and allows the participant to explore detail relating to experience that might be forgotten were the images not available. In the case of

the Sowers, the photographs gave them access to a means of communication that did not involve action, but that could express the detail they wanted to portray (Schratz & Steiner-Loffler 1998).
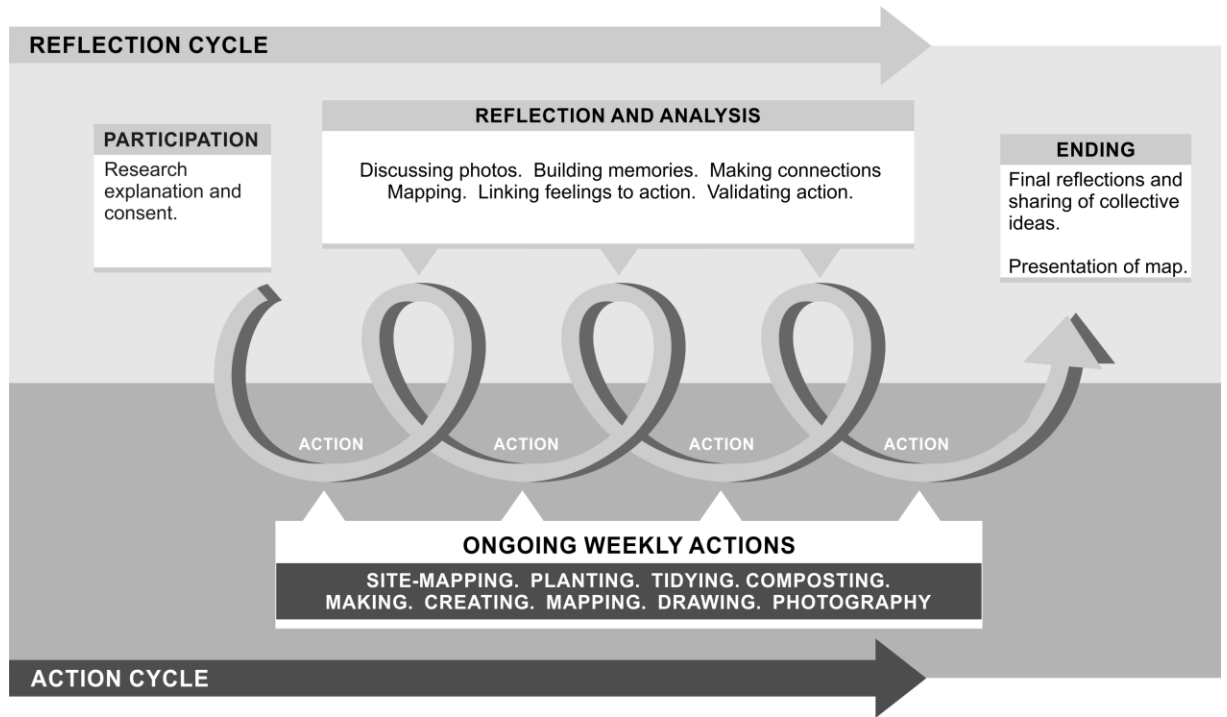
Figure 4.6 Depiction of the action-reflection cycle of the Sowers PAR group

4.4.1.1 Use of Photography with the Sowers Group

The nature of the learning disabilities of the participants prompted the use of visual methods that assisted memory and communication (Cameron & Murphy 2007). Pictures and unambiguous symbols had already been utilised within the recruitment and consent process to ensure clear communication (see Appendices C1 and D1) (Mencap 2009). The use of photography had three objectives:

1. To provide a non-verbal, accessible means of communicating experience of place and participation (Spencer 2010). The action of taking photographs or being in a photograph for display and group discussion was inherently purposeful. It allowed participants to make decisions about data and how they wanted their data to be portrayed. It demonstrated their capacity to be part of the project and to contribute to it (Aldridge 2007).

2. To prompt discussion and aid individual and shared memories throughout weekly data collection and analysis (Aldridge 2007; Harper 2002)

3. To provide reinforcement of participants' roles, through seeing themselves in place. This focused discussion on what they, as participants, might like to continue doing, how they could do it and whether they saw themselves doing those things more in the future.

The photographs were a practical tool and a way of communicating action and personal, as well as work-related, learning. The photographs enabled individuals within the group to communicate their place, their occupation and their feelings without words, lending them what Schratz and Steiner-Loffler (1998) term "*a silent voice for the researcher*". This group, were, however, anything but silent, and when newly printed photographs were brought in for discussion, this was exciting and one of the most interactive times for the group. Sticky notes with symbols as well as plain sticky-notes were drawn on and written on and added as explanation for, or reflection on, the photographs. This was part of the initial data analysis, providing initial themes of preferred activities and places on site, as well as barriers and facilitators to being in the garden.

4.4.1.2 Mapping

Rifkin and Pridmore (2001) consider the act of generating community maps to be an important tool in participatory planning and community development. They outline the versatility and descriptiveness of maps drawn by the people experiencing the area and highlight the accessible nature of map drawing to those who are unable to write or express themselves verbally. Mapping was a key data generation tool for this group. Alongside the photographs, building the map on a weekly basis also enabled participants to plot the progress of their occupations on site. They created the map as visual and tactile data relating to their experiences. Mapping also enabled them to orientate themselves to the site in a concrete and meaningful way, adding new discoveries, relating growing activities to sections in a way, and building their own garden.

Spencer (2010 p.72) proposes that "*maps operate as metaphors for our relationship with the world*". The final map encompassed both superficial and more in-depth insight into the relationship the participants had with the garden site, those who worked alongside them and the plants, creatures and structures that shared the space with them. Guided walks (Mathers 2004) around the site facilitated the creation of the map initially and enabled participants to plot parts of the site that were important to them or that they associated to an emotion or action that they wanted to remember. Figure 5.14 shows the full map created by the Sowers group in their eight week PAR process.

4.4.1.3 Growing Activities and Garden Maintenance

Seed sowing, composting, planting out, seed saving, path-making, production of insect hotels and bird feeders

Box 4.2 Growing and garden maintenance activities used by the Sowers PAR group

The growing activities as well as site-maintenance activities, such as path maintenance, recycling, composting and mulching, were all activities utilised to ensure that the group were participating in realistic, non-tokenistic activities that would contribute toward the general running of the plant nursery. It was important that these activities were the focus of data collection, being the key occupations offered to volunteers, staff and students to engage in. These occupations also enabled reflection on how physically inclusive the site was. Alongside this was the responsibility of each individual to play their part in the philosophy of the organisation, in the *earth care* aspect of permaculture and in accepting and describing their responsibility to this, playing a part in their own inclusion process. Simo (2011) describes the importance of engaging in essential tasks in a gardening community as transformational for those who take part, as they move from being the people requiring care, to caregivers themselves.

Sensory experiences contribute to our abilities to create new meanings in relation to the environment around us and contribute greatly to the we way we perceive, process and transmit new knowledge about places and experiences (Pink 2015). The sensory experience of participating in the above-mentioned activities was another aspect that made utilising growing and hands-on garden work as well as site-walks and touching, smelling or tasting the plants, important. The Sowers group used knowledge of what things tasted, looked, smelled or sounded like to position themselves on parts of the garden map that they liked or disliked.

In table 4.3 the different types of data collected by the Sowers group is displayed, highlighting where analysis was contributed to by the PAR groups and where it was done by myself.

Key data sources for PAR group 1 (Sowers)	Type of data	Analysed by
Transcripts from group meetings	transcripts	SC
Map of garden site	Mapping/drawing/symbols	Sowers SC
Photography	Photographs	Mainly Sowers own analysis; All participants, including SC
Field notes and reflections	Written practical and reflective data	SC

Table 4.3 Types of data generated by the Sowers group and who participated in analysis of it

4.5 The Growers: recruitment and summary of PAR process

The Growers PAR group followed the Sowers group only a month later. I brought some learning and initial themes and ideas from the Sowers group into the Growers groups. This allowed this next group to consider these themes and ideas and to acknowledge their own new and different experiences. My experience with the Sowers had indicated the importance of participating in the research process as a co-researcher, observing the group process and trying to understand, without influencing; to allow exploration and knowledge generation without controlling. It had been exhilarating and exhausting. The Sowers group drew attention to issues I had not considered before in relation to the way the organisation functioned as a community and how people discovered and accessed the site. This, along with the individual intentions described below, formed the purpose of the research for the Growers group. Veering from traditional PAR, there was not necessarily a 'problem' to be examined and acted upon at the start of this group, the problems emerged within the action and research cycles, enabling the group to examine their participation on site more critically, and to consider how to both enhance their own experiences within the garden but also to develop the wider 'voice' of the garden participants who were not co-operative members.

Participants for the Growers group were invited to join the research through a flyer on the volunteer notice board (see appendix C3) and verbal requests in the weekly notices at lunchtime during December 2012. The participants are listed in chapter six, but are briefly introduced here:

1. Henrietta wanted to gain an understanding of her own role in the organisation and the importance of the ethical principles that governed decision-making in the organisation and influenced projects that she was involved in.

2. Reginald had a strong desire to reflect on the journey he had been through in the past couple of years from full time employment to retrenchment, depression and finally satisfaction in finding food growing and garden site maintenance using permaculture design as well as a local community of people he could relate to philosophically.

3. Nathan had recently completed the permaculture design course and wanted to continue to examine his role and the application of permaculture design ethics and principles on the site, in more detail.

4. Marilyn was involved in running the food preparation in the kitchen on Wednesdays, which were busy volunteer days. Marilyn had found herself working with a group of people who were protective of the kitchen as a place of belonging and safety. This was not an intentional aspect of the cooking sessions and Marilyn was interested in what drew people to the space and the organisation.

4.5.1 Summary of the 'Growers' PAR Process

The Growers group agreed to meet four to five times: to explore their role in the organisation; the influence permaculture philosophy had on their work and whether it shaped their lives outside of the organisation; and consider the impact of their specific work on site in relation to the organisation and surrounding local community.

The group agreed that meeting prior to the main weekly volunteering session, was a convenient time. Gathering somewhere on site that felt secluded and safe for open discussion would be essential. The group process was pressured at times, hampered by time constraints and challenges with regard to space to meet. This was to be the greatest challenge due to the pressure on all available covered areas on site in cold or wet weather; however this pressure also brought creativity to the process and instigated more action than expected in the action-reflection cycles. This group, in comparison to the previous one, where more verbally focused, although they also found the use of photography and imagery an essential part of their research. They analysed their data, spending personal and group time on this. They developed themes and strategies for personal and organisational development, using each other as sounding boards for ideas. The Growers PAR process is represented in figure 4.7, demonstrating action and corresponding reflection cycles in the generation of different knowledge and artefacts.

They created a wall-hanging, using pictures and quotes from their own group process. This depicted their journey to the garden, their learning and specific experiences that were important to share in terms of future development of the organisation. They presented this to the rest of the volunteers and co-operative in the final session in spring 2013. Other artefacts, photographs and diary reflections were produced during the group's period of participation and these were included as data sources for analysis too.
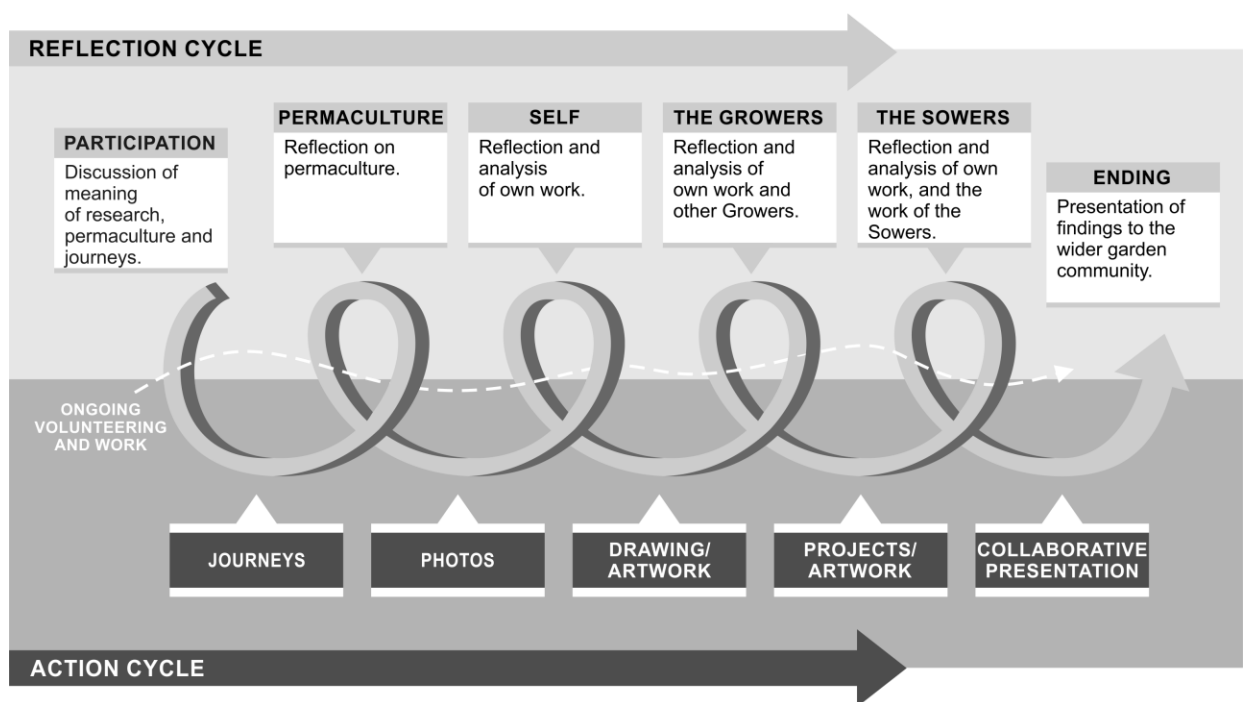
Figure 4.7 Summary of 'Growers' PAR process

4.5.2 Tools for data generation in 'Growers' PAR group

4.5.2.1 Photography

The Growers used photography extensively to illustrate their involvement in the organisation; in particular images that encompassed their appreciation of food growing or cooking or working with people. The photographs were also used to depict principles of permaculture that could be captured in an image and aspects of their role on the site that they valued. Finally, they captured activities and places

on the site that linked into narratives of experiences on the site or of their literal and metaphorical journeys to the site.

The photographs, in contrast to the more opportunistic images of the Sowers group, were deliberately created to share a particular thought or idea with the group, as "*visible fragments of particular engagements with the…setting* (Radley & Taylor 2003, p.79). The photographs were meant to aid exploration and explanation of experience or understanding within a specific context. The photographs also raised consciousness regarding a specific issue, allowing a critical perspective to be brought to the group in the form of an image, rather than a verbal statement (Radley & Taylor 2003).

4.5.2.2 Illustrations and pyrography

This group found that they were able to express themselves through illustrations and other creative means, and that the action of doing this, particularly when we were all working together, was both reflective and aided the process of considering themes at a deeper level. Issues such as spirituality, climate change, community and belonging and personal capacity were discussed during the sessions of creating the wall-hanging that depicted their journeys to the garden and their focus or priority within the garden as a community. One of the group members contributed two further artefacts in the form of wooden pyrography and a detailed drawing of a tree depicting his interpretation of permaculture. These were discussed in the group, with aspects of them (as an iron-on picture transfer) added to the wall hanging. (The wooden pyrography was also used as inspiration for the schematic representation of all the findings in the discussion, see figures 5.1 and 5.2 in the next chapter)

4.5.2.3 Writing: Field notes and diaries

The group members were given notebooks to capture ideas or thoughts that may come to them relating to the themes the group had brought up during sessions. Nathan and Marilyn used these to note thoughts and drawings throughout the PAR period. Reginald wrote extensively and shared his thoughts with me by email,

highlighting items he would bring to the group to share. The meeting times were inevitably too short for all members to share all they were thinking on the themes and these aid memoires were useful in allowing participants to share the aspects they felt most strongly about, allowing me to collect information or contributions the participants wanted acknowledged, even if there was not enough time to discuss it in depth. I also kept field notes and reflections, as previously discussed, for this group which were added to the transcripts and other material for analysis.

The table (table 4.4) below represents the types of data collected by the Growers group participants and who they were analysed by.

Key data sources for PAR group 2 (Growers)	Type of data	Analysed by
Wall-hanging	Drawings/images/directs quotes from own transcripts	Gowers group; SC
Group discussions	Discussion transcripts	Growers group; SC
Other artefacts (drawing and pyrography)	Pyrographed log picture; Permaculture picture	Growers group; SC
Field notes and diaries	Field note transcripts; Diaries/email diary	Growers group (some reflections shared and discussed by group) SC

Table 4.4 Types of data generated by the Growers PAR group

4.6 Key-Informant Interviews

The interviews played an essential role in providing additional detail to the frameworks the PAR groups had established. Throughout the PAR sessions, questions had surfaced with regard to the relationship the organisation had with external bodies such as nearby borough local authorities, leaders and members of the local community and referral agencies such as the NHS and mental health charities. Key-informants were approached largely due to their specific role in the organisation or a particular experience they had had during their involvement; for example, demonstrating progression from one role to another, or making a choice to participate in the garden over a statutory day service. Sarah and M were founding members of the Forest Garden co-operative and they, along with Jay who was the volunteer co-ordinator, were gatekeepers or facilitators of this research to an extent. Bryman (2016) describes these gatekeepers as valuable as they have an appreciation of the research process and often signpost the researcher to investigate important concepts, events or situations. These key informants were able to describe links with external agencies and communities in more detail and gave context to the formation of the co-operative and the development of the social enterprise. Nicola was a newer member of the co-operative and shared critical thoughts on mentorship and needs for newer staff members in the organisation. Simon was an adult with learning disabilities who had made important choices for himself about where he wanted to spend his time; and Gavin had developed his skills and knowledge in the garden to an extent that facilitated personal and vocational transformation.

All six key informants agreed to being interviewed about their involvement in and experiences of the organisation and consented to being audio recorded. I, as lead researcher, conducted all six interviews and there was no particular order to who was interviewed first to last. This was decided according to when those being interviewed were available. The interview space had to be safe and comfortable for both the interviewee and myself and pose no risks to confidentiality. For this reason the interviews were often done in a secluded or closed off part of the garden, in a room within the workshop or away from the site in an agreed venue.

The questions largely followed a topic guide which was sent to the interviewee prior to interview (see appendix F), however the questions were open-ended and elaboration of points was valued to improve context and add valuable detail (Kvale 2007). Some questions were also created specifically for the interviewee, for example, where they were someone particularly involved in connecting with an external group, questions were asked about the establishment of this connection and the challenges and opportunities the connection brought to the organisation. The questions were phrased to allow for a conversational-style interview, in which questions could be altered slightly depending on the persons' expertise and experience (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick 1998). Once the first interview had been done, some alterations were made to the order and phrasing of the questions in order to make them clearer and more succinct for subsequent interviews.

A more detailed outline of the interview participants is found in chapter seven. The interview stage was the final data collection phase and took place between May 2013 and August 2013. Once transcripts of the interviews were typed up, these were sent back to the interviewees for member checking (A. Bryman 2016) and editing, where participants could alter or clarify what they had said to ensure their contribution was accurate. This was then returned for analysis. Field notes were recorded after each interview and were added to the transcriptions prior to analysis.

All participants in the two PAR groups and those interviewed in the final data collection phase signed consent forms (or agreed another way of marking consent on the form) (see appendix D for consent forms). A short demographics form was also filled in by most of the participants or someone nominated by them (see appendix E) to develop a broader picture of the range of participants in the study.

4.7 Organisation and Analysis of the Data

The section below outlines the gathering, storage, preparation and analysis of data collected throughout the research process.

4.7.1 Participatory Analysis Phase

The description of PAR in the previous chapter outlined the importance of the process of action and reflection in knowledge generation as a key aspect of the action research process. The PAR cycles produced a high volume of data that was considered, often more than once, and interpreted by the participants in order to ensure that the outcome or evaluation was a true reflection of what they have experienced and desired to communicate to others or take forward for future development.

The data analysis process took place in two phases: a participatory phase during the PAR processes; and a final analysis phase, in which the participatory themes were considered alongside of or as part of new themes identified by myself.

The participatory phase was one in which participants initiated knowledge generation through rounds of reflection on the photographs, action (such as gardening) and construction of the map and wall-hanging; these were a synthesis of key aspects of their experiences and considerations for future engagement in Forest Garden. In addition to this, once transcribed, the Growers group analysed sections some of their own transcripts for identification of themes and "burning issues" (Ospina et al. 2008).

In the Sowers stage, photographs were analysed in two ways, through the use of stickers that represented symbols for liking or not liking something ("thumbs-up" or "smiley-face" signs printed on sticky-notes) (Mencap 2009) and by writing keywords on sticky-notes if they were able to or if their support worker could write for them. Once the pictures were tagged with post-it notes, these were further photographed for the lead researcher to use as a record of participant evaluation. This type of analysis with a group of people with learning disabilities is consistent with methods utilised by others using similar methods for data collection (Aldridge 2007). Support workers, as participants, also added written key words to the

pictures using post-it notes that were their own interpretations or jointly-agreed keywords between themselves and the person they were working alongside.

In the Growers PAR group, reflection focused on written word (transcripts or other artefacts people had shared within the group) and visual analysis using ethnographic content analysis of each other's photographs, the wall-hanging and other artefacts created by each other (Grbich 2007). The content analysis identified what the image was of, what the context of the image was, who was involved in it or its production and what meaning the picture conveyed (Grbich 2007). Many of the pictures drawn or taken also came with an explanatory narrative, adding to the context of the picture, and that explanation was transcribed and later analysed along with other transcripts using thematic analysis.

Important ideas arising from both the Sowers and Growers groups shaped some of the interview questions to ensure that they were relevant, and probed gaps or enlightened issues that had been brought up within the PAR groups. Once the interviews were all completed, these were transcribed and added to the group and field note data already prepared and organised.

The transcripts of group discussions and interviews, field notes, some vignettes and photographs were all transferred onto NVivo 10 (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) for further organisation, storage and analysis. A process of in-depth analysis was then undertaken by the lead researcher.

4.7.2   Final Analysis Phase

Early themes and key ideas suggested by group participants were recorded and included in field notes and transcripts of the sessions. Following the collection of all the data, an iterative process of thematic analysis (Kvale 2007; Grbich 2007) was initiated with open coding of the written transcripts from each of the PAR groups and then the interviews. Coding and categorising for each phase of the research was done using NVivo 10, which was also useful as secure and confidential storage (see appendices J1-J4). Kvale (2007) describes both data-driven and concept-driven coding, explaining that data-driven coding is iterative

and prevents analysis with preconceptions of what might be found in the data. For this research, concept-driven coding would not have been appropriate due to the cyclical and explorative nature of both participatory action research and critical ethnography (Grbich 2007), where the researcher and participants construct meaning from the data through revisiting ideas and concerns (Savin-Baden & Major 2010), rather than connecting data to pre-conceived notions.

Some of the emerging codes, however, clearly allied themselves with the central capabilities within the human capability approach (Nussbaum 2011), a theoretical framework of importance to the research as a whole. To enable relevant labelling during production and processing of these emerging codes, a number of early code names were based on these capabilities if they described an emerging experience or idea. These were aligned into relevant broader categories and finally into themes, with titles in some cases directly emerging from the data. These are described in detail in the three findings chapters that follow. Key themes from each of the findings chapters were then synthesised and discussed in chapter eight. Visual representation of the themes that emerged from the findings can be found at the start of chapter five in figure 5.1.

4.8 Authenticity of the data

The quality of the data collection and analysis was based upon an ethos of creating and sharing knowledge as democratically as possible using a qualitative research design that demonstrated both rigour and authenticity. In qualitative research, the issue of trustworthiness is essential in considering whether data produced and findings discussed are a valuable contribution to the field. Trustworthiness relates to research accountability and is established by demonstrating four attributes within qualitative research; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (van Niekerk & Savin-Baden 2010).

4.8.1 Credibility
The credibility of the data considers the level to which the data can be trusted or relied upon to be correct and believable (Savin-Baden & Major 2010). The

credibility of this research was improved through the use triangulation of data and respondent validation as well as clear evidence of findings being grounded in data (Gibbs 2007). Triangulation was achieved through the use of different methods of data collection within the two PAR groups, the keeping of field notes and finally the interviews, which helped to connect and fill in knowledge where information was needed to build a holistic context. This is in keeping with Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007, pg 239) who maintain that triangulation is the use of "multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence". In this research, the use of triangulation helped to reinforce perceptions of what was being implied or observed during the PAR group sessions, particularly when use of language was minimal, and pictures and gestures were relied upon to communicate. An example of this within the Sowers group is where one or more of the group members discussed enjoying a certain occupation or area of the site or felt affirmed by participating in an aspect of gardening, a discussion of the photographs using post-it notes and follow-up addition of this place or occupation to the wall hanging, helped to confirm the data.

In the Growers group, participants initially discussed aspects of their engagement with the organisation and interest in the site verbally, and this was triangulated with photographic, written (diary), pictorial or other evidence (such as the pyrography example in figure 5.2 in the following chapter) to build clear understandings of their experiences. Some triangulation and informant feedback was done within the group sessions to ensure consistent member checking processes (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007); while other examples of data that confirmed findings elsewhere in the research emerged later, on analysis of the full quantity of data, in the categorising process.

In the triangulation process, the interview data enabled a depth and quality of data where the group themes and findings had highlighted areas that required further investigation. Examples of this were furthering understanding of the idea of occupational progression from early volunteering or attending a class, to having additional responsibilities in the organisation; and investigating the feedback mechanisms garden participants could use to voice their needs. Finally, I utilised research diaries throughout the research planning and data collection period,

which enabled me to document and reflect on what had happened each day, my immediate and then later responses to events and consider areas of enquiry for the following stages of research. The diaries were useful in making sense of issues and occurrences when I later went back to review and analyse data and describe the process of the data collection. They were useful for ensuring dates, people involved in activities and how events had played out, matched other reports within the group and interview data.

Respondent validation (A. Bryman 2016) was done during and following the PAR group sessions, where ideas, concepts and issues were checked and recorded and transcripts in the Growers PAR group were also checked by the group themselves as part of the early analysis of data. Following the interviews, written transcripts were sent to interviewees in order to check that they agreed with how the interview had been recorded in text and they were given the opportunity to correct or add to information they had given in the interview. The person with learning disabilities that was interviewed was assisted with the checking process by another volunteer in the organisation in order to ensure he also had the opportunity to add or change any details from the interview.

At the completion of both PAR group meeting periods, some of the data (maps, photos) were displayed for the organisation to look at. The Growers presented their wall hanging and findings to a wider group of volunteers and co-operative members in a lunchtime gathering. This helped to distil and share some of the ideas arising from the research and also ensured that the research participants felt that they held ownership of the data, it representing their experience of the social and occupational context at Forest Garden.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability means that findings in this research study may be relevant in similar settings elsewhere. To enable transferability, thick descriptions regarding the context of the research and the experience of the participants are included in the findings (Gibbs 2007). This has been attempted through different means, including the wide use of data collection tools that are both written and visual.

Findings have been presented in relation to other social enterprises, green care organisations and social and therapeutic horticulture settings, with findings considered relevant and applicable to a number of these.

4.8.3 Dependability

Dependability requires that the details of the research can be trusted over time (Savin-Baden & Major 2010). This aspect of quality was achieved by ensuring an audit trail throughout the research process, particularly one in which different methods have been utilised within the design. Field notes, emails, letters, transcripts, diaries and associated documentation indicate decision-making throughout the research process and these are brought into both the discussion and the findings in order to enrich the context and quality of the research. Process validity is discussed in relation to action research (Herr & Anderson 2015) and this is situated well under the heading of dependability, as it asks questions relating to the relationships developed with participants, the issue of what counts as evidence for assertions made within the research; and to what extent the problems discussed within the research promote ongoing learning for individuals and the organisation. In this research the relationships developed during the research period have evolved into ones of ongoing information sharing. These continuously build on the services developed within the co-operative and feed into knowledge-sharing pathways such as local health, education and council services, third-sector resources and national and international conferences (see appendices K and L).

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability considers evidence that the analysis and interpretation is an accurate reflection of the data generated in collaboration with co-researchers involved. The evidence is often related to the specific context in which the knowledge was generated and asks whether findings generated are relevant and applicable to the local community, participants and organisation, calling this aspect of quality democratic validity (Herr & Anderson 2015). In the case of this research,

the process of the research phases, points of negotiation and all areas of collaboration and agreement have been demonstrated within appendices and can be linked to original transcripts or other jointly-generated data.

4.9 Conclusion

The research methods were chosen to reflect what I understood the philosophy of the organisation to be on initiating the research project. The permaculture ethics promoting an inclusive and equal recognition of all participants in the organisation, the structure of the organisation being one based on democratic principles and the nature of the social enterprise being community-based, open to change and politically involved. Participatory action research reflects the cycles of growth, planning and development of a market garden while ethnographic methods also suit the environment due to the importance given to nurturing a culture of sustainable thinking and living.

This chapter has outlined the process and methods of the research, excluding a section on ethics, which was discussed within the previous methodology chapter. Following explanation of the phases of data collection, a description of the analysis method was given and finally consideration of the quality of the research processes was discussed. The findings from the Sowers group are described in the chapter to come, starting with a description of individual participants and moving onto a detailed explanation of their findings through different accessible and action-orientated methods.

Chapter 5:
Overview of Findings and first phase of PAR, The Sowers

The findings are divided into three chapters in order to follow the stages of data collection. The process was an iterative one, leading from a close look at one specific group of people within the organisation who had learning disabilities, to a broader range of long-standing volunteers and workers in PAR group two. Finally, in order to "find out those things we cannot directly observe" (Patton, 2002) and to discover the context in which the garden was established and in which it currently exists, six interviews were done and these are represented in the third findings chapter.

The findings as a whole are represented in figure 5.1. The conceptual diagram was inspired by an artefact of the research (figure 5.2) and was developed as the findings unfolded. This was a piece of work created by one of the participants during the second phase of data collection using a section of falling tree. The themes from the first two phases of the research, the PAR groups, are represented as a cross-section of a tree, starting from the centre and the initiation of the first group, the start of the circular, reflective development process for all participants.

The radiating concentric circles in a tree reflect growth and the lines running perpendicular to these, the 'medullary rays', feed the tree by allowing nutrients to run from the core of the sapwood of the tree in the centre, to the bark on the outside. In this diagram, the themes running from the centre though all phases of the research to the outer edge, are those gained chiefly from the interviews but that appear in other parts of the research and apply to or influence all aspects of the organisation.

Themes and data from the interviews may be mentioned in findings from phases one and two where they add appropriate information to a topic to increase our understanding of it.
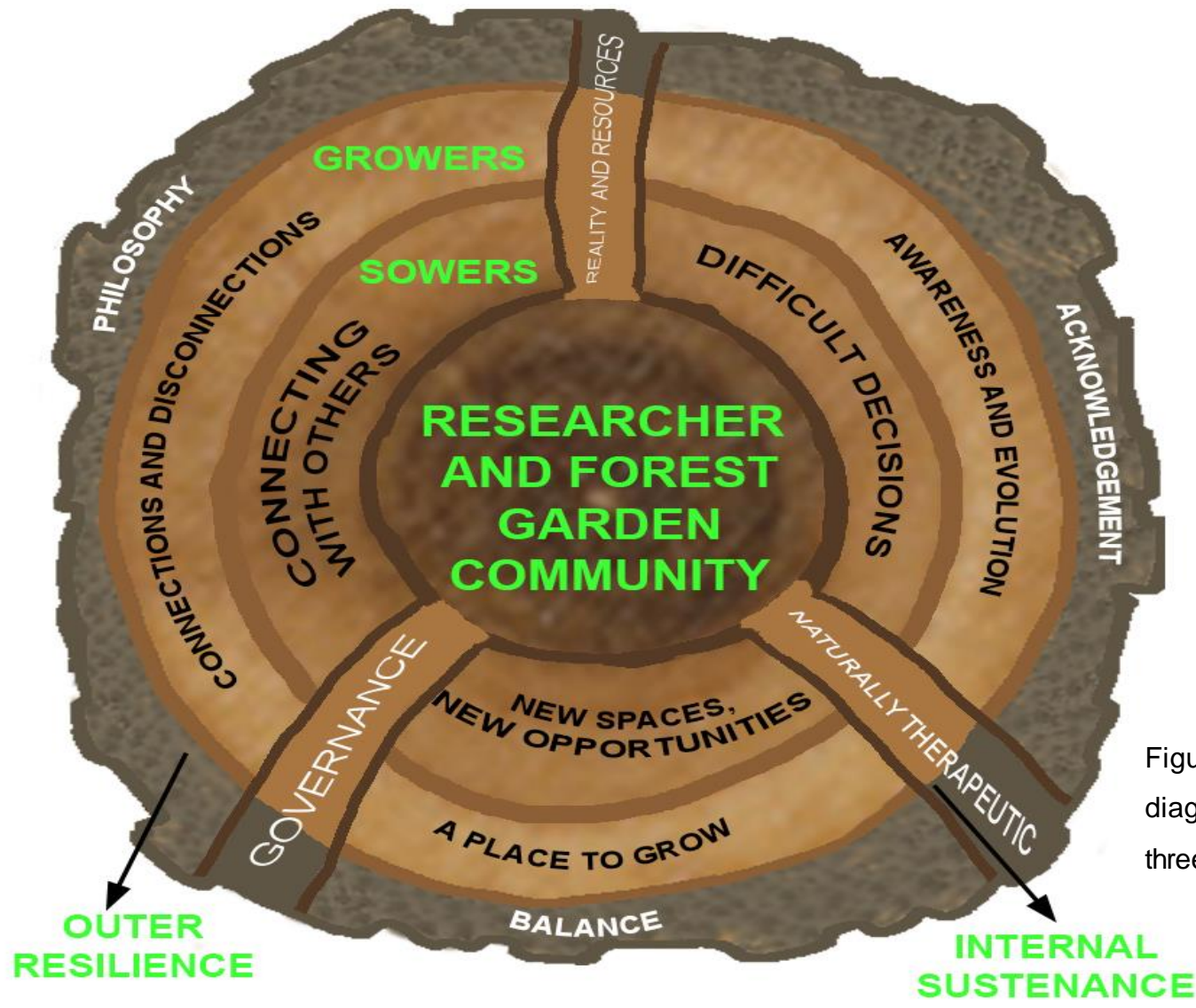
Figure 5.1 Conceptual diagram of findings from the three research phases

Figure 5.2 Pyrography artefact from PAR Group 2 the 'Growers' - Inspiration for the Conceptual Diagram of Project

Stage One: The 'Sowers' Participatory Action Research Group Findings

This section details the findings from the 'Sowers' participatory action research (PAR) group established, the Sowers. As mentioned in the methods chapter, this group was established in October 2012 and included participants with moderate to severe learning disabilities and their individual support workers. The group members met over a period of ten weeks and presented their findings in the form of a wall-sized map to the wider volunteer and staff group in the final week. Further findings included in this chapter follow another round of analysis of group transcripts and artefacts such as photographs and map by the researcher.

The key question the group set out to answer was:

What is the occupational experience of participating in a community garden?

This question was made more accessible by breaking it down into more manageable phrases and exploring these in context, rather than in an abstract sense, for example, reflecting on areas of the garden people enjoyed working on more; considering the different tasks group members participated in and how they felt about them. The process of gathering and documenting this knowledge was valuable in itself in improving means of capturing information and, each week, making adjustments to the environment or tasks that might enable better engagement.

This project highlighted the challenge of trying to distinguish the research *process* from the research findings in PAR and ethnography, as both the act of planning and collecting or generating data together and the analysis process produced rich, insightful detail about interactions with each other and the garden.

Figure 5.3 Themes from the first phase of analysis: Sowers PAR group
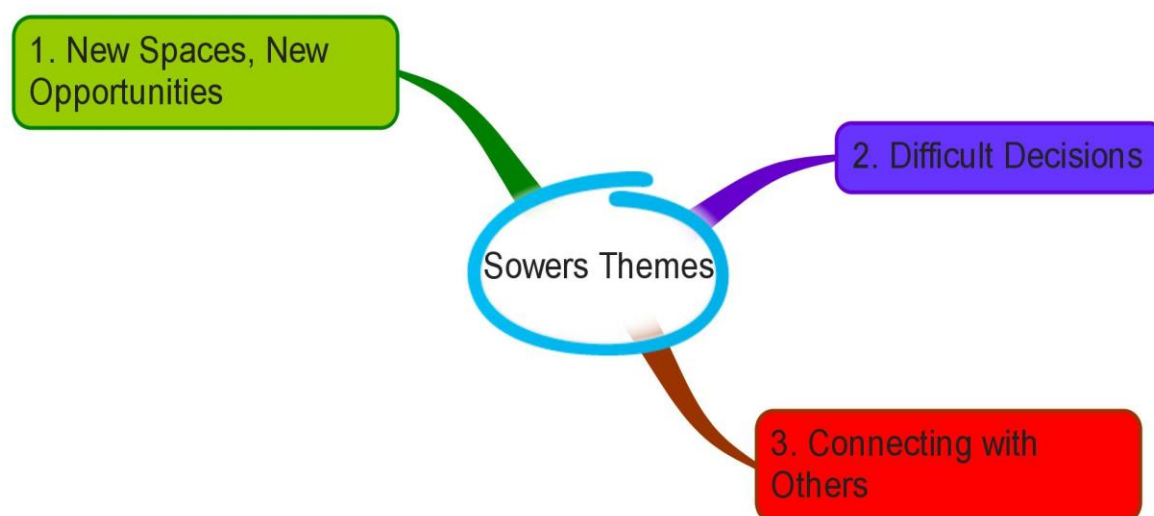
The diagram above demonstrates three final themes generated from the participants with learning disabilities and those derived from support worker input and the researchers' own field notes and group transcripts. Precursors to these final three themes were initially generated by the group themselves within the PAR sessions using various accessible analysis techniques, such as symbols, pictures, discussion and thoughts or feelings stuck onto the map or photos.

New Spaces, New Opportunities

The plant nursery spans an area of 12 acres and is located on a hillside surrounded mostly by dense woodland and on one small section, by an opening to suburban streets. There is one large glasshouse with a workshop attached to it in the centre of the nursery, with the outside growing areas spread out around these buildings, up and down the hillside. The co-operative's management of the space with the permaculture ethic in mind, means that there are boundaried areas for walking, growing, gathering and maintaining as 'wild', in order to ensure that intrusion on the land is constructive and not intrusive.

The outdoor spaces held appeal for the Sowers group from a sensory, interest and mood-lifting perspective and for exercise, although all participants found the

outdoor work physically taxing and, in some cases, completely inaccessible due to a physical disability.

'New spaces, new opportunities' was the largest of the group's own themes. In the group reflections it was difficult to cleave the occupation or the opportunities offered, from the place. Each outdoor space held meaning due to the type of work that was suitable or available for people to do. The people in this group did not have the freedom to roam the garden independently, as the able-bodied volunteers were, developing meanings of their own for spaces when they found a quiet place to sit or personal space of interest to them; thus the spaces often had more limited individual meanings and were associated with tasks or experiences they did as a group and a personal like or dislike of the place in relation to the task.

5.1.2 Being Outdoors: "Something different"

Group members with learning disabilities as well as their support workers talked about the difficulty of finding activities that were stimulating or offered some variety. Instead they felt what was most offered to adults with learning disabilities were classroom or centre-based activities that did not often provide new skills, knowledge or any opportunity for physical exercise.

Outside activities in the garden usually entailed physical work, not always appealing to everyone in the group, although few ever refused to try a task. Leo, a burly and outspoken gentleman demonstrated an ongoing ambiguity in the general relationship with the outdoors held by this group.

He would often be reluctant to leave the warmth of the classroom where we first gathered in the morning, and due to his body shape, found it difficult to find wellington boots to protect his feet in the boot pile. He took over-regular breaks and sometimes disappeared back to the classroom during a task, but was always the first to say how much he enjoyed the fresh air, the difference it made to his mood (improving it) and would comment on the sights and smells regularly. He found it stimulating but physically difficult to be there, which he demonstrated by

verbalising positive statements about what he had learned or observed but physically removing himself from activities when tired. One such example followed an hour long session of turning compost and moving it to another place with a wheelbarrow, which Leo found physically straining and relied on his support worker, Pat, to undertake for him. In the reflective session, he then noted:

> Leo: "It's just so refreshing being outside during the day and doing different things. The whole thing was good and even the smell of horse poo or whatever. It was different."

(Sowers group 10.10.12)

5.1.3 Exercise Equality

Exercise was an aspect of the physicality of being outdoors that was listed as a reason for joining the group by different members at different times. This was not always an individual's choice, which will be discussed later. The opportunity for this exercise was not always available to everyone as some tasks required the use of heavy tools or lots of bending down, but due to the variety of tasks, most found a physical role they could manage with or without help.

Nina, a young woman of approximately twenty-five years of age, had physical and learning disabilities. She walked slowly on the uneven surfaces of the nursery garden paths and could not bend down much to reach low beds and was able to hold things better with her right arm than her left. She was unable to talk but communicated her needs via her support worker, Gia. Nina was strong-willed and demonstrated her determination to try all tasks by presenting herself, with the equally enthusiastic Gia, at the designated place with gloves on and in a timely fashion. She also communicated her displeasure or unwillingness to participate in a difficult or inaccessible task by returning to the classroom or removing herself from the task. She was not easily put off by bad weather although did find many of the outdoor tasks challenging due to the range of bending and lifting involved.

Nina liked moving woodchip or compost in a wheelbarrow as it was something she could do more independently (figure 5.4). To enable more successful participation in this task, we tied a rope to the front of the barrow so that Nina was able to lift

the wheelbarrow and its contents with help from Gia at the front, who pulled it along. Gia and Nina engaged in every task and it was reported via her mother that Nina's mood was always much better following a morning at the nursery. This said, the inaccessibility of many of the growing spaces in the large market garden detracted from the experience for Nina and others at times, and was an issue of reflection for the group throughout the project (figure 5.5).

Figure 5.4 Nina and Gia using the wheelbarrow to transport woodchip together

Figure 5.5 Leo and Nina taking a break from a task that involved walking over very uneven ground

Grant was a young man in his thirties with moderate learning disabilities who lived with his father but had a girlfriend and daughter nearby, who he saw daily. He did not attend the group with a support worker as he was able to travel and manage his own activities independently. His key role at home was to collect his daughter from school in the afternoons and this left him time to pursue his gardening interest in the morning. He was able-bodied, although tentative with handling heavy or bulky tools. He was able to talk, although was softly spoken and shy in the often loud and chaotic group atmosphere. He tried everything the group got involved in and reported that he had joined for the exercise and to learn about the plants:

> *Gia: Nina liked the barrowing*
>
> *Abe: Me too! I liked the barrowing and the mud inside*
>
> *Grant: Yeah, I liked that too.*
>
> *SC: What did you like about it Grant?*
>
> *Grant: Uh….I like the exercise*
>
> *SC: You like the exercise? A bit of physical activity?*
>
> *Grant: Yeah…It makes me sweat.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Sowers group 10.10.12)*</div>

Exercise was, however, only experienced by those who were able to *do*, and this was often challenging, considering that the tools were heavy, the tasks sometimes required endurance and the terrain was often difficult to balance or work in with a physical disability. *Being,* a state of much less activity than doing, appeared to be something that some members of the group did well and others found very difficult. The ability to sit and be content to watch and listen was something James did very well but not something Abe appreciated. A sense of being in *place* became much more relevant and interesting to all group members after they had been around the site, done activities in different places and begun to construct their map with drawings, artefacts and photos.

5.1.3 The impact of place: "We look lovely in this place"

Individuals in the group identified different spaces that they liked most on site using the map and describing activities that they enjoyed. Common for many of the participants, particularly those with a physical disability additional to their learning disability, was the glasshouse. This spacious and light-filled construction allowed an experience of being outdoors and 'in nature', but being sheltered from the worsening winter weather. It was also accessible in terms of pathways, level access and near to the classroom.

The only outdoor space that was unanimously accepted as favourite was the orchard, which was discovered on a walk to map out parts of the site. The walk

stimulated much discussion as there was a great deal to see, smell, taste and talk about and the group bonded in their excitement over various areas of the site they had not seen before or found intriguing. The apiary in the orchard was seen first, causing consternation and a mild anxiety about being stung by the bees, however further along, the group stopped under a beautiful oak tree, pulling together for what they felt would be a good group photograph. This photograph (figure 5.6 and figure 5.7) became a group favourite and played a key role in enabling the group members to appreciate each other and accept their own sense of belonging in the garden because they looked "lovely" there, both as individuals and as a group. When given the opportunity to reflect on the walk and the moment caught together under the tree, there were comments on how the group looked together in the outside space:

> *"The tree in the background looks amazin' and everyone look lovely and happy"*
>
> (Gia and Nina, big tree photo comment)

> *"We like this photo. We all look very lovely"*
>
> (Leo and Pat, big tree photo comment)

The tree and the environment appeared to have an impact on how individuals felt about themselves and additionally, how they felt about belonging to this group and the wider garden as a whole.

Figure 5.6 The 'Big Tree' picture was the first group picture requested by the group members themselves

Figure 5.7 'Big tree' picture with comments and likes from participants

5.1.4 Together without Belonging

The mapping walk, which took place in week four, was a turning point in group cohesion. The group participants had up to that point been reluctant to engage directly with each other and had, for the most part, seen the sessions more as a collection of individual gardening sessions run concurrently, rather than one task done together as a group. The lack of cohesion up to this point was reinforced by the hierarchies at play within the group, with support workers protesting when they were asked to assist more than one client temporarily due to their own support worker or Anna or I being called away. The reluctance of the support workers to engage with the rest of the group and demonstrate teamwork, emphasised a separateness which was demonstrated in the behaviour of those members with learning disabilities.

An example of this was noted in the second week, when an elderly participant, Heather, was left at the site by her support worker who had not understood that she needed to stay. Heather had struggled with the terrain in the outdoor gardening task that day and Anna and I had had to take turns to support her and had requested that one of the support workers, who was there with a more independent participant, oversee her.

The result was a number of complaints from support workers about having to support more than one person or split their attention, even though, with Anna and I there, all participants were more than adequately supported. The following was taken from field notes on the day:

> *The main issue is that the support workers complaining felt they had to keep an eye on Heather as well as their own charges. Proportionally, there are more people in the class who are able to support than those that need support, which is unheard of in my usual work environments……. but nevertheless I explain that it won't happen again and everyone settles back into their tea and biscuits. I realise I have an expectation that people will be*

willing to share their skills and look out for one another in the same way I
am used to them doing in under-staffed local authority settings.

This undercurrent of separateness was at odds with the group working processes entrenched within the operation of the market garden as a whole. All tasks were done in teams, even if they were only teams of two or three.

Simon, one of the long-standing volunteers on the site, who has moderate learning disabilities was someone who agreed to being interviewed later on in the research process. In this interview he reiterated this sense of separateness that highlights the problem of services or groups run specifically for people with one 'condition' who are 'brought' to a group rather than attending voluntarily: they are in the group due to their condition, not due to a shared enjoyment of the occupation.

Simon: I get on with everyone. Muck in and that.

SC: Good. Ok. In comparison to say, for example, don't know, have you ever been to a day centre or anything like that?

Simon: I have yeah and I didn't like it.

SC: What were the things that you didn't like about it?

Simon: Because they sent me to the centre where there's handicapped people.

SC: Ok, you didn't like that

(Simone, May 2013)

Following the mapping walk, where we had mixed properly and talked and smelled and tasted things as a group and also seen other volunteers at work in the garden, the members appeared to relax with each other, impacting visibly on the behaviour of one of the group members who had the most challenging social behaviours.

Dan was a well-built young man originally from Sierra Leone in his twenties who had experienced a difficult start to life and was left in the care of the state by his family, who moved back to West Africa when they could not cope with his behaviour. Dan had learning disabilities alongside a complex mental health background and was living in a home for other young adults with similar difficulties. He was constantly flanked by two male support workers who appeared calm and intermittently interested in the garden activities but were well prepared to manage

one of Dan's outbursts, should they be required to. Dan could talk a lot, but did not often make sense when he spoke, bar one-word answers to very specific questions. He did become agitated and in the first couple of sessions, had to leave early as he found the sessions too long.

The outdoor tasks were particularly challenging for him, even though he was a young and energetic man and the exercise was the main reason his support workers brought him to the nursery. Dan developed a close relationship with Gia, Nina's support worker, who was friendly and did not mind Dan's shy affection, turning it into a motivational tool to encourage him to participate in outdoor activities. The group observed this insightful move by Gia and seeing this co-operation between participants, further cohesion appeared to develop, establishing a more collaborative group in which to explore shared experiences (figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8 Dan (left) with Gia and Nina during the mapping task

5.1.5 Sharing in quieter spaces

The research and gardening sessions were generally structured with an early outdoor session and a quieter session inside to warm up and reflect or do a quieter task. The weather drove the group inside earlier and earlier as we approached December, to a point where we planned extra indoors sessions in the eventuality that the group members refused the outdoor task (figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9 Shared relation to spaces in the garden – the glasshouse was a popular space for participants – warmer and quieter in the winter months

The indoor space was a room within the main building or warehouse and this inner room had walls lined with straw and clay, insulating the heat from the woodstove into the room and providing a cosy recovery from frozen fingers and tired limbs following a forty-five minute outdoor task. Tea was provided and the habit was to sit for a few minutes and warm up, sharing a packet of biscuits if someone had remembered to bring some.

The biscuits proved to be the glue that sealed the group together – the only common desire, and a comforting link to their worlds beyond the strangeness of the wild outdoor space and classroom of straw. Just as sharing food has a binding capacity in most cultural groups, biscuit eating and sharing time appeared to be sacred and a hush would fall over the whole group until every crumb was devoured. Once or twice apples were introduced as a healthier option, however this failed to be an alternative and served only to introduce more food and more eating time to the equation. The common practice of biscuit eating and sharing was one that the whole group understood and it became a priority to Abe, a young and enthusiastic man who attended the group on his own, to organise. Each week he would nominate either himself or another person to bring biscuits and others would respond and cajole him about this, this being a familiar task that all the participants with learning disabilities recognised and were confident enough to take the lead in. To demonstrate the importance biscuit time took, Abe and Leo, who generally hardly acknowledged each other, were heard prioritising biscuits over sleep in this conversation:

> *SC: So do we prefer biscuits or apples…or both?*
> *Abe: Both*
> *Leo: What kind of biscuits?*
> *Gia: Who forgot the biscuits?*
> *Abe: Next week…..I was running a bit late.*
> *Leo: I said what's in the biscuits? Is it natural or….*
> *SC: I don't know – that's up to Abe as he's bringing the biscuits.*
> *Leo (to Abe): You'll have to wake up early.*
> *Abe: Yeah….I'll wake up early.*
> <div align="center">(Sowers Transcripts, 10.10.12)</div>

The classroom time was a quieter time and developed into our research analysis time, where we looked at photos of experiences on site, drew or attached activity representations onto the map and did other indoor gardening tasks with more focus and attention.

Dan, the participant who was usually boisterous and averse to doing activities outdoors, preferred the peace of the indoor routine and would apply himself quietly to drawing or making things of an intricate nature (figure 5.10). This seemed incongruent with his size and general level of agitation. His support workers backed up this theory, explaining that at home, he preferred quieter, indoor tasks to outdoor ones and that he was brought here by them for the exercise and social aspects the garden offered, but would probably not attend a garden through his own choice.

Figure 5.10 Dan adding to the map

James was a participant in his fifties and reported to be a keen gardener. He lived in a sheltered housing facility and always had a friendly and attentive support worker with him in the sessions. During one of the photo analysis sessions, his support worker, Maria, explained that James tended to be more involved when he attended the gardening sessions and his mood improved. She felt that it was primarily because he was busy, occupied doing something he enjoyed and felt was meaningful. He was not a demanding person, she explained, but when offered options of places to go, he always chose the garden. James, not a very vocal man, demonstrated his agreement with Maria's summary of his experience by adding two stickers of approval to the photograph once she had explained her sticker (figure 5.11).
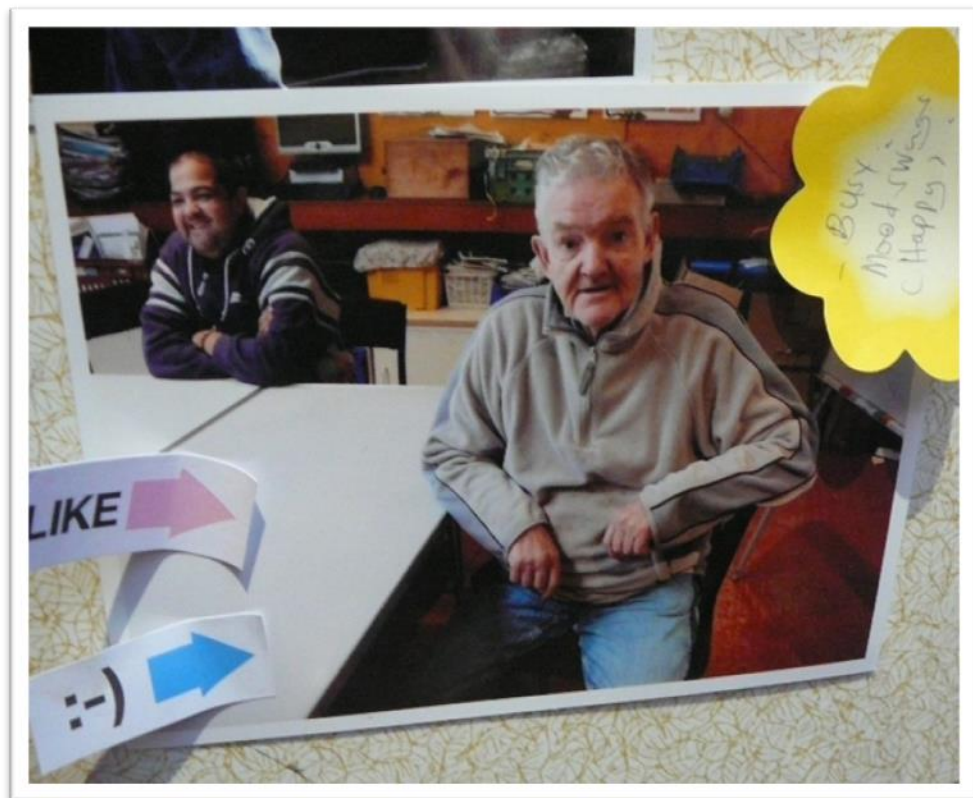
Figure 5.11 James in the classroom, involved in a group discussion

5.1.6 Unexpected opportunities

The support workers attending the site displayed mixed reactions to the garden on first attending it with a client. They were frequently surprised by and underprepared for the expectation of physical involvement that a garden on such a large scale demands. Some support workers had been before and were attending again because they themselves enjoyed the gardening work, but they were in the minority. In the research group, all participants, including support staff, were offered the opportunity to participate in the gardening tasks to ensure a level of equality within the group. There were those who chose rather to watch and only participate when the participant they supported required assistance.

Initial separateness between support staff and people with learning disabilities was exacerbated by the expectation that only the 'client' would be gardening as the support workers were only there to assist when needed. Those support workers who had not been to the garden before and did not know that participation was implied often wore inappropriate footwear, indoor clothing and stood back when tasks were undertaken. Those who had been before were better attired and more readily joined in the tasks. Some, however, never joined in and preferred to remain a supporter rather than a participant within tasks. This was understandable as that is how they understood their job as support worker.

Support workers in general (even those who did not express an interest in gardening initially) felt they were given the opportunity to try activities they did not expect to like. Most support worker participants attending throughout the ten weeks discovered something or many things they enjoyed doing in the garden that they previously had not attempted and so were pleased that the opportunity to attend with their client, had arisen. They also felt that they too were learning new skills and felt that they had benefited from being there by incidentally learning about plants and developing a set of gardening skills.

> *SC: "Do you think you might get anything out of coming along with the people that you bring to the Forest Site?"*

Gia: "Learning new skills. I wouldn't normally do gardening myself, so it's a nice opportunity to do that sort of thing and especially have fun doing it with Nina because even though she struggles with a lot of things, there are things she can do."

Seb: "Yeah. We are learning a lot. We are here supporting Dan but we are learning a lot."

<div align="right">

(Sower's Transcripts 21.11.12)

</div>

One of the support workers enthusiastically participated and supported her client to participate in all the activities. She was a less experienced worker and felt that she had also learned how to be a more involved and better support worker by coming to the garden and working with the staff there to problem solve how to make tasks more accessible for her client.

Gia: " ....I find it interesting learning how to adapt to make the situation better for her (Nina).

SC: Great. That's a good thing. And if you came to more sessions, you might kind of build on that?"

Gia: "Yeah, more skills and stuff and learn to adjust things and spot things that I might not have normally thought of.... like the string for the wheelbarrow, I would have never have thought of that."

<div align="right">

(Sower's Transcripts 21.10.12)

</div>

A further incidental benefit for the support staff attending the site with their client was developing an occupation-based network of their own. The community-based nature of their jobs at times being isolating, the support workers found that this was a good opportunity to meet and talk with colleagues and also to find activities that they themselves might be interested in pursuing in their own time.

Maria: "Um....I think the other thing you'd get from here is networking. You know, you get to meet new people and new contacts. There is so many

people that if I didn't come here today, maybe I would never have met them. So some of these contacts can really be useful in future. Maybe I would like to take a gardening course in future. And if I came here today knowing you were doing research about this kind of thing, maybe I would get your contacts. So useful contacts for the future… and making friends.

<div align="right">

(Sower's Transcripts 21.10.12)

</div>

5.2 Difficult Decisions

Making decisions was a key theme for all the participants. They were all eager to discuss both the limited occupational options available to people with moderate to severe learning disabilities, but also the challenge in communicating both needs and opportunities. There was pressure to choose occupations even when they did not suit people's needs or wants and a difficult process in assessing risk and ability to make choices and decisions in the moment.

5.2.1 Choice "At least we got the chance to do it"

The limited alternatives for participation in gardening and community projects for many with learning disabilities arose in a feedback session following one of the activities we did on site. Leo described relief at being given the opportunity to choose to do something and decline it if he decided he did not like the task:

> *Leo: I think most of the things we do here are so interesting. The place is well designed to do things. You come inside it's nice, you go outside, it's nice.*
> *SC: Would you come back to do more here?*
> *Leo: if they'd let me. Yeah, because it's so good, I mean not even school does gardening any more. I mean years ago we used to do all them things but no more. I mean if you don't like it (here) they give you a chance to say but at least you had the chance to do it. Which is really good and it's outdoors.*

<div align="right">

(Sowers transcriptions 05.12.12)

</div>

And describing the opportunities within the garden to make choices in relation to one's own abilities and needs:

> *Leo: yeah, but to go back to here, the people that thought about this, give them a really….it's good. There are not a lot of places like this. If they got more people chances like this I think they would get a better result everywhere because some people are not good in different things, but this is really good. And also the staff, they're very patient with us. You don't hear them screaming and shouting.*
>
> *(Sowers transcriptions 05.12.12)*

The ability to make choices based on what you enjoy and can do, appeared to be a novel concept for some of the participants with learning disabilities, particularly those who were older, and perhaps more used to submitting to decisions made by others on their behalf. The younger generation, some bolder and more confident, were more used to choice and had been offered levels of independence and opportunity some had never experienced.

The accompanying support workers' lives were also affected by complex issues relating to choice. At times, some of the support workers appeared frustrated or burdened by the daily responsibility of having to facilitate or make choices for others, particularly when they felt the options were limited. This topic was also discussed in an interview with a co-operative member who was involved in managing the volunteers at the garden. This interview participant highlighted the consequences of making decisions for other people based on limited options and a lack of knowledge of the person's capabilities and favoured activities.

> *Jay: …. I also get a sense that they (support workers) are so desperate to give people something now, they are so desperate to get people out the house. That's how I feel. And I ask them (the people with learning disabilities), are they interested in volunteering in the garden?*
> *Their support workers will say 'they've just got to get out… they've got to do something'. And for some people I can see that it's important, they've just*

got to get out and they might just get into it once they're here but some
people just don't want to.

…..it's detrimental to our, what's going on here to have people forced into it.
Yeah, I think it can be difficult having to explain it… that being inclusive
doesn't mean we say 'yes' to everyone and being the one that's saying 'no'.

(Jay, July 2013)

The support workers not only felt frustrated by limited community activities to offer the people they worked with, but the responsibility and risk of making decisions with or in some cases, for, them, lay largely unacknowledged as well. This is an observation note written after the support workers were given time to discuss their thoughts and experiences of participating in the garden:

They seem to share a kind of invisibility with the people they work with, or
perhaps even more because they are constantly reminded that they need to
act in their client's best interest. I wonder, when you spend so many hours
together in a day, are there times when you feel you are living someone
else's life, always having to make the choice you think your client would
prefer, and overriding your own?

(SC Field notes, 21.01.2012)

The issue of 'making decisions on behalf of another' has a direct impact on both the support worker with the task of doing this and the client who has been deprived of the opportunity to influence his or her own participation. Many of the support workers appeared ambivalent about the daily task of deciding where to go, how to get there and how much to be involved in the occupations chosen for, and sometimes by, their clients. Although this was a large part of their task as support workers, they all appeared to understand and relate to the moral dilemma of deciding what was in someone else's 'best interests'.

The following excerpt demonstrates Seb's cautious contemplation on the matter of Dan's participation in the garden. Dan is able to make minute to minute decisions about likes and dislikes, however larger decisions regarding his health and wellbeing are difficult for him due to his impulsive behaviour and poor

understanding of his condition. They feel that as a young man on the verge of being overweight due to medication and a sedentary lifestyle, he requires exercise but they know that he prefers indoor tasks such as working on computers and drawing.

> *Seb: "We have been coming quite some time now. We have been thinking that it might be time that we change Dan to another course maybe because we are not sure of whether he is really interested in gardening….at the end of the day he knows nothing and is not answering our questions. He has got his things that he is really interested in, especially computers and all that. Um, but maybe his behaviour is changing. Probably because he is attracted to someone (all look at Gia and laugh). Um, I don't know, we might have to find out next year if he is going to come back, but physically we think it is good for him. He is a big guy and he needs some exercise."*
>
> *(Sowers Transcriptions 21.11.12)*

5.1.3 Risk taking versus taking the opportunity

The plant nursery operates a system of trust, teaching and common sense in relation to working with tools, in dirty, wet spaces and doing manual labour-type work. The participants were expected to use only the tools chosen and laid out for the tasks, however tools were not locked away and were available to anyone to look at, hold and use when they felt appropriate. This approach is different to most local authority or other care settings, where items thought of as 'dangerous' are generally locked away as part of risk management. The tool shed held little interest for most of the participants, however there were times when, as someone who has worked in institutional settings for most of my career, I felt alarmed at the potential for danger or injury, even in tasks I initiated.

This lack of risk aversion within the garden community allowed many to participate in activities and use tools that they had not done before as they had been considered too dangerous, not within the realms of the person's *normal* activity or manually *heavy*. The support workers again, expressed that they felt the responsibility of making difficult decisions for other people. If the person they were

with lacked the ability to manage their own physical boundaries and measure their own capabilities, the risk had to constantly be measured by the support worker, as demonstrated in the situation below:

> Mia: "It's nice to see something that Abe enjoys and sometimes it's quite nice to be able to sort of step back and not be leading and in a way, it's quite nice to do something that's kind of structured and I can be a support role in. Yeah, it's finding that balance between how much support to give, because in that task (cutting a plastic bottle with a craft knife) he did need some support and actually stepping away and saying, you know, we want you to be independent. It's hard with things like that."
>
> (Sowers Transcriptions 21.11.12)

In some cases it was not the tools or hard work that posed the most difficult challenge in terms of managing risk, but the more abstract choices. Pat, Leo's support worker had been charged with managing Leo's blood sugar levels and weight as Leo demonstrated inconsistent concern for the impact of both of these on his long term health. Leo was the first to request a tea break and, although never providing biscuits, would partake in the sharing of these very enthusiastically when anyone else brought them. Pat became annoyed and felt that the biscuits should be better monitored by Asia and myself. In an institutional setting I may have considered this, however in the garden setting, where people came of their own free will, I did not feel it appropriate to monitor the biscuits. A conversation ensued between some of the support workers, in which they aired views on the level of their responsibility to their clients with respect to the client's health and the level of participation the client had in decision-making in relation to health and risk-taking in general.

> Pat: Yesterday when I took him home, because they got take-away and all and they've got cakes in there (Leo's family's shop), I tell you something if he had a gun in his hand, he would have shot every single one of us. Honestly, every single one of us.
>
> Maria: But what I think is that you just need to find a way of controlling him because you can't say that they won't get biscuits because maybe it is only him and other people need them.

……………………………………………

Seb: I understand. He got his rights. If he say he wants it, and you say no, and he say he wants it…

Pat: Yeah, I understand what you saying, but when I care for him right, my orders is not to let him eat too much. So we get into an argument, because he knows what he's talking about, he just has a short memory, yeah. But he knows what he's talking about.

(Sowers Transcriptions 21.11.12)

The above excerpt demonstrates an interesting snapshot of the complexity of choice, control and responsibility in this setting. The co-operative members aimed to have an empowering approach in which people felt able choose and interact in a more liberal environment than the institutional environments the people with learning disabilities were used to. The participation of people with learning disabilites, however, was reliant on the presence of support staff that they worked with every day and who at times, held strong beliefs about who should be 'in control'.

This belief was not by any means a consistently held one and, as with the concerns over choice of activity, the support workers grappled with the issues of *empowerment* and *risk* and in the end felt that their role was undervalued by others. The depth of their daily tasks, the responsibility they held to both facilitate choice and take responsibility for another person's safety, was passed off as a relatively 'unskilled' vocation.

5.2.3 Powerlessness or Patience?

Reliance on others for assistance and the frustration of waiting for someone else to initiate the next activity or journey was not overt but surfaced in behaviour at times and in one discussion around transport to and from the garden.
The participants all talked about being *patient* and *knowing how to wait* as learned skills, particularly in relation to getting to and from places. The lack of independence for participants with learning disabilities with regard to transport was

common and this gave rise to much dissatisfaction relating to unreliable transport when trying to get to Forest Garden. Gia and Pat both expressed frustration at cabs not being able to find the garden or not picking them up as drivers often mistook it for the children's nursery down the road and gave up waiting:

> *Gia: ….today we're getting a cab back home. So fingers crossed that works out because it's quite out of the way and they might find it a little difficult to get to.*
> *Pat: What, a cab? Yeah, the first time we came here in the cab and they dropped us at the school.*
>
> *(Sowers Transcripts 17.10.12)*

Leo at first appeared unconcerned about his travel, saying that Dial-a-Ride had given him no problems, but then when reminded by Pat about an experience of them being late the previous day, he appeared bitter and resigned:

> *Leo: It's like dog eat dog. Unless you ring like a day ahead, they will let you down. You just have to be patient and bite your tongue….*
>
> *(Sowers Transcripts 17.10.12)*

These ongoing travel dilemmas all displayed an underlying level of frustration, anxiety and powerlessness that was optimistically termed 'being patient' by the group.

Reliance was also consistently evident in both positive and negative senses in the context of the relationship between people with learning disabilities and their support workers. One reflection following a session with the group described the role of the support workers as grouting, keeping different parts or 'tiles' of a person's world together, depicting a positive type of reliance:

> "*I see what an essential role the support workers play in creating links between different parts of their clients' worlds for them. A kind of tile grout, without which everything would float about without a proper place.*"
>
> *(SC Field notes, 21.11.12)*

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I wondered whether this was always necessary or whether more could be done to enable people to manage those connections themselves through more consistent occupational involvement, rather than continuous courses and term-based activities.

5.2.4 Balance: *Doing* with *and sometimes* for

Throughout the research sessions, there were times when achieving the task required by the garden staff, such as mulching a distant vegetable bed, laying woodchip on a muddy path or planting peas on a cold morning were challenging for everyone involved but particularly for those who had a physical disability as well as a learning disability. Despite this, attendance of participants was good all the way through to December.

The final tasks were done mostly indoors due to reluctance to work outdoors and a list of winter tasks such as making bug hotels for the glasshouse for hoverflies to live in. These tasks were inevitably finer and required more in-depth supervision and intervention from the support workers. I worried that this would detract from the level of ownership people felt in relation to the tasks or appear tokenistic to some. A couple of the participants required no support from another in terms of decision-making and physical involvement in the task while others required some tasks to be mostly done by someone else but in a manner that involved the learning disabled participant so much that the task appeared to be jointly achieved, rather than done by the support worker. In the following excerpt, Gia explains with humour why she did most of the work in making the bird feeder, a task Nina would have found impossible without help:

> *SC: So what's your hotel called, Nina?*
>
> *Gia: (looking at Nina for confirmation) Hotel XXXX?*
>
> *Nina nods agreement*
>
> *SC: That's Nina's surname isn't it? Looks like there will be lots of happy bugs in there Nina.*

Gia: I think we done it quite well, innit? Because we got like two separate compartments going round. Split the wood into two. Nina didn't want to get her hands too dirty so she made me do all the work (laughs).

<div align="right">*(Sowers Transcripts 07.11.12)*</div>

Mia, who came with Abe on some occasions, referred to this constant weighing up of the task and the participant's abilities a number of times.

Mia: Yeah….it's finding that balance between how much support to give, because in that task (making bird-feeders) he did need some support and actually stepping away and saying, you know, we want you to be independent…..

And:

Mia: …..I mean, he just so wants to kind of…do it without thinking about the knife…you know (referring to making holes in the plastic using a sharp knife). Yeah no, it was nice, because I thought this class is fine for him not to have support and now I realise actually that we do need to think about that for some tasks in this environment. He might need to think about coming with a support worker (more often).

<div align="right">*(Sowers Transcripts, 21.11.12)*</div>

This example highlights the awareness of the support worker about the sensitive nature of support and reliance on another. The client, Abe (see figure 5.12), had been attending the site without support and had managed most days with no mishaps, however, he was visibly more confident and relaxed on the day his support worker attended with him and this allowed him to attempt tasks that he would have declined had she not been there.

Figure 5.12 Abe finds a spot for his bug hotel in the glasshouse

5.2.5 Declining support

Abe's case appeared to create a sense of unease with some of the other support staff who knew him from previous terms, having seen him attend with a support worker up to this point. His 'graduation' to a more independent level of attendance demonstrated that people could possibly manage without care staff present, that someone could actually decline the offer of support. The following is an excerpt from field notes following a session in which Abe arrived late one day.

Today Abe was late and because of that, he was in a bad mood….. We were on our way outside to start a gardening activity, when the neighbour's dog came bounding up. It is a friendly dog that most people have met and are accepting of but as it arrived, one of the support workers made a loud barking noise and squeezed Abe on his arm in a fake biting motion. This gave Abe a fright and sent him even further into his blackened mood, causing him to be rude and impatient with people for the rest of the session. The day ended with a feud between him and another participant over Abe's loud chewing…

At the end of the session, two of the support workers for other participants took me aside and expressed their dissatisfaction at Abe being allowed to attend without a support worker… This felt like an unfair judgement on Abe, because a large part of his bad behaviour had been due to one of the support workers giving him a fright. I was struck by the 'us and them' situation we were suddenly in, and the power that support workers might have as a group, of excluding a fellow participant.

(SC Field notes, 24.10.12)

The dynamic between the people requiring assistance and those whose job it was to provide the assistance was constantly in flux. For some, support work was a job that had rules and limits and the level of involvement expected from the support worker was to ensure safety and completion rather than task satisfaction. Others appeared to be reflective of their position and consider each opportunity for interaction with the client's ability to participate in mind. How the support worker

felt that day or their approach in general had a substantial impact on the client's experience in the garden.

Choice, risk-taking and the power relating to these topics was a dense theme that came up each time the group met. The use of photography as a method also proved to be an accessible and reflective form of choice. Everyone in the group became more confident with taking and being in the photographs, slowly taking more ownership and responsibility for how their experience was being depicted:

> *"I've been putting the photos out every week…. In some ways that is less exciting than before when the photos were a novelty, but the constant exposure has made people think about the photos more and be more circumspect about the ones they choose to represent themselves and their experience…, which is interesting and not predictable."*

> *(SC field notes, 28.11.12)*

5.3 Connecting with others

The Sowers group members took much longer to connect with people beyond the safety of their pre-established support-worker/participant partnerships and acknowledge their collective role as gardeners.

Figure 5.12 Maria adds a comment to a picture James liked of himself gardening

5.3.1 Seeing each other

Maria's labelling of a picture of John gardening as: "company, support, involved" (in figure 5.12) hints at her assumption that participating in gardening activities alongside other people provides him with companionship and a sense of belonging. As described previously though, this group took many weeks to begin to see each other beyond the pre-established care relationships and in the end it was not clear whether there was an appreciation for group working, or merely a

greater acceptance of the other participants in a shared space. The photo and label below (figure 5.13) describes "working well as a team", however this is Gia's description of the relationship between herself and Nina, rather than the whole group. Again, this demonstrates more of a focus on the units within the larger participant group.
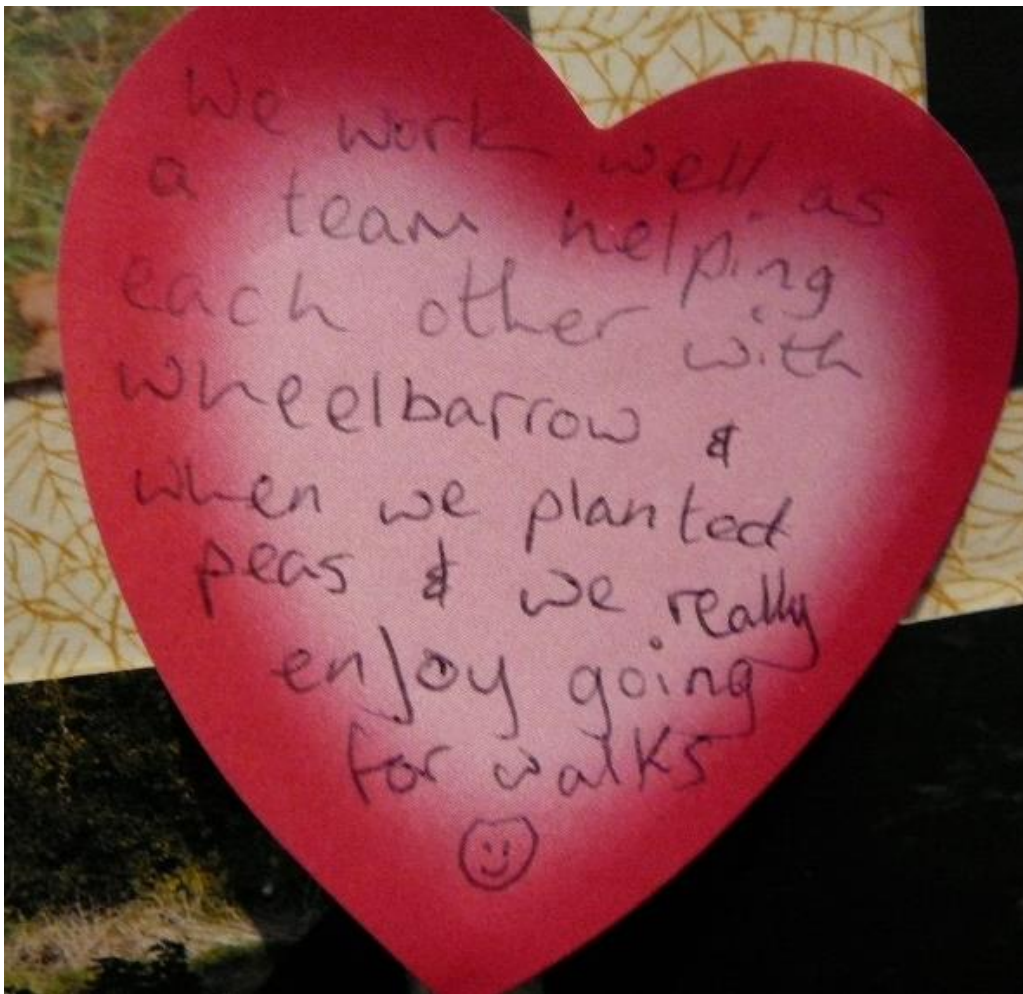
Figure 5.13 Reflecting on a photo following an action cycle from the Sowers group

The group members grew more used to each other and following the walk and the initiation of the mapping task, there seemed a greater acknowledgement of and reserved interest in each other. Evidence of this was commenting on each other's photographs in the review sessions and pointing out pictures of other group members when new photographs were shown.

The other area in which group members related to each other was in deciding what their favourite part of the site was. In these mapping sessions, people had to

interact and those who were able to communicate could argue about areas they felt they liked best on the site, those they did not like and those they could not get to. They also had to interact in order to complete drawings and attach artefacts to the map as this required asking for pens, scissors and glue. The interaction for those with no speech was with sticky notes demonstrating happy and sad faces and picking up and showing others photographs they liked or did not like.

Mixing with other gardeners on site was difficult to achieve. The group were often limited by access and time. On one occasion a kitchen garden activity planned in which the group would share space with a group of volunteers. This was to enable the group to work closely with others on site, however access to this section of garden was difficult and once there, the other volunteer gardeners had already worked their way so far up the garden that they were away from the paths that the group were to do work on. Had the group members been dispersed within the larger volunteer groups, this separation might have been less obvious and one person working at a slower pace would not have been noticed. The intention of the group joining the larger volunteer group had been enable inclusion, however instead it had emphasised their differences in ability.

The final session, with the completion of the map (figure 5.14) and the presentation of it at the party represented a subtle shift in the acknowledgment of the group members of each other as they observed and discussed their joint creation. This was only a subtle shift as the end of the sessions represented change; many of those attending would not be staying on as volunteers on the site. One participant, Grant, felt independent enough to make the decision to return to the garden as a volunteer. The rest of the group members were reliant on others to make that decision for them to an extent, and on the community garden itself to find new and sustainable ways to include people with moderate to severe learning disabilities and their support workers.

Figure 5.14 The finished map presented to the rest of the gardeners at the group's final meeting

5.3.2 Conflict, acknowledgement and reciprocity

There were many positive aspects of the social interaction engaged in during the group process and the research. Participants eventually acknowledged each other more and towards the end there was a familiarity with each other that enabled a combined effort to complete the map and demonstrate their collaboration to others on the site.

The area of most conflict within the sessions was between support workers and their clients, particularly those who worked together continuously and had a level of familiarity with each other's habits and behaviours, such as Leo and Pat. Pat became exasperated one day following an argument over shoe size with Leo, in which Leo insisted that Pat had his shoes size wrong and refused to change the topic until Abe stopped them, telling them to continue their argument at home. Further displeasure in the group developed from what was perceived as continued lack of acknowledgment for assistance given between some of the support worker-client pairs. Seb described this situation during the support worker session, understanding that it was Dan's behaviour and learning disability that prevented a standard demonstration of gratitude:

> *Seb: Yeah, Dan is slightly different because his main problem is his behaviour. He is not autistic, he has more behaviour problems than anything else, and dealing with his behaviour is very difficult. And that's why you find at times he becomes so disruptive.*
> *Maria: It's very challenging.*
> *SC: Do you think when you manage to get it right with him, do you feel like he gets a sense of achievement with that?*
> *Seb: Uh…It's very difficult, because he thinks he knows everything. That's the problem (laughs). You might do something for him. He finds it difficult to say thank you because he thinks he did it himself.*
>
> *(Sowers transcripts 10.10.12)*

Those support workers who did not particularly enjoy gardening and who also felt a lack of acknowledgment for their support sometimes appeared distant in sessions, not always participating in the task, checking their phones regularly – a way of establishing a personal boundary against vocational invisibility.

Gia talked about the reciprocity in her relationship with Nina. She felt that as she was young and new at the work, she learned a lot from the experience of working with Nina who had had many support workers in the past and knew how to make the most of her relationship with them.

> Gia: *"I feel like with Nina I give her a lot more than the other people in the group because she doesn't speak, she is very weak in her knees, her joints and stuff, so she can't do bending tasks so a lot of the tasks she has to be sitting down or standing up. So we enjoy doing the wheel-barrowing most because she can do a lot of it and I can just assist her. .... she is very good at assisting with me, so I do enjoy doing that with her and I feel like I contribute as much as she is so it's like a team effort so it makes it more special because it's like a bond that we're building together."*
>
> *(Sowers transcripts 21.11.12)*

5.3.3 A sense of belonging: "Equal, I feel equal"

Simon, the long-standing volunteer with learning disabilities who was interviewed later in the study, attends the garden weekly, often on more than one day. He lives with his girlfriend and a carer and, as mentioned before, finds the work on a gardening site more meaningful to him than other places he has been referred to in the past. When talking about being supported with certain tasks on site, Simon agrees that he receives help when he needs it, but feels that this does not have an impact on his standing in the organisation.

> *SC: Have you made any special friends here or is there anyone that you get on with really well with?*
> *Simon: No. not really coz I get on with everyone. Equal, equal, I feel equal.*
> *SC: You feel equal?*
> *Simon: Yeah*
> *SC: Is there any time here where you feel like you help other people?*
> *Simon: Yeah, I do…Yeah, I have, when people are new here staff ask me to help them.*

In this extract, he describes having a sense of equality as he has a rapport with most people in the garden and people know him. He also has a role and is able to contribute meaningfully by observing and tending to the snake population on site, cooking shared lunches and introducing new people who come to the site. Making connections with other people, although it appeared to be one of the reasons the people with learning disabilities commonly came to the garden, was not an issue of key importance for this group of people themselves at this stage of their participation. It was also challenging to create a platform for inclusive occupation for a whole group whereas one person, given the correct support, was more able to find a role and develop a sense of belonging.

In the final session, during the evaluation of the research sessions and completion of the map, the group participants demonstrated elements of belonging that they had not done before: They discussed the places they resonated with on the

garden site as well as the occupations they preferred; they were excited to have completed the map and be presenting it to the other gardeners – a concrete demonstration of their impact on the garden and the work they had done and they compared copies of the printed photos they would be taking home with them.

The presentation of the map was a visual reinforcement of the group's belonging to the wider gardening community at Forest Garden, however it felt like the start of the group's work on what real participation in the garden meant to them, rather than the completion of it.

Chapter 6: The second phase of PAR, The Growers

Stage two of the project involved the formation of a second PAR group, *the Growers*, formed of four people from the general volunteer population of the plant nursery. The aim of this group was to do a more in-depth exploration of the experience of people who were not part of the co-operative, but were volunteers, apprentices or sessional members of staff committed to the organisation. The Growers participants had been present when the Sowers map had been unveiled in the classroom and knew that this previous group had already generated themes of their own through creation of the map and use of photographs.

The aim of the Growers group was to explore their experience of participating in the market garden, to consider ways in which the philosophy of the organisation influenced them and what they hoped for with regard to their efforts in Forest Garden. The Growers also met in the garden prior to the start of the scheduled volunteer sessions. They too used photographs, reflections, drawing and other media to generate data to represent their experiences. They brought items or reflections along that they had created or written about during the week to discuss together, and later on, discussed themes they felt had emerged after revisiting their own discussions, pictures and work.

The Growers contributed a different type of data, in verbal and written forms, than the Sowers group and a variety of data types were collected: recorded group discussions, written reflections in research diaries and artefacts such as a wall hanging, a framed picture and an item of pyrography. They focused on the impact of the physical spaces of the site and also on the social and environmental impact of activities on the site and the influence of taking an ethical approach, such as permaculture, on the management of the organisation. The four group members had additional roles to their general volunteer status in the garden and due to the developmental role they played in the organisation in various ways, this group has been named the *Growers* group.

Recruitment to this group has been described in the methods section in Chapter Four. Figure 6.1 is a photograph of all of the group members in the quiet space in the garden, nicknamed the *Magical Realm* that we often gathered in for our discussions. The group members either chose, or were given a pseudonym (if they declined to choose one) for use beyond the boundaries of the garden. Figure 6.2 summarises demographic detail about each group member and their attraction to and role in the market garden.

Figure 6.1 (from left) Henrietta, Nathan, Marilyn and Reginald in one of the Grower's meeting spots, the 'Magical Realm'

Figure 6.2 Growers Group Members

Growers Group members

Henrietta — 28
- Thoughtful, interested in community development, loves nature
- Working on 'Buddy' system to help volunteers with support needs
- Discovered Forest Garden through attending an open day

Nathan — 76
- Referred to Forest garden through Evolve (mental health charity)
- Long-standing volunteer, loves gardening as a hobby, reflective and poetic
- Working on Forest pond improvement project

Marilyn — 44
- Invited to Forest Garden by a co-op member
- Leads cooking sessions on Wednesdays at the garden
- Artist, very creative, teacher
- Would like to make a Forest nursery cookbook

Reginald — 62
- Found out about Forest Garden through a neighbour
- Dedicated gardener, well-read on environmental topics
- Would like to make entrance to Forest nursery more welcoming and noticeable
- Does a lot of extra, 'maintenance' work at Forest market garden
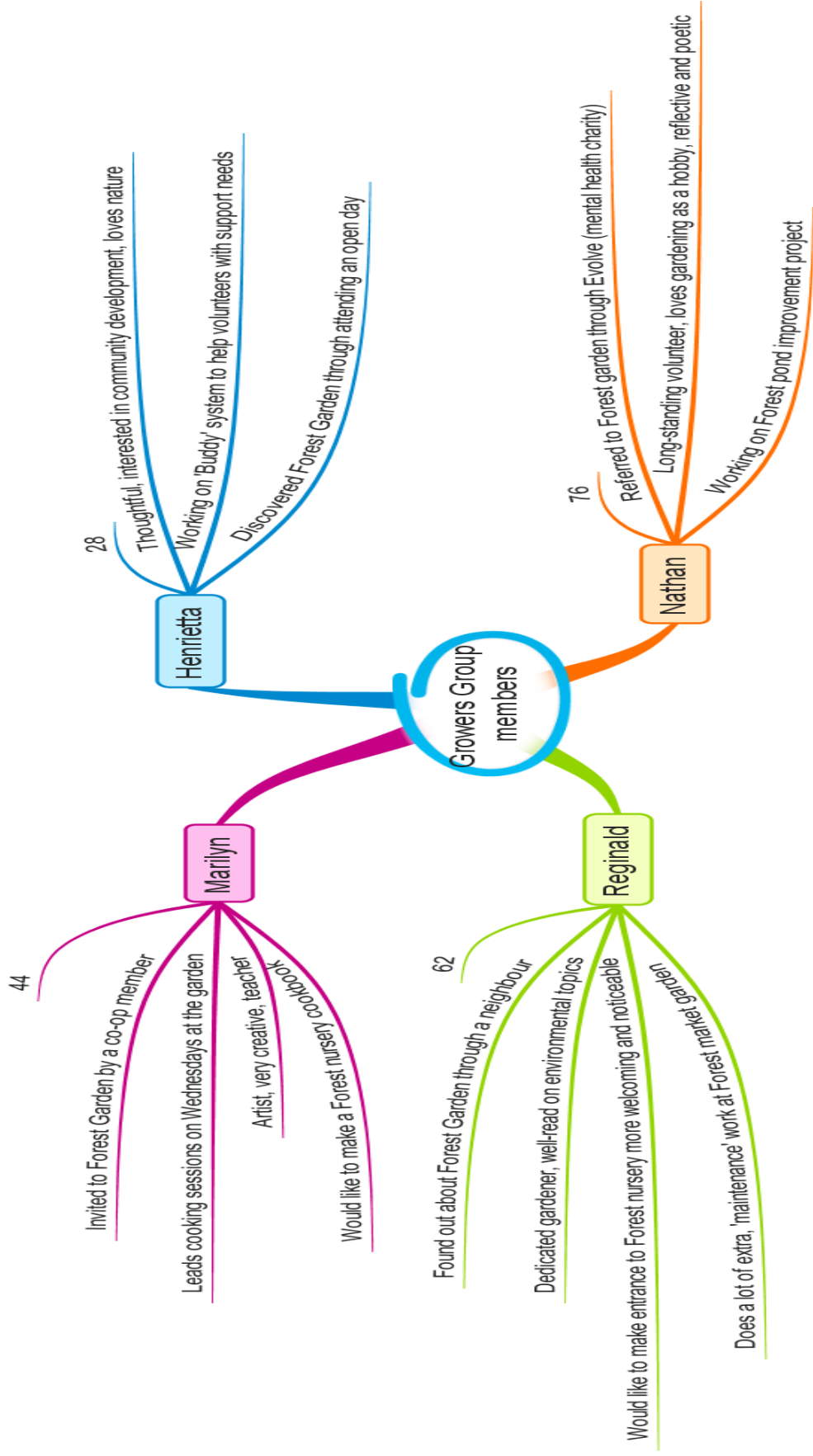
The group members described very different life events bringing them to their place at the plant nursery although they all felt that their roles had grown from general volunteer role to one where they contributed specialist knowledge and had more formal roles or tasks within the organisation. All except one person had been employed as part-time apprentice or worker at stages throughout their involvement with the organisation. In March 2013, when the PAR group began, only one group member was officially employed by the co-operative and one was due to take on a paid temporary role that would overlap with the time the PAR group was running.

6.1.1 Development of themes from the data

Early findings from the Sowers group were shared with the Growers group in one session in an effort to build on these working themes and compare experiences. Themes from the Growers group built upon the Sowers' experiences and explored the space, connections, sense of belonging and opportunities for doing and being, at a deeper level.

Part way through the Growers' PAR period, Marilyn, the participant who led the cooking on Wednesdays, invited me to sit in on a lunch preparation session as the group of kitchen volunteers were interested in talking about their participation in the kitchen. I joined one of these sessions and those present all consented to add their stories to the research. The volunteers who helped to prepare lunch were consistent and mostly preferred to be in the kitchen than in the garden. Two of the kitchen participants had a mental health diagnosis involving depression as a symptom and another two them had a moderate learning disability. Data from this kitchen session that related to themes that the Growers identified in their PAR sessions, was included in this chapter.
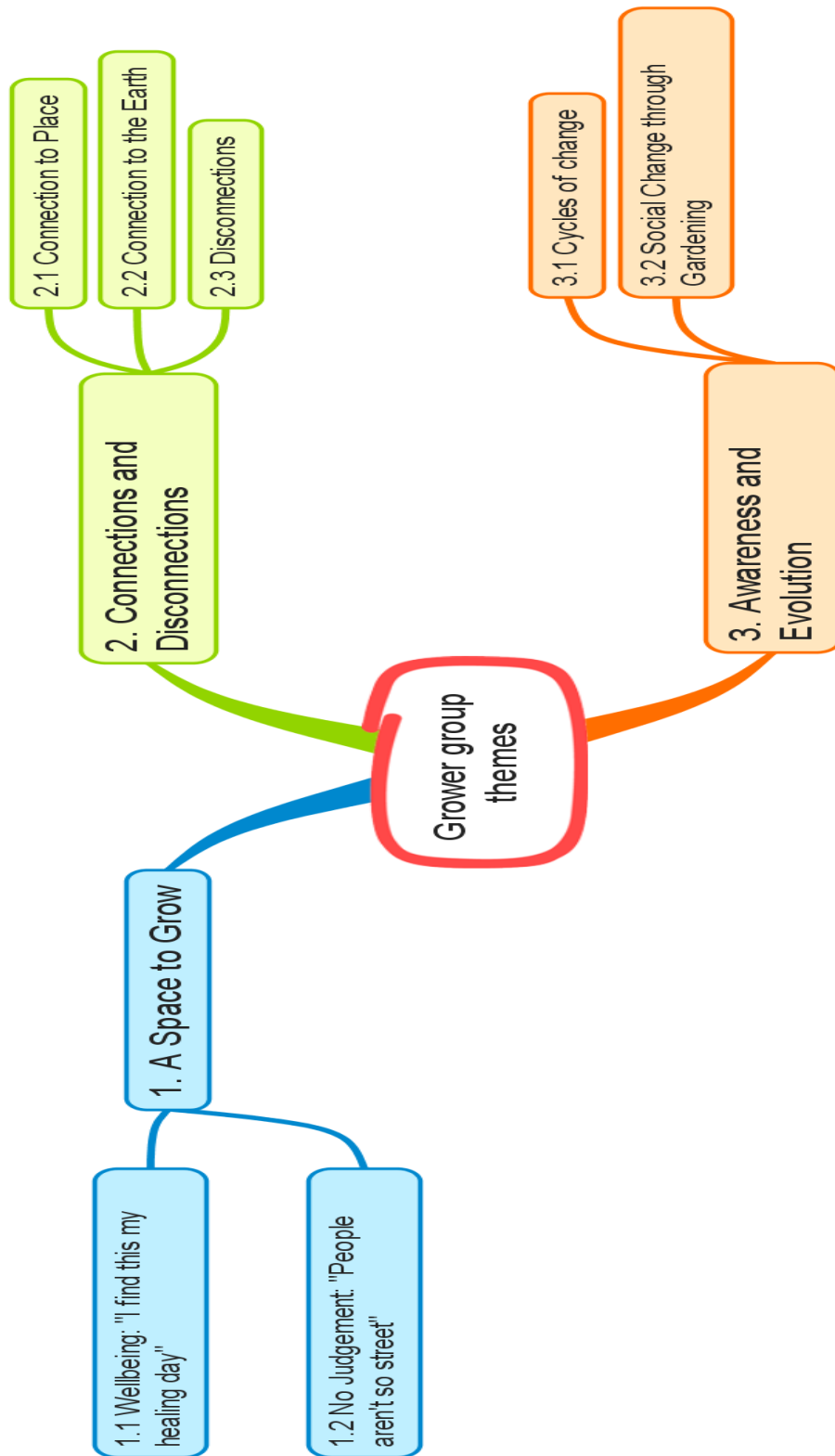
The PAR process resulted in development of two areas of interest which were carried over from the Sowers Group to the Growers group. One related to the *space*, how it influenced performance and was one of the key motivating factors for people's attendance and participation on the site. The concept of *connection* was also explored in more detail, considering peoples' need to connect with the

earth and other people through the occupation of food growing. The Growers group also mentioned areas of *disconnection* that they felt could be resolved to improve the sense of inclusion within the garden community.

Creating new connections and building on existing connections between people and each other and people and the earth was a regularly discussed topic and was the theme most strongly linked to the context of permaculture, the guiding philosophy of the co-operative. A further theme: *Awareness and Evolution* developed from the discussions and activities of the group. A*wareness* described the ways in which feeling more connected through doing the gardening and participating in other activities on site, heightened awareness of environmental issues and a sense of shared values. Cycles of nature were noted and linked to peoples' own personal connection with the earth, their belief systems as well as a consistent awareness of time and the change of occupation, rhythm and intensity of work connected to seasons.

Finally, the group discussed the impact of participating in the organisation on their personal lives and the power of doing and being in the space and community of the garden. They discussed positive changes, slow but meaningful, in their lives and in the lives of those they knew within the plant nursery volunteer groups. This theme, titled *evolution,* is added to *awareness and involvement* due to the gradual, personal and social nature of the changes and the unknown level or range of impact the change has on the local area and its people over time.

Figure 6.3 Themes from the Growers Group

Grower group themes

1. A Space to Grow
1.1 Wellbeing: "I find this my healing day"
1.2 No Judgement: "People aren't so street"

2. Connections and Disconnections
2.1 Connection to Place
2.2 Connection to the Earth
2.3 Disconnections

3. Awareness and Evolution
3.1 Cycles of change
3.2 Social Change through Gardening

6.2 A Space to Grow

In this theme the Growers group, with input from the kitchen group, as mentioned, commented on the impact of the physical and social environment of the market garden as well as the working micro-environments within these. Growers group participants discussed the challenge the garden work presented and the rewards from it being complimentary, creating positive outcomes. The sensory and aesthetic attributes of the garden appear to counteract or offset some of the experienced stress related to normal pressures when working with large groups of people within set timeframes.

Work on the site is structured so that there are many small groups working in different sectors of the site. This structure facilitates a measure of choice, enabling those who feel less comfortable in open, exposed spaces to enjoy the same sense of participation and production within closed spaces, doing more spatially contained work, such as packing vegetable boxes or preparing food for the other workers. The versatility of the site is one that is difficult to replicate in other *therapeutic* environments, and this is commented on by Growers participants and other contributors to the research in the following two subthemes.

6.2.1 Wellbeing: "I find this my healing day"

In one session where the Growers talked about the photographs they had taken to describe their participation in the market garden, they discussed why they were drawn back to the Forest market garden site due to the work being both surprising and rewarding. All four of the participants felt that they worked hard on the site and were faced with pressures and challenges of a similar nature to other workplaces, such as poor conditions when the weather was bad and lack of assistance when fewer than normal volunteers appeared. The consensus, however, was that they returned each week because the rewards outweighed the parts of the work that made it difficult.

Figure 6.4 Reginald's photo of the fire wood pile he created after clearing a new growing space

Figure 6.4 demonstrates a small section of a large woodpile created by Reginald another volunteers following the clearing of some new space for growing. The work was very physically tiring but the wood was sold for donations and used for

firewood in the workshop wood-burner in winter, making the job worthwhile and rewarding.

Figure 6.5 Marilyn's picture of preparing some newly harvested beetroot for the shared lunch
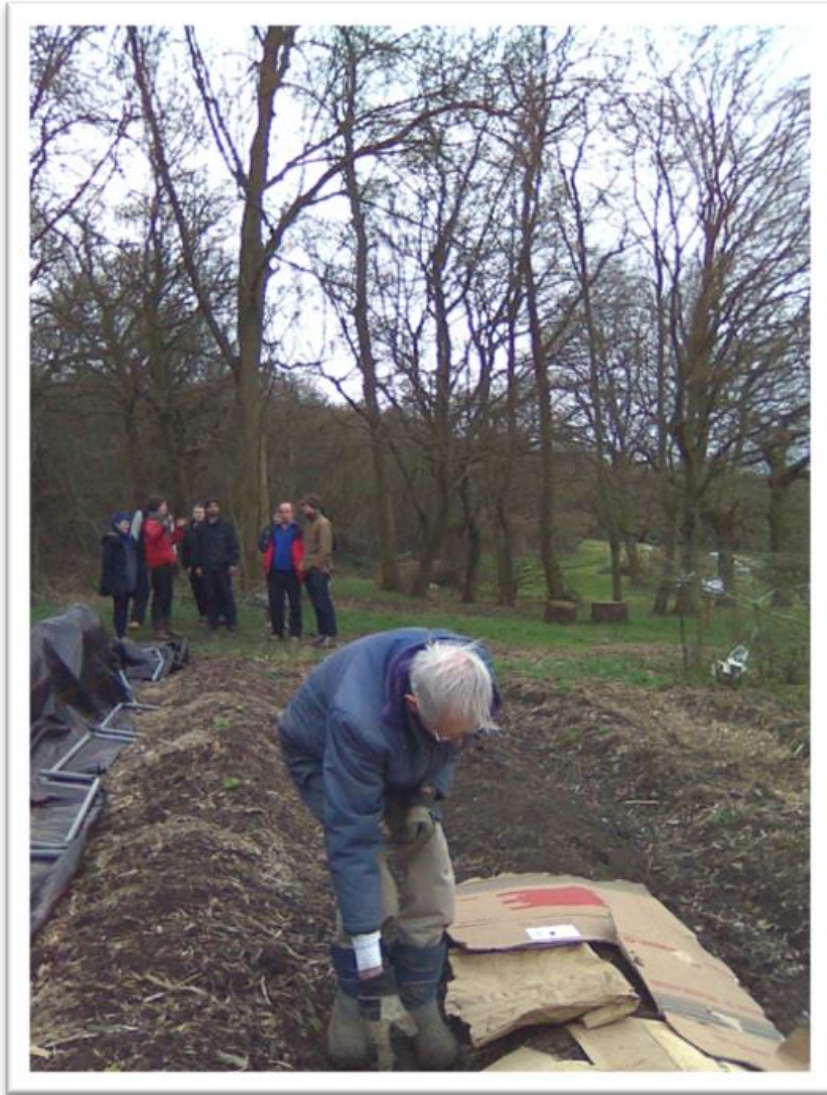
Figure 6.6 Nathan preparing soil in winter for new planting in spring

Figure 6.5 represents the aesthetic pleasure Marilyn felt she got from working with newly harvested food on site while figure 6.6 is a photograph of Nathan working in the kitchen garden on a cold day, demonstrating the important part the garden played in his routine, only missing a volunteer session if he was ill or on holiday. Figure 6.7 shows a photograph taken by Henrietta in the forest en route to the garden. The excerpt following the photograph is part of a discussion about the sense of wellbeing that is evoked from leaving the city to participate in work in a place protected to some extent from too much human involvement.

Figure 6.7 Henrietta's picture of the forest walk to get to the garden

Henrietta: ....if you're passing through this (forest) to then arrive at a place where we're then working with eco-systems and nature to produce something which is good for us, that is really nice.

Reginald: this is in the forest is it...(name) forest?

Henrietta: yeah...

Reginald: I think it really enhances wellbeing. You know if you're going from a concrete jungle and then coming to this place here it makes you feel really good. It is quite inspiring.

Henrietta: I really feel like that, you know I live in the middle of London and a lot of us, even if we're not in the busy-ness of the centre, it's like the suburban concrete environment and it is really special to come here and it's quiet. And there are lots of dog walkers around but it's...like wilderness to me is important. In my notes I was thinking about how...you know the winter has been very long and dark but actually there is nowhere I can go that is really dark because of all the streetlights...and it's like being disconnected from the natural cycles that we were talking about before because you've got this continuous human involvement, whereas being able to come up to a place like this and being pitch black and realising that's really rare and really precious is actually..

Marilyn: That's so special isn't it? And do you find... I find this is my healing day. I feel healed when I've been here.

Henrietta: That's interesting because you work so hard when you're here as well!

Marilyn: It is a hard work day but it's nice work. Yeah that few...the last two hours before getting it all ready and hoping it's enough – that is really stressful and getting everyone to... "Come on we've got to do...." That is hard but at the same time it's also lovely, you know, it's not awful".

The market garden and its surroundings were identified by all four Growers participants as a naturally occurring healing space and one that promoted wellbeing due to its physical characteristics and work structure. The idea of it being a space that promoted a sense of wellbeing both physically and mentally was acknowledged as a commonly held idea among many garden volunteers and staff during informal discussions on site, which provided a useful lens through which to observe and analyse some of the more complex attractions to the space. The geographical qualities of the garden, being surrounded by a wooded area and on a hill, meant that it projected a sense of being apart from the suburban area beyond the wood. This was one of the qualities participants valued as it enabled people to leave behind aspects of urban and suburban life that they felt impacted on their life in a negative way.

6.2.2 No Judgement: "People aren't so street"

The garden acted as a means for *escape* for some: those who have experienced a loss of confidence due to unemployment, long or short term mental health conditions or other problems that might alienate them and have an impact on their participation in social spaces. The community is diverse and focused on key occupations, ensuring that the emphasis is on achieving common objectives related to the garden or its community rather than highlighting differences or personal challenges. This creates a space for people to participate without fear of judgement regarding their physical appearance or behaviour, as Sacha, one of Marilyn's kitchen volunteers, points out in this extract:

Sacha: The people are nice. People aren't so street you know, they're just nice people. To me they remind me about Greenpeace and CND* and things like that.

Simone: And what do you mean by 'street'?

Sacha: It's just like kind of nasty and sly and worrying about what you look like and stuff like that, you know what I mean. On street level.

Simone: And you feel like you can come here and get on with it, you don't have to…

Sacha: You don't have to dress up or anything, you know what I mean, like? It doesn't matter.

*CND Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

There was agreement in the Growers group that the way the volunteer work groups were structured and the number of environments available to work in (ie. Kitchen, fields, vineyard, orchard, glasshouse, warehouse etc.), facilitated participation by providing a range of opportunities to engage through a number of occupations, group types, group sizes and environments.

The following extract reflects how the structure of the gardening tasks facilitated a sense of *control* through offering a variety of tasks to choose from to ensure people would be comfortable with the occupation they were to work on for half or a whole day, depending on their voluntary commitment. The final line highlights that, due to the voluntary nature of the work, it could be said that there was a higher level of autonomy than in paid work – the objectives are established for a group, not an individual, so the pressures of obligation and expectations of personal performance are reduced. Those not able to commit to a whole day are encouraged to commit to a shorter day of set hours to establish a routine, but this is done according to the ability and preference of the volunteer.

Marilyn: This young guy lives nearby and I'd really like him to come because he's afraid to go out on his own and he's really anxious. His mom came with him but he enjoyed it and he gets on with stuff but he's afraid…I don't know if he's agoraphobic or what but he'd love it here I think.

Simone: well but it sounds like that's what is nice about being here…you can be as chatty or not chatty as you like.

Henrietta: Yeah because you can choose to do a quieter inside job or a more busy outdoor job. There's a certain amount of control once you get here.

Reginald: That's one of the great things about it – you can pick and choose and there are different projects going on on a particular day and so you just say: "Ah I don't feel like doing that" or "I'm not in the mood" and it's accepted because it's not considered a 'job' you know.

Reginald was very independent and often took on work that could be done alone on the site. He appeared to value self-efficacy and control of his time more greatly due to his previous experience of employment, where he felt "*imprisoned*" by the hours, the long commute and the type of work. He viewed the experience of stumbling upon Forest Garden as an escape, a place he felt he had been searching for his whole career but had taken an unexpected deviation into office work, away from his interests and into an type of work that left him "*exhausted*" and unfulfilled.

The Growers participants discussed their *journeys* to Forest market garden in the second meeting together and they agreed to illustrate these journeys on a large white cloth which would eventually be shared with the rest of the volunteers. The image in Figure 6.8 below was of Reginald's journey. It depicted his *escape* from work he found meaningless alongside a long and tiring commute. The garden, its occupations and its people had facilitated a sense of freedom and new beginnings when he had stumbled across it after months of being at home following being made redundant at work. Reginald felt the garden had helped him to regain his sense of self and rediscover his love of science and nature.

Figure 6.8 Reginald's 'Journey' to participating in Forest Market Garden

Reginald: This is me a few years ago. I am at work but I feel imprisoned with less activity and less creativity and so the wall behind me is the concrete jungle and although there's a lot of colour around me – it's outside, and only a peripheral vision of myself, but behind the flashy tie, there lies a very worried and ashen-faced person which is full of worry because of the day to day work within society. And here I am and I've got redundancy and all the bars are behind me and I've broken the chains (laughs) but the thing is I have a long journey….it's three trains and a tube. Then this is the nature reserve around the corner. I was interested in helping out there and I met this lady, a neighbour who told me that there were volunteers wanted in Forest Garden so I came along and I saw (co-operative member) and that's how I got into Forest Garden.

Following the session in which Reginald and the other Growers discussed their journeys, Reginald approached me about his mood. It is the start of winter and he feared the onset of depression due to the poor light and the consequences this would have on his thoughts and level of activity. He felt that since he had been spending more time outdoors, his mood in winter has been better than the past – he was internally forcing himself out of the house to to join in activities at Forest Garden and this meant exposure to light and fresh air, allowing him to face a season he traditionally struggled to get through with more optimism. A reflection in my field notes from the day we discuss the journeys considers how working outdoors had had a clear impact on Reginald's life, but not completely altered the complex nature of his mood:

Reginald implied that the garden offered a safe space to reconsider his life when it was at a point of stasis and reflection. Other people, as Sacha said, referred to the garden being a safe space to think and grow ideas and skills for the future. Marilyn shared the following in relation to this idea:

Marilyn: And all the people in the kitchen say "we feel really safe" and they feel really safe to be open and just be… which is lovely isn't it. So it's

perfect for the people coming onto this course (long-term unemployed on medical grounds) that I'm doing now, so it's all this sort of togetherness and sort of springy branching out and growing sort of thing. And nurturing, which is really nice. It's a really nurturing environment, isn't it?

Gavin (one of the people interviewed later in the research process) reiterated this:

Gavin: At the end of 2011 I went through a period where I was really down, I'd been doing a job for a long time that I really didn't like. I couldn't seem to get away from it and in the end, I just ended up not doing anything. In early 2012 I enrolled in an evening course here and that was the first, even though I'd lived in (local area name) all my life basically I'd never seen this place or been here before. I can remember I was really blown away by the views…

I struggled a bit with the social side of it because I'd lost a bit of confidence over that period and it's a very different atmosphere to working on a building site, I'm sure you can imagine, but I've really grown to like that side of this as well. At first it was just the peace and quiet here and just doing the gardening work which I really enjoy doing.

These two excerpts indicate that it was a combination of the place and the characteristics of beauty and peace of the garden as well as there being a particular social milieu that added to the sense of security created by the space. Marilyn described the space not just as safe, but also as "*nurturing*" (see quote above), a word often associated with encouraging growth.

The next theme relating to *connection* builds on the Sowers theme that is similarly named and considers how connecting with the earth, the place and with others on this site is both challenging and rewarding for those who might struggle to find connection through other occupations and or in other contexts. The sense of safety on the site was important in establishing what allowed for new connections to be made, for people to reconsider personally established boundaries that kept them isolated or withdrawn. The theme discussion also highlights areas where there were disconnections or missed opportunities to reinforce healthy connections. The Growers group were clear that the theme of connection was not only related to people connecting with other people, but people connecting with the earth and that this ensured a raised consciousness of self, of others and of nature's cycles and changes.

6.2. Connections and Disconnections

> "… I think it's not so much what I do here, but what I get out of being here that's certainly … a connection with people who really care about stuff."
> (Henrietta)

The Growers group identified that making connections with other people and nature was an important reason for their presence and participation at Forest Garden. It was linked to a sense of belonging and identity by Henrietta when she claimed to have *"felt very disconnected"* following her move to London after university and subsequent difficult search for a local food growing community. The word *connection* appears repeatedly and is often related to a theme that

connection to a place, to the earth and to other people can enable establishment and maintenance of a sense of identity and purpose. The market garden was a place of connection for many and yet areas of *disconnection* were also identified and the group considered how these areas could be negotiated and improved upon.

6.2.1 Connection to Place

The connection to Forest Garden as a place is almost implicit as the group members volunteered to form this group in order to reflect on this. In deconstructing this sense of connection, it emerged that people are drawn to different parts of the site in which they had been able to make or contribute to or create an impact or parts that appealed to them individually. Where many are drawn to one part of the site, this area took on a meaning within the Growers group and it was seen as an area that connected people in shared appreciation. Places such as this that were more widely appreciated often became part of the geographical history or culture of the site. The *Magical Realm* was one such area, as previously discussed and the orchard, where the *Big Tree* resided, was another.

The large old oak tree has already been identified as important by members of the Sowers group, who felt it made them "*all look lovely*" as they posed beneath it (see Chapter5). Henrietta brought the orchard and its tree back into discussion with her photograph in figure 6.9 and reflection below:

> *Henrietta: "But also I was really interested because once I'd clocked it I was really taken by all the little trees coming up around it and it was this really great comparison of like…we've got this really ancient thing and we're cultivating new stuff here and it's all intermingled."*

Figure 6.9 Henrietta's picture of the ancient 'Big Tree' in the Orchard surrounded by saplings

Reginald felt that his knowledge of the history of the place improved his sense of belonging because he could see himself as part of the continuum of people working on the land, reclaiming it for those who felt connected to it and who could respect its changing boundaries, the wild parts that resisted human influence.

> Reginald: "…*you can actually see if you walk around the perimeter you can see different boundaries that have been changed. So there's a lot of history….it's a world in itself really, here.*"

The oak tree is a physical representation of the history of this forest site on the edge of London which is celebrated by those running the site as it gave the type of work being done in the garden context. Nathan had been keeping a diary and alluded to the history of the site and its past political meaning in one of his entries:

Sometimes when I am helping to work this 12 acres I think of the enclosures, loss of access to the principal way of making a living, loss of open space and connection to the natural world. This had a great impact on mental health as told by the celebrated peasant poet, John Clare: "Now this sweet vision of my boyish hours, free as spring clouds and wild as summer flowers, is faded all - a hope that blossomed free. And haft been once, no more shall ever be. Enclosure came and trampled on the grave of labours rights and left the poor a slave."

(Nathan's research diary).

Nathan contributes much through photographs, pictures and reflective writing to the group. His journey to the site was initiated through a referral from an agency assisting people struggling with the reduced occupational role, retirement or long-term unemployment brings, finding them supported volunteering opportunities.

Nathan: Well I retired in 2009 and um… I didn't want to give up work and just stop. I had to do other things. And I'd always had an interest in gardening going back for quite a long way, you know and... I went to an organisation called xxxxx, as I say, that does things for retired and unemployed people and…they brought me up here in a group and introduced me to this. And as I already like working with the soil anyway you know, this was an extension of that, and I became involved.

Nathan's biggest project has been to take the lead in improving the pond area as part of a permaculture design group, of which he was one of the only remaining members. The co-operative encouraged interest like this, particularly in parts of the site that needed development but that they did not have time to work on themselves.

Nathan's willingness to develop the pond area had a mutually beneficial connection, giving him a valued role on the site as someone who tended an often neglected area. The Growers' connection to the garden, whether the whole site or

part of it, appeared play an essential role in their sense of belonging. The geographical history of the garden provided an ongoing environment within which they participated week after week to become part of the *story* of the place by ensuring its maintenance and survival.

This work the Growers were involved in not only provided them with a role and sense of belonging to the people in the garden, but they described an ever increasing commitment or obligation to the non-human aspects of the garden too. This is noted in the poem documented on the Growers wall hanging by Nathan next to his drawing of the pond. The poem, called the Peace of Wild Things (by Wendell Berry), describes a physical, mental and spiritual connection to the earth.
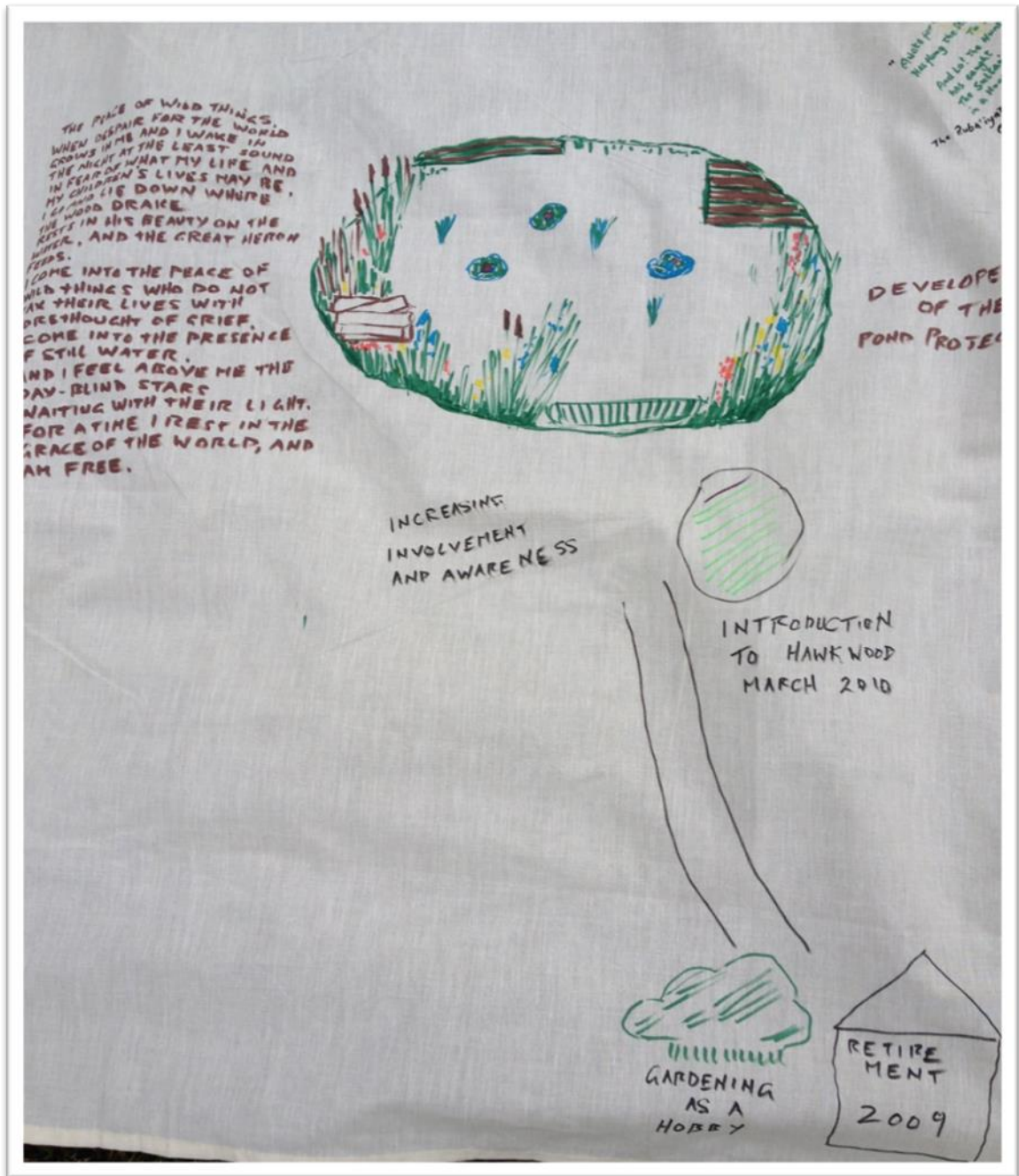
Figure 6.10 Nathan's journey to Forest Garden and the pond area he was developing

6.2.2 Connecting to the Earth

Connection to place is experienced as different to *connecting to the earth*. The attraction to Forest Garden appears to be a combination of connections to place, the earth and to people. Those expressing a desire to connect with the earth do not specifically require the connection to happen at Forest Garden but appreciate that this place provides opportunity for a physical interaction with nature.

Henrietta identified her need to reconnect with the earth through gardening following her move from Leeds to London as being the impetus for her journey to volunteering at Forest Garden.

> *Henrietta: … I was in Leeds to study but towards the end of my 3 year degree I got involved with an allotment site there ….it was totally over-run but a dedicated group were like let's take this back and garden it communally more. So it was reshaped into beds and uh it became this really exciting and really positive place and I …..was able to see the bounty of the summer and the allotment and it was just really nice and a place where …there was someone hanging out having meals over rocket stoves.. and it was just this really …idyllic…um…uh what's the word.*
> *I was kind of looking for a similar place where people were growing food and sort of working with the land and had a community attached to it and I kept coming across these little patches of people kind of working on them but... I felt very disconnected…. I was like London's so big there must be something going on in here but it's so big that I can't find it…*
> *That (a networking website) eventually led me to a Sunday open day. I came up on a Sunday and then this is me and Jay digging over the potato field in the kitchen garden (see figure 6.11) and it was this like cold day and we were just digging, digging over roots and I was like this is, this is it because it was right on top of the hill and it was this big sky and I was like ah this is really nice….*

Figure 6.11 Henrietta's journey to Forest Garden

Henrietta's personal need to connect with the earth near her new home arose from her knowledge of the benefits of this connection. She mentions pleasure at seeing the "*bounty*" of growth following her gardening efforts, of making new friends in the allotment in Leeds and the camaraderie of sharing a common purpose in shaping and nurturing a piece of land.

Henrietta was clearly also drawn to the physical and sensory nature of the work – the digging, the cold and the sense of openness from their vantage point on the hill.

Marilyn identified similar benefits, being a more recent member of the growing community at Forest Garden and the person leading the cooking session on Wednesdays where food is harvested, cooked by volunteers and eaten by everyone on site that day. Marilyn's appreciation of the sensory aspects of working

in the garden and kitchen was demonstrated by her colourful photograph sharing and the bright figures she drew on the wall hanging.

Marilyn worked with people who were being encouraged back into the workplace after years of being declared medically unfit to work. She identified that the garden had the potential to be a place where, through connecting with the earth, people can start to see a role for themselves and develop a sense of responsibility beyond their own needs.
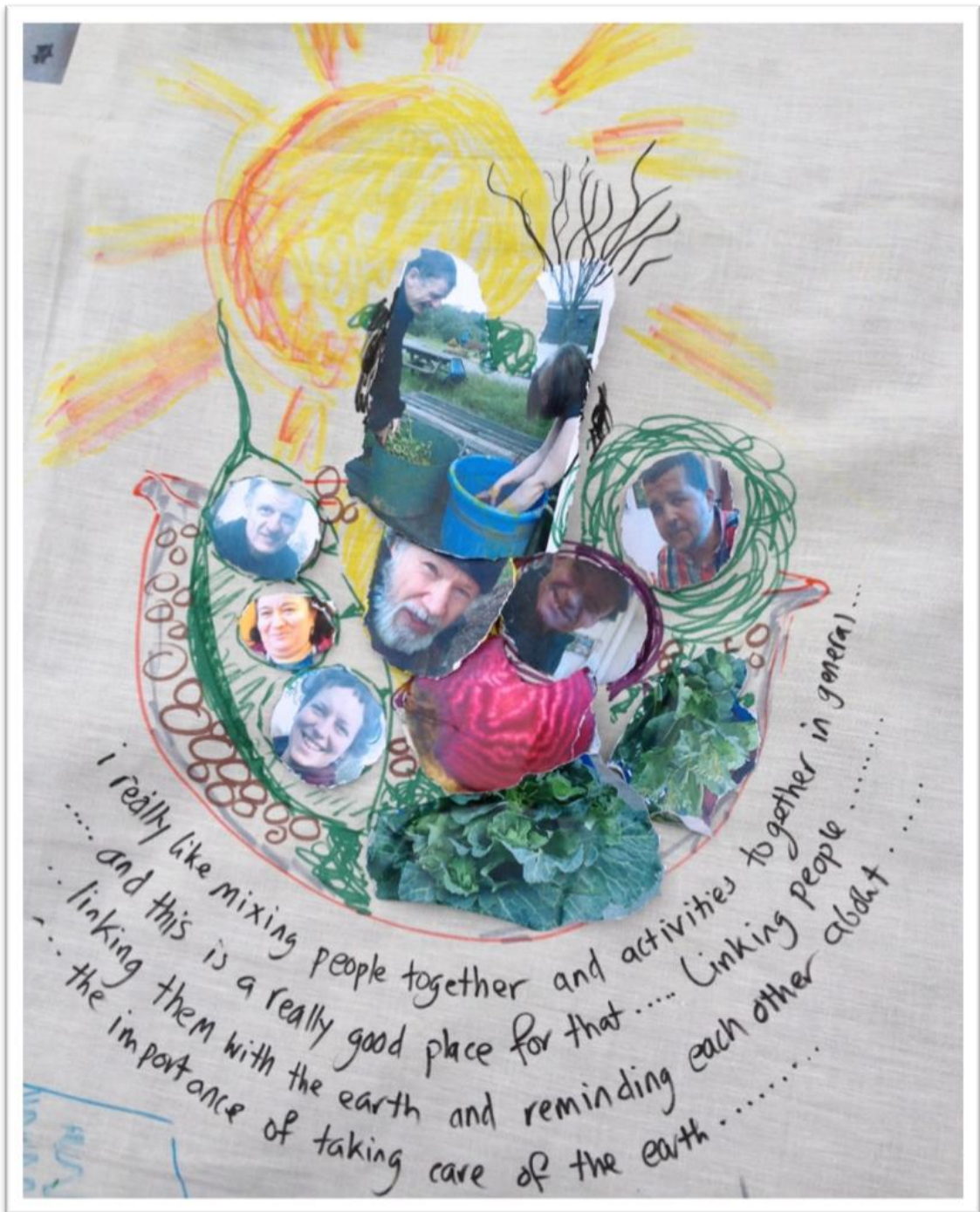
Figure 6.12 Marilyn's depiction of mixing people and activities together to make connections

2.3 Disconnections

The theme of *connection* is prominent in the transcripts and is possibly linked to the sense of safety and wellbeing mentioned in the first theme discussed by the Growers. Inevitably there was also discussion about areas of *disconnections* in the garden. These areas were small and cushioned by an understanding that the organisation was run by a small number of people in a not-for-profit context, thus removing blame from individuals but framing the considered disconnections more as recommendations.

Three areas of disconnection or discontent were identified by the Growers group in their reflection on being committed participants in the garden: Often not being able to complete a task one had started; not having an opportunity to reflect on their work or contribution with others at the end of the day; and feeling a lack of acknowledgement for work done at times.

2.3.1 Seeing the finished work

This first disconnection was voiced by Reginald, who spent much of his free time on site out of volunteer hours as well as attending volunteer sessions regularly as well. Reginald had, at the time of the research group, reached a point of having a number of tasks on site that he did independently. He is generally a loner and on reflection I realised I had not often seen him as part of one of the usual gardening work groups when I was volunteering. Reginald brought up one day that when he had first started volunteering he had found it frustrating that he had often not seen the end result of a task and experienced the satisfaction gained from standing back and viewing a completed end product. He mentioned this in one of the discussions:

> *Reginald: But what I like to do is start off a job and finish it. But an awful lot of jobs here…you don't seem to see the finished work and that is a disappointment but now I have a way of getting involved in the start and the finish and that gives me a lot of satisfaction when I see it finished and I've taken a part in it as well.*

Other group members agreed that this was sometimes a frustration and may have an impact on the continued participation of some volunteers; particularly those who only attended once a week and perhaps needed some sense of completion.

2.3.2 The 'Anti-climax'

Linked to not always experiencing the benefit of seeing a task completed was not having a designated time or space to reflect on the day's work. A space semi-formally promoted for reflection on the day's work and contribution it had made to the general growing plan, time to share a drink and consider the day's events. This was mutually considered something that might improve the experience of the day for many volunteers and embed a sense of belonging and purpose, particularly for new volunteers.

> *Reginald: Yeah because it's great sometimes when you're with somebody with the same mind-frame and you're talking about something that inspires you and you're on the same wavelength and then you finish up the day and it seems to be a tremendous anti-climax and that's it… so you're enjoying something and it's been taken away.*
> *Marilyn: It would be nice if there was like a social thing at the end of the day…*
> *Henrietta: There could be something outside…even out by the hammock in the summer so that there was a little bit of a move and just to sit and enjoy the day.*
> *Marilyn: it's a sense of belonging, isn't it...that's important to people*
> *Henrietta: it really is yeah…*
> *Reginald: It's quite interesting what you were saying with the other group (the Sowers)….that what they …liked was a biscuit and I have been thinking of that and I realise I can see exactly what it is…the social thing and sitting down and enjoying each other's company.*

The last of the 'disconnections' is linked to both the previous ones and is part of a theme that will be explored further in the interview findings.

2.3.3 'Acknowledgement'

The Growers emphasised that they themselves felt acknowledged for their work, but felt that this was due to their being more involved in individual projects; their work had obvious outcomes and so they received more frequent acknowledgment. They suggested an increase in frequency and demonstration of acknowledgment for the work the volunteers did, particularly for those who were not able to identify their own achievements due to low mood, poor self-esteem or cognitive limitations.

> *Marilyn: And I get a bit embarrassed when you all clap because I think "but you've all been growing it!"*
> *Reginald: I think…. it would be nice if there was a bit more acknowledgement for the growers at the end of the day…or…you know there is acknowledgement at the solstice days and seasonal celebrations but some people particularly those who can't see the long term stuff who might need a bit of encouragement regularly.*
> *Henrietta: yeah like if you're doing something like bed building which requires so much energy to put in but it probably doesn't get acknowledged that much does it, if you're thinking about acknowledging the cooker and the grower, but what about acknowledging the person who set up all that growing? And all those things are vital.*

They felt this acknowledgement would enable people to build up self-esteem and a sense of worth and that giving credit for individual and group achievement would increase motivation, particularly after difficult or unpleasant work.

Reginald: My feeling on it is that people have put an awful lot of effort in it and there are people who come here who have maybe been made redundant or are in-between jobs and they need that sense of worth which they have lost…

Marilyn: hmm…getting your confidence back.

Reginald: They get confidence and the fact that they are able to do something and that they can contribute in their own way and it would be nice if they got continuous acknowledgement of that and that is quite inspiring and the greatest remuneration that they could be given really because the need that.

Henrietta: That's really helpful…putting it in context in people's lives…that's really valuable.

_____

Reginald: And you feel you've achieved something…you go home and you're quite pleased with yourself. You feel productive. Because that's what you lose…

Recommendations to demonstrate acknowledgement were linked to improving the informal social opportunities after volunteer sessions and making the site more accessible to volunteers, encouraging them to visit parts of it for relaxation and mediation and not only formal gatherings or work-related tasks.

6.3 Awareness and Evolution

The Growers, through their discussion and unfolding drawings and photographs described how they had become much more aware of changes in nature and in themselves from working in the Forest Garden environment.

"then it (life) twists around and it turns in circles you know – you're back to where you started off and back to where you wanted to be"   *(Reginald)*

3.1 Cycles of Change

Members of the group and later those interviewed were struck by how much more aware they were of the impact of seasonal change and how cycles occurred in nature that reflected in their own lives. They felt that being so close to the changes occurring in the fields and in the forest on a regular basis had an impact on their own awareness of the temporality of nature as opposed to that of life in the city.

> *Reginald: …it seems to be that in permaculture (practice) there are slow, gradual changes and I found that when I came here first, I had so much energy and I wanted to see changes straight away and I was quite impatient about things. And then I realised that …it's about patience and time and life seems to take its course and now we have been waiting such a long time for the sun to come out and when it does come out, there is a flurry of activity. You see everything growing so well… but if you think about it, it's taken so much time and all I can see are the fruits, the results rather than the long slow process of waiting and now it's finally evolving. Like we have to sort of slow down a bit. That things will come and whatever will be will be, as they say.*

Earlier, Henrietta talked about feeling disconnected from natural cycles due to "*the continuous human involvement*" caused by lighting up the city and suburbs at night. This is another example of a natural rhythm only noticed through the opportunity to leave the centre of the city. Growers participants discovered that since they had been working on the site, they had wanted to change the way they managed their lives, their families and their gardens at home to reflect a slower-paced, more mindful nature-based rhythm.

Nathan notes how knowledge he had gained through the co-operative's permaculture approach to gardening had changed his own approach beyond the boundaries of Forest Garden:

Nathan: I think for me it all began with gardening. Just being involved in the gardening and becoming more and more aware of the bad things. When I first did gardening you wouldn't think much of using a chemical spray on the roses or putting down slug pellets and then you learn that that's not wise. You become aware of the implications and you stop doing it. It makes me feel more connected – I'm more aware of the natural world. I'm taking care not to do thoughtless things. Stopping, thinking, observing – becoming more conscious all the time.

Marilyn was one of the most emphatic about the change the site has brought her. Her journey to Forest garden was different to the others as she had been invited to take on the role of cook by one of the co-operative members when they met in other roles elsewhere as demonstrated in her 'journey' picture in figure 6.13 below. Marilyn embraced some of the changes the garden brought her:

Marilyn: And as a society we expect things really quickly, and because we've moved away from the land, we expect everything right now, like our tomatoes in December… personally I challenge myself to cook with whatever we've got, whereas when I first came, I'd buy a few things to add to it. But now I don't use anything that is not in the food box.

Figure 6.13 Marilyn's journey to Forest Garden

There was a clear acknowledgement of an increased mindfulness of nature's cycles and the realisations that came with stopping to observe these in action. The group members also appeared to have a growing awareness of the human impact on nature. This raised awareness in a place like Forest Garden that occurred quietly and non-invasively seemed to make them desire change and be wary of it at the same time. This excerpt from field notes is an example:

> *The participants in the Sowers group shouted their thoughts and feelings out loud and demanded things when they wanted them. They were messy and happy, grabby and grumpy, lost and found all at once and I felt exhausted, not confused at the end of a session with them. They shouted what they would like to change, even if it was just apples for chocolate biscuits, whereas the Growers seem tentative about change. They all have ideas of what they would like to add, change or improve on the site to make it more welcoming, accessible and rewarding for people, but perhaps they fear upsetting the status quo, or the co-op members, or even the essence of the place. Perhaps they feel that impressing their own selves upon this land, this place, would change it beyond recognition.*
>
> *SC Field notes May 2013*

The group members were, however, very active on the site and therefore likely to impart change slowly through their day to day work. Their hope was to impress their knowledge about natural resources and their skills upon a wider group and to broaden the community of growers, cooks and others who wish to participate.

6.3.2 Social change through gardening:

The Growers felt that they were in a perfect position in the garden to implement social change in the local community. They all had ideas of things they would like to do in order to increase awareness of nature and better management of our natural resources at a level that everyone could relate to it. Marilyn, through her harvest and cook sessions, Nathan through involving new people in his pond project and educating them about plant and water management in that way.

Henrietta was working with volunteers who had volunteered to help other volunteers who needed assistance to participate on site. This peer support system would enable the supporters to learn new skills and those being supported to have access to the same knowledge and skill development as the other volunteers.

Reginald was interested in making the site more noticeable to others by improving the signage and putting up explanations of permaculture and pictures of the garden further down the road as people did not know the garden was there. They all felt that once people were brought to the garden, some of the social change would happen automatically through people changing one or two things about their behaviour from what they had learned, like recycling, composting, not wasting resources or even growing their own food. Marilyn felt that the change needed was like a 'maturing' process, where people started to take responsibility for themselves and the earth:

> Marilyn: ….talking about how we are using things up and not thinking about it, how we want things now and it's got to be like this, and I was thinking that that is like a real teenager thing. And perhaps that is how we are as a society, without thought. And maybe we're moving on. And we need to move really slowly from teenager to adult as a world, as a society.

Implementing social change locally, where needed, as opposed to focusing on international projects was something people had understood as important in both the Growers group and when interviewing co-operative members. There was an emphasis on looking closer to home to work out what was going wrong in the world and trying, in a small way, to have a positive impact on this. Henrietta describes her studies in international development and then says:

> Henrietta: Yeah, but it's funny cos like you're looking so abroad and realizing and doing this like allotments stuff and saying to yourself 'now that's actually where so much change happens – at the community level', so I've been moving away from that international-looking stuff.

Later, Sarah, one of the co-operative members, revealed a similar realisation, brought on by a friend in Acra who asked her what was happening on the streets of London. She did not know the answer and made a decision to come back to the United Kingdom to work with communities closer to her home:

> Sarah: *I'd spent so much time in Acra, in Rio de Janeiro, in Hyderabad, in all these different places taking part in really front line, social justice activism but I couldn't answer that question… about the streets where I was based…. and the place that I could see those connections and that story unfolding was where I had my allotment (in South London)… that's where the answer to that question was.*

The transition from the Sowers group, who brought up both enlightening and complex issues of participation and choice, to the Growers group, who explored themes developed by the Sowers and their own concerns about the environment and peoples' behaviour in greater depth, was a cyclical and reflective process. An overall outcome was that people were being brought closer the earth and this enabled a more conscious interaction with people and nature, development of occupational roles people found fulfilling and productive and provided a safe enough space for people to build a community that, together, could consider themselves a base for small but powerful social change.

Marilyn depicted this well with her picture in figure 6.14, of an earthworm that had escaped onto some cement and was found by someone in a group of people who had lost their confidence and roles through long term illness and unemployment. They had spent the day considering their potential to return to working in the garden or in other places that might link them back into their community.

> Marilyn: *And then we found the little worm and they said "oh I don't think this should be in here and he was right and so that's a really nice symbol of what went on… the whole thing really about people and community.*
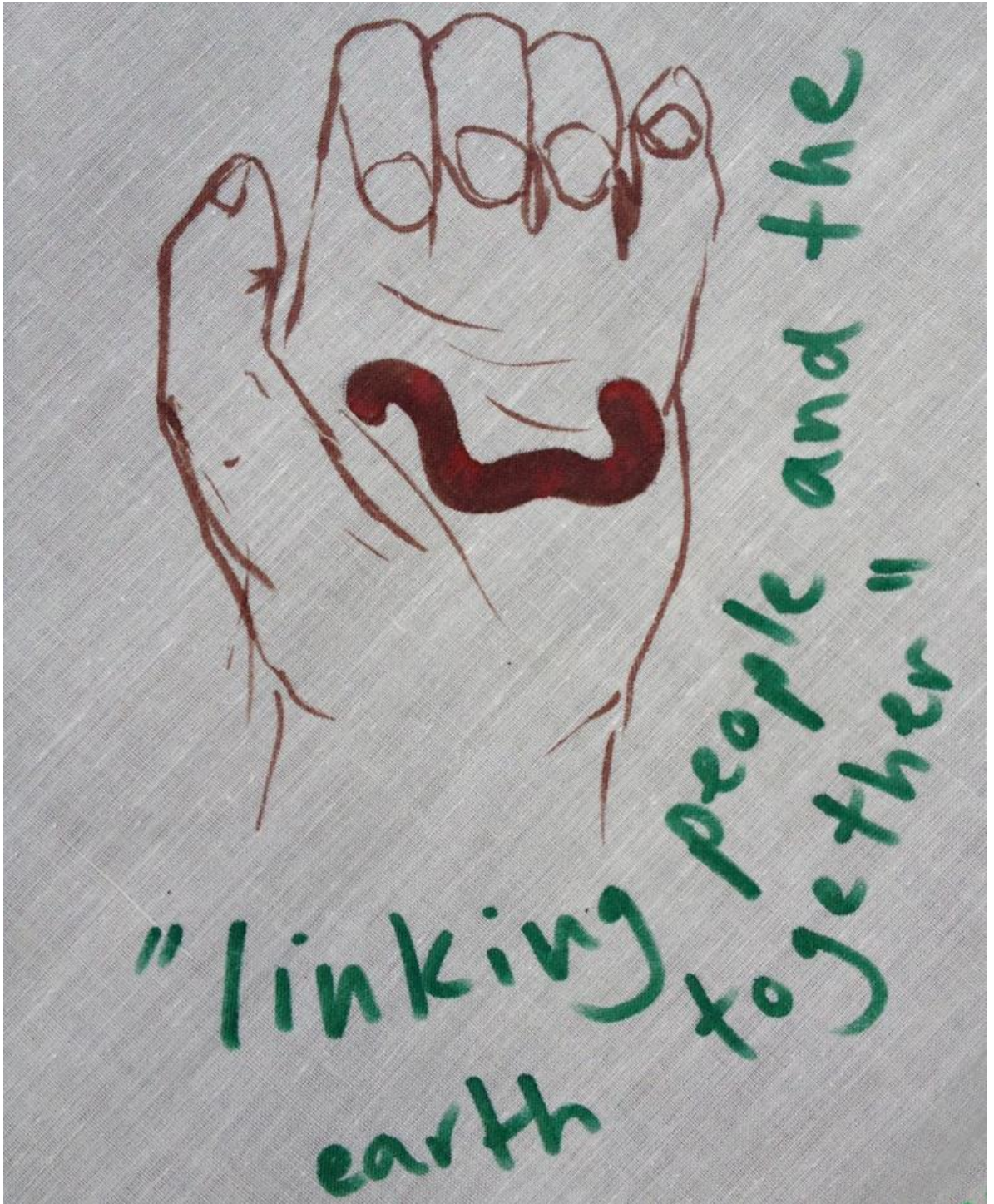
Figure 6.14 Marilyn's picture of the earthworm being returned to the earth by her group

The Growers group presented the key ideas they felt had emerged from their discussions, experiences and artwork to the rest of the volunteer and co-operative gardening community at Forest Garden one lunchtime. The projects they had mentioned as areas they felt personally committed to were discussed with and followed through by individuals with the support of the co-operative and other volunteers, although the outcomes were not recorded due to the timeframe of the research.

Chapter 7: Interview Findings

The PAR groups in their reflection and action cycles generated layers of information relating to the essence of the Forest Garden; the complexity of choices made to get to the garden and participate in growing tasks; the space that enabled connection with nature and other participants; the consciousness raised by the opportunity to work closer to the earth; and the sense of community and purpose gained from growing food together.

The interviews added context to some of the inner layers of information already laid down by the PAR groups and also added a final layer of detail, giving insight into the management of the garden, the co-operative's hopes for the future and challenges they faced in making the garden a resilient and sustainable place to grow food and social change. Interviewees have already been introduced in the methods chapter but the diagram below in figure 7.1 serves as a reminder about key participation details of each person. Each interviewee added to the core themes from their own perspective, having been involved for a different length of time, at different stages of the organisation's development and in different capacities.
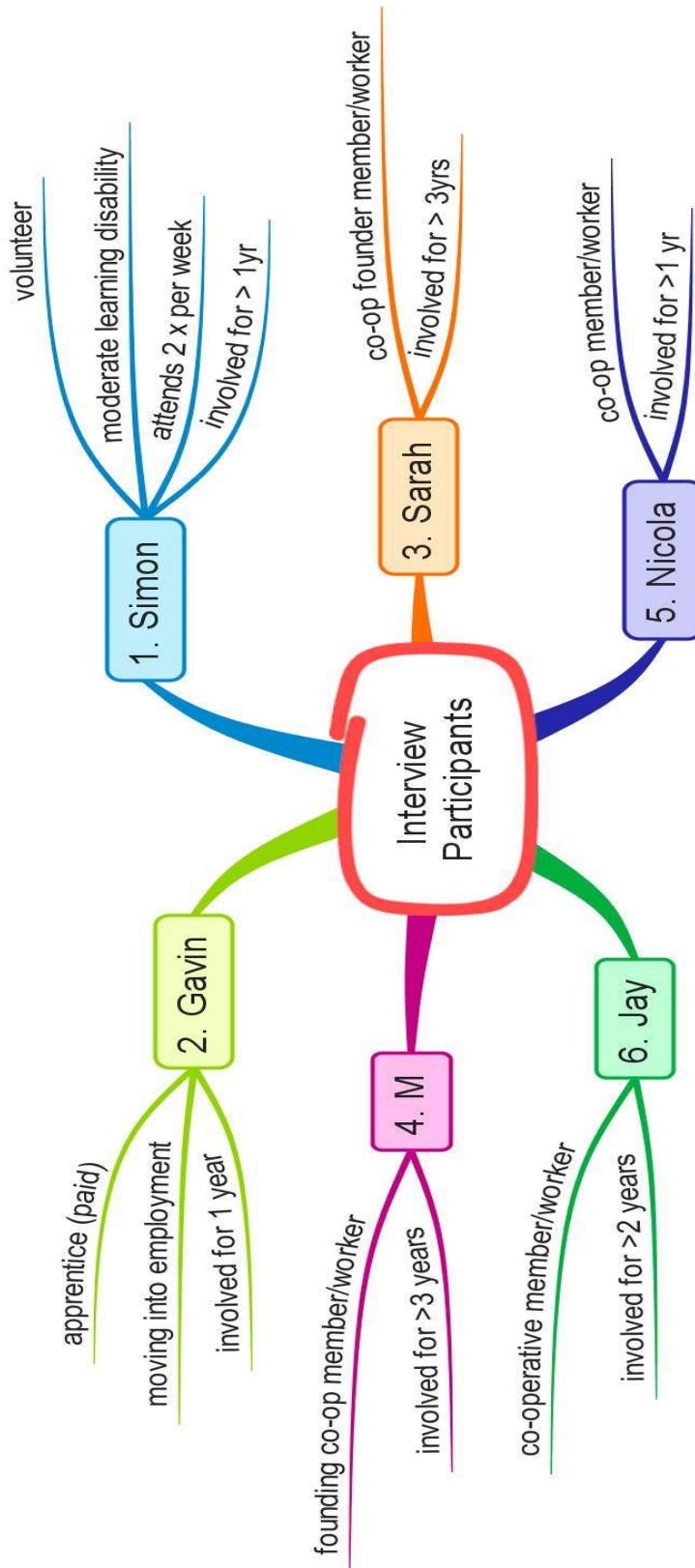
Figure 7.1 Summary of Interview participant roles and involvement in Forest Garden

7.1 Interview Themes

The interviews resulted in six core topics as demonstrated in figure 7.2. The first theme introduces the concept of policy versus philosophy and describes the understood decision-making processes, the leadership and one of the organisation's main objectives, to remain 'autonomous'. The second theme explores the impact of running an organisation based upon a shared philosophy and describes how this can be both attractive and inclusive as well as exclusive in some cases. The third theme considers the realities related to running an organisation in which environmental sustainability and social inclusion are important but resources are limited. The fourth theme describes areas of work or relationships that work well and should be acknowledged and those that could work better if elements of them were acknowledged more.

Finally there is evidence relating to the garden being naturally therapeutic in its ability to accommodate a wide variety of people with a range of abilities and the counteracting theme of 'balance' which demonstrates the organisation's challenge to keep the garden both sustainable and therapeutic, a place to grow food and also to grow human capacity.
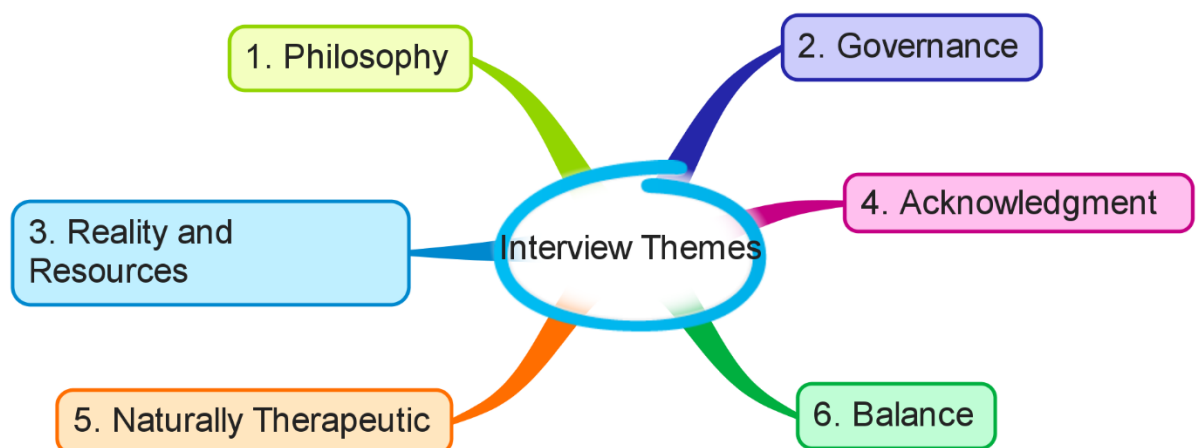

Figure 7.2 Core Interview Themes

7.2 Philosophy: "Everything we do is values-led"

The background to the philosophy of Permaculture has already been discussed in the literature review. The focus of the interviews was to find out whether people felt the philosophy had an impact on their practice on a day to day level, what effect running the organisation according to the ethics of *Earth Care, People Care and Fair Shares*, had on the people involved and the surrounding community.

The co-operative members interviewed referred to the permaculture ethics as their default position when they needed to consider a decision or a challenging situation, they would consider it in context of permaculture ethics and principle and try to align their decision according to that. What was aimed for in the organisation was to strike a balance between providing space for local, well-managed food production, space for a wide range of people to learn and develop themselves and an awareness of good governance and sharing of ethical trading and growing ideas. In his interview, M said:

> *"…the ethics is really what I always come back to because that's like a simple thing to come back to and then start off from again. The whole people care, earth care, fair share and the fact that it's not one or the other it's actually… they've all got to be there. But that actually if you create the right space that should happen simultaneously…you know, they should just happen."*

Another co-operative member commented on the fact that there were a couple of written pieces of governance that could be called policies within the organisation, but that even these were based upon a common understanding of values:

> *"Those (permaculture) ethics dictated the policies therefore if we refer to the policies, it's just a reminder of the ethics." (Nicola)*

It was also considered that people working in the co-operative probably held similar beliefs, to an extent, before they came to work in the garden. This made decision-making easier and instilled an unspoken trust between co-operative members, that the permaculture ethics and the common organisational vision would be considered when

decisions were made:

"I guess because of the way we operate, where people have quite a lot of autonomy in their roles, we don't have to be collectively making consensus decisions all the time about the day to day stuff. I think because the shared values are so deeply held within the organisation, in a way that makes it quite easy."

(Jay)

The Forest Garden was established with permaculture at its core when the co-operative were successful in their first three year lease. The co-operative members developed the site using permaculture design principles and techniques and now that it was established there was a sense from some that the values behind permaculture had become unconscious daily practice:

"It's hard to imagine what it would be like without (permaculture)... I mean it's not necessarily something we talk about day to day… but I think that stuff carries through, I think we do talk about what we do in terms of the ethics and I think they're so embodied in the values that I think that's there… We're not there quoting them (permaculture principles) because of reading this or that which we could be but I think it could be a bit 'naff' - fun for some people. I think it's there and maybe that's cause of so much permaculture work going in at the beginning." (Jay)

7.2.1 Vision and Commitment: "The revolution is not easy…" (Sarah)

The founding members of the Forest Garden Co-operative felt that their vision was embodied by permaculture and that in using this, it would provide a framework for the visions they held for the future of their work, to share information and skills about food growing and healthier, more sustainable living and develop relationships at a 'grass-roots' or community-based level:

"We have to recognise that there is a whole tranche of our society, our communities, that aren't even considering what goes onto their plates and

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how it's affecting their health and wellbeing…"
(Sarah)

_____

"There is a willingness within the people… to actually realise that – what a good relationship is and realise that 'I was respected there and I can give a bit of respect back'. I think people are being pushed, we're all being pushed further away from… a positive notion of human community and I think when people suddenly experience what human community can be, a little bit of faith is restored. People want to be part of it…."
 (Sarah)

And from another founding co-operative member:

"What we try and do here is through 'doing', through the plants and, you know, we are creating a space for people as well and it has, I think …. something equalising and levelling about it…. and gardening it is… its quite, everyone gets dirty, everyone comes from a tradition, whichever cultural tradition they are from of farming, food growing, cooking, eating, you know, that's where a lot of growing spaces, on allotments there's very different wealth, class, anonymity and yet there're no 'better', there's just 'different'…." (M)

The risk of running a philosophy-based organisation that was non-profit and constantly aware of finite resources is that there is a reliance on a high level of commitment from both staff and volunteers. For some, the commitment was a small price to pay for the benefit of working in an organisation that supported and promoted their beliefs.

"It's a nicer place to work, people have more ownership. If you were financially at risk in other organisations you'd jump ship wouldn't you? Or if things were difficult you'd just look for something else. I think people have a different level of commitment to this place." (Jay)

Others felt the combination of commitment alongside carrying out *someone else's*

vision on a day to day basis was sometimes overwhelming if you had not developed the personal or professional tools enough to do so. This highlights the importance of the tenuous balance between the ethics of *people care* being as important as *earth care*. One co-operative member who came in to the organisation once the market garden had been established for over two years said:

" And you really have to throw yourself into the work, I think everyone who has come new to a job here has realised that you have to completely commit to it and throw yourself in…it does consume you. If you've got the work, the ethics and the dynamics, it can be a lot to manage." (Nicola)

And

"Yeah, and I think being in that situation can feel quite pressured and I definitely felt that. Like I'm meant to be 'magicking' up something but I'm actually still just very much trying to work out the day to day. You are meant to be working on the same level as the people around you as there is no hierarchical structure" (Nicola)

The consensus was that a key ingredient to success in a philosophy-based organisation with little external funding and a large intention for social change, was commitment. Whether you found this easy or difficult, it was essential:

I think it will stretch us, and that's another thing that's a challenge, we're constantly stretched, it will stretch us…. you know the revolution is not easy. If you're committed…to be part of the change in your own tiny way, we live in difficult times, and you've got to love it and give to it… (Sarah)

Keeping sight of the overall vision was also important in ensuring that the organisation was growing in a direction that met the organisation's objectives. The community-based part of the project, liaising with local council members and ensuring people and organisations in the borough were communicated with,

although an important part of the vision, often shifted priorities and threatened ideals:

> *"The danger then is getting involved in a very local project that you sort of become a bit insular and you don't talk about those big things anymore. And it is a danger because actually you've got to keep on talking about what inspired you to come here in the first place…. keep reconnecting with that bigger vision." (M)*

7.2.2 Philosophy and politics: "we wear our beliefs lightly" (M)

The impact of the philosophy and the vision the organisation had positioned them politically 'left' of many in the local area. People attending the garden often held similar standpoints, however as the garden worker population grew, this became less obvious. There was a constant question in my mind as researcher about whether expansion of the organisation and their desire to connect and work with local government and to ensure an inclusive population of volunteers and workers, would dilute the common vision for social change. How does a small organisation balance holding strong ideas of inclusive participation, organic gardening and social responsibility recruit and retain a wide range of workers and volunteers and carve itself a base so peacefully within political haven of conservatism?

M, one of the co-operative members, felt that this was not as much of a problem as one might imagine – that *valuing the edges* was, in fact, part of the philosophy of permaculture, and therefore not a threat to the vision. He said that "*suburbs are quite an interesting battleground for that kind of idea of the 'edge'… the urban thing*" and that one could hold beliefs and allow others to hold theirs in the same space, without this being threatening to anyone or the overall aim of the project:

> *"The perception I get is actually quite a lot of people on board, who kind of all work, with all different views and we kind of manage to wear our beliefs lightly enough that people can still be work with us without feeling they having to toe the line..."* (M)

This perspective of remaining true to philosophy and vision while working closely with others who may differ in belief or action, holds true when magnified beyond individuals and into local government and beyond. The Forest Garden co-operative have managed to grow enough to influence the local borough council's *food growing strategy*. Making these partnerships has not limited their ability to promote their own aims; it has in many cases offered them more opportunity to talk about them. I expressed concern that at some stage there may be a compromise, as did M, who reflected on the co-operative's cautious but successful interaction with local councillors and influential bodies.

> *"There's always that danger of sort of co-option, of being used in some sort of political game and we're sort of playing the game at the moment and, you know, I wonder if there's a danger there…..”* (M)

Remaining autonomous, while being vigilant of 'co-option', has been one way the co-operative have managed to be successful in recruiting a wide range of volunteers and make the site available to a number of groups of people who might be subject to more stringent policies in the national health service (NHS), correctional services or local government social services. Balancing a desire to grow and be more inclusive while remaining independent of rules that govern practice in referring organisations may be more difficult to manage in future without firmer policies to safeguard the organisation and the people included in it. How much would an influx of policy and enforced administration change the nature of this organisation?

7.3 Governance: "more ownership, less blame"

Governance was discussed on many levels; what influenced the way they managed the organisation; the way the co-operative was led and whether there was enough infrastructure to lead and manage in the way the co-operative aimed to do so, in a democratic and non-hierarchical way.

7.3.1 Remaining Autonomous: "We've been very careful about not making alliances that could turn round and bite us in the back"

The co-operative acknowledged their need for partnership in order to be successful and to expand their own influence, however they were very clear about the fact that all relationships they forged needed to be one of shared investment.

> *"The Council relationship is quite interesting, we definitely value our relationship with the council, they're not a bad council, but …. (we have) been sort of quite specific that we'll only work with MPs and politicians who come to us and bring something we can share…. We've been very careful about not making alliances that could turn round and bite us in the back."*
>
> *(M)*

Sarah reiterates this, but in relation to people who approach the organisation with ideas that would potentially expand the organisation's existing agenda, but would entail finding funding to employ further workers. She highlights that although the idea might be appealing to the co-operative, people would need to consider how they would be funded and logistics of the project prior to the co-operative approving it.

> *"And, I think that it's a consequence of how the organisation is set up, so it, you know my hope is that it invites people to believe that things are possible then the reality is that ability, capacity and where-withal to bring that forward is limited and lacking and so it's a curious output from being structured the way we're structured, an autonomous organisation." (Sarah)*

The focus on retaining autonomy appears to play a key role in the organisation's goal to be self-sustaining and to weather political and social trends. The decision-making in the co-operative as a group is said to be democratic and the leadership horizontal, ensuring all involved as paid workers, have input into planning for the future. When explored, there was some discussion about the influence of those not paid, but with personal investment in the organisation, such as apprentices, trainees and volunteers. I was left questioning how these people had their say in

the organisation and whether there was a hierarchy of influence when decisions needed to be made.

7.3.2 Governance and authority: "a self-managing organisation with a flat structure"

The co-operative was said to be run as a *flat structure*, with no specific leader, no hierarchy and a democratic decision-making process. It was acknowledged by all co-operative members interviewed that this was the ideal and that it was sometimes difficult to achieve, particularly as the co-operative's numbers were expanding and new members might have less knowledge of the organisation and therefore be less equipped to make informed decisions:

> *"There are definitely people who have a bit more swing in the co-op because of either they have been around for a long time or the fact that people just really respect them and they know a lot or the fact that they're a bit dominant in other ways, like good and bad…."*
> *(Jay)*

This had been my own experience right at the start of the research. I had proposed a plan at the start of one or two of the research sessions and these had been overruled in favour of different activities. This had turned out to be positive for the research as, on reflection, it allowed for a more realistic process, however the interaction had given me insight into the unspoken hierarchies within the organisation:

> *"On a personal level, I need to learn a bit of resilience. There is something in the dialogue between X and I that often makes me feel as if I am missing something, or am not understanding something properly. It shakes my confidence and I wonder if this is done subconsciously, to keep me at a distance. I can't decide if that is because of my role as researcher, or if that is the way with all new people taking on roles within the organisation. Does this ensure that new staff know their place in an un-declared hierarchy?"*
> *(Field notes, 2012)*

Many of the interviewees commented on whether they felt there was a natural hierarchy within the co-operative or within the organisation as a whole and most reflected honestly that some aspects of the structure had the potential to lever more authority, and thus reduce the sense of equity felt throughout the organisation at different levels.

"I'm in the kind directors' hub which is the people that have been elected to represent the co-op in those decisions but the way we've structured it is we're making decisions based on conversations we've had with other colleagues, so we're not just elected to make the decisions. I don't know how it feels for other people, do they feel if there's an authority there, it's not meant to feel like that but it's hard to say."

(Jay)

And from Sarah:

"...actually what keeps the wheels turning, is just having the co-op and so the essence of the co-op is they are the paid employees… there are people who are paid to work at Forest Garden but are not in the co-op, and there is a hub within that, there are seven people in the hub that are the governors, the managers, basically that's our board of trustees, if you imagine it traditionally and we just look at spreadsheets and strategy… So that's effectively in some ways, the radical part, the people who are governing the organisation are the people who work for the organisation. There's no chairs coming from outside."

This nod towards hierarchical authority was necessary for increased efficiency as the organisation was expanding and not all areas of discussion were of interest to everyone in the co-operative. This was mitigated by consultation, both formal and informal, however it was acknowledged that this did not always work and may, on the outside, represent a higher level of authority.

One staff member commented that at times, being in a co-operative setting made proposing new ideas more challenging as there were more people to convince and the correct time or place to make the proposal was more ambiguous:

"… actually if you had an idea and you already had the commitment and the responsibility to take it forward, there might be more clarity about where you take that (in a hierarchical structure) and it would be more a yes or a no. I mean like you'd still have to win over the boss and convince him that it was a good idea, whereas in the co-op you need to work it through with a bigger group of people…" (Nicola)

The co-operative workers were both approving and critical about the management of the co-operative and described it as a fluid structure; there were continuously changes being made to it to reflect the expanding and maturing nature of the organisation. None were so critical that they felt they would change the structure completely and most acknowledged that more could be done to incorporate the views of those not part of the co-operative, such as the trainees and volunteers.

Trainees and even apprentices, although much more a part of sphere of influence on a day to day basis than volunteers, did not necessarily have more authority than volunteers, even though they had a specific role in the organisation and were generally leading a task, rather than being led. Some trainees and apprentices, in fact, felt that they had less authority than some longer term, more involved, volunteers, due to their own sense of self confidence:

"I think the part of it I find hardest still and it's something since I've started that I'm more involved in is supervising volunteers but I know I've got support with that but it's just, I find it hard to tell people what to do and when they're doing something wrong… I find the most difficult side of it is say there's somebody who's been volunteering long term, a lot longer than me, and they go and do something like tread on a bed or something, I find that really hard." (Gavin)

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The group for which there was no real evidence of representation in meetings or via formal feedback channels, was the general volunteer group. This was the largest workforce, however, as it was fluid, self-motivated and not tied by any written commitment to the organisation, it was also not afforded a formal voice in the future of the garden or the organisation as a whole. This, although skirted around slightly, was the reality of the situation, although it did not appear to make volunteering any less attractive and the volunteer workforce, far from dwindling, was increasing. Self-critique of the lack of authority given to volunteers was touched on by two of the interviewees, with one explaining the scope of involvement people could have in the organisation. He justified the need to have a consistent decision-making body in order to manage the range of involvement and ensure the organisation moved forward as a priority over giving a formal voice to all participants at all levels:

"…volunteers have input and there is a suggestion box. There is no actual volunteer's forum as such or any way in which volunteers can have any actual decision making power but then neither has it been demanded, so, yeah. I suppose, you know, what we say, going back to … what the co-op would say is that Forest Garden is a network of people interested in food growing. A network or a family of people that includes people who might have come to the stall…there are loads of people involved at every level, you know, crop share growers from the outreach gardens, volunteers here, various people, we all consider ourselves part of this kind of broad … thing. 400 people on the email list, that sort of thing and then there are degrees of involvement and at the core are the workers co-op who are the decision-making body and the governing body….

…again, if you came from a very critical angle you could easily kind of pick away at it and say well – its volunteer labour and some are getting paid and some people are volunteers…."   *(M)*

Early on in the research process, on a particularly difficult morning during the PAR process when I had disagreed with staff when deciding on an accessible and meaningful task that suited both the growing plan and people with learning disabilities, I had a glimpse of the organisation from the critical angle M mentions

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above. I realised that until that day I had been convinced only of the win-win aspect of volunteering on the site and realised then how challenging it must be for the co-operative to hold this space for volunteers to an extent that people always felt rewarded by mere participation. That day, I had seen the complexity of managing largely unskilled labour alongside seasonal work plans, under-resourced physical environments and high expectations of work satisfaction and had understood their human need to retain a level of authority, even if it betrayed the image of democracy:

> *"I feel a distinct change of engagement with the site take hold of me. It is more critical and even a bit prickly. I feel that the work is hard and the pay is poor and people run it on their passion and beliefs. The co-operative staff rule. Although, if they didn't rule, how would they keep the philosophy going and maintain the feel of the place. I feel frustrated and a bit sad - somehow like I've gone backstage and seen all the unpainted set pieces and the actors all sitting around smoking."*   *(Field notes, 2012)*

7.3.3 Managing autonomy: "Self-management is not for everyone"

The management of staff was an area the co-operative felt they had a framework for, ensuring that all co-operative members, non-co-operative staff, apprentices and trainees had two nominated colleagues to check in with regularly for work and pastoral issues and that they had a formal appraisal on a yearly basis. There was a strong focus on *self-management* and self-appraisal, in which people were expected to plan and manage their expected work output according to the time they had available. They also had to suggest tasks for volunteers to be involved in and make decisions about what needed to be done prior to volunteer involvement. Some of the workers managed this well and some professed to find this difficult, again due to working off another's plan or expectations:

> *"And I guess that's the pressure I put on myself, when you're working with people who are really strong at that, it's almost like, it's kind of that's the benefit of having people who are good time managers...them having some*

input into people's roles, supporting them managing their time, you know....
I think if you're going to set targets as a group, you then need to work as a
group to manage everyone's time to meet that, rather than just saying, well
that's the target, we're all going to manage our own time and like… get
there." (Nicola)

Co-operative staff acknowledged that there were problems with the existing framework; that support meetings did not always occur when they should; and that some people found self-management difficult, preferring more guidance, particularly at the start of their jobs. Both issues above were related to staff being under great demand when they were on site during the day, managing a large population of volunteers and the upkeep of a large garden and facilities. Meetings, particularly for individual support, were often left until the end of the day or after hours. A key meeting in the morning to plan the day and ask questions was an essential point of contact for people, although not all staff attended these meetings, creating a potential two-tier support system. It was clearly an area that concerned people, although the solutions did not appear obvious:

"I would place a lot of value on the team structure so those check-ins in the
morning, I think that the limiting factor, I think we've actually relied quite a
lot on them, but I think the limiting factor is that not everybody is involved in
those. I mean we run an appraisal structure so everybody has two peer
bodies and there is a formal appraisal and an annual appraisal but one of
the limiting factors is that we realised that people aren't getting more regular
support. ……more regular feedback actually, unless they seek it out."
(Sarah)

And

"How do you teach people that self-management stuff because …not
everyone does come with it and I think that's where we, as a co-op, that's
where we …struggle to be a good employer but at the moment we're in a
position where you have to be self-managing to be in the co-op and we
really struggle if people can't and its really different for everyone. I think

> *that's the most difficult thing we've got going on. It's how to make people feel well supported… without it putting too much on their colleagues…"*
>
> (Jay)

The only solution to be found was to find time for training of co-operative staff on areas of management that they might not have much experience of. This was something that appeared to be avoided due to the pressing priorities of day to day work issues and that there was no designated 'department' for human resources within a small co-operative organisation.

> *"…some colleagues have been in management positions before in previous work, so you know what it means to support somebody, others have never done any of that, so to expect all people to be able to is not going to happen, so we have to look at how we train…. need to be trained, so again, it's a curious sort of side line to being a co-op is that in a bog standard hierarchy, the human resources team would be a crew of qualified human resources in theory people. We haven't' got that but we've got to make sure that people are qualified to conduct self-appraisals with colleagues in a way that is supportive and progressive for people."*   (Sarah)

The requirement for a self-managing workforce, within limits, also had an impact on how inclusive the co-operative could be as an employer. This affected their goal of creating progression within the organisation, from volunteer to trainee or apprentice and then worker.

> *"I think it comes back to then some of our engagement and inclusion work that staff members will have mental health difficulties and workers co-ops are classically not well structured to deal with that. When a colleague is having a sort of unstable time, we do rely on people being quite autonomous and I don't think that's necessarily enabling for people's sort of mental well-being"*   (Sarah)

Autonomy, both as an organisation and as individual workers was a highly valued trait, although this appeared to be in contrast to the sense of connectedness and

community people felt when participating as a volunteer or learner. The expectations on workers appeared to shift remarkably although some consideration or mitigation was offered if the worker had openly acknowledged a fear or condition that might impact on performance. Gavin had expressed a fear of the social aspect of working in a big, busy community garden and had outlined his concerns about being able to lead tasks. He had received both support and time to adjust to the transfer from volunteer to worker and felt his experience was largely positive:

> *"But, all the co-op workers here they understand when people need a little time and space and I'd say they gently encourage people to get involved, not just in the work, but in the social side of it as well."*   *(Gavin)*

A hierarchy of autonomy, authority and support offered did appear to exist within the co-operative and its paid and unpaid staff and volunteers, although this hierarchy was not necessarily formal and emerged due to skill, status and confidence levels as well as ability and desire to direct the organisation towards certain clear goals. The co-operative aimed for an administratively flat structure, ensuring equal pay and employment conditions, but even this was difficult due to the growth of the organisation, those experienced enough to guide it and the numbers of people required to keep decision-making creative and manageable:

> *"… it's interesting reflecting on when we talked about the co-op being a hierarchy but at the same time because, as a core team… there's clearly that kind of sense of where people are.. and there's that kind of equality there in terms of respect of power, and people, and it's a mixture of youngish and older people and men and women and you know…"*
>
> *(M)*

The hope appeared to be that encouraging mutual respect, acknowledgement of time, contribution, progression and other value-driven elements would reduce the perception of hierarchy and increase the idea of a participatory approach to managing the garden, although it was clear that some areas needed development in order for this to work.

7.4 Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement of the intangible aspects of participating in the garden site and working with the organisation was something people discussed throughout the interviews. Out of the reflective process of being interviewed came the contradictions, the surprises and the honesty of finding experiences that were challenging and fulfilling, uncomfortable and inspiring at the same time.

7.4.1 Structure and Freedom

> *"It just felt really peaceful here, and everyone I spoke to seemed really nice and laid back."*
>
> *(Gavin)*

The impression given by the Forest Garden when one first arrives to volunteer or spend the day on the site is that there is a wide element of choice to what you can do, many people to talk to and share with and a vast space to explore. As time moves on, if one volunteers regularly, one realises that most of this is true, however there is a solid structure built into when and how things can be done in order to ensure that the garden and the people have an equal share of attention and are equally cared for.

> *"Nicola: Yeah… I think it does give such a relaxed feeling from the outside BECAUSE it's so structured. I don't think I've ever worked anywhere with as much structure as (Forest Garden)! It is so structured and that's why everyone looks so relaxed….like it's 1:30, we know exactly what's going to happen now…like I've never had such a routine! Not since school!*
> *S: I suppose it is good, especially if you have loads of volunteers wandering around.*
> *Nicola: No, I think it's brilliant and I think it's the key to why everyone has a nice time and looks so relaxed, because they know exactly what's going to happen and when.*

> *S: Do the co-op members have to work quite hard to keep the impression of freedom when you're actually corralling people into tasks all the time?*
>
> *Nicola: Yeah, it's like the analogy of the ducks on the pond…where their feet are paddling wildly under the water and it's looking really calm on top."*

The ability to give the impression of freedom and space to think or develop or create is not always associated with very structured environments; however this organisation appears to have managed to convey an impression to those who come to participate and work with them that the space is community-owned and the activities are flexible. When one looks closer at the level of organisation that goes into one day of volunteer management or a new project, acknowledgment must be given for the co-operative's ability to blend structure and discipline with allowing people enough space to give the impression of freedom and choice:

> *"Jay: It's this culture that's somehow been maintained which really spreads and I think that's why people really like it.*
>
> *S: Yeah. I think that is important, I was just talking to (Reginald) about it, the community, the sense of being part of something. In that… being the person, or being part of the group that creates that must be quite a good thing*
>
> *Jay: Yeah, but I think everyone here does it, don't they, I think it just happens. I mean it could change, couldn't it, something small could happen and it would change and I think if the workers weren't able to keep that up then that could impact it. You know, I mean there's plenty of other workplaces where you can go round being snarky and just think that wouldn't be acceptable here, you know we have to keep up. I feel really bad on the days when I'm not relaxed, when I'm frantic, because I think it doesn't fit. You know we have to keep up this, kind of, friendly and open, and make time for people and then everyone does it."*

The interviewees felt that the culture and structure established by the co-operative was an essential aspect of what they had to offer people and that it had to be acknowledged as one of the intangible but most valued attractions to the site for many people seeking space to develop themselves and to establish some kind of

vocational routine.

This was hard work for the workers in the organisation, but they too acknowledged the intangible (and some tangible) aspects of working for the co-operative and particularly on the Forest Garden site.

7.4.2 "Not just a Workplace": Acknowledging contradictions of working at Forest Garden

The co-operative members interviewed all felt that the work was challenging and that alongside the pressure of managing a large number of people with varying needs on a large market garden site, nature too held very specific deadlines, which were unforgiving if missed:

> "Yeah, I think because in the co-op... It is a …defining feature and no one will pull you up on completion of tasks. The only things that will pull you up are...like group deadlines. Like 'I know you manage yourself, but you are dictated to by when plants need things done'…..
>
> Yeah so I think last year I felt constantly like I didn't quite... I didn't quite know what the plants were going to do next and I was (laughs)...like what's going to need my most attention next. I felt like the plants were managing me a bit." (Nicola)

There were, however, many benefits to working on the garden site and for the co-operative, and it appeared that these benefits outweighed the challenging or difficult aspects of the job for most people.

> "That's what I like about it so much in comparison to other jobs I've done in the past where you know, it's the middle of summer and you're sat trying to meet a deadline because that's what the plan was and it's sweltering hot in an office. The deadlines of nature seem more appropriate for the seasons." (Nicola)

There were also social aspects of working on the site that enabled people to see beyond the purely vocational or financial benefits of being at the Forest Garden site:

"It's a life style and it's a proper livelihood, it's like a something that you do all the time and it's really nice to be able to talk to other people about what you do. It's my favourite job that I've had to describe to people what I do. Yeah. There's a nice cross over with the rest of life.

….

A lot of people here have relationships as well that merge into it and there's the social thing as well and it really helps to feel like that and I think if we didn't feel like that, we'd probably feel like we were in a underpaid, overworked work place."

<div align="right">

(Jay)

</div>

Workers were stimulated and felt fulfilled by the environment and when exhausted, were able to recoup their energy by spending time alone on the site. This was something that Growers group members felt would be useful for more people to be able to do at liberty.

"I definitely love it, I definitely sort of feel like it is somewhere where I get a sense that I've arrived and it's a home. It feels that I've definitely come to a place where I'd be happy to spend the rest of my life.

…..

On a personal level I never feel overawed I always have a moment of space and quiet here because I hold a key and I may often stay late at the end of the day or come in earlier and I think that's quite important really…" *(M)*

The relationships established on the site also appeared to be something the co-operative staff and workers valued and found very supportive, although some new starters found themselves confused by some of the strong relationship dynamics that had developed over the years when they first entered the organisation:

"I think if you don't know about the friendship and relationship dynamics of the co-op, if you don't know about them and you just turn up, it can be hard to get your head around." *(Nicola)*

However for others, the level of unspoken trust established over the years of building the organisation together was an aspect of the work and the workplace that they felt they would not find in many places:

"Even when I have had times when I've had difficulties, you know, people have like really run to catch me...... and I really feel it's there in the background when needed and I feel that's there's a lot of mutual belief in each other, people really do believe in each other for the right reasons and there's a lot of trust there ....."   *(M)*

The contradictions of the hard physical and pressurised work within the beautiful surroundings and the opportunities for valuable relationships and creative thinking appeared to be, in themselves, both an attraction and a conundrum for those working there.

"It's funny isn't it...like I felt a bit like... you get to really know it and you get to know its good points and its bad points... I went along to X's leaving drinks and it was really lovely, all about falling in love with a bit of land is like falling in love with a person. And I was like "oh, that's really true". And then it reminded me of a song about, which says the "land that I love is the land that I'm working but it's hard to love when our backs are hurting". And I do feel like that about (Forest Garden), because even though I really love being there, I find it quite tiring to be there, because I can never relax and enjoy it, I really rarely sit down and relax...." (Nicola)

Acknowledging the contradictions; the beauty and the harshness of working on the site as well as the opportunities and the pressures they bring were a large part of the final acknowledgment; that of acknowledging the surprising skills people brought to the site.

7.4.3 "The people who seemed so fragile will really surprise you": Acknowledging the surprises

The final aspect of acknowledgment was the consideration of those who presented with valuable skills when the workers had expected to be the people teaching skills. In some cases, people with mental health problems or learning disabilities brought the experience of their lives to the site with them, and once feeling confident enough in their position on the site, they were able to contribute in ways some of the most experienced workers were not.

The volunteer co-ordinator, Jay, said in relation to one particular example of this:

> *"I'm really amazed how much time and understanding so many of our volunteers have for each other. I think, yeah, really amazing. You know, I'm inspired by that, and in a way they push us, the workers, to be better at it as well."* *(Jay)*

The example was of a young woman with mental health problems who was living in a shared hostel for people with similar health problems. She was constantly anxious about disturbing events in the home herself, but living in that environment had given her certain coping skills and a level of understanding and an ability to relate to people that those not in that environment would never have:

> *"You know, X comes, and he's got trouble with ex-girlfriend and his baby... And I think it's definitely therapeutic to be here, for all of us. Yeah, I think that's partly the site and the work and its partly being with loads of other people that make you, you know, there's always someone who have more problems than you and actually, I think a lot of, some of the volunteers who have the most severe mental health backgrounds are very sympathetic and able to deal with other people's stuff. You know, H has listened to X talk about all sorts of stuff,….and I was really worried about it and she said, 'oh no... she's actually really used to that stuff'… she takes it really well."*
>
> *(Jay)*

The assumption was always that those arriving at the garden who had any kind of declared health problem would always require more support than they were able to give was not correct. More often, the workers were acknowledging the abilities, qualities and value of people with disabilities alongside the infrastructure that would be required to increase accessibility to gardening and other tasks on the site. One of the gardeners felt that more could be done to consider inclusive activities on site for people with learning disabilities and that people attending the learning disability class were also contributing to the site, rather than merely coming to it to be 'kept occupied': "

"I guess it's that thing of a lot of people could look at the learning disability class and see them as users of a service and not necessarily see that thing of how much they actually bring…"   *(M)*

The concept of the garden bringing out skills and qualities not otherwise identified in many people introduces the idea that gardening, particularly in a large, flexible and beautiful space, can be considered to be therapeutic without needing to be clinical and also highlights the benefits of working for wider participation.

7.5 Naturally Therapeutic: "it's better than counselling"

7.5.1 Awareness of cycles and habits

"Working longer hours in a natural environment has had a physically grounding effect on me during my time as a volunteer and a researcher in the Forest Garden site. Used to artificial lighting in hospitals and offices, I have discovered that I had not been receiving the subtle signs of constant movement sent out by nature, even during the slow, stagnant winter months. This lack of awareness of the changes happening around me, particularly in the depths of cold winters, lowered my mood and made me grumpy and disillusioned."

(Researcher's field notes, 2012)

The garden not only exposed people to a constantly changing environment, whether growing, dying or shifting in some way, but its movement appeared to prompt the people in it towards growth and development along new paths too. Gavin found he was so busy and interested in the garden he did not find time to smoke and was doing more exercise. It seemed natural to change his life without it being too onerous, whereas in his previous job, the smoking and poor eating habits were part of the environmental pressure:

> *"Since I started volunteering here I've lost over well over a stone and I feel fitter and I've given up smoking in that time so that helps.*
> *……..*
> *Yeah, my boss there was a heavy smoker and we'd be sitting in the van with him and it was hard to stop and hardly anyone smokes here and plus it's such a nice peaceful place it's easier to give up." (Gavin)*

The seasonal changes helped to motivate people, give energy for busy periods and reduce pressure in quieter times. These schedule changes were not set by calendar or clock, but by daylight hours and what weather and conditions the seasons brought, predictable in some cases and not in others.

> *"I think you have more control over what you're doing in the winter, whereas in the summer you're on a ride, aren't you?" (Nicola)*

Finally, M felt that having access to both urban and rural spaces was a much more natural way of being and promoted a healthier approach to how we conducted our social and personal lives:

> *"…because of my background and my politics I think the fact that being kind of seated on the edge of a town is really important, I think, I'm from a small town where I was brought up I was on the edge a town, I could go for a wander in fields or I could head into town to see my mates and, you know, I very much had this, it wasn't a contradiction, it wasn't strange and I think actually quite healthy, I actually think that's a very healthy existence and I think that humans are social animals and humans also natural animals. And I think philosophically…it occurs to me*

that… one of the ways we went wrong was by separating town and food growing and food consuming and actually a more sensible way to live is to have…to live in spaces that are both urban, social, community and also are natural eco cities and then of course we manage to space out cities and reduce urban congestion and decay and to bring back life into the rural areas…"   *(M)*

An important focus in this bridging of urban and rural environments is the construction of new and enterprising relationships and networks for groups and individuals, again enabling the establishment of social support systems in a more organic and less prescriptive way.

7.5.2 Building diverse relationships: "An antidote to the Daily Mail"

The Sowers and Growers groups both highlighted 'connecting with people' as one of the key reasons for attending the market garden site on a regular basis. Interviewees related their experiences of relationships built in the garden as being diverse, including different genders, cultures, sexualities, abilities and age groups. One interviewee felt that this gave her a broader view of the world than other people she met of her age, who commonly spent time with only people the same age as them:

"I think people really enjoy the community here …..but a lot of people don't spend time in mixed communities. Most of my friends don't have friends that are even a few years older than them… let alone younger… I'm really lucky to have this and the woodwork project that are putting me in contact all the time with people outside of my demographic and most people just don't get that any more…
And older people that I spend time with say how much they like spending time with younger people who are in their 20s and 30s and I think, you can you can see younger people get really into listening to other people's stories about life and the volunteers here are just so sympathetic to each other and so interested in each other, and it's this culture that's somehow been maintained which really spreads and I think that's why people really like it."

       (Jay)

The above is a reflection on the value of a group of mixed-age people with a common interest. The following excerpt demonstrates one of the reasons why the community in the garden attracted both men and women volunteers and workers, establishing respect for this gender difference in market gardening that still reflected one gender more strongly in other parts of the world, and, on reflection, in some parts of this country.

> *"I'm really pushing A recently to try and reflect on her work in Ethiopia and her work in East London… the one thing that she notices again and again is that men and women are treated equally at (Forest Garden)." (Sarah)*

This was also evident in field notes that I took after conversations with one man with moderate learning disabilities in the garden:

> *"Tom takes his role as a strong man very seriously and, I think, found it a bit odd that there were so many women doing jobs that he had been socialized into thinking were men's jobs, like lugging heavy loads around and pushing heaped wheelbarrows of muck from one side of the site to the other."*
>
> *(Field notes, 2012)*

The range of backgrounds and abilities evident on site prompted one staff member to feel that this constant interaction with people who often appeared so different was important in building a more resilient community, able to cope with and understand difference:

> *"I do think it must give everyone so much more resilience in life. You know, if you come here and you talk to people you would just never talk to then everyone's better equipped to talk to people you might have previously thought of as the weirdo at the bus stop and their neighbour and people that you probably come into contact – probably not in an office, probably not in your pub that you go to with your friends but in the street and I think we're an antidote to the Daily Mail. You know, all the hatefulness! (laugh)… like people actually sympathising with each other and understanding each other…"*
>
> *(Jay)*

Finally, Simon, an interviewee who had turned down the option of statutory day services in favour of attending the garden more often, felt that the combination of the work and the relationships he built, were the reasons he chose to stay at the garden (along with being given the opportunity to be the local snake expert…):

> *"S: And when you are here at Forest Garden what do you like about it?*
> *What are the things that you enjoy coming here for?*
> *Simon: Probably the company.*
> *S: The company? What kind of company is it?*
> *Simon: We like to get on.*
> *S: So, chatting or*
> *Simon: While you're doing work.*
> *S: So, chatting and working at the same time.*
> *Simon: Yeah."*
>
> (Simon)

Being able to access both natural and urban settings and to create diverse social networks not only provided a wider opportunity for occupation and social integration, but brought with it a broader range of choice for people, particularly those unable to access more distant green or growing spaces independently in large cities or towns. The important aspect of the reason why the garden had been successful is that due to the rights-based approach of the co-operative, it was important that participation was based on choice and that to a large extent, people found the garden, rather than the co-operative seeking the people out.

7.5.3 Natural Inclusion based on Choice: "People found us…"

The initial 'outreach' aspect of the garden, to those who needed a higher level of supervision or support in a gardening environment, had been established early on, when the co-operative were still based on a nearby, much smaller, allotment space. People had identified the space as shared and had considered it an opportunity for people they were working with to try gardening as an occupation:

"When we were at the allotment site, we had a couple of young people with learning disabilities who were finding us there partly because their respite carers were looking for things for young 'Harry' to do and saw the allotment garden and thought, 'ah, he's going to be good with that'.

Interestingly, they're the people that found us. I think some of the sign posting… started at the allotment site we were given… I always say people found us, we didn't find them but it definitely started at the allotment site and outdoor work and shared work, I would say are the two elements of it but we couldn't support it. We couldn't support the communities that were finding us there really."   *(Sarah)*

The importance of that work with marginalised populations was thus identified by the co-operative early on. The essential aspect of choice has since been acknowledged as an element of success both for the garden and the volunteer when creating opportunities for people to join the gardening community, as mentioned by the Sower's PAR group. This element has become increasingly important as the outreach work has grown at Forest Garden and more people have found their way to the garden through word of mouth, referral and reputation:

"We had a couple of people come this week with a support worker and she was trying to bring three of them but in the end two of them came. One of them was interested and the other one wrote on his form – 'I'm not interested at all, she made me come'.

…….

There's that thing of one person not wanting to do it, it impacts other people… if there was more of that here, that could have a real negative impact on a lot of the people volunteering. That's the fundamental thing about volunteering, you want to do it, that's just fundamental thing about volunteering isn't it, you want to be here, you want to participate, you choose it." *(Jay)*

Simon reiterated this and highlighted the frustration he had experience before, of being referred to a place he did not want to go to and the relief that guidance had changed to incorporate wider ideas of what was 'appropriate' for him to participate

in:

> *"Simon: I get on with everyone. Muck in and that.*
>
> *S: Good. Ok….. Have you ever been involved in anything that where people sent you there?*
>
> *Simon: I have yeah and I didn't like it.*
>
> *S: What were the things that you didn't like about it?*
>
> *Simon: Because they sent me to the centre where there's handicapped people.*
>
> *S: Ok, you didn't like that*
>
> *Simon: They told me you don't have to come here if you don't want to, you could go somewhere, but I choose not to.*
>
> *S: What was the thing that you didn't like about that place?*
>
> *Simon: The activities… It wasn't my idea of going to a centre.*
>
> *S: Ok. Do you prefer things like this that's more like work sort of stuff?*
>
> *Simon: Yeah."*

Simon was not the only person who felt more gratified by the work he did and the contribution he made at Forest Garden over the options offered to him within a system built to suit many and so not always suitable to all. The following extract is from an observation made while working with another gentleman with moderate learning disabilities who had experienced the labour market positively but had subsequently been through difficult times personally and was not able to find further work he found satisfying beyond the work he was introduced to at Forest Garden. It demonstrates the propensity of the work and pension systems to discriminate against people without full knowledge of their capabilities and their state of wellbeing:

Tom's version of belonging

Tom was offered the opportunity to expand his hours in the garden. He was very enthusiastic and accepted but explained that the dampener on the situation was that he is still considered eligible to work and so would still need to go and sign on in order to claim his benefits.

I was frustrated for him – he clearly loved being at the garden and he felt he achieved a good day's work there and was part of something he could physically see working. On the other hand he had to go and sign on fortnightly and explain that he is not able to find or keep paid employment because he needed verbal guidance and support when he is on a working site, not something available in most mainstream jobs.

Tom gave up his previous job due to depression when his father passed away. For someone without a learning disability, this would be a hitch, but perhaps not the long-term hitch it has turned out to be with Tom – he has never been able to find another paying job as suitable for him as the weeding one. And now he has found work he loves, but is not getting paid for it, which takes the pleasure out of it in terms of his role as a bread-winner in the home.

The difference, if you have a learning disability is that the choices seem more limited, making the sacrifice, if you do get offered a paid job, much harsher. Tom really enjoys being outside and putting his learned skills to work in the environment, where he feels useful and fulfilled. The jobs he gets offered are mostly based indoors, badly paid and offer nowhere near the benefits he feels from volunteering. So he sits in ambiguity, his obligations pulling him in two directions.

In cases where employment in the open market would result mostly in unsatisfactory, under-stimulating work, the irony of the positive impact the gardening was having on the wellbeing of the same people was tangible. In cases such as this, a clearer route of progression toward paid work might have been useful.

The 'outreach' or more overtly 'therapeutic' work grew once Forest Garden was established at the plant nursery site and funding became more available due to the increased capacity of the site and the staff. There was still, however, a reluctance to move the 'system' out of balance by actively seeking out people who may have found the site too different or inaccessible, thus instigating a rapid, large scale change of the nature of the site and it's organic growth pattern and jeopardising the 'naturally therapeutic' aspects of the site for everyone:

> *"I think until recently we've tried quite hard not to be tied down to, you know, like getting 25 BME women here because we said we would… we want to do it because people want to."*   *(Jay)*

The naturally therapeutic aspects of the garden have been discussed in findings from the Sowers and Growers groups, as well as by the interviewees. The key aspects of the garden's 'therapeutic essence' were created both by the environment itself in terms of awakening a heightened awareness of cycles and rhythms that improved a personal sense of wellbeing; and by the people managing it, establishing new and diverse relationships, encouraging a sense of equality and trying to ensure that all participated by choice. An essential therapeutic ingredient, arguably for the people as well as the natural environment, was maintaining a balance between organisational growth and the seizing of opportunities and observing the effect this had on the existing people and plants on the site.

7.6 Balance: "It is a whole context of many priorities, each with sound arguments in their favour" (Field notes, 2011)

> *"we've managed to get something that a lot of different people connect with in their own ways and that's quite special."* (M)

The theme of 'balance' relates to the consistent referral of workers to needing to keep all priorities and resources in sight in order to maintain a successful and functional system for both people and plants in the garden. One issue that arose many times was the need to balance the use of the garden as a therapeutic 'tool' for all the people volunteering within it, and particularly people with a learning disability, mental ill health or another reason for requiring extra support of on site, with the economically viable running of a market garden. Related to this was the need to assure that work that was identified as being more 'accessible', did not become a form of tokenistic participation.

7.6.1 Therapeutic garden or garden that is therapeutic?

The awareness of how much attention a working market garden requires to make it economically successful enough to manage without external funding was present for all the workers interviewed. The garden required constant time and attention, particularly in the busy spring and summer months, when all possible hands available to work the garden were needed.

Many volunteers were needed to keep the large market garden tended, however if a substantial number of the volunteers required too much 'attention' themselves, this shifted the balance from ensuring the sustainability of the garden, to meeting peoples' needs. The aim was to ensure that people who wanted to volunteer and were able to, to some capacity, were facilitated in doing this, but establishing the type of work people could do, how they could do it and for how long was a constant predicament for co-operative members, particularly the volunteer co-ordinator, Jay:

"Some of the other volunteers who more obviously need support at times we've wondered if they can participate. Yeah, working out the boundary of what's inclusive and what's not suitable doesn't seem to get any easier"

(Jay)

And when considering taking further steps towards making the garden physically accessible:

Yeah…. It comes up every couple of times a year, and how to talk about it, and how to explain that to other volunteers as well who… might (ask) well 'why aren't we making it more inclusive for people in wheel chairs?' And, I guess at the moment we're not because we've got a lot going on, and what would having a wheel chair accessible group bring to us at the moment because it would bring a lot more volunteers who can't do a lot of the tasks which I think we can't handle right now and that thing of not being a therapeutic garden but being inclusive is difficult, isn't it?

(Jay)

The concern was not just for the garden that might be neglected in favour of ensuring more people could participate, but that people who were perhaps very capable and did not often ask for help, may be overlooked completely due to the small number of people able to offer guidance and assistance:

"… it just depends on our capacity and we just have to be… we need to just remember to be regularly checking in on our capacity because as soon as we're at the limit of our capacity, other people's experiences, you know people who need support and those who don't, their experience gets reduced."

(Jay)

M agreed with the above, however felt that the issue was not limited to concern about being able to provide assistance to those with a disability, but was relevant to any demographic that grew larger than the site and its finite resources and opportunities could manage at one time. This is interestingly in keeping with

permaculture growing principles of ensuring a diversity of different crops to keep the soil and other living creatures well nourished, rather than allowing a 'monoculture' crop to take over:

> *"Something we have sort of talked about there's obviously, there's probably a limit to how many people with significant support needs we allow on site at any time and that's largely to do with how many support people there can be here at a time… And also there is another element which is that all kinds of people come and if any one, big group of type of person it would shift the balance a bit so even if there were too many… if suddenly we had far too many sort of, young graduate, activists, types, who are great workers and they are great in conversation and they have a lot of energy but, you know, if there was a lot of them then I think there'd be a tilt in the balance and I think a few of the volunteers would be like, 'This isn't for me any more'"*
>
> *(M)*

In summary, the correct balance was a key area of concern for those thinking about the long term sustainability of the site. Their goal was to be inclusive, to offer opportunities for skill development, vocational knowledge and support, encouragement towards self-management and progression in the horticultural field and a sense of community and social interaction, but this all needed to be balanced with a judgement of what the growing site could cope with. It was also important to consider how people were managed on the site – in groups, under a watchful eye or independently, with more freedom to act. These were daily considerations for some members of the co-operative and though they did not resent the workload, they felt and watched the cycles of interest grow and considered the possibility that at times, to be as inclusive as possible, they might need to make 'exclusive' decisions.

7.7 Reality and Resources

A lot of evidence has already been provided to demonstrate that people come to the garden for a wide variety of reasons and the simplest way to gain access to it was to offer time and physical labour in exchange for the needs that might be met by being in the space, participating in the gardening or being with the people there.

7.7.1 Complexities of volunteering and progression

In some cases, the benefits to offering personal time and resources to Forest Garden were obvious and spoken, and in some cases they lay beneath the surface and a person's motives or benefits have to be assumed or observed through their actions and their weekly reappearance:

> *You know, somebody like X doesn't really want to talk. I mean, he's interested in the organisation, he asks loads of questions about what we're doing but I don't think he wants to sit down and tell anyone about what he's gained here, it's just not his style... (Some) people stick for a long time. Loads of people just come up for an induction, look around, and don't come back again.*   *(Jay)*

The demographic of the volunteers changed from day to day, but there was a core group of volunteers who could be relied upon to arrive each week, sometimes two to three times a week.

> *"There's volunteers who come here very regularly and on an informal level they have more responsibility and …. Lead tasks, for example, in certain areas and we trust with certain things. Someone like X who comes and does know what to do here cos he's got to that point where he belongs and he actually kind of owns the place…."*   *(Jay)*

It was observed that the core group of volunteers were often not those who sought out a lot of progression in the work they did in the garden or who came with an 'agenda', seeking position, activism or overt recognition:

> *"it's not a big progression for them in the way it is for some people but they still get loads out of it and they'll still enjoy it and they'll still probably learn a lot. People who don't need something like this – those are the people who WE need the most and they still get tons out of it.*
>
> *S: Yes. What sort of group would you say that is? Is there like a demographic of people who sort of have the time and the skill and the…..*
>
> *Jay: I think it's still all ages. Because we've got so many volunteers who've done stuff for years and years and they're a pretty wide spectrum of ages. I suppose people who are a bit older stick for longer 'cause they're less likely to do something else and it helps if they're not travelling too far…"*

> *(Jay)*

The challenge with creating clearer routes of progression from volunteer or learner to apprentice or paid gardener was resource-based: there was not enough money or supervisory capacity to employ more than one or two people who were not able to 'self-manage'. People on the site with a disability who could not manage their own workload required funding, time, a supportive framework of people to work with and a designated 'authority' figure in some cases. This sentiment was reflected on by gardener M as he considered the reality of the situation with people with learning disabilities who came to the site:

> *"But people with learning difficulties, we've kind of, though we've tried to have this idea, ok, well how can we progress people and give people a meaningful role and I think that we've gone so far with that. We've got people who come regularly from that community, who regularly come here, who do a good day's work or a good half day's work, one hour's work, and hopefully they feel they've contributed and they have contributed and that's great. And, the next step is, what would it look like to sort of thing how could we get this person into meaningful paid work or into a trainee role? Or one of those, there's almost a glass ceiling, isn't there?"*

> *(M)*

The co-operative members continued to apply for funding for this group and implement systems whereby 'buddies' could be trained on site to assist people who needed help when working in the garden, but ultimately a larger scale, more permanent solution needed to be found to the problem of moving people more into consistent volunteer roles and progressing them to paid work.

7.7.2 Relevance and Sustainability: "I think if I am honest my biggest fear really is whether we stop being relevant."

The movement and identification of ideas for growth of the organisation within the cooperative was identified to be rapid, within the means they had to take up new opportunities. Some of the opportunities were self-identified and some were opened up by the local authority who acknowledged the work the co-operative were doing in the borough. This natural growth seemed to be a reliable feature at the time of the interviews, however the concern that what the co-operative were doing might one day become less popular forced members to consider the long term sustainability of the project:

> "You know, sort of at the moment what (The Growers Co-operative) does, it definitely occupies a space and there is a need for it and that's proven because there's a lot of uptake of all of what we do. People are excited about us and we are excited about what we do and it feels like it's something that's dynamic and momentum behind it... and my fear is I guess, what if that becomes unfashionable and everyone gets... more into something else... and we're just, and there's a declining interest in what we do. I think that's my biggest fear."

M related this worry in a way that made me think the worry was a persistent one and one that perhaps assisted in keeping him focused on the future. This was the approach of the co-operative as a whole, most of whom touched on a concern for

the future, but were determined that they would carry on, perhaps introducing new elements to 'stay relevant' and remain a sustainable organisation:

> *"I think sustainability means that things will continue and that they might be different" (Sarah)*

And:

> *"So I guess again, you got to have faith to respond to changes and do essentially what's core of what we do but find new ways of making it relevant." (M)*

The interviews provided layers of further information following the PAR groups, answering questions that had emerged from the groups and posing new questions for other interviewees to try and answer. This process of reflection and development of information finally evolved into a picture of six key ideas, three of which related to areas that needed to be focused on in order to make the organisation grow at the correct pace, creatively and within reasonable means: The governance of the Forest Garden Co-operative; making appropriate use of the naturally therapeutic qualities of the garden; and maintaining a constant eye on the resources available, both internally and externally generated.

Three elements that would possibly hold the organisation together and ensure their resilience through changing political and economic tides and the feared move from being relevant and a going concern to a hobby that becomes less 'fashionable' were: Acknowledgement of the people offering time and skills to the site and the people tending it; balancing the time and resources available to both plants and people; and finally, keeping a focus on the philosophy the organisation based itself on and remaining autonomous and connected at the same time. These are all reflected in the diagram initially presented in figure 5.1 in chapter five.

Many of the above themes threw up complex contradictions and challenges, however those interviewed appeared aware of these and lived with them, choosing to keep sight of the positive aspects of the garden in the moment and hoping to ensure a future for themselves through creative and ethical thinking.

Chapter 8: Discussion

The findings led to the emergence of three overarching themes which were considered in the context of current literature on social enterprise, social inclusion, social care policy, green care and occupational science. Figure 8.1 below demonstrates the three final themes as they emerged from examination of the findings. Sub-themes identified throughout the findings were drawn together and discussed under the following three thematic headings: *Exclusion within Inclusion; Choice, Freedom and Ownership;* and *People, Plants and Place.*

Analysing the research data initiated a shift in my own understanding of the term social inclusion, and a realisation of the complexity of this term, that offers distraction from the real and continuing problem of exclusion (Labonte 2004). Considering how and why people are excluded and how to address exclusion rather than promoting the "*warmth of our inclusive deal*" (Labonte 2004), could reveal a critical framework to explore social transformation. Johnson et al. (2010) reinforce this change in focus, outlining in detail why the objective for "*a good life*" could be more attainable and realistic than a goal of inclusion, particularly for people with learning disabilities, due to the political and social rhetoric attached to the concept of inclusion. It is with this in mind, that the first theme is discussed, considering the Forest Garden as a place where exclusion is not welcomed but does exist and the ways in which it manifests and is approached by all participants.
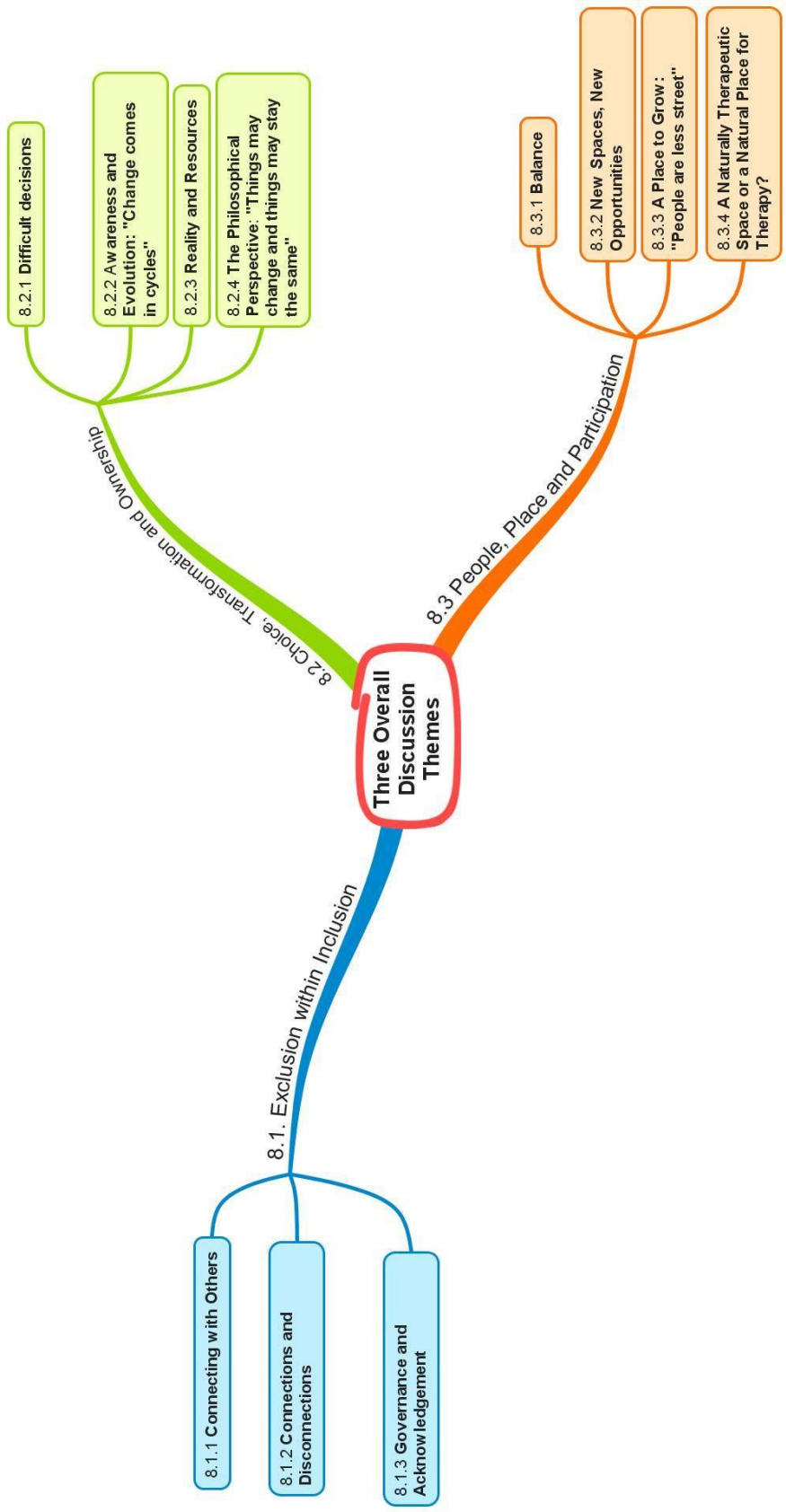
Figure 8.1 Grouping of findings to form three overall discussion themes

The mind map contains:

Three Overall Discussion Themes (central node)

8.1. Exclusion within Inclusion
- 8.1.1 Connecting with Others
- 8.1.2 Connections and Disconnections
- 8.1.3 Governance and Acknowledgement

8.2 Choice, Transformation and Ownership
- 8.2.1 Difficult decisions
- 8.2.2 Awareness and Evolution: "Change comes in cycles"
- 8.2.3 Reality and Resources
- 8.2.4 The Philosophical Perspective: "Things may change and things may stay the same"

8.3 People, Place and Participation
- 8.3.1 Balance
- 8.3.2 New Spaces, New Opportunities
- 8.3.3 A Place to Grow: "People are less street"
- 8.3.4 A Naturally Therapeutic Space or a Natural Place for Therapy?

8.1 Exclusion within Inclusion

This section of the discussion highlights the achievements of the social enterprise in attempting to build an inclusive space and bridge gaps created by social exclusion and occupational marginalisation within the organisation and outside of it. There is a critical consideration of opportunities that were created to make connections with people as part of daily horticultural tasks and sharing of food and experiences as well as those times when disconnections arose or differences were reinforced. These contradictions within a politically and socially progressive social enterprise demonstrated that even when working towards social inclusion, exclusion is always present and difference must be acknowledged as part of a broad and varied definition of community.

Permaculture philosophy actively promoted acknowledgement and inclusion of plants, other living creatures and people that were vulnerable or that lived on the edges of large eco- and social systems, in other words, marginalised. The permaculture principles, such as: "Use edges and value the marginal" (Holmgren & Telford 2013, p.20), indicated an appreciation of both people and plants that might populate the boundaries or margins of society and the garden, as they hold value that is creative, dynamic or unique (Macnamara 2012; Holmgren 2011). "Use and value diversity" (Holmgren & Telford 2013, p.19), promoted the incorporation of everyone's skills and abilities so that a wider range of possibilities could be achieved within a garden or community (Macnamara 2012); and "integrate rather than segregate" (Holmgren & Telford 2013), reinforced the idea that everyone should have a role based on their ability or capacity within in the garden and community (Holmgren, 2011).

In an agricultural context such as Forest Garden, this meant utilising plants that might be considered weeds for their lesser known but useful properties; encouraging a diversity of plants, including heritage varieties, rather than allowing one variety of plant to perpetuate; and growing different crops together as a poly-culture benefit from companion qualities. Similarly, by encouraging a wide variety of people to engage with an environment, the organisation hoped to create a

tolerant, culturally-rich and interesting community of participants. The co-operative members themselves identified with people on the margins, many of them literally living on the edges of suburbs in narrow boats on London's canals in an effort to live low-impact, lower cost lifestyles in a city known for its high cost of living.

Prior to taking over the larger Forest Garden site; while they were working a large allotment plot in the same local area, people had happened upon the co-operative members gardening and merely asked if they could join in, as Sarah mentioned: "*people with learning disabilities…were finding us…we didn't find them*". The co-operative later actively encouraged those from populations of the geographically local and neighbouring communities as well as marginalised groups from further afield to engage with the them and the garden, reaching out to ethnic minority groups, young offenders, learning disability service users and people living with mental illness in an effort to welcome those who might find themselves subtly or overtly excluded from other activities.

A need to balance resources continuously weaved itself through the findings and throughout the project as a continuous element of permaculture thinking, as explained in chapter seven by M. The explanation was both a promotion of inclusion and a warning to understand the needs of the environment and the people the environment was host to. The experience of the co-operative members had been that if the site was suddenly overwhelmed with one type of person (the example given was "young graduate types") and excluded others, then the environment and the community suffered, just as planting only one crop repeatedly in the same place, was bad for the soil:

> "*…all kinds of people come and if any one, big group of type of person (arrives) it would shift the balance a bit … then I think a few of the volunteers would be like, 'This isn't for me any more'".*
> (M)

This response epitomised the difference between this garden and a traditional day service or even another horticultural project constructed with a specific population or age group in mind. This organisation continuously aimed to have a variety of

people with differing skills, ages and abilities involved in order to create a community of people working towards a "*sustainable food system* within a *social justice context*" (Forest Garden website).

This was a positive aim with regard to social inclusion, however such a focus on difference necessitated a continuous need to enable connection between individuals and groups of people. "Building bridges" was also one of their objectives (Forest Garden website), along with promoting just production and trade and furthering access to land and water. This very human-orientated objective was often difficult to sustain alongside ensuring that growing work was done efficiently; funding was continuously available to resource projects and pay wages; and enough workers were available to keep up with the garden and community's demands.

The pressure on the garden to balance internal resources in order to meet all its external and internal social and environmental objectives was high. Compromises were evident in the form of decisions made for, rather than with, some groups and access restricted to some for practical and pragmatic reasons.

The first theme in this section demonstrates this and is derived mainly from the Sowers group, where priorities for those attending the garden course were social interaction, learning new skills and occupational engagement. Findings indicated an initial resistance of members of the group who had learning disabilities, to interact with people other than their own support workers and the group facilitators. There was a sense of isolation held by some of the pairs that they brought with them into the garden and the research.

Johnson and Walmsley (Johnson et al. 2010) discuss that there has been a change of focus in the definition of social inclusion for people with learning disabilities over the past three decades, with the most recent focus being on human relationships and emotional wellbeing. This is in keeping with the Capabilities Approach's sentiment that having opportunities to relate to others is a key capability (Nussbaum 2011) and from an occupational perspective, to connect with people while contributing or helping another is an underestimated human

need, according to Whalley-Hammell (2014). Connections slowly improved within the group, due to shared occupation and enjoyment of the site, however a longer, more ongoing period of involvement would possibly have benefited the internal group connections and had more impact on the amount of social interaction with the rest of the volunteers involved on site, as supported by Sempik et al (2014) in their research on the effects of social and therapeutic horticulture (STH) on social behaviour. Findings from the Sowers group highlighted the connections already established, those that were challenging to make and the occupations that enabled connections during the Sowers PAR group.

8.1.1 Connecting with Others

In line with Johnson and Walmsley's (2010) reference above to the emerging view of social inclusion within the context of learning disability, one of the stronger themes from the Sowers group centred on relationships and how these were slow to build and required time and sometimes facilitation to be established. Connecting with each other and with others working in the garden required something more than the courage to greet another. The fact that the group were separate to the general volunteer group was the initial barrier to being seen, but also that many in the group members embodied a learned reserve that situated them on the edge of action, rather than in the centre.

8.1.1.1 Seeing and Being Seen

More than half of the Sowers group, those with learning disabilities and their support workers, had been to the market garden before to take part in similar activities to the ones we were undertaking during the research period. Some of these members had made connections with Sarah, the co-operative member who had run the gardening sessions before, and with me, as I had assisted in some of Sarah's sessions before. Not many of the group members had managed to make contact with any of the other volunteers or co-operative members, partly due to timing, with the group starting an hour before the larger volunteer group started

and partly because the group only did tasks that were accessible to the whole group. This often shifted the group from the central meeting zone in the warehouse and off in their own group to a task elsewhere in the garden.

Many of the tasks that were more accessible to this group focussed on garden maintenance activities or growing tasks focused on what were termed the *learning beds,* meant for small crops that this group could grow, which would not disappear within the larger, main planting areas on the rest of the twelve acres. I had an ambivalent feeling about working in these separate, accessible beds for people with disabilities. This was as excluding as proposing specialised education, however they were more accessible to the group than many of the other beds on a site that was steep and uneven in many areas, ensuring that participants in the group had access to growing areas that suited their physical needs. The beds were positioned close to the warehouse in a good, sheltered growing spot, but it meant that the Sower's group primary growing area was apart, reducing natural connections that could be made within gardening tasks that were shared by all. This was one of the key areas of exclusion within inclusion identified on the site.

Sarah identified the separateness of these beds in an early conversation when planning the research and we discussed the potential meaning they expressed to people, but at the time the exclusive nature of it was not noticed or mentioned by the group members, those with disabilities or their support workers. That fact made me reflect on the expectation some of the group members may have had of separateness, difference and at times, invisibility. Other volunteers on site rarely acknowledged the Sowers group members and once, when a task was specifically set up to enable the Sowers group members to work on a part of the site that was accessible to them alongside other volunteers in the same place, the barriers between the groups persisted. A wide expanse of field lay between the volunteers weeding the kitchen garden and the group members laying new paths around it and a lack of task commonality reduced the groups to two teams again, rather than one sharing the same place.

Hall (2005) discussed the dilemma of perpetuating a different type of exclusion when attempting to promote inclusion due to discriminatory contexts being left

unchecked. In the garden, the establishment of a separate gardening group for people with disabilities, led directly to exclusionary practice. This situation was not necessarily always the case, however, because at least three of previous year's attendees that I had met, had moved on to become regular volunteers. They had identified areas of the garden, kitchen or glasshouse where they were they could participate with little assistance for longer periods and felt confident with the volunteer group they were working with. These three did not require one-to-one support workers and could make use of the interdependence found in general group work on the site and guidance from the co-operative staff. The confidence and companionship gained from regular attendance also allowed time to establish relationships with other volunteers, to address issues of difference (Soffer & Chew 2015) and to enable those planning tasks to understand how to make more activities and areas more accessible.

One of the key elements that drew out the individuals' sense of contribution and belonging within the wider garden community for the Sowers, was taking photographs; being in photographs of work done; and then discussing these in the classroom at the end of each session. The group members were able to identify what they had achieved and see each other in relation to their work and to others in their group. Situating their own action in places on the site map was another means of establishing connections with each other as individuals but was also a visual representation to the larger volunteer group and co-operative staff, on a weekly basis, of what the group had done. This map and the photographs taken in the session were displayed in the classroom where volunteers who arrived later on were able see and acknowledge the group members and their contribution.

Schratz & Steiner-Loffler (1998) indicate that Pierre Bourdieu saw photography as a means of escape from the everyday as well as a way of discussing feelings. The discussions about photographs at the end of the sessions were lively as they brought out different emotional responses relating to experiences such as weeding a bed with cold fingers, holding an earthworm or noticing that something the group members had planted had grown. There was a sense of ownership of the images and the actions or garden spaces they depicted. The ownership of these pictures and occupations appeared to have magnified the group members and reduced the

group and individual invisibility. This demonstrated Bourdieu's contention that the photographs allowed people to escape their situations and see themselves differently. It also reiterated Lorenzo's (2010) perspective, discussed in chapter four, that reflective spaces or those where photographs were discussed, helped to enhance self-confidence, while action spaces, in which photography was used by participants to capture images of themselves or others *doing*, are catalysts for building a sense of power.

The group members slowly developed a sense of agency within the garden, particularly once they were more comfortable in each other's space, and identified some united objectives. Doing activities that they could relate to and that clearly contributed to the garden in a meaningful way engendered a collective sense of purpose and enjoyment. The group demonstrated this in a number of tasks, but one key example was the production of the *insect hotels* to entice pollinators into the glasshouse. Each hotel was named after its maker or a place of importance to its maker and then a located in a place chosen by the participants in the glasshouse raised beds. This particular task was one that brought the group closest into contact with other volunteers, who admired them and commented on the group's creativity and the usefulness of the product. This also enabled connection and communication beyond mere greetings, establishing a new level of acknowledgment for the group members as collaborators in the garden, rather than dependents or contributors in a less equal sense.

Duncan & Creek (2014) propose that development of a sense of agency is a positive response to come out of occupation when people have felt marginalised or in this case, invisible to a wider community. The engagement in this occupation, along with others like it, engendered a sense of being part of the Forest Garden community and demonstrated a capability to contribute to a shared objective.

8.1.1.2 Connecting with each other: gardening as co-occupation

The members of the Sowers PAR group arrived in pre-established pairs. These were not consistent pairs (one member had two support workers) and sometimes

the support worker was different, where a person lived in a supported living scheme with a number of staff members. In chapter five there is a reference to the role of the support workers in the lives of the participants with learning disabilities, holding many aspects of the service users' lives together. They helped to create continuity between contexts for those with learning disabilities who sometimes found transitions between environments and occupations challenging.

This relationship between support worker and group member with learning disability elicited many questions and observations for me, and also added some useful insight into the question of whether it might be better for Forest Garden to provide on-site support or whether people should bring their own support workers or personal assistants to sessions. This question arose throughout the research period, and informal policy on site was that it was the individual's choice: the co-operative needed to be prepared for either option. These included providing volunteers who were interested in supporting others in the garden with generic training about working with people with disabilities; or providing gardening skills training to people chosen by those requiring the support, risking that their support workers may not be interested in gardening.

The question that followed was how to motivate and engage the support workers to ensure that their role was as meaningful and engaging as the disabled participant's role when on site in order to maintain an equitable participation experience. Shakespeare (2006) warns against this concern for those supporting people with disabilities as it distracts from the focus on social, political and physical barriers the people with disability are facing. In this context, however, using permaculture (Holmgren 2011) and occupational justice (Stadnyk et al. 2011) as guiding approaches in a participatory process, the difference in occupational goals were acknowledged and fulfilment in occupational role encouraged for all the group members.

Having a system on site where one person's needs were seen to be more important than another's was not tenable alongside the democratic approach and permaculture philosophy of the organisation itself. This tendency was also demonstrated in the reluctance towards tokenistic activity, where the co-operative

members discouraged activity if it did not benefit the garden or community or was not needed at the time, for example watering plants in midday heat just because it was an accessible activity.

Initially the group members remained in their established units of person with disability and support worker. At first, it was challenging to create any significant interaction between these units, and this is supported by the study by Sempik et al. (2014) in which a low level of social interaction between people with learning disabilities for the first month of horticultural work together was found. I wondered whether the strength of the relationship and the sense of reliance some participants with learning disabilities felt in relation to their support workers, sometimes kept them isolated as a pair, and in some situations, more invisible in their association with each other: The person with learning disability, invisible due to a history of hiding difference when in company (Johnson et al. 2010) and the support worker, continuously reminded that they were acting on behalf of another, invisible in their own right in a career as a facilitator more than a participant.

This observation is supported by Johnson et al. (2010) who describes the role of support worker as one of silence, and being full of "inherent contradictions" (Johnson et al. 2010, p.158), particularly in a situation where they are employed by the person with disability, as in the case of personal budgets or direct payments. The support workers in this study were expected to empower or promote independence of the user participants but were, in effect, the employees of the person either through social care or a personal budget, creating issues of authority within the relationship that materialised in disagreements, for example Leo arguing about his shoe size with Pat.

Dunn et al. (2009) discuss a model of partnership that has the opportunity to emerge, particularly when people with learning disabilities work consistently with the same support workers. This model is useful in contexts where occupation is evident and available for both parties to be involved, such as gardening, because it recognises the relationships between support worker and person with learning disability as inherently meaningful and reduces the emphasis on reliance within the task (Dunn et al. 2009). If this relationship is considered valuable by both

parties, the quality of life for the person with learning disabilities is enhanced due to the engagement and interest of the support worker, and the occupation at hand becomes more meaningful to both people. The relationship between Gia and Nina was an example of this, demonstrating a connection that went beyond working together, as described by Gia as a "bond" she and Nina were building together through participating in the gardening sessions. Gia, and Nina (who had experience of working with many support workers) appeared to be able to acknowledge their differences and areas of dependence on each other, which strengthened their relationship and ability to work intuitively together (Nicholls 2013)

As discussed in the literature, within occupational science literature, the above description of Gia's, where both parties are involved and engaged and contingent on the other's participation, is known as *co-occupation*. Pierce (2003) first coined this term and it accurately describes the functional and social relationship of participant pairs within the group, explaining co-occupation as *"a synchronous back and forth between the occupational experiences of the individuals involved, the action of one shaping the action of the other in a close match."* (Pierce 2003, p.199)

Many of the photographs taken by the group or researcher depict this co-occupation taking place. In the immediate task there was a shared objective to produce the final product: a sown seed, a raked path or a turned compost heap. There is, between the support-worker and the service-user, a shared intention or understanding of each other's roles within the task that allows each the space to respond to each other's actions rather than duplicate actions. There is also a shared emotionality, or a shared understanding of the others' emotional investment in the task and also a shared physicality, through the different tasks demanded by the garden. These three aspects are highlighted as key to the concept of co-occupation along with the task having meaning to both parties (Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow 2009; Pierce 2009).

Identifying a shared emotional investment concerned me initially, as I felt that the support workers might not necessarily demonstrate this. However in most tasks,

the emotional interplay between the two or (three at times) people working together was evident. The subtle acknowledgment of how someone was progressing with a task, where they were spatially in relation to each other, whether they were physically managing and how engaged they were was constantly evident in most of the partnerships. Where this connection was not evident, there was often a break in behaviour, for example when Dan's support workers were distracted by their phones or talking to each other, he often looked disengaged himself and this sometimes led to him displaying disruptive behaviour, shouting repetitive statements or wandering off: their disengagement with the task reflecting in him. He also had two people to stay connected to during his occupational engagement where others only had one, which possibly impacted on his experience of co-occupation and consequently on his behaviour.

The outcome of this finding was an emphasis on both parties feeling occupationally engaged in the gardening tasks and both attaining a sense of achievement in their own right, rather than the focus being on individual enjoyment for only half the members of the group. This highlighted the need to encourage those that tended to stay on the margins of the group or support from the margins, to participate within the boundaries of their role and to the full extent of the occupation, without limiting the participation of another. It also demanded that consideration be given to ensuring that neither those participants who were supporting others or those being supported were exposed to the frustration and powerlessness derived from a sense of occupational alienation (Wilcock 2006) when participating in the garden. Occupational alienation occurs when people do not feel engaged with their occupations or when these lack purpose for that individual (Pettican & Bryant 2007). This concept corresponds to the permaculture philosophy of valuing those who find themselves on the edges (Holmgren 2011) and are perhaps not the obvious candidates to focus on engaging.

The ability to appreciate the collaborative nature of most of the partnerships was important, however the ability to appreciate group members as individuals with their own objectives and needs in some way created more of an inclusive space, reducing the focus on personal dependency and increasing the emphasis on what people wanted to get from the sessions. Group members demonstrated a sense

of agency, understanding their roles as participants who were contributing to the building of a map that would describe their interests and investment in the garden; their feedback on activities they had done in the garden; and the feelings these had invoked. Through the map illustrations and chosen photographs they were able to document the contribution they made to the management of pests in the glasshouse, the growth of plants they had sown and compost-mountains they had turned. Their developing agency was demonstrated not only by their consistent reappearance each week and their continued interest in the mapping and photography of their work but also in their consideration of how they might continue to be involved in the future.

The Sowers group started out as a fragmented group demonstrating the relational barriers brought on by a shared sense of passivity that manifested in poor or no communication strategies with other pairs within the group. Acknowledging the occupation and often co-occupation achieved by each other as participant units during the research demonstrated a potential for co-production within and beyond the garden (Hunter & Ritchie 2007). The common voice and the tools through which to discuss needs and change were developed during this research. The Sowers group, through their PAR findings, had potential to have a direct impact on future decisions around participation in the garden, for example, who could come, with whom and how this might be facilitated or funded.

Co-production is the establishment of a relationship that encourages partnership with people participating in a service and those offering it, rather than hierarchical decision-making (Hunter & Ritchie 2007) and consequently develops a more authentic voice through which to influence policy and choices collaboratively at different levels (Bovaird, et al., 2016). This kind of co-productive relationship is supported by the flexible, advocacy-type relationships proposed by Abbott & McConkey (2006) in Chapter 2 and Slasberg et al. (2014) in promotion of responsive assistance for those taking steps towards making their own decisions and managing their own support. Building relationships and a sense of agency slowly, through occupation, for this group of people, was the instigator for addressing issues of social inclusion locally, in the garden, and establishing the

possibility of influencing wider decision-making outside the garden through co-production.

The continuum demonstrated in figure 8.2 was developed through analysis and synthesis of the Sowers PAR data and ethnographic notes during this phase. It demonstrates how acknowledgment and the addressing of issues of inclusion through meaningful occupation and co-occupation could therefore be considered to be an important precursor to the less practical and often more challenging issues of social and political inclusion.

Figure 8.2 Continuum of inclusion through occupation developed during this study

8.1.2 Connections and Disconnections

The above trajectory of occupational inclusion toward social and political inclusion had been an initiating factor for some of the Growers group members too. Three of the group had joined due to a sense of isolation; one from a geographical move and loss of social circle, one due to bereavement and one from a change in employment status. All Growers group members had an objective to connect with others who were interested in food growing, community development and the

environment, bringing them together in occupation and allowing for social connections to be made.

The Growers PAR group reflected some of the variety of background the volunteers in the market garden represented. They had been part of the Forest Garden for years as opposed to weeks and had established roles within the organisation, having aligned themselves with the beliefs and goals of the co-operative. They felt they were part of a community of people with shared interests and goals, similar to what (Wiesel 2009, p.601) describes as the most elusive of definitions of community: *"a group of people who share a sense of belonging and affiliation."* This type of community is not affiliated to any municipal jurisdictions, nor is it a specific affiliate of other national associations, however it does have a national and international component in a shared philosophy of permaculture and organic farming, allying it slightly with a voluntary sector definition of community, being a less place-based form of community (Wiesel 2009).

This group of people had already established a sense of belonging in the garden, as opposed to the Sowers group that was only just achieving that by the time the data collection stage neared its end. The Growers group members had made strong connections and felt a sense of agency through belonging. They all mentioned enjoyment of the work, the people and a natural attraction to the land from the time of their first visit, influencing their decisions to become more involved, relating their initial commitment to a personal mental and physical sense of connection with nature. They had needed to demonstrate commitment, but it had not been as challenging for them to demonstrate their contribution to the garden community.

8.1.2.1 A Natural Connection

The strength of the connection and commitment to the organisation had three common elements within the Growers group: an initial sensory and physical connection to the space; a connection to the people and a community; and a sense of finding a place where their participation had transformative results, whether large or small (illustrated in figure 8.3). A combination of the natural

attraction of the setting and its restorative effects engaged the individuals in the group immediately, with most of the group describing aspects of what Kaplan (1995) explained as the restorative benefits of nature: An effortless fascination with the growing areas; a sense of being away from daily routines and the continuous overwhelming sensory input of the city; an ability to become immersed in the work, understand it and be satisfied by it and a desire for action and complexity of task that is met by the environment (Fieldhouse & Sempik 2014).
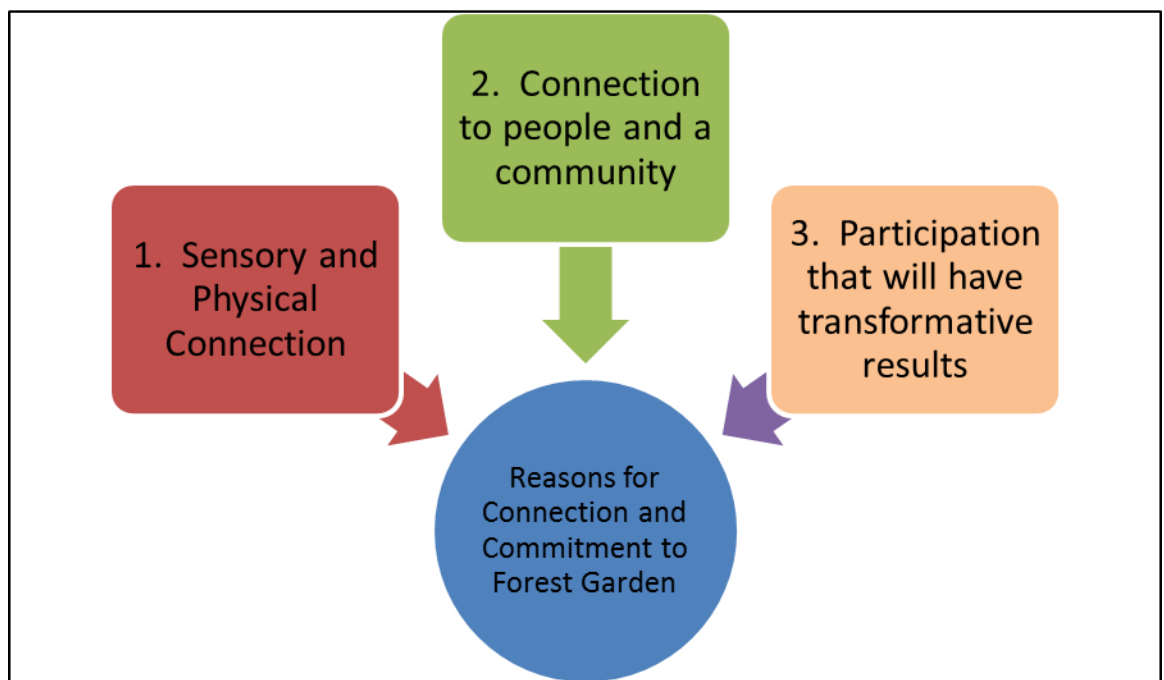
Figure 8.3 Reasons Growers expressed a connection and commitment to Forest Garden

The three common elements of attraction and commitment to Forest Garden were important as they were echoed by others in their descriptions of both natural physical and sensory enjoyment of the cultivated and wild areas, the openness of the sky and the fields and the sights, smells and sounds of being away from the routine of home. Henrietta described the impact of the digging on a cold day under a big sky as her first experience of the site and what motivated her to return, including the companionship of one of the co-operative members and a sense of having found a place where she felt connected with the earth and the community of the garden. The action-orientated and sensory characteristics of gardening is well-established as a key therapeutic aspect of horticulture (Fieldhouse & Sempik

2014; Buck 2016). Sensory and physically gross-motor behaviour within gardening tasks is mostly easily interpreted and followed within a person's capacity, demonstrating one reason gardening spaces are appreciated as good therapeutic spaces (Fieldhouse & Sempik 2014; Laws 2009; David Buck 2016)

Reginald too emphasises the physical and occupational sense of fulfilment of the physical and mental engagement when working in the garden, opposite in nature to the work in his previous occupation behind a desk, which had left him feeling confined. Nussbaum (2011) considers both affiliation and control over one's environment in a political and material sense to be central capabilities, ensuring people develop a sense of belonging and agency in their environment, deprivation from which can lead to occupational dysfunction and loss of identity (Whiteford & Hocking 2012).

The three elements of connection to Forest Garden as a place and a community enabled a contribution not just in a material or physical sense but, due to their regular participation, a contribution to the history and the culture of Forest Garden. Particular areas of interest on the site also contributed to the development of the history, culture and meaning for people becoming and staying involved in the future. Henrietta and the Sowers's admiration of the "Big Tree" in the orchard overlooking the newly planted trees drew on the contrast of natural and cultivated history of the place and the contribution the volunteers were making by being involved in planting the trees that would outlive their human participation in the garden. The archive of stories, activities and celebrations built around the "magical realm" added to a sense of folklore and complexity that invited further involvement and exploration of that environment (Kaplan & Kaplan 2011) and the development of traditions that contributed to the culture of the multi-functional and aesthetically beautiful space.

Most of the time, the participants agreed that participating in Forest Garden gave them a sense of occupational identity and provided what Laws (2009) proposed to be three qualities of alternative therapeutic spaces to traditional institutional settings: It was a space that promoted agency and self-determination by allowing some sense of appropriation or ownership of a task or growing space; it provided

people with 'a space in the world', one that was not full of hard, clinical edges and that was non-judgemental; and lastly, it was a non-technical space, not one where a therapist or clinician held more power, but one that "allowed for a more equal politics of relatedness" (Laws 2009, p.1832) between volunteers, co-operative members and other participants in the garden.

8.1.2.2 Acknowledgement of contribution and commitment

There were times that the Growers felt a sense of disconnection to the garden and the co-operative. Two areas of frustration voiced by the Growers related to important social and occupational needs expressed by the Growers group. Reginald had outlined both of the above frustrations, however the rest of the group agreed that these were issues they had thought of independently at times: Acknowledgement of volunteers more regularly and more formally for the work they had done by allowing use of the common and wild or uncultivated spaces in their own time before or after sessions, was seen as a way the co-operative could demonstrate appreciation for their day's contribution to the garden. They suggested that this demonstration of appreciation might enable further community-building among volunteers and co-operative members, but also give them a sense of ownership for the site and the work done on it.

The second issue of disconnection emerged at more of an occupational level, highlighting the frustration of not being able to complete tasks or see and take ownership of a completed job. This was often due to shifting priorities or time-constraints, however the Growers felt that this, too, was an issue of acknowledgement, and that if people wanted to see a task through to completion, they should be able to if possible. This would increase the meaning of the work, a greater understanding of the process for that task, and allow for ownership of the process and recognition for the outcome. This desire for understanding the impact of one's work in order to value it, rather than the scope of it being limited by competitive or capitalist outcomes, is described by Karl Marx (in Dean 2009 and Wilcock 2006) as preserving the social importance of work and reducing detachment from it. The Growers group members were people who felt committed

to the work done by the co-operative in the market garden and felt that even though they could identify many benefits to their own wellbeing and personal development through participating in the organisation, these benefits were as a result of work they put into the garden.

Additional demonstration of acknowledgement for the work done by the volunteers would demonstrate recognition for work done as an individual and as part of a work group. The opportunity to stay and socialise after volunteering or work time or spend more time on site building relationships and sharing experiences and knowledge following a day of work in the garden stood to benefit the participants in the garden, the co-operative members and the garden itself. Improving networks and strengthening links that often stretched beyond the walls of the garden added to the development of social capital for the whole organisation as well as individuals in the garden community (Ridley-Duff et al. 2011). Having implicit permission to remain in the garden and utilise the space for more individual pursuits, such as meditation, yoga, mindfulness practice or physical exercise also benefited the both parties, building more resilient food growers who understood the need for balance of work and leisure and the link between this and wellbeing (Buck 2016).

8.1.3 Governance and Acknowledgment

The issue of valuing the commitment demonstrated to the organisation and acknowledging it in more tangible ways also arose in the interviews, not necessarily relating to volunteers, but also to paid members of the co-operative, who found themselves working beyond paid hours and at levels some found beyond their capacity at times. All, however, felt that being challenged in their work had both personal and professional benefits and disadvantages. The work at Forest Garden was based upon philosophy and value rather than policy and political temperament; however it was still in the context of a capitalist-led, competitive society.

The personal investment in sustaining the organisation demanded that people work to their capacity, learn new skills when the opportunity was offered, and keep

up with the pace of the garden and demands of others involved in its development. This could, in the words of one interviewee, Nicola, "consume you" at times. This sense of being consumed is in keeping with the description of alienation by Marx in his paper on *Alienated Labour* (Clark et al. 1994), where loss of identity is associated with being caught in a capitalist concept of work, in which more work results in more power to the product or outcome, and loss of fulfilment from the task and lack of ownership of the occupation for the worker (Clark et al. 1994). The organisation, faced with the political and geographical challenge of trying to sustain a socialist movement in a capitalist society, had to find ways of monitoring its values in order to stay connected to the people working with it.

8.1.3.1 Vision, commitment and governance: "The revolution is not easy"

The co-operative members described their work, directly and indirectly as values-led, concluding that many people who were involved with the organisation long term or who worked for the co-operative would have held similar beliefs or values prior to their involvement and therefore mostly had common social, political and environmental beliefs. The policies established to manage the organisation were borne from the permaculture ethics and core values of social and environmental development the organisation was based upon. This fact was one that attracted many people to want to work on the site as they aligned themselves with these principles for living, however not all were as aligned to the level of commitment the organisation demanded, particularly on those employed by the organisation, which as Sarah explained, would "*stretch us*" and require that you "*love it ….and give to it*" in order to see the level of transformation in local communities that the co-operative aspired to.

This "values-led" leadership, as Jay described it, did attract people to the organisation and along with the strong emphasis on working with different communities and promoting social change, lent itself toward democratic and feminist way of working. It was evident, however, that as the organisation had grown, the tension of being both co-operative members involved in day-to-day decision-making and, "*the board of trustees or governors*" (Sarah); leadership in

the organisation inevitably saw times of success and conflict. Spear, Cornforth and Aiken (2009) warn against the combination of being both governance and management in the voluntary sector, although the structure of a co-operative is such that it allowed for this. The benefit of being an organisation run by the workers ensured that issues were always relevant and discussed in a timely manner; however the issue of there being a large part of the workforce not included by any formal means in the co-operative decision-making process, was one that people could not ignore.

The understanding was that the volunteers and trainees had not felt this level of involvement necessary; however it was mentioned by interviewees and touched upon by the Growers group as an area of non-democracy that was in contradiction to the social stance of the organisation. From the Growers group perspective, it had revealed an element of powerlessness as there had been no official forum through which to voice ideas or issues of concern other than approaching individuals in the co-operative. Some of these individuals were subjectively seen to hold a larger stake in the enterprise, hold more of the risk and thus the decision-making power within the organisation. Their position and overall commitment suggested permission to steer direction for everyone towards a minority ideal of social transformation, rather than a wider community understanding (Dey & Steyaert 2010). That is not to say that this direction was not one everyone would take, however the lack of representation and clear individualism posed a challenge to the organisation leaders to ensure a wider stakeholder influence.

Ridley-Duff & Bull (2011) discuss the issue of whether social enterprises necessarily demand a democratic structure, inclusive of all stakeholders or whether this can make leadership unnecessarily complicated when there is no demand for it. They do not reach any firm conclusion, citing examples of enterprises where people opted out of involvement in governance aspects of organisations but they emphasise that there is strong evidence indicating that most people want input into their workplace (Ridley-Duff et al. 2011) and value formal ways of making this happen. They also highlight that inclusion of stakeholders in governance of the organisation is reflective of how engaged the organisation is in promoting social inclusion.

This is a critical point and perhaps one that promotes further thought on whether more needs to be done to engage participation in governance of the organisation if further steps towards social and occupational inclusion are to be made. The issue suggested by those currently involved in governance is that of organisational capacity: Keeping the balance of ideas, space, staff capacity and continuous work on the garden as an economic imperative as well as increasing stakeholder input and potentially more work, more ideas and more change, is challenging and would need time and further resources to introduce along with a will and a process through which to share leadership and decision-making beyond the co-operative boundaries. Spear et al. (2009) recognise this and agree that multi-stakeholders can make decision-making more difficult but also feel that the value of having different perspectives on issues can often outweigh the complexities of managing so many voices.

The co-operative members valued a flat structure in relation to leadership and people who were involved in decision-making generally did feel that their voices were heard. The co-operative met in hubs that represented the area of work they were most involved in, where information was shared and discussed in smaller meetings and then brought to larger co-operative meetings for final decision-making. The length of time people had been involved in the organisation, the connections they had with others in the co-operative as well as influences beyond the boundaries of the co-operative inevitably saw the evolution of informal hierarchies within the flat structure leadership. As one interviewee described, there were definitely people in the co-operative who "*held more sway*" (Jay) and this was recognised by most people involved in the organisation. Spear et al.(2009) highlight that this is a common phenomenon within social enterprises and agree that people are often given more power in these situations due to the strength of their external networks or personal reputation, however they emphasise that this can only have an impact if the person or people have the will and the skill to make use of this reserve of power.

The hierarchies within the co-operative were slow to evolve, as were the skills needed to become a new member of the co-operative. This was an issue one of

the newer co-operative members highlighted, specifically that there was a focus on *people care* when it related to volunteers or students on site, but co-operative members did not always apply this ethic to themselves, in relation to each other and other staff, expecting the commitment, self-motivation and assurance to come with the new worker, rather than be something that was nurtured during their employment. By some, it was felt that long hours, self-management and initiative were expected even when a person felt and voiced that they were working beyond their physical, mental or emotional capacity.

This contradiction also reportedly existed due to time and resource limitations. Co-operative staff unanimously admitted that they felt they needed further time with those they mentored, supported or supervised. There was agreement that this was an area that most would change, that it worked for people who were confident in what they were doing, but newcomers found the lack of time for proper joint planning and guidance challenging and created frustration and a personal sense of poor performance. It also reinforced a power imbalance within the co-operative, demonstrating that the flat structure of governance was, at times, only so in theory and not in practice. This fact opens the door to issues more common to capitalist, top-down organisations and highlights the danger of creating pockets of oppression in an organisation aiming to combat social inequality and division.

(Nussbaum 2011) highlights control over one's environment as one of ten central aspects of living a life worthy of dignity. The arguments above relating to having representation within the organisation and an acknowledgement of both capacity to contribute and commitment to contribution are essential in ensuring a workforce that has both a sense of agency and a non-tokenistic sense of belonging within the organisation. Outside of these occupational boundaries is a threat of exclusion from the intended occupation and the context it lies within, putting a person or group at risk of social exclusion if they do not already experience this.

8.1.3.2 Occupational Exclusion

The Forest Garden co-operative's overall intention was to address issues of exclusion, however it was evident that in attempting to be inclusive, there were

times when exclusion occurred in unexpected places or due to a pragmatic need to maintain a solvent and sustainable enterprise. Some examples of this exclusion within inclusion have led to a synthesis of what it means to be excluded within the specific context of occupation. The Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University 2016) describes being excluded as being prevented from participating in an activity, or making a decision that something is not possible. Relating this to occupation implies that occupational exclusion is preventing someone from participating in an occupation or making a decision that it would not be possible for them to participate in it, and therefore preventing their opportunity for participation and belonging through the occupation.

Levels of occupational exclusion occur on a daily basis, when people responsible for others or for an organisation make decisions to change, grade or restrict an occupation due to a person's known ability or for the benefit of the wider organisation. It is when this exclusion is perpetuated and ability or circumstances not regularly re-evaluated, that occupational exclusion becomes unjust and can move toward occupational deprivation as described by Wilcock (2006). Deprivation becomes a dispossession of occupation, and should be guarded against when acknowledging that occupational exclusion exists in a situation.

Occupational exclusion is brought about through external factors, as in the case of occupational deprivation (Wilcock 2006). It can, in most cases, be managed through clear understanding of a person's occupational needs and the occupational barriers or challenges facing the individual or group; or through altering practice within an organisation so that excluding factors are addressed. In relation to the previous discussion on *occupational inclusion* as a building block to social and political inclusion, a reverse trajectory could be true of occupational exclusion. To be excluded from occupation for paternalistic or other reasons within a certain context, is to be further removed from the opportunity of citizenship or belonging within this context, leading to a loss of social and political opportunities available through participation. Three key characteristics of occupational exclusion are:

1. Perceived or real lack of representation within an important area of occupation in a person's life

2. Little or no acknowledgement through monetary or other significant means for occupation supporting a cause or organisation.

3. Tokenistic or no consideration of personal capacity to engage in and make choices related to an occupation meaningful to a person.

Occupational exclusion has been conceptualised here in order to highlight that exclusion can take many forms where occupation is the focus and can lead to a reinforcement of previous experiences of marginalisation and inequitable treatment (Duncan & Creek 2014). This, in turn, limits a person's development and ability to build capacity and capability towards a good life (Johnson et al. 2010) of dignity (Nussbaum, 2011), freedom from oppression of any kind and opportunities for meaningful and suitably acknowledged occupational engagement.

8.2 Choice, Transformation and Ownership

8.2.1 Authenticity of choice

A key aspect of citizenship when seen from a capability perspective, rather than neo-liberal perspective, is freedom to participate and contribute to society (Whiteford & Hocking 2012). Choice is essential to this participation, however this research has demonstrated what other theorists have discussed; that the meaning of choice for people with disabilities is ambiguous and has contradictory social and political meanings(Oliver & Barnes 2012; Nussbaum 2011; Wullink et al. 2009). In addition to the contradictory meanings of choice, people with learning disabilities continue to experience limited participation in decision making and are offered a limited number and variety of choices (Johnson et al. 2010; Wullink et al. 2009).

The Forest Garden offered opportunities for participation and some variety of choice within those activities, as remarked on by Leo, who felt the group with learning disabilities were given the chance to try activities they might not have been offered outside of the garden. These options might not all have appealed to the group members, but Burchardt (2004) and Sen (2009) point out that the process of choice and the opportunity to participate is as important as participation

in many cases. The group's enthusiasm regarding new and different activities was motivating and the temptation to provide a wider variety of activities was ever-present, however the pressures of a growing plan ensured a realistic array of tasks for the season. The co-operative, considering their stance in relation balancing earth care and people care, were reluctant to offer choices or options for engagement where these were tokenistic or ineffective in relation to the overall growing plan.

The understanding that choices offered for participation within the garden, though limited due to accessibility at times, were options that would have an impact on the garden and the community of garden workers, was a point of motivation not just for the Sowers group, but for most garden participants. This knowledge offered dignity through the provision of authentic and not tokenistic choices in the planning of and participation in growing-related activity as individuals and as a group. The result of this was a sense of increased agency as a group, particularly for the Sowers, and more steadily, as individuals who felt they were able to see the changes they had affected within the community and the contribution they made to plant production. This agency was based upon a growing understanding of their roles within the garden and in turn allowed for a sense of ownership, particularly where impact of the group's work could be seen and noted by others.

Decision-making and active choice were, as mentioned, not always clearly defined and particularly early on in the group's history, there were times when there was an ongoing question about how much of a role the people with learning disabilities had had in choosing to come to the garden, what they did in the garden and how much they understood of the intended benefits and outcomes gardening held for them. Sen (2009) argues that freedom is promoted through a focus on the value and quality of opportunities offered, rather than the range of choice.

Nussbaum (2011) and Johnson et al. (2010) therefore highlight that it is the responsibility of the community or society to be creative and focus on promoting freedom to participate through choices that hold value and are accessible to people. Acknowledging and sharing challenges and ideas during the research meant that support workers in the Sowers group felt more empowered to provide

opportunities for choice, understanding and embodying their own evolution from silent supporters to more actively involved agents of change within their sphere of influence.

The people with learning disabilities within the Sowers group also demonstrated their roles as agents of change through active participation and engagement in occupation and reflection as part of the research process. Had the sessions not been limited to a term, the group might have gone on to explore their roles beyond highlighting the social and occupational issues of their group to influencing wider social and environmental concerns. Johnson et al. (2010) and (Nussbaum, 2006) declare that a good and dignified life for people with learning disabilities involves opportunities for action and social change. Forest Garden, with its acknowledged areas of improvement, did offer a backdrop for the Sowers group to affect personal and social change beyond the boundaries of their own group. This added social capital based on their own developing skills, knowledge and relationships, to the rest of the garden and local economy.

8.2.2 Awareness and Evolution: "Change comes in cycles"

The theme of growing self-awareness and autonomy as well as the individual's development as an agent of change through occupation was acknowledged differently within the Growers group. They felt the garden had changed them and they, in turn, had taken the opportunity to implement change in the garden community and in some cases, beyond.

The Growers referred to cycles of change throughout their meetings and mapped their own development in skill and understanding of food growing, working with people and permaculture philosophy to seasonal changes and landmarks. This assimilation of understanding of themselves in relation to the enterprise, to permaculture philosophy and the garden demonstrates Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Decoteau 2016), a combination of structural influence and free will that evolves into a set of behaviours or propensities to act. The Growers demonstrated common commitments to the organisation and had a strong sense of belonging

due to their own investment in the organisation, however, they too held no form of formal representation within the co-operative. They indicated that a more formal way of processing ideas from volunteers more consistently would benefit the organisation and reinforce both local belonging and a sense of agency for volunteers (Pudup 2008). This would, in turn, enable a wider group of people to pursue the objectives of the Forest Garden co-operative, resulting in a greater social, environmental and political impact.

Individuals within the Growers group realised that they had an increased influence on outside agencies through the work the Forest Garden was doing. They could use their knowledge and skills towards both social and environmental causes that they felt strongly about on a cultural and social level. The description of personal change through participation in the garden resonates with the development of resilience through purposeful occupation described by (Duncan and Creek, 2014). It also reinforces the idea, discussed earlier, of collaborative occupation leading to co-production of objectives with external agencies, leading to greater opportunities for social and political inclusion for participants.

8.2.3 Reality and Resources

Finding ways into meaningful occupation, paid, voluntary or as a student, was a leading reason the Growers and many other volunteers had sought participation in the Forest garden. The garden, although able to offer continued skills development as a volunteer, could not sustain paid work for workers beyond the co-operative members and a small number of apprentice or trainee roles, often funded through external sources. Anecdotally, this was a source of frustration for volunteers, students, trainees and unpaid apprentices coming into contact with the organisation because those who were unable to afford unpaid involvement with the organisation were then excluded from regular participation due to needing to find alternative paid work. This left many who had developed personal capabilities and social capital through food growing, seeking employment elsewhere or ceasing their involvement in horticultural work altogether. Those with Job Seekers Allowances (Department of Work and Pensions 2016) could continue to sign on

with the knowledge that they would have to move on at some point, possibly for less meaningful work.

Tom (discussed in chapter 7) was one such volunteer who had moderate learning disabilities and who would have benefited from a clear pathway back into work since his depression had forced him to stop work with a weeding company prior to his involvement in the garden. Forced to choose between living without benefits or being in work that he found meaningful as a volunteer, this example is what Oliver and Barnes (2012) describe as the depletion of Tom's right to recognition for contribution to the general good. Hall & McGarrol (2012) claim this dualism creates two separate socioeconomic spaces characterising those who can keep pace with work and consumption and those who are unable to work, and are therefore considered lesser citizens for requiring welfare.

Similarly, for participants with learning disabilities who were younger than Tom, person centred-planning (Robertson et al. 2005) and the roll-out of the Getting a Life guidance (DOH, 2011) promoting younger people (14-25 years of age) with learning disabilities finding paid employment, was relevant but having little impact. Although a year old by the time the research was under way, the policy had not yet had any real influence on those eligible who were involved in the research or in the wider volunteer community in the garden. The Getting a Life (DOH, 2011) document mentioned citizenship and paid employment as expected results, merging the two aspects again and demonstrating no intention toward adopting a capabilities rather than a capitalist framework within work and welfare.

Ansari et al. (2012) highlight the negative impact large businesses and corporations have on smaller community enterprises internationally, and they encourage a form of *inclusive capitalism* that promotes social capital developed in the community, remaining in the community. They utilise ideas of Sen (2009) and Nussbaum (2011) in the proposal of a framework that promotes transfer of social capital to other small enterprises within the community by ensuring access of smaller enterprises to resources from wealthier organisations and through this, enabling the social capital and capability grown in the community to stay within the community (Ansari et al. 2012).

There is some opportunity for Forest Garden and other organisations like them to lead the way establishing pathways to government and other interested and ethical organisations that may want to broaden participation and widen the reserves of capabilities within a community. Use of specific outcome measures that could confirm a volunteer or apprentice's contribution within their capacity and in turn, validate their continued engagement and skill development within the organisation, would aid this process. Outcomes for this would benefit all three parties, social enterprise, government agency and individual and would establish a precedent for a capabilities orientated workforce, making it much more accessible to people with a wide range of abilities.

This would, however, require an internal infrastructure of record-keeping and outcomes monitoring that is currently difficult considering the organisation's human or material resources. Hogg & Baines (2011) also warn against becoming too service-orientated, claiming that for an organisation focused on broad social and environmental change, being a service may reduce the strength of the organisation in other priority areas.

8.2.4 The philosophical perspective: "Things may change and some may stay the same"

The co-operative are aware that they have many avenues they could develop from a wellbeing and vocational perspective and equally positive opportunities to develop their education and food production branches. Their resources and desire to remain autonomous of the state supports their sustainability as it releases them from political affiliation or commitment. It also limits sustainability by maintaining Forest Garden's influence as informal and reliant on co-operative relationships between themselves and individuals in statutory services. Rothschild (2009) describes the monitoring systems that state funding imposes on those they fund and, in a sense, control, as being poorly designed and often a barrier to success. The co-operative may choose to revisit their permaculture ethics in order to help with decision-making with regard to these risks and opportunities of remaining autonomous, however resources and affiliation are not the only considerations with regard to growing and remaining sustainable as an organisation.

One of the growers and co-operative members, M, mentioned that his greatest fear for the organisation was it "*losing relevance*". The garden is a large and unrelenting commitment and was also maintained on a high level of good will and volunteer time and energy. The current popular culture of self-sufficiency feeds into the high level of interest in third sector organisations involved in food growing. This, along with media and growing research interest in the benefits of participating in food growing and other outdoor activity (Buck 2016; Care Farming UK 2016) ensures a constant volunteer influx to the garden.

Environmental concerns regarding poor food production practices and unsustainable farming also encourage a following, bringing free, interested and motivated labour. Spear et al. (2009) reiterate M's concerns, stating that both staff and volunteers may join or form the organisation due to a cause but may not understand the governance implications of running a large enterprise. Once popular appeal is lost due to a change of media focus or political influence, a reduced workforce would limit growth and force a focus on production, limiting the organisation's ability to have the social and environmental impact they desire.

Considering new pathways through which people could engage with the co-operative and participate in ongoing planning and design, however, may prevent loss of relevance and provide a safety net for less developed areas of the enterprise. An active involvement in parallel movements, such as green care and social and therapeutic horticulture could also create networks that promote the relevance of the organisation's work, rather than put it at risk of losing relevance due to limited focus. The next section considers, in more detail, the importance of the garden as a space with different meaning and possibilities for a wide range of people and how this resource could be utilised to ensure growth and sustainability of the organisation and their work.

8.3 Plants, Place and Participation

This section addresses themes on the importance of being responsible for the sometimes novel activities of cultivation and maintenance of plants and land; having a space to participate in that offers opportunities to engage in meaningful, change-orientated doing and reflecting on what that doing means to people at different levels. Finally, it examines the function or multi-functions of a place and whether these are compatible and what impact each function may have on the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

8.3.1 Balance

In a permaculture sense, this section is about the ethic of *earth care* and considers what the research offers us in relation to the importance of a place such as Forest Garden to different people and balancing the complexities of engagement and expectation within that place. If environmental justice is important to ensure the sustainability of the places we live in, the nourishment we get and the types of occupations we engage in (Dennis et al. 2015; Burrage 2011; Wilcock 2006) then activities need to be balanced to ensure human and plant needs are considered in decision making in the occupation of food growing. This balance of needs was demonstrated earlier to have implications on inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation within the wider garden context and forces us to consider the benefits of authentic participation according to one's capabilities and the considerations behind developing a garden specifically for human therapeutic engagement.

The Forest Garden was developed as a market garden rather than a therapeutic or care-orientated enterprise, although it has come to demonstrate a number of therapeutic and wellbeing outcomes, such as offering physical exercise, skill development, knowledge about food growing and a sense of contribution and belonging within a wider community. Ensuring, as (Nussbaum, 2006) proposes, that the garden and all its non-human life are as important to consider as the human participants, avoids issues of tokenism but can, at times, appear unwelcoming or unreasonable.

The valuing and balancing of environmental, social and occupational justice is complex and challenging in the face of temptation to provide more services than the land can sustain for people in the hopes of attracting funding and consistent health and social care-related resources. This might, as mentioned before, ultimately threaten the authenticity of choices made by those engaging in the garden, the broad spectrum of local people wanting to participate and the ability to use the earth to build social capital so that it benefits both parties.

8.3.2   New spaces, new opportunities

The Sowers group engaged with the garden differently to many of the regular volunteers who often took access to open green space and the opportunities for engagement within it, for granted. They commented consistently on the different activities they had participated in as a group and as individuals within the garden and greenhouse spaces and expressed a satisfaction at having had a chance to try these activities. Abbott & McConkey (2006) and Hall (2005) both highlight the limited choices in relation to occupational engagement people with disabilities experience in spaces beyond their home or local environment.

Besides the opportunity to participate in shaping knowledge about their experience through the research, the garden itself posed new opportunities to participants due to the contrast in occupation and environment it held to statutory services many Sowers participants had been involved with. Simon, with his comments on being treated as an equal in the garden (chapter five), demonstrated the impact being in a non-institutional, social justice oriented, occupationally-focused setting had made on him. Hale et al. (2011) highlights the importance for those managing gardens and food growing sites to emphasise both the occupation of growing as well as the opportunities for engagement with those outside of one's daily sphere of influence. Community gardening allows time and space for both autonomy and collective action to grow in a safe environment, and therefore provides a platform and, in some cases, facilitation, for those interested in taking on local and wider challenges.

8.3.3 A place to grow: "People are less street"

The issue of stigma or discrimination was never openly discussed by the Sowers group, although it was alluded to by the support workers in the group in terms of lack of accessible opportunities on offer. One volunteer who participated in weekly food harvesting and preparation at Forest Garden, discussed the difference between the social atmosphere in the garden and how she felt beyond its boundaries. There was a more open, friendly and less guarded response to each other within the garden and kitchen. They valued the shared space, positive regard for their cooking and lack of judgement of their invisible differences (mental health and learning disability-related) offered by their group and the wider garden community. The garden and pockets of specific space within the garden therefore acted as a "third space" for some, offering a neutral environment in which a person could be themselves without concern that their past or home lives would influence their occupation or relationships (Oldenburg 1989).

The garden demonstrated qualities of being a third space between home and a formal work or in some cases, clinical, space that might have been loaded with expectations and hold triggers for emotional responses or behavioural expectation (Warner et al. 2013; Laws 2009). The garden's attraction for many, particularly in the kitchen group, was that it was plain or low profile, a space where ordinary people did ordinary activities together. It also brought those volunteering wherever they were on the site to the same level while they were working in the garden or the kitchen: everyone doing the task got muddy if they were working in the rain or smelled like garlic bread if they were in the kitchen. This allowed for a free flow of information and connection between people who might traditionally be in hierarchically different positions, supporting the central capacity promoted by Nussbaum (2011) of a life of with equal dignity and respect, and arguably strengthening the whole community rather than one individual.

Laws (2009) interpreted the dual aspect of the garden, with its mix of wild and cultivated areas as a reflection of peoples' own lives, where the wild or less-

controlled areas might feel more suitable at times than others, depending on a person's mood. Equally, Granerud & Eriksson (2014), suggested that green care spaces and occupations gave people the opportunity to care for people, plants and creatures within the space, which mirrored their own needs at times but was safe to acknowledge in a space that was non-stigmatising.

There was a constant pressure from those supporters of the garden in local services for mental health, learning disability and a range of other causes, who acknowledged the literature in support of social and therapeutic horticulture and felt that the co-operative should formalise the therapeutic aspect of the garden in order to make referral processes and outcomes clearer. This, as mentioned earlier, posed a danger of altering the nature of the garden population and tipping the balance away from earth care toward a more people care focus. There were many benefits to the local community and the co-operative in terms of developing interesting occupation and vocation-centred projects with NHS, third sector and social care stakeholders, however the challenge remained in maintaining a balance between social, occupational and environmental justice.

8.3.4 A naturally therapeutic space or a natural place for therapy?

The question of whether to move towards more formalised links with health and social care or to remain an organisation interested in promoting inclusion of people with disabilities on a small scale in relation to general people care objectives was, and continues to be, an open and complex dialogue for the Forest Garden Co-operative. The co-operative desires a workforce with different cultures, backgrounds and capabilities as this reflects their objective to reduce social inequalities and improve skills for self-reliance among marginalised populations (Forest Garden website).

They enjoy the interest and expertise brought from a wide section of the population locally and beyond the borders of London and sometimes the United Kingdom. Although Forest Garden welcomes people with disabilities and has a small outreach programme specifically for certain groups, such as people with

learning disabilities, they also align themselves with other causes and interests beyond social inclusion and disability.

There are many examples of projects and organisations that set out with the specific aim of establishing a green care enterprise that has a therapeutic aim. A well-established social and therapeutic horticulture project is the Thrive project (Thrive 2016), a charity offering spaces and resources for gardening as therapy. This organisation and others with a similar aim, have a focus on social and therapeutic wellbeing and rehabilitation for people within a cultivated garden space. Not all projects are similar and green care itself is too broad a topic to comment on specifically, however the question remains as to whether a more focused intention toward therapeutic outcomes would shift the balance within the permaculture framework too much from a balanced system of earth care and people care towards a much more human-focused agenda.

On a practical level, the infrastructure of the organisation would have to change to align with statutory requirements around information management and clinical governance (Department of Health 2014a). The administration of the above would most certainly remove human resources from growing tasks to desk-based work, necessitating funding for recruitment of more staff or reliance on further volunteer resources to assist with this.

Co-operative members voice the concern that an imbalance of populations on site, creating a view that the site was limited to therapeutic intervention, and not open to all, might change the volunteer demographic unless parallel educational and vocational initiatives were kept running alongside therapeutic interventions. Funding to resource therapeutic practice and increase accessibility of the site would be required and in turn, statutory bodies would require more specific therapy-related outcomes than those utilised at present (Communities Living Sustainably & Growing Health 2016; Bragg et al. 2015; Parkinson et al. 2011). Catering for personal assistants and managing finances relating to care and assistance through personal budgets would increase administration for those attending as well as the organisation (Harlock 2010), although the organisation

would stand to gain from funding from social care through personal budgets and emerging personal health budgets (Bragg et al. 2015).

Overall, as mentioned before, the pressure to become a service, has the potential to overwhelm the focus on social and environmental development and activism (Hogg & Baines 2011) and redirect much of the co-operative's energy in the direction of health and social care objectives. These concerns have been the key argument against a wider focus on accessibility and formal referral-based horticultural therapy. The naturally therapeutic aspects and inclusive, grass-roots essence of the garden for those who attend voluntarily at the moment are at risk of being institutionalised through the habitus of statutory care protocol and culture.

A user-involved approach towards bringing therapeutic approaches outdoors, as demonstrated by (Laws 2009) is supported by the interest demonstrated by volunteers and staff members at Forest Garden in the design and implementation phases of this research project. A participatory, permaculture-based outreach programme design that incorporated accessible, occupation- and vocation-based therapeutic activity is a challenging but much more authentic option than a formal horticultural therapy programme. This would complement existing knowledge and skills-based education that could be tailored to meet the needs of users wanting to learn and understand more about permaculture in order to be involved in the design and maintenance of the programme. This project could be one part of a wider, more participatory design for the whole organisation, allowing the organisation users more control over governance and planning.

Shrivastava & Kennelly (2013) propose that small enterprises have a natural propensity towards encouraging more sustainable practice within their local communities due to these being fixed in space and practical to be involved in. Forest Garden, as an enterprise, already has an established sustainability agenda that could be incorporated into the design of the user-led therapeutic programme design. This would ensure that the permaculture principles and concerns relating to both environmental and organisational sustainability are addressed and understood by users, containing the fears of imbalance within the *people care* agenda and ensuring that *earth care* remains a focus for all users.

8.4 Limitations

This section examines where the research met with limitations that might affect the transferability or dependability of the outcomes.

The first limitation relates to preparation of the literature review. The initial draft of this review was done in 2011, when the project was initiated and related to a different political structure and different but already changing health and social care policy structure to the one we currently experience. Personalisation was being launched, with high expectations and rigid targets, and the Care Act (Department of Health 2014b) was not yet in existence. The literature review reflects this, although some effort has been made to update it where this was possible and relevant within the timeframe of completion.

On a practical level, my ability to examine the reality, relevance and progress of personal budgets with participants in the garden was limited in a political sense, in that the drive to promote personal budgets was strong in theory, but demonstrated little evidence in practice. From a research perspective, this was also hindered by the small number of people in the garden who had access to, and were using, personal budgets during the research. Those who did have access to them were not managing them independently due to the severity of their learning disability, and were unable to discuss the relevance of them in the context of access to services. Co-operative members had limited exposure to personal budgets in practice and had little to contribute other than interest in the opportunities personal budgets might offer some of their volunteers. Due to the participatory and exploratory nature of the research design, the focus shifted from personalisation being a primary issue to examine with participants, to one that would need to be examined more theoretically once the data relating to experience in the garden had been collected and analysed.

The next limitation related to access to participants for the first PAR group. My initial intention was to invite all those who had participated or were interested in participating in the garden, who had a learning disability, to participate in a separate PAR group to the pre-established class specifically designed for people

with learning disabilities. This was to eliminate expectations relating to being in a classroom situation and to widen the invitation to people not attending the class. Many issues prevented the establishment of a second group with the same participants running alongside the pre-established group, mostly relating to the participants being unable to come to the site more than once a week; being able to find assistants who would be able to support them on site more regularly and the garden being able to support space for another group at a time of year when the weather was worsening and being outdoors for the whole session was not always going to be possible.

I found the final stage of analysis challenging, trying to distil and interpret the knowledge generated, the complexities of relationships and the broad range of experiences; particularly relating to the PAR groups. Utilisation of their own initial thoughts and themes aided this process, but my role as author in representing other peoples' experiences in a balanced, critical and authentic way was filled with personal and professional contention. I regularly lapsed out of researcher mode and wrote from the perspective of a clinician, highlighting the importance of using supervision and peer discussion with other researchers to critique and understand the impact of language and positionality. Bracketing (Tufford & Newman 2010) was a technique I was aware of but did not necessarily engage with to a large extent, due to the tensions this technique brings in relation to being a reflexive researcher. I was, however, conscious of my limitations and lack of experience as a researcher and so, at times, had to mentally step out of my comfortable vocational role and into that of researcher, advocate and activist.

Similarly, my position as an insider in the organisation prior to undertaking the research frequently had an impact on my ability to see beyond maintenance of relationships and support of the work done at Forest Garden. I regularly sensed my own resistance to critiquing colleagues and friends in the garden, and I rewrote sections numerous times in an effort to develop this criticality. This constant revision of writing and thematic development did facilitate an intense reflection on whether the data depicted and interpreted was an authentic representation of what was said and what occurred during the research process. I remained in contact with the garden, friends and colleagues within it as these people had been in my

life prior to the research and I hoped to retain these relationships beyond the research.

Other personal limitations included contending with work and family commitments while undertaking research that was, at times, all-encompassing; and learning to be a parent to our son, who was born just after the data collection stage of the research was complete. Personal priority and vocational shifts, at a time when I was heavily engrossed in reflexive and analytical work, at times threw me off track creatively and emotionally, and at other times enabled me to identify and understand perspectives I might not have noticed before.

The final limitation relates to what could feasibly be included in one doctoral thesis, considering the amount of data generated in three phases of qualitative research. Some findings ranged beyond the realms of what was relevant and appropriate to include in this thesis and a judgement had to be made, during the write-up, about what to include in relation to the research question, and what would better be expressed at a later date, in a different format or for a different audience. My intention is to include and discuss the few findings that are not present in this thesis within future collaborative presentations, accessible and academic publications, conferences and knowledge-building workshops.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

9.1 Conclusions

This research has helped to add to existing knowledge relating to the experience of people participating in social enterprises that are focused on food growing or horticulture. The case study of Forest Garden examined what people gained from and brought to the organisation in their differing roles within it, from temporary user to regular participant to founding member. The outcomes were based on participant-generated information and themes from this were discussed in detail in chapter eight. Three final conclusions were drawn from the research as a whole and these were interdependent, as depicted schematically in figure 9.1.
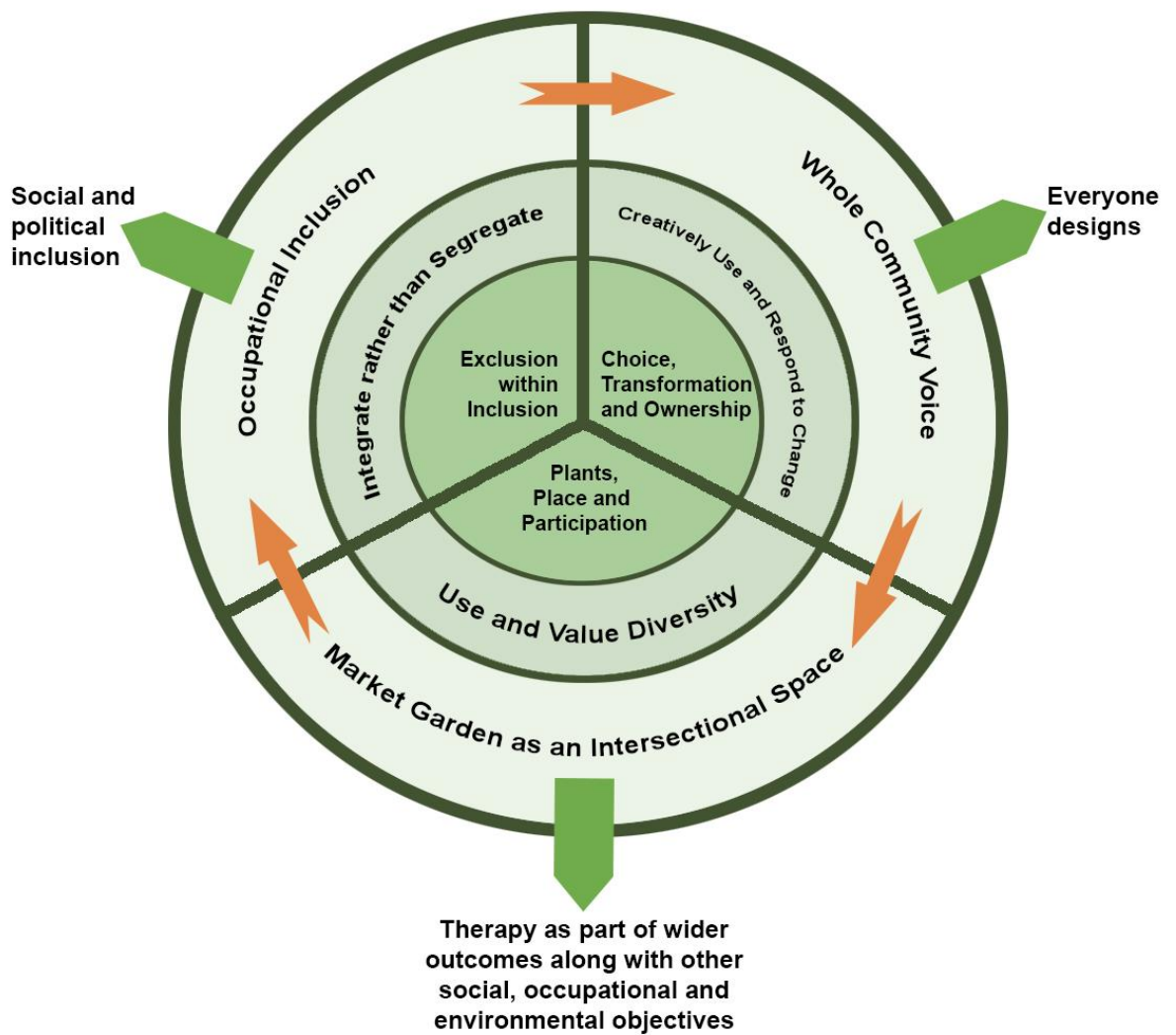
Figure 9.1 Three key conclusions as interdependent factors in furthering inclusion, sustainability and organisational relevance

9.1.1 Occupational Inclusion

Participation in the market garden and research activities, particularly photography, mapping, constructing and drawing led to a sense of shared purpose and agency for participants in the two participatory action research groups. As discussed, there is too often a focus on social inclusion for those marginalised within society through disability, unemployment or other life changes, such as retirement. This research demonstrated that in some cases social inclusion can be challenging to bring about, particularly where communication difficulty, emotional response and behaviour make interaction with people and place difficult. In these situations, and in general in the garden, the focus was moved toward occupation, which allowed for acknowledgement of each other's capabilities and means of experiencing work in the market garden.

In promoting occupational inclusion, there is an understanding that participant thoughts, ideas and vision for the organisation, where feasible and appropriate, will be represented in the design and running of a programme or project. There is also acknowledgment of a person's role within the organisation and what that person practically brings to the organisation and receives in turn. There are enough occupations within a community garden for people to work towards meaningful personal outcomes by participating according to their capability.

Focusing on relational aspects within the garden, such as the importance of co-occupation and collaborative design and planning with all participants in the garden will further personal goals as well as those wider objectives set by the co-operative. Community-based, collaborative activity is known to be stronger in influencing policy (Bovaird et al., 2016), which is ultimately what will keep the organisation politically and personally relevant and interesting to those involved in it.

9.1.2 Whole Community Voice

Legitimate concerns were voiced throughout the research project regarding ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the organisation, particularly at times when there might be challenges to face, such as a poor harvest, fluctuating volunteer support and political or popular culture changes. Watson (2006) describes how communities are responsible for the formation of culture, rather than small groups of individuals. In the case of Forest Garden, it became evident that significant parts of the organisation were not formally acknowledged and given an effective voice in decision-making.

Without a voice, those sections of the community lacked power to contribute to the design of the growing organisation and ultimately its cultural heritage. Here a key aspect of permaculture: that of including the stakeholders was being set aside due to governance oversight and occupational overload from a managerial perspective. Formal inclusion of voices from all regular groups accessing the site in design and running of future activity would ensure a wider base of social capital from which to draw. It would establish a more reliable source on which to base proposed outreach programmes and a much stronger platform from which to manage political, environmental and social challenges when they emerge.

9.1.3 The Market Garden as an Intersectional Space

Finally, the temptation to focus in on the wellbeing aspects of food growing and gardening more formally as part of a therapeutic horticulture is great due to the many aspects of Forest Garden that make it a naturally therapeutic space. The argument for promoting the site more formally for its therapeutic qualities, enabled a consideration of social and health care funding being a more consistent and larger part of the economic stability of the organisation. This idea, however, poses some challenges to the balance of permaculture ethics in the garden, with the emphasis on *people care* aspects threatening to overwhelm the two remaining ethics, *earth care* and *fair shares*, both important current focuses for the organisation. The Forest Garden co-operative, as discussed, have objectives that

include reducing social inequity in marginalised groups in the area and creating more self-sustaining and resilient local communities in order to promote both social and environmental justice. For this reason, the central aims of the co-operative running the garden necessitate a multi-dimensional approach in order to prevent privileging of one priority over others (Ropers-Huilman & Winters 2010).

Considering the experience of people participating in the organisation at present, whether volunteers, co-operative members, regular or sporadic gardeners or learners; it is evident that most report a wide range of naturally therapeutic and vocationally orientated benefits from their participation. There is potential to improve practice and planning on site to enhance therapeutic benefits and perhaps even formalise referral pathways to enable wider access to the site from local health and social care trusts. Creating a specific focus on therapy, however, threatens to rebrand the site as one not focused on wellbeing, but rather limited to a more rigid framework of external health and social care expectations and outcomes. This might inevitably reduce the organisation's autonomy and its current value as an intersectional space for social, environmental and occupational justice to be pursued.

9.2 Collective environmental occupation

The neo-liberal shift in health and social care provision (Grover & Soldatic 2013; Oliver & Barnes 2012) has had a two-fold effect of permitting a focus on individualised support and ignoring the responsibility we have collectively to each other and the environment we live in (Townsend 2015; Simo Algado & Townsend 2015). This research supports an increasing call among occupational scientists in the call to understand not just what individuals need, but what whole communities require in order to solve the larger issues of unemployment, exclusion, poverty and environmental degradation (Dickie et al. 2006; Cutchin & Dickie 2012; Wilcock 2006).

The intersectional space of this garden, as discussed above, provides a setting in which participatory citizenship (Fransen et al. 2015) can be nurtured at a pace and level of performance that meets the capacity of a wide range of people, and in

doing this, promotes a shared understanding of social and ecological issues and a culture of positive behaviour in relation to these issues. This increased collective power and consciousness not only has the potential to improve individual lives within the community in practical ways, but also to have an impact on public health, in relation to exercise and awareness of food sources; and environmental sustainability, through pro-active, knowledgeable environmental behaviour.

Public health and environmental action as collective rather than individualist issues, have been raised as concerns before within occupational science literature, and highlighted as concerns occupational therapists and scientists should be focusing on in service provision and research (Wilcock 2006; Whiteford & Hocking 2012; Simo Algado & Townsend 2015). Using occupation wisely in community-based settings such as this market garden, offers potential to cultivate a conscious collaborative health and social care paradigm shift. The co-production of services from the ground up that this organisation represents, demonstrates the ability of social enterprises that are ethically and ecologically-focused to influence local government strategy and awaken interest in alternatives to statutory services that can provide more than just day care.

Ramugondo & Kronenberg (2015) discuss the concept of *Ubuntu*, familiar to me as a South African, but distant in the clamour of funding cuts and target-focused care. There are four elements to Ubuntu, the sense that we are shaped by our interactions with each other; interaction between the individual and the community, reflection on becoming, as individual and community; ethical responsibility to each other's' existence; and an enablement of capability within all engagement. Places like the Forest Garden offer opportunities for us as citizens, and particularly as occupational therapists and scientists, to work with them, using occupation, to forward these collective aims.

9.3 Democratisation of knowledge

The participants played an important role in the discussion of their own knowledge dissemination on site, largely through presenting their findings verbally and visually at the end of each PAR group. They also consented to a sample of photographs and artefacts from the research being left on display for the rest of the season following the two presentations, one in 2012 and one in 2013. One of the paintings contributed by Nathan from the Growers group continues to be on display in the classroom at the garden and the rest of the artefacts were housed with me for inclusion in the body of this thesis and future publications or presentations.

A summary of parts of this research has been submitted to a green care knowledge-building endeavour funded by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, called *Growing Well*. (See appendix J). The research has also been presented verbally and through poster presentation at a number of different conferences and workshops in London, other parts of the UK, Ireland and South Africa. These are noted at the start of this thesis, along with details of a book chapter in which knowledge from this research has been shared as a co-author. A selection of these are also available to review in appendix K.

In future publications and presentations I aim to include participants in the planning, writing and delivering findings from the research. This is to ensure that the knowledge remains within the public domain and is useful to the social enterprise and those within it, rather than resulting only in academic learning. To initiate this process I will be running a workshop with co-operative members and other interested participants from the Forest Garden on completion of this thesis, summarising findings and discussing the implications of these for the future of the garden.

9.3 Implications and recommendations for research, practice, policy and education

9.3.1 Research

Acknowledging that it is possible to gain an understanding of issues in a just and democratic way using a range of methodologies; my experience of using PAR in this study, which enabled the participants to generate their own findings, made me conscious of questioning why I might not be using a participatory approach in other areas of my work, where one was possible and appropriate. The use of critical ethnography equally enabled me to see how, even when a situation appears accepting and inclusive, there are still areas of exclusion that emerge to be questioned. A participatory approach and critical examination of these areas often have the power to transform unnecessary exclusionary practice.

This research demonstrated that choosing research designs that match the approach and beliefs of the organisation or areas being studied help to establish trust early on, where paternalistic research practices might have developed historical misgivings or uncertainty about being involved in research.

The methods used also highlighted the role of participatory action research as a design that is flexible and permits adaptation to different environments and participants. The use of photography was a key method of enabling people with moderate to severe learning disabilities to see themselves as productive citizens but also as researchers, from different sides of the camera. Herr and Anderson (2015) propose skilfulness and integrity as criteria for outcome validity within action research, where a researcher demonstrates an ability to move the participants forward toward action. In the case of this research, action was largely taken as part of the research process with findings resulting in slow but constructive action as they continue to have an impact on future planning within the organisation. Examples of this to date include the continued training of local volunteer assistants to assist people with disabilities on the site if they do not have access to personal assistants and the consideration of initiating a user-involvement group to contribute to the shaping of volunteer opportunities within the garden.

9.3.2 Practice

In practice, the learning is spread across health, social, environmental and business sectors, adding to the understanding of the multiple ways in which green care sites are useful as therapeutic spaces. Insight is shared that the way in which provision of a wellbeing-related service is conducted within each setting cannot necessarily be confined by labels or assumptions. Whereas, in statutory services there are often a range of defining characteristics that make them reliably accessible and relatively consistent in terms of policy and funding streams; green care sites and social enterprises differ in form, outlook and resources. For this reason, each green care social enterprise should be allowed some freedom to define its contribution and aims according to its resources and what it can offer, including the value it might bring through its approach, such as Forest Garden and its use of permaculture. These social enterprises should, however, acknowledge their limitations and exclusions openly to enable people accessing them to decide whether they would benefit from participation in them or not. This acknowledgement would prevent both internal and outsider ambiguity in terms of accessibility, available opportunities and future intentions of the organisation.

Relating to the above, transparency with regard to established or intended relationships with local authority and health services would enable informed choices for people who would like to access the organisation to meet personal social care, well-being or health goals. The risks and opportunities of implementing formalised recording and outcome measures has already been discussed in chapter eight, however if the green care enterprise does choose to engage more directly with authorities in offering an alternative to statutory services, use of appropriate outcome measures and confidential record keeping would need to be implemented in order to build credibility with commissioners and participants.

Discussion of the above formalised care endeavours does distract from some of the more theoretical and advocacy-related aspects found to be true of green care social enterprises in this research. Horticultural occupations have been shown to help build cohesive communities and shape ideas of what is unique and beneficial in green care. Co-production, with green care participants, social enterprise

leaders and local authority or health representatives; of flexible and practical pathways into green care would ensure that future policy-making in this area includes user experiences and sustainable suggestions.

9.3.3 Policy

Findings relating to the limitations imposed on support workers of people with disabilities through lack of resources, training and attention to professional development needs have largely to be addressed through policy change or enforcement. If personalisation of social care and more recently, health care is to demonstrate any lasting effect, there needs to be a focus on preparing support workers to be adaptable and resourceful assistants. To work in green care social enterprises alongside another person is to be prepared to connect with the earth physically, mentally and emotionally in order to facilitate this connection effectively with the person they are working with. Their role in co-occupation often highlights unnecessary occupational exclusion and tokenistic intent in everyday settings.

People who are underpaid, under-skilled or under-acknowledged are unable to offer this and therefore this gap needs to be addressed at both a policy level and a practice level, by the green care enterprises and the relevant authorities these workers are associated with. This redressing of resources has an education component and the decision of how or where skills are obtained and what skills to teach will inevitably differ according to locally-established relationships between education facilities, social care providers and third sector enterprises.

Government support for growth in the social enterprise and the third sector in general, remains tied to political leadership. The current lack of predictability in relation to this may be a threat to the autonomy and survival of many social enterprises reliant on interest and funding to support aspects of their work. Political influence and leadership changed three times over the period of this research and with the UK's recent move to leave the European Union, implications for funding from government and European networks are indefinite. The temptation toward stability through the adoption of neo-liberal business practices may impact on the

alternative approach and democratic nature of some green care enterprises, such as Forest Garden. Remaining autonomous and relevant through the use of robust democratic practices, local engagement and the maintenance of a value system in line with permaculture ethics may go some way toward developing a sustainable model for this particular social enterprise. This, in turn may be useful learning for other social enterprises contending with similar political dilemmas.

9.3.4 Education

Finally, in education, the research adds to the range of experience and knowledge we are able to share about where health and social care is situated and how our skills can be utilised, particularly as occupational therapists. Anecdotally, students in occupational therapy today engage in more social enterprises and green care organisations as role-emerging and non-traditional placements, than ever before. The way we understand and teach about occupation, capability and therapeutic engagement in different environments needs to adjust accordingly for us to remain relevant as an occupational therapy profession within these novel areas of practice.

Throughout the research process, I was constantly reminded of the Canadian Model of Client-Centred Enablement (Townsend et al. 2007). This model lists the variety of contexts occupational therapists may work in and how we have developed skills in all these areas that can be used to facilitate an enabling environment (these are: adapt, advocate, coach, collaborate, consult, coordinate, design/ build, educate, engage and specialize). In this study, the garden has emerged as a space of affirmation and transformation through social, environmental and political occupations. Acknowledging the multi-functionality of these growing spaces facilitates a greater understanding of the opportunities these spaces offer us as occupational therapists and our responsibility as advocates and activists, not to ignore them.

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The implications for myself, as practitioner, researcher, educator and occupational being, have been too many to enumerate; however one particular thing that I have taken away from this research has been the gift of learning to hesitate before making assumptions, and to look again. I realise that my tendency prior to becoming a researcher was often to take in issues and occurrences at speed , to make assumptions or judgements based on readily available information or observations, and push on to the next issue; which was largely encouraged in pressurised clinical or management environments. The details, qualities and contradictions I see now, because I know how and where to stop and look for them, bring me closer, not only to other people and the planet, but to myself. And for that, I am grateful.

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Appendices

A. Table of key literature review relating to Green Care
B. Brunel University Ethics approval confirmation letter
C. Research information sheets and recruitment flyer
D. Consent forms
E. Demographics sheet
F. Topic guide for Interviews
G. Core Capabilities for Nussbaum's Capabilities model
H. Examples of themes developed from the research at different stages (taken from Nvivo v 10 software analysis)
I. Descriptions of worker roles in Forest Garden
J. Research Summary and Case Studies for Forest Garden
K. A selection of presentations and posters from conferences
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Appendix A

Table of key papers relating to Green Care

Author/Date /Country of Origin	Type and Aims of Study	Participants	Data Collection /Analysis	Outcome	Relevance
(Clatworthy et al. 2014) **Gardening as a MH intervention: a review** *MHRJ – peer reviewed journal*	Critical review of research into therapeutic horticulture since 2003	10 papers met search criteria	Critical appraisal using data extraction form	Quant results or reduced depression and anxiety symptoms and improved mood, attention and self-esteem; Qual results emotional benefits, social skills and network improvement; attitude to work; voc skills; connected to nature, improved sleep; felt productive	Mental health (not LD for this research purpose);
(Diamant & Waterhouse 2010) **Gardening and belonging: reflections on how social and therapeutic horticulture may facilitate health, wellbeing and inclusion** *BJOT – peer reviewed journal*	Qualitative Exploration of how STH may facilitate health, wellbeing and inclusion	3 staff STH therapists	Reflective workshop	Affirmation Choice and self-determination Provision of private and community space Physically and emotionally safe environments	Method not scientific and only 3 participants
(Genter et al. 2015) **The contribution of allotment gardening to health and wellbeing: A systematic review of the literature** *BJOT - Peer reviewed journal*	Systematic review looking at contributions of allotment gardening to health and wellbeing	10 papers met search criteria	Criticaly appraised acc to: Reporting External validity Internal validity Power (quant) and a separate	(Specific to allotment gardening) • Stress-relieving refuge • Healthier lifestyle • Contact with nature • Personal devt	Allotment gardening smaller than community garden site.

Author/Date /Country of Origin	Type and Aims of Study	Participants	Data Collection /Analysis	Outcome	Relevance
			framework for qual papers.		
(Granerud & Eriksson 2014) **Mental Health Problems, Recovery, and the Impact of Green Care Services: A Qualitative, Participant-Focused Approach** *OT in MH - Peer reviewed journal*	Qualitative To examine the empirical experience of green care in relation to recovery from mental illness	12 men & 8 women 22 – 55 with mental illness, including those with longstanding severe psychotic disorder.	interviews; grounded theory	3 findings: • A meaningful life (rhythm, being needed; social context; new skills) • A natural type of work (physical; seasonal) • Sense of community and belonging • Challenges and mastery	Small study Considers the important role of the farmer/main grower as the leader of the occupation, and the OT as consultant.
(Hale et al. 2011) **Connecting food environments and health through the relational nature of aesthetics: Gaining insight through the community gardening experience** **SS&M – peer reviewed journal**	Qualitative, Interviews with individuals and groups Investigating the relational nature of aesthetics and how this can influence health behaviour	28 individual interviews and 14 group interviews	Phenomenology, semi-structured interviews	Developing an ecological aesthetic of community gardens A place for learning 'natural' processes in the city A place of affirmation and expression A place for a holistic sense of health and wellbeing	Community gardens as therapeutic landscapes Connection between aesthetic qualities of gardens with health behaviour Large study, based in USA

Author/Date /Country of Origin	Type and Aims of Study	Participants	Data Collection /Analysis	Outcome	Relevance
(Parkinson et al. 2011) **The Therapeutic Benefits of Horticulture in a Mental Health Service** *BJOT – peer reviewed journal*	Qualitative/Quant To explore the therapeutic benefits of horticulture in a mental health service	10 mental health service users	Qualitative (WEIS) and quantitative data – interviews and rating scales	Different reason for appreciating horticulture for men and women; benefits linked to personal interest in horticulture; High social value of horticultural occupation Facilitators were important	Acknowledged 'open & green space' as important factor in many studies; Thorough coverage of research area due to mixed methods but difficult to follow at times; interesting use of outcome measures; purely mental health(Fieldhouse, 2003)
(Parr 2007) **Mental health, nature work, and social inclusion** **Environment and Planning: Society and Space Journal – peer reviewed**	Qualitative 2 studies out of a larger 5 garden schemes discussed	15 MH Sus 17 staff	Ethnography Interviews transcribed and coded with NVIVO	Good points about some exploitative stuff. People who are vulnerable carrying the burden of creating sustainable communities with little material gain. Older discourses about therapeutic power of nature still current. Enables active citizenship and a way back to work and into the community following institutionalisation. Workers reticent about working in bad conditions, find some of the work hard and slow, tiring and tense when it is repetitive. Can be physically and socially demanding if feeling unwell.	Important in bringing more critical elements to light.

Author/Date /Country of Origin	Type and Aims of Study	Participants	Data Collection /Analysis	Outcome	Relevance
(Sempik et al. 2014) **The effects of social ant therapeutic horticulture on aspects of social behaviour** *BJOT – peer reviewed journal*	Quantitative To explore the benefits of social and therapeutic horticulture (STH)	143 participants (108 male) Mixed disabilities with focus on learning disability and mental health	Secondary analysis of assessments based on Likert scales for motivation, social interaction, communication and task engagement	Increased session number enabled better habituation; Increased social interaction and motivation for service users with LD; Increased social interaction for MH service users Need to re-examine task engagement and the measurement of this.	Long session length (5.5hrs); Used volunteers for support, not personal assistants; Looked at specific areas of behaviour change rather than broad overview.
(Sempik et al. 2005) **Health, wellbeing and social inclusion: Therapeutic horticulture in the UK**	Qualitative Evaluation of the benefits and limitations of STH	24 sites for survey 5 for in-depth evaluation (137 people interviewed)	Critical review of literature; In-depth survey of 24 STH sites – combination of types of interviews – structured to semi-structured depending on capacity; observations using photography; case studies. In-depth	Met 4 dimensions of social inclusion – Burchardt, legrand's Can be applied to other forms of green care Good commentary on use of photographs	Detailed consideration of social inclusion. Improved social skills and belonging, less pressure, safety and peace, learning new skills and having a role, improved physical and mental health

Author/Date /Country of Origin	Type and Aims of Study	Participants	Data Collection /Analysis	Outcome	Relevance
			evaluation of purposively chosen sites to evaluate benefits and limitations		
(Whatley et al. 2015) **Enabling occupational participation and social inclusion for people recovering from mental ill-health through community gardening** *Aus JOT - Peer reviewed journal*	Qualitative How does a neighbourhood-located gardening programme create a socially-inclusive environment, and enable occupational participation among people recovering from mental ill-health? Ethnography	4 staff, 5 participants, 2 external support workers 2 volunteers (13)	Participant obs (23 hours), discussion, field notes	Community garden enabled social inclusion and occupational participation by: • Creating community – themselves and resource for wider community • Creating a flexible environment that supports participation according to interest and capacity • Creating a learning environment	Only a proportion of members represented Author an employee of local MH trust – constrained discussion? Specific aim and small scale of study limited scope
(York & Wiseman 2012) **Gardening as an occupation: a critical review**	Investigated the benefits and meaning of therapeutic gardening.	Four studies compared.	Meta-ethnography of peer-reviewed qualitative research papers	Provided people with skills to develop agency and identity; group context and occupation enable development of supportive social environment.	Focused on therapeutic gardening

Appendix B

Brunel University London Ethics Approval

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School of Health Sciences and
Social Care

Research Ethics Committee

3 July 2012

Proposer: Simone Coetzee

Title: The occupational experience of an inclusive, horticultural social enterprise.

Reference: 12/04/PHD

Letter of Approval
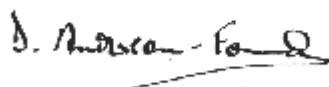
The School Research Ethics Committee has considered the amendments recently submitted by you in response to the Committee's earlier review of the above application

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied that the amendments accord with the decision of the Committee and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- *The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee.*

NB:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the School of Health Sciences and Social Care Research Ethics Committee.

- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee

- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.

- The School Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.

David Anderson-Ford
Research Ethics Officer
School of Health Sciences and Social Care

Appendix C

Research Information Sheets for Forest Garden co-operative and research participants

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

Action Research Group Information Sheet

Who is doing the research?

My name is Simone Coetzee and I am a Forest Garden volunteer. I've been coming to the site for over two years to participate in the volunteer days and also the level 1 Introduction to Gardening Course. I value the ideas behind the work that Forest Garden Co-operative do and the diversity of people that are drawn to work, volunteer and learn at Forest Garden.

I am doing a PhD at Brunel University's School of Health Sciences and Social Care. I am interested in social enterprises such as Forest Garden and the experience of people who are involved in different roles and activities at Forest Garden.

Info PAR Grp v2

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

As an occupational therapist, I would like to find out more about what being part of Forest Garden means to people.

I am working closely Sarah and Jay (volunteer co-ordinator).

The researchers who I am working with at Brunel University are Elizabeth McKay, Wendy Bryant and Lindsey Nicholls.
This project has received ethical clearance from the university's Research Ethics Committee.

Info PAR Grp v2

Forest Garden logo

Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

What is the research about?

There are three main parts to the research:

1. I would like to explore what it is like to work, volunteer and learn here at Forest Garden.

2. I am interested in the Permaculture idea: **'Earth Care, People Care, Fair Shares'** and how it influences Forest Garden.

3. I would like to see what we can do to help make Forest Garden accessible to more volunteers and students.

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Forest Garden logo

Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

How will the research be carried out?

I will be doing interviews and facilitating two groups to gather information for the research.

Participatory Action Research Group Information

This group will include about 6 people who have identified that they have a learning disability and need support to learn skills or participate in activities at Forest Garden. Together we will use activities such as plant growing, making a map using pictures and symbols created by you and we may also use photographs of activities or places we like on site to share our experiences at Forest Garden.

The groups will take place over 6 – 10 weeks. The research sessions will be be about 2 hours long. You are welcome to bring someone along to support you in the sessions. They will be considered participants in the research if they join the group with you and will have an opportunity to share their experiences.

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

What do you do if you are interested in participating?

- The research will happen naturally within the gardening class that you are attending using the activities we normally use within these sessions. If you would prefer not to participate in the research, you will still be part of the class but things you talk about or pictures we take together with you in them will not be used.

- Simone will go through the consent process with you to check whether you want to be part of it or not. You can take this home to read or work through it with Sarah, Jay or your support worker.

- If you or a relative or support worker would like to talk to Simone about the research because you have concerns about it or are just interested but do not want to actively take part, please also feel free to contact her.

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

What if I change my mind?

- If you agree to take part but then decide you don't want to, you are free to pull out of the research project. If you change your mind about taking part in the interview at any time you will still be able to participate in other activities on the site.
- If you choose not to be involved in the research or leave the research project at any point, it will not make any difference to your normal role at Forest Garden in any way.

How will other people get to know about the research once it is finished?

- By giving presentations
- Writing articles for academic journals and other publications such as websites or newsletters

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

Key contacts for this research project:

Simone Coetzee
Simone.coetzee@brunel.ac.uk
07876013080 (research mob)
Brunel University
School of Health Sciences and
Social Care
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge,   UB8
3PH

Forest Garden details removed for
confidentiality

Any complaints :
Dr Simon Bradford
Simon.bradford@brunel.ac.uk
01895 267143
Head of Research Ethics
Committee
School of Health Sciences and
Social Care
Brunel University Kindston lane,
Uxbridge, UB8 3PH

Dr Elizabeth McKay
Research Supervisor
Elizabeth.mckay@brunel.ac.uk
01895268754
Brunel University
School of Health Sciences and
Social Care
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

Interview Information Sheet

Who is doing the research?

My name is Simone Coetzee and I am a Forest Garden volunteer. I've been coming to the site for over two years to participate in the volunteer days and also the level 1 Introduction to Gardening Course. I value the ideas behind the work that Forest Garden co-operative do and the diversity of people that are drawn to work, volunteer and learn at Forest Garden.

I am doing a PhD at Brunel University's School of Health Sciences and Social Care. I am interested in inclusive social enterprises such as Forest Garden and the experience of people who are involved in different roles and activities at Forest Garden.

Info Interviews v2

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

As an occupational therapist, I would like to find out more about what being part of Forest Garden means to people.

I am working closely with Sarah and Jay (the volunteer co-ordinator).

The researchers who I am working with at Brunel University are Elizabeth McKay, Wendy Bryant and Lindsey Nicholls.

This project has received ethical clearance from the university's Research Ethics Committee.

Info Interviews v2

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

What is the research about?

There are three main parts to the research:

1. I would like to explore what it is like to work, volunteer and learn here at Forest Garden.

2. I am interested in the Permaculture idea: '**Earth Care, People Care, Fair Shares**' and how it influences Forest Garden.

3. I would like to see what we can do to help make Forest Garden accessible to more volunteers and students.

Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

How will the research be carried out?

I will be doing interviews and facilitating two groups to gather information for the research.

Interviews –I will talk with up to 15 people about their different roles here at Forest Garden, including volunteers, students, teachers, apprentices, support staff or relatives of students or volunteers and workers (staff).

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

How long will the interviews be?

The interview length might vary, but it would be good if you could set aside an hour for it.

What will I be asked about?

We will cover topics like:

- What you do at Forest Garden
- What it means to you to be involved at Forest Garden
- What you enjoy and what you would change about
- What it means to you to be around people and plants

Info Interviews v2

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

How will you benefit from participating in the research?

The information Simone collects with your help will give people an understanding of what it is like to be involved in an organisation like Forest Garden and what we can learn being involved in an inclusive social enterprise that grows food.

It will also help Forest Garden to understand how best to carry on with their goal of making the organisation more open to people with differing abilities.

As a participant, you will be a part of the research team and will receive a certificate from Brunel University to state that you participated in the research project. We hope that you find the experience of participating in this project interesting.

Info Interviews v2

Forest Garden logo

Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

What do you do if you are interested in participating?

- Let Simone, Sarah or Jay know that you are interested in being interviewed as part of this research project.

- Simone will talk to you about what is involved in the interview in more detail. You can also talk to Jay or Sarah about it.

- The consent form will be given to you and Simone will go through it with you. You can take this home to read or work through it with Sarah, Jay or your support worker.

- If you would like to talk to Simone about the research because you have concerns about it or are just interested but do not want to actively take part, please also feel free to contact her. It is helpful to know what people think about the research and about Forest Garden.

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Information about Research at Forest Garden

What if I change my mind?

- If you agree to take part but then decide you don't want to, you are free to pull out of the research project. If you change your mind about taking part in the interview at any time you will still be able to participate in other activities on the site.

- If you choose not to be involved in the research or leave the research project at any point, it will not make any difference to your normal role at Forest Garden in any way.

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How will other people get to know about the research once it is finished?

- By giving presentations

- Writing articles for academic journals and other publications such as websites or newsletters

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Key contacts for this research project:

Simone Coetzee
Simone.coetzee@brunel.ac.uk
07876013080 (research mobile)
Brunel University
School of Health Sciences and Social Care
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge,   UB8 3PH

Forest garden information removed for confidentiality

Dr Elizabeth McKay
Research Supervisor
Elizabeth.mckay@brunel.ac.uk
01895268754
Brunel University
School of Health Sciences and Social Care
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH

Any complaints :
Dr Simon Bradford
Simon.bradford@brunel.ac.uk
01895 267143
Head of Research Ethics Committee
School of Health Sciences and Social Care
Brunel University Kingston Lane, Uxbridge,
UB8 3PH

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C3 – Recruitment flyer for the second PAR group

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

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Participatory Action Research Group

Who is doing the research?
I am Simone Coetzee – a Forest Garden volunteer.

I am doing a PhD at Brunel University's School of Health Sciences and Social
Care. I am interested in social enterprises such as Forest Garden co-operative
and the experience of people who are involved in different roles and activities at Forest Garden.

As an occupational therapist, I would like to find out more about what being part of Forest Garden means to
people.

What is the research about?

1. I would like to explore what it is like to work, volunteer and learn here at Forest Garden. What
   brought you here and why you stay.
2. I am interested in the Permaculture idea: 'Earth Care, People Care, Fair Shares' and how it
   influences working practice at Forest Garden.
3. I would like to see what we can do to help make Forest Garden accessible to more volunteers and
   students.

What is the time commitment?

2 hours for 5-6 sessions over a period of 4 months – the group can negotiate dates and times. We aim to
start the sessions in the last week of February.

**For more information about this group and to sign up for it if you are interested, please tell Simone
(here on Wednesdays) or leave a message Jay (here a lot more often!) with your name and contact
details. Or you can email Simone on simone.coetzee@brunel.ac.uk:**

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Information about Research at Forest Garden

Simone Coetzee
Simone.coetzee@brunel.ac.uk
07876013080 (research mob)
Brunel University
School of Health Sciences and
Social Care
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge,   UB8
3PH

Dr Elizabeth McKay
Research Supervisor
Elizabeth.mckay@brunel.ac.uk
01895268754
Brunel University
School of Health Sciences and
Social Care
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH

Any complaints :
Dr Simon Bradford
Simon.bradford@brunel.ac.uk
01895 267143
Head of Research Ethics
Committee
School of Health Sciences and
Social Care
Brunel University Kindston lane,
Uxbridge, UB8 3PH

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removed for confidentiality

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Appendix D

Consent forms

Appendix D1 PAR Group Consent forms

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Research at
Forest Garden Growing Site,
Participant Consent Form (Group)

YES   **NO**

Please circle the responses:

1. I have been given an information sheet

   YES   NO

2. I have talked about the research project with Simone

   YES   NO

Group consent form v2

1. I know that my name will not be used in anything written or said about the research we do

   YES   NO

2. I agree that things that I say or share can be used in reports, talks or articles about the research. If this happens, my own name will not be used in order to protect my privacy.
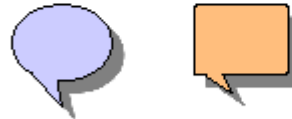
   YES   NO

3. I understand that I can decide not to take part in the group at any time

   YES   NO

4. I understand that photographs will be taken and that I can say whether they will be included in the research or not
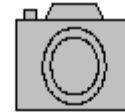
   YES   NO

5. I agree that notes can be taken during the group sessions

   YES   NO

6. I agree that some things that I say in the group can be audio recorded

   YES   NO

1. I agree to take part in this research about my experiences at Forest Garden

   YES   NO

2. I understand that I can carry on my activities or class at Forest Garden even if I decide to stop taking part in this research project.

Name: _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Research at Forest Garden

Participant Consent Form (Interviews)

YES   NO

Please circle the responses:

1. I have been given an information sheet

   YES   NO

2. I have talked about the research project with Simone

   YES   NO

Interview consent form v2

1. I know that my name will not be used in anything written or said about the research we do

   YES   NO

2. I agree that things that I say or share can be used in reports, talks or articles about the research. My own name will not be used in these in order to protect my privacy.

   YES   NO

3. I understand that I can decide not to take part in the interview at any time

   YES   NO

4. I understand that if I do not want to answer one or more of the questions I don't have to do so

5. I understand that photographs will be taken on site. If I appear in one, I can say whether I want it to be included in the research or not
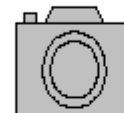
   YES   NO

6. I agree that notes can be taken during the interview session

   YES   NO

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded

   YES   NO

2. I agree to take part in this research about my experiences at Forest Garden

   YES   NO

3. I understand that I can carry on with my activities at Forest Garden even if I decide to stop taking part in the research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

Appendix E

Demographics Sheet

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Research at Forest Garden

Appendix 6

Demographics

Age

Borough or area of home

Means of transport to Forest Garden: car   bicycle   walk

                                       taxi / private hire   assisted transport

What is your ethnic background?

Your Current Participation at Forest Garden

Time period (years, months, weeks) working/volunteering/learning at Forest Garden

Frequency of participation: Once a week for a course

                              Once a week

                              Twice a week

                              Three or more times a week

Type of participation: Student (name of course attending _____)

               Apprentice

               Co-op member

               Volunteer

               Other

What other activities do you do during the week? (eg. work, green gym, classes, day services etc)

Demographic sheet May 2012

Appendix F

Interview Topic Guide

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Research at Forest Garden

Appendix 7

Interview Questions

(The interview participants will be representing different roles at Forest Garden so question focus might be different for interviewees depending on their role within the organisation)

Getting Involved at Forest Garden

What is your experience of involvement at Forest Garden?

What do you do here?

What does it mean to you?

How does your involvement vary/change

Prompts: Tasks, meaning, variety, ability, length of time, seasons, commitments

About Forest Garden

What does the space or physical environment at Forest Garden mean to you?

Does the social environment at Forest Garden have particular meaning to you?

What do you think of the people who run Forest Garden?

How does it compare to other organisations you have been involved with?

Is there anything you would change about Forest Garden?

Is there anything you don't like about Forest Garden?

Prompts: Environment, earth, communities, green, co-operatives, social enterprises, ecological

Supporting People at Forest Garden

Interview sheet v.2 May 2012

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Your Experience of being part of an Inclusive Social Enterprise

Research at Forest Garden

Supporting People at Forest Garden

What does Forest Garden's philosophy, 'Earth Care, People Care, Fair Shares,' mean to you?

Why do you come to Forest Garden?

Do you have any particular support needs?

How do you feel supported here?

Is there anything you would change or suggest to make you feel more able to be involved in activities here?

Prompts: transport, access, resources, balancing support for humans vs plants

Is there anything else you would like to share or tell me about your experience at Forest Garden?

Interview sheet v.2 May 2012

Appendix G

Martha Nussbaum's Threshold or Central Capabilities in the Capabilities Framework

(Nussbaum 2011, p.33-34)

Central capability	Description
Life	Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely or before one's life is so reduced as to not be worth living.
Bodily Health	Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
Bodily Integrity	Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
Senses, imagination and thought	Being able to use the senses to imaging, think and reason – and to do these things in a "truly human" way, informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of ones' on choice, religious, literary, musical and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
Emotions	Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves, to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general , to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development).
Practical reason	Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance)
Affiliation	(A) Being able to live with and towards others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in

	various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech). (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cast, religion, national origin.
Other species	Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.
Play	Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities
Control over one's environment	(A) *Political.* Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) *Material.* Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

Appendix H

Descriptions of worker roles in Forest Garden

Roles in Forest Garden	Description
Co-operative members	This was a group of approximately 10 people (at the time of the research). Leadership of the social enterprise; some of these members where founders of the co-operative, some are new members. Guidelines existed for co-operative membership of the organisation and new members were voted in by other members according to eligibility and organisational need. Co-operative members took charge of different aspects of the management of the garden, distribution of food and links with external agencies.
Volunteers	Volunteers could participate three days a week and were encouraged to declare an interest in one (or more) of the following roles to enable planning: Horticultural assistant; vegetable box packer; cook and stall volunteer. For those requiring support with volunteering, a 3-10 week trial placement as a volunteer could be organised where different roles with varying levels of support (from personal assistants or on-site volunteer assistants) could be experienced.
Apprentices	There was one apprentice role. It was a paid apprenticeship position with a commitment of 30 hours a week for a year. The post was funding by the co-operative and other organisations promoting vocational development in the area of community food growing.
Trainees	These were roles developed to learn about and gain experience in specific areas of food growing, community outreach and food distribution. They were voluntary roles that ran for 9 months of the year and required a 1-2 day per week commitment to the role. These were developed to enable people to gain work

	experience in order to move on to employment in these areas.
Students	Opportunities to gain accreditation at national open college network. These were facilitated through a local adult education facility. Non-accredited courses for different gardening and horticulture-related courses also offered. The gardening experience course for adults with learning disabilities was one of these non-accredited courses and led to people negotiating a 3-10 week placement as a volunteer as described above.

Appendix I

Nodes taken from Nvivo 10 software demonstrating themes developed at different stages of analysis

I1 Sower's themes

Nodes

Name

- Sowers Themes
  - Balance - Finding that balance (Mia)
    - Amount of support given - when to help and
    - Contradictions in practice
    - Individual vs community - the invisible line o
    - System balance - productivity and participati
    - Tokensim
      - Gap-filler activity vs real gardening intere
  - Choice - Everything different is nice (Leo)
    - Having control
    - Justice
    - Power
    - Responsibility
  - Occupations - I liked the gardening bit, getting m
  - Opportunity - but at least you had the chance to
    - Barriers to participation - life outside the prot
    - Inclusive or Exclusive occupations
    - Progression through roles
    - skill development
  - Sowers

I2 Grower's Themes

I3 Interview Themes

Nodes

Name

- Interview Themes
  - previous lives
  - Staff development
  - Challenges
  - Organisation management structure
  - Supporting people
  - 'our systems'
  - Lack of similar existing services
  - Choice
- Method
  - Consent
  - Inexperience
  - photography as method
  - Map making as method
  - Sowers analysis process
  - Place and research method
  - Group discussions
- Methodology issues
  - Research vs Organisational needs
  - Power
  - Ethics
  - PAR with PwLD
  - General PAR

I4 Combined Themes

Nodes

Name	
Adopted or emerging roles	
Awareness and involvement	
Capabilities	
Challenges	
Growers themes	
Interview Themes	
Method	
Methodology issues	
Overlapping Themes	
Identity through contribution	
Inclusion and Exclusion	
Making connections - so it's all this sort of togethe	
Nurturing Space - There are not a lot of places lik	
Permaculture	
Personal journey	
Recommendations	
Sowers Themes	

Appendix J

Grow Well Summary and Case Studies

The Occupational Experience of Participating in a Food Growing Social Enterprise

Simone Coetzee, PhD Researcher, Brunel University, London
(Supervisors) Dr Elizabeth McKay, Dr Wendy Bryant, Dr Lindsey Nicholls

Background

Based on PhD research (in progress) with community food growing social enterprise on the edge of London. Data collected between 2012 – 2013.

- A 12 acre 'working' market garden on the outskirts of London.
- A social enterprise, run by a worker's co-operative
- Growers (over 60 staff and volunteers) and those attending courses are from varied backgrounds and abilities – appears 'naturally' inclusive
- Uses 'permaculture' philosophy to design its systems - is this one reason for it's success?
  (Holmgren's (2011) permaculture principles have been utilised as a framework for this summary)
- Permaculture ethics as guiding philosophy:
  o Earth Care
  o People Care
  o Fair Shares
- Ethics-driven rather than policy-driven

Does this make it more flexible for people to fit in or harder to decide who the organisation can realistically work with?

Research Question:

What is the occupational experience of people with and without disabilities in an inclusive horticultural social enterprise?
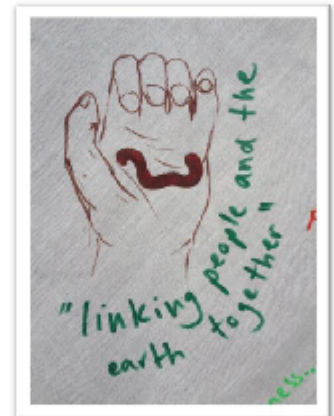
Brunel University London (Approved by Forest Garden and the Brunel University Research Ethics Committee); all participants were offered continuous consent advice throughout and have agreed to sharing of research data and findings.

Why food growing as occupation?

- **Social Inclusion : *'Integrate rather than segregate'***
  Opportunities for engagement in all four areas of social inclusion: production, consumption, social interaction and political engagement (Burchardt et al, 2002; Sempik et al, 2005)

- Skills development and work: *'Obtain a yield'*
  Different levels of skill development and work training depending on capacity – voluntary and paid (Sempik et al, 2005; The Plunkett Foudation, 2011)
- Environmental sustainability: *'Use and value renewable resources'*
  Permaculture methods – aim for personal, community and environmental resilience (McNamara, 2012)
- Growing spaces - places of neutrality and acceptance: *'Use and value diversity'*
  Fieldhouse (2003) – community growing project – people with mental health problems felt it was 'de-stigmatising'; they felt 'normal'
  Simo (2011) 'a way in to the community'

Why social enterprise?

- Focus on the relational aspects of citizenship: *'Use the edges and value the marginal'*
  Learning disability – Need to redefine citizenship as "a shared accomplishment by disabled people in interdependent relationships with others... focused less on accomplishment and self-sufficiency and more on collective interests." (Hall, 2011)

  Focus on relationship between 'citizen' and 'community' rather than 'client' and 'professional'

- Build social capital: *'Catch and store energy'*

  Support people and their capacity to participate and build 'social capital' (Sempik, 2005; Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011;The Plunkett Foundation, 2010)

  Consider volunteers invaluable and thus reduce stigma of 'unpaid' work (Barnes and Mercer, 2005)

- Organisational sustainability: *'Use and value renewable services'*
  Politically neutral– can choose to work with local authority or government agencies or stay independent if this makes them more sustainable (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011).

Research Methodology

'Use small and slow solutions'

- Qualitative study
- Participatory Action Research
- Community-based
- Shared generation and ownership of data
- Promotes community action (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2008)
- Little evidence of the use of this with mod-severe learning disability,
- Critical Ethnography – ethnography with a political purpose

Participants and progress

1st PAR group – eight people with moderate to severe learning disability and their support workers (16)

2nd PAR group – mixed group of volunteers/workers (4)

Six key-informant interviews with volunteers, apprentices and co-operative members

Field notes/participant observation on site and in tasks

Sept – Dec 2012	Jan – May 2013	May – Aug 2013
Sowers PAR Group	**Growers PAR Group**	**Key-Informant Interviews**
Exploration of Inclusion, Occupation and Experience	Exploration of Journeys and Philosophy of Permaculture	Exploration of Authority, Intention and Policy

Participant observation and research notes

Figure 1 Timeline and summary of research stages

SIMONE COETZEE
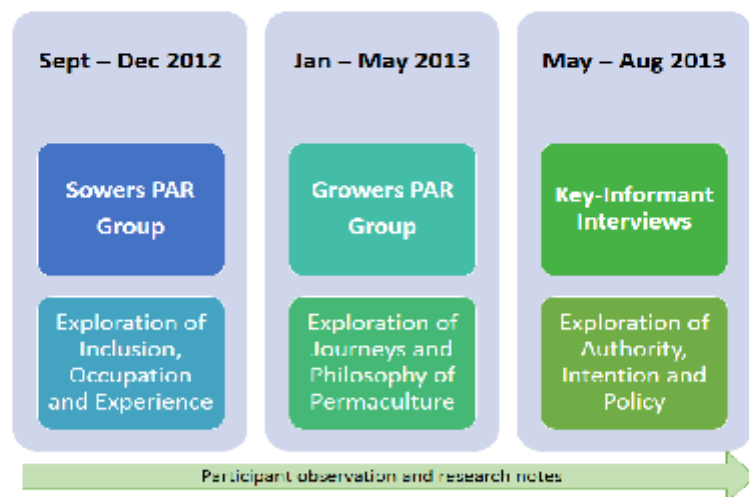
Figure 1 Timeline and summary of research stages

Preliminary Findings

'Obtain a yield'

1. Participation in a working market garden gave greater meaning to growing activities – not tokenistic but part of community production

2. Being seen (in the photographs) was just as important as taking the photographs – demonstrated identity as gardeners/workers

3. Even in good examples of social inclusion and community, there is exclusion – groups often work apart.

4. Shared accomplishment and interdependence is the norm for some. Gardening is a good activity to practice co-occupation (the action of one shaping the action of another in a close match. Pierce, 2003)

5. People felt connected and committed to the plant nursery because of three common factors
- Sensory and physical connection
- Connection to the people and a community (affiliation)
- Participation in the garden enabled transformative thinking at a personal and wider community level
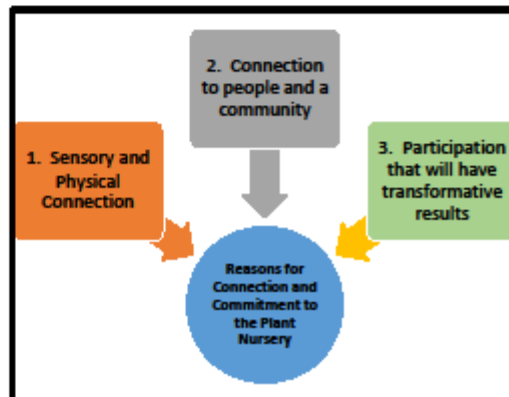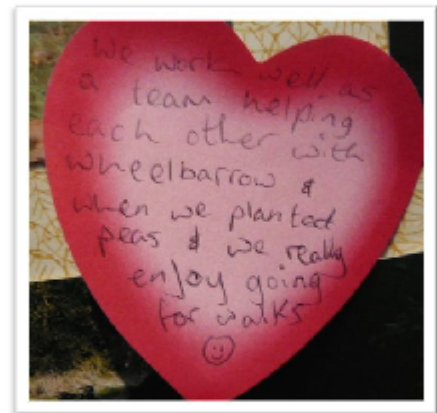
Figure 2 Common factors of connection and commitment

SIMONE COETZEE

6. Gardening can be rewarding but also challenging - people can sometimes experience frustration or disconnection if they need to move on or stop for some reason during an activity – no sense of completion or satisfaction

7. Commitment needed to be acknowledged in more ways – formally and informally.

Conclusions

1. *Occupational Inclusion: Everyone works*

   Occupation-focused activity such as gardening/food-growing allows for appreciation of capability and capacity over social-inclusion focused activity. Social inclusion often comes once capacity and capability are more established.

   "Equal, I feel equal…."
   Simon, a volunteer with learning disability

2. *Whole community voice: Everyone designs*

   All voices should be included in design and planning of the site through user-involvement events through some formal means. This would result in a more reliable source to base proposed outreach programmes on and a much stronger platform from which to manage political, environmental and social change when it arrives.

3. *Plant nursery as intersectional space: Therapy as consequence of, not instead of, food growing*

   Therapy as part of overall outcomes, not a tokenistic aspect of the garden.

   Improve rather than change practice to keep focus on three core ethics and wellbeing

   "I mean if you don't like it (here) they give you a chance to say but at least you had the chance to do it." Leo, participant with learning disability

stronger platform from which to manage political, environmental and social change when it arrives.

3. *Plant nursery as intersectional space: Therapy as consequence of, not instead of, food growing*

Therapy as part of overall outcomes, not a tokenistic aspect of the garden.

Improve rather than change practice to keep focus on three core ethics and wellbeing

"I mean if you don't like it (here) they give you a chance to say but at least you had the chance to do it." Leo, participant with learning disability

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SIMONE COETZEE

Abe was a 16 year old young man with moderate learning disabilities. He attended a day centre and other educational activities and is well supported by his family. The day centre staff identified that Abe liked gardening and they made contact with Forest Garden. He was registered on a 10 week gardening course for people with learning disabilities which he attended with a staff member from the nursery. He enjoyed it so much he returned to the course on two further occasions.

Setting personal and vocation-related goals

Abe was confident at the nursery site as he had attended many times before. Because of this he decided he would like to work on attending the garden more independently. It was arranged that Abe would work towards getting to the garden on public transport, with a support worker meeting him at home and accompanying him on train or bus to the garden. He would then remain at the garden on his own and the support worker would meet Abe again to accompany him home.

Abe also had an occupational goal to manage the activities the group undertook more independently now that he was attending on his own. This goal had mixed success due to Abe being a little competitive at times, and sometimes making mistakes because of that. On the positive side, Abe was very motivated and often helped others by sharing information or demonstrating skills to others in the group.

Challenges:

- Abe was reliant on other people being available to support him in getting to and from the garden. This meant that he missed sessions or had to find alternative transport when support workers were not available to travel with him. This upset his routine and sometimes his mood.

Opportunities:

- Abe flourished in the garden and was able to set goals around attending the garden that not only facilitated his progress in the garden, but with personal and community goals too.
- Abe was a good candidate for an ongoing programme of gardening that was supported by a 'buddy' system.
- Abe started to take leadership and responsibility roles within the group once he was confident in the group. Abe had potential to diversify into working in new areas of the organisation as well as possibly being a helper or user-facilitator in the existing group that he was confident in.

Where to next?

- Abe could attend volunteer sessions alongside a trained garden 'buddy' to build up his endurance and skill in the garden.
- Abe could participate in the portfolio gardening scheme and considering further roles within the volunteer schemes available within Forest Garden.
- Abe might also be a good candidate to participate in a user-led forum shaping the future of work with people with learning disabilities on site.

James had a moderate learning disability and is in his sixties. He lived in a supported housing residence. He attended the gardening course for adults with learning disabilities once prior to his involvement in the research class and really enjoyed it. James was always prepared to try out a range of gardening equipment and never said no to a new task.

Maintaining health and wellbeing in later life

James had tried a number of different activities but he professed to enjoying gardening more than many of the others. He was quiet and did not talk much with others although he was sociable in other ways, working well alongside other participants and participating in the reflection sessions through drawing and verbal answers when he could. James loved being in the glasshouse in particular, potting plants and making compost. He was also very skilled at digging and weeding outdoors, ensuring a good mix of active and slightly more passive activities.

James' support workers did not have to help him physically but sometimes helped to facilitate communication. They felt that James enjoyed coming to the garden because he does not get much exercise at home. He enjoyed the fresh air and activity in the garden and watching things grow from seed to plant. He also enjoyed the company of other growers and the camaraderie of sharing tea and biscuits with the class.

Challenges:

- James had to attend the garden with a support worker, although this was not a problem as the staff at his residence were keen for him to participate so tried to make the time.
- He found it difficult to communicate verbally so sometimes was not heard when the group were excited or when the work being done was noisy.

Opportunities:

- James found the work meaningful and stimulating and enjoyed the natural exercise.
- There were lots of opportunities for James to be in a social environment, working in partnership with other people.
- James' enthusiasm and skill made him a good candidate for further volunteer opportunities in the garden or the wider organisation. He was well supported by his residence and they could work with on-site 'buddies' to enable more flexibility around volunteer session times.
- His participation in the research group enabled James to find his voice through different mediums. He used photography, post-it notes and signs, drawing and making things to express what he liked and valued about being on the site.

Where to next?

- James demonstrated an interest in continuing to attend the group for future sessions. He felt he was physically and mentally benefitting from the place and the type of activities offered on site. From a person-centred perspective, James would benefit from continuity and building his endurance in the garden. He also enjoyed the company of other gardeners. The ongoing volunteer gardener programme would be a good place for him to build up his confidence, skill and relationships.
- Once more established in the volunteer programme, he might also be a good candidate to shape disability user-involvement in the garden.

Appendix K

A selection of posters and presentations from conferences

Coetzee S., McKay E.A., Bryant, W., Nicholls, L (2014) 'Learning Disability Support Worker Roles in a Food Growing Project', *College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference*, Brighton, 03 – 05 June 2014.

Coetzee S.; McKay E.A., Bryant, W., Nicholls, L (2014) 'The role of support workers working with people with learning disabilities in a food growing social enterprise', *College of Occupational Therapy Specialist Section for People with Learning Disabilities Conference.* **College of Occupational 2014.**

To include or not to include...

Permaculture is based on three main ethics:
'People Care', 'Earth Care', 'Fair Shares'
There are 12 Permaculture principles that promote inclusive and accessible ideas in society as well as horticulture, such as:
- Use the edges and value the margins',
- Integrate rather than segregate'
- Use and value diversity'

Holmgren (2011)

Ethical dilemma:
Including the support workers might detract from the authentic 'voice' or story of the people with learning disabilities.
Not including the support workers as participants would have given a less holistic picture of the full experience of people and would have reduced the full participation of the people with learning disabilities.

Findings and Discussion – Challenges and Ambiguities

Challenges and Ambiguities

- Acknowledgement
  - From those they were working with (people with learning disabilities)
  - From others regarding the skills they required to work in a wide variety of settings doing vastly different tasks with people who may have a number of disabilities.
  - Support worker skill in knowing when and how to assist requires experience and often goes unacknowledged. Pointer on income (2009) support this.
- Decision Making and Conflicting Loyalties
  - Often in the position of having to make choices or decisions on behalf of their client in terms of occupational engagement eg. Planning the week, balancing indoor and outdoor tasks, healthy eating and member behaviour, experiencing new and exciting things.
  - Dunn et al (2009) – support workers draw on own experiences, values and routines in planning and decision-making. This could create conflict with both employer and person with learning disability.
  - Role ambiguity and conflict – negatively correlated with job satisfaction with support workers working in field of learning disability (Dyer and Quine, 1998). Loyalty to client vs employer – creates ambiguity and internal conflict.

Risk Taking and Finding the Balance
- Support workers are regularly required to assist their service users with decisions, including risk taking, such as using dangerous equipment.
- Getting this right has an impact on the client's quality of life and occupational participation. This relationship is essential in creating meaning (Dunn, 2009).
- There is continuous difficulty striking the balance between 'standing back' and 'doing for'. This comes with experience and knowledge of the client.
- Acknowledgement of this skill facilitates and the support worker's ability to gauge risk facilitates engagement in both research and occupation in general (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003).

Findings and Discussion - Opportunities

Opportunities

- Building Relationships – 'like a bond we are building together'
  - Dunn (2009) and Clegg (2008)– an 'ethical partnership' can be developed where the support worker engages in personal and relational reflexivity – working between states of self-effacement and self-affirmation and 'imaginative fusion' with and separation from the client. Another unacknowledged skill?
- Networking – Meeting other professionals and getting to know new services
  - Support workers all felt they benefited from attending the garden – they met other support workers, other professionals and volunteers in the garden and developed their own professional network and resources.

- **Learning New Skills** – having to engage in tasks with their clients sparked new interests in themselves
  - Support workers enjoyed gardening and research-focused tasks eg. Photography and mapping, taking an interest in the results of both.
  - Two became volunteers in the garden in their own time.
  - Engagement in the gardening was a pre-requisite for support workers if they brought their clients to the site – this initially caused complaint and some left, but those who engaged gained value in their own lives.

What this means for us…..

- Inclusion of support workers in participatory action research facilitates better engagement of clients with learning disabilities and thus more authentic results.
- Consideration should be given to the occupational needs of support workers as well as clients with learning disabilities as this creates a beneficial partnership and a better experience for both when engaging in occupation.
- Consideration needs to be given when planning tasks that might require risk-taking behaviour or decision-making around health behaviour, acknowledging the support worker's role in facilitating these decisions and aiding this process where possible.

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Appendix L

Glossary

Care Farm

"The use of commercial farms and agricultural landscapes as a base for promoting mental and physical health, through normal farm activity" (Hine et al. 2008a, p.247)

Co-occupation

"A synchronous back and forth between the occupational experiences of the individuals involved, the action of one shaping the action of the other in a close match" (Pierce 2003, p.199)

Co-production

Co-production is the establishment of a relationship that encourages partnership with people participating in a service and those offering it, rather than hierarchical decision-making (Hunter & Ritchie 2007)

Community Garden

"Community gardens are green spaces provided for communal activities, including food production, and are an alternative to allotment gardening in the UK" from webpage (Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens 2012)

Occupation

"A group of activities that has personal and sociocultural meaning, is named within a culture and supports participation in society."(Creek 2010, p.25)

Occupational Science

The academic study of people as occupational beings (Yerxa 2000)

Occupational Alienation	"A sense that one's occupations are meaningless and unfulfilling, typically associated with feelings of powerlessness to alter the situation" (Hagedorn 2001, p.166)
Occupational Deprivation	"A state of prolonged preclusion from engagement in occupations of necessity or meaning due to factors outside the control of an individual, such as through geographic isolation, incarceration or disability" (Christiansen & Townsend 2004)
Occupational Exclusion	When people responsible for others or for an organisation make decisions to change, grade or restrict an occupation due to a person's known ability or for the benefit of the wider organisation. To restrict a person's opportunities for participation, citizenship or belonging on a temporary basis. (Chapter 8, section 8.1.3.2).
Permaculture	A movement committed to ethical, grassroots development and sustainable practice in all aspects of culture and agriculture. (Veteto & Lockyer 2008)
Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH)	"Participation by vulnerable people in groups and communities whose activities are centred on horticulture and gardening." (Bryant et al. 2014, p.484)