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Digging through Imaginaries of Urban Nature.
A Site Analysis: Allmend Grüzefeld, Winterthur.

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SCIENTIFIC PROBITY

In addition to the signed scientific integrity provided by the University of Basel, I would like to mention that I have used Chat GPT Version 3 in some parts to paraphrase texts and to improve the syntax. However, these sections were rewritten and revised by me and have never been copied in their entirety. For this reason, I have not marked them in my thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

HEKS   Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz

Aid Agency of the Protestant Churches in Switzerland

HGW   Heimstättengenossenschaft Winterthur

Homestead Cooperative Winterthur

MEG   Miteigentumsgemeinschaft Grüzefeld

Co-Owner Association Grüzefeld

PPVW   Püntenpächterverein Winterthur

Allotment Garden Association Winterthur

UPE   Urban Political Ecology

INTRODUCTION

In the ancient Mesopotamia around 3000 BC, Uruk was the most densely populated city on Earth by accommodating 50,000 to 80,000 people within an area of 8 square kilometers. According to Wilson (2022), Uruk symbolized humanity's triumph over nature, and the city's influence was likely felt long before visitors reached its gates. The city's inhabitants cultivated the surroundings by transforming the land into fertile grounds and stepping through one of the gates, visitors were greeted by vast gardens, while a sophisticated system of canals channeled water from the Euphrates River into the heart of the city. In 444 BC, the city of Thurioi is established in southern Italy and became a model for a new democratic society. The clear orthogonal structure, the so-called Hippodamian system, goes back to the teachings of Pythagoras and corresponds to the democratic ideal of *isonomia*, meaning equal distribution (Tabor 2003). Hippodamos is considered to be one of the first creators of a utopian system. Together with Phaleas and Plato, they drafted constitutional designs of an ideal state associated with questions of the best state order (Maahs 2019). Some centuries later, in 1516, *Utopia* was published, with which Thomas More established the literary genre of utopia. The term is derived from the Greek *ou* (not) and tópos (place), thus giving it the meaning of a 'no place' (Van Klink, Soniewicka, and Van Den Broeke 2022). More touches on themes such as happiness and provision for the individual, harmony of society, meaningful rule, as well as the question of private or common property which are still relevant today as a utopia stems from the tension between ideal and reality: how is the world, and how could it be? Uruk, Thurioi but also the island in Utopia exemplify how over centuries, humankind has evolved by living in and utilizing 'nature' for their means. Cities inherently lend themselves to contemplating the control and management of nature due to their infrastructure, technical systems, and institutional rhythms governing daily life. The resulting imaginary of a city/nature binary is based upon the belief that nature is seen as being supplanted by urbanization. "If cities are imagined to be crowded, grey, dense, dirty places (in implicit contrast to the countryside outside), the addition of green space can be, and usually is, evaluated as good" (Angelo 2017, 167). This thesis delves into the dynamic interplay of past, present, and future imaginaries of urban nature in Winterthur, particularly focusing on the Allmend Grüzefeld area within the Mattenbach district. I selected Winterthur as my research site because first and foremost, I grew up in a workers' house with an adjacent large garden in Oberwinterthur. The question of what constitutes a livable city in a holistic perspective has been with me for several years now and will probably accompany me for even longer. Therefore, I wanted to engage with utopian thought as it has long been intertwined with humanity's relationship with nature and technology, aiming to strike a balance

between technological demands and the resources nature provides. Utopia, in this paper, used as a synonym for imaginaries, is not only the object of study, but also a historically grounded category of analysis which I address in the methodology chapter that shows how the present is being interpreted while envisioning a future. Second, I wanted to focus on Winterthur due to its significance as one of the regions in the canton of Zurich that has been designated to accommodate the expanding population. Winterthur is confronted with a top-down requirement for densification which put open spaces for imagination and play to engage with urban environments holistically (Lefebvre 1967) under pressure. Third, in times of climate change, sustainability approaches demand more 'nature' in urban spaces to guarantee the liveability for its residents and thus new strategies and imaginaries of urban nature emerge, such as the Smart City Winterthur which puts the residents and the environment at the forefront (Stadt Winterthur n.d.). Last, since the lease of the agricultural land usage on the Allmend Grüzefeld expires in two years, questions of what can potentially be made of the site are being raised. Therefore, I argue that it is a crucial time to look back to former imaginaries as well as current and future ones as they can inform contemporary understandings of urban green space development.

The central question of this thesis revolves around the evolving imaginaries of urban nature, recognizing that our vision for the city cannot be separated from the desired relationship with nature (Harvey 2008). By tracing the course of the Mattenbach stream, I investigate the normative assumptions that govern our perception of human-nature relationships within the imaginaries in and around the Allmend Grüzefeld, while also reflecting on how we can move away from the nature/urban dichotomy in everyday life. Just as a river behaves, I sometimes dive into different branches, which may no longer have a clearly apparent direct connection with the initial question, but which come together at the end through the assemblage of the individual fragments.
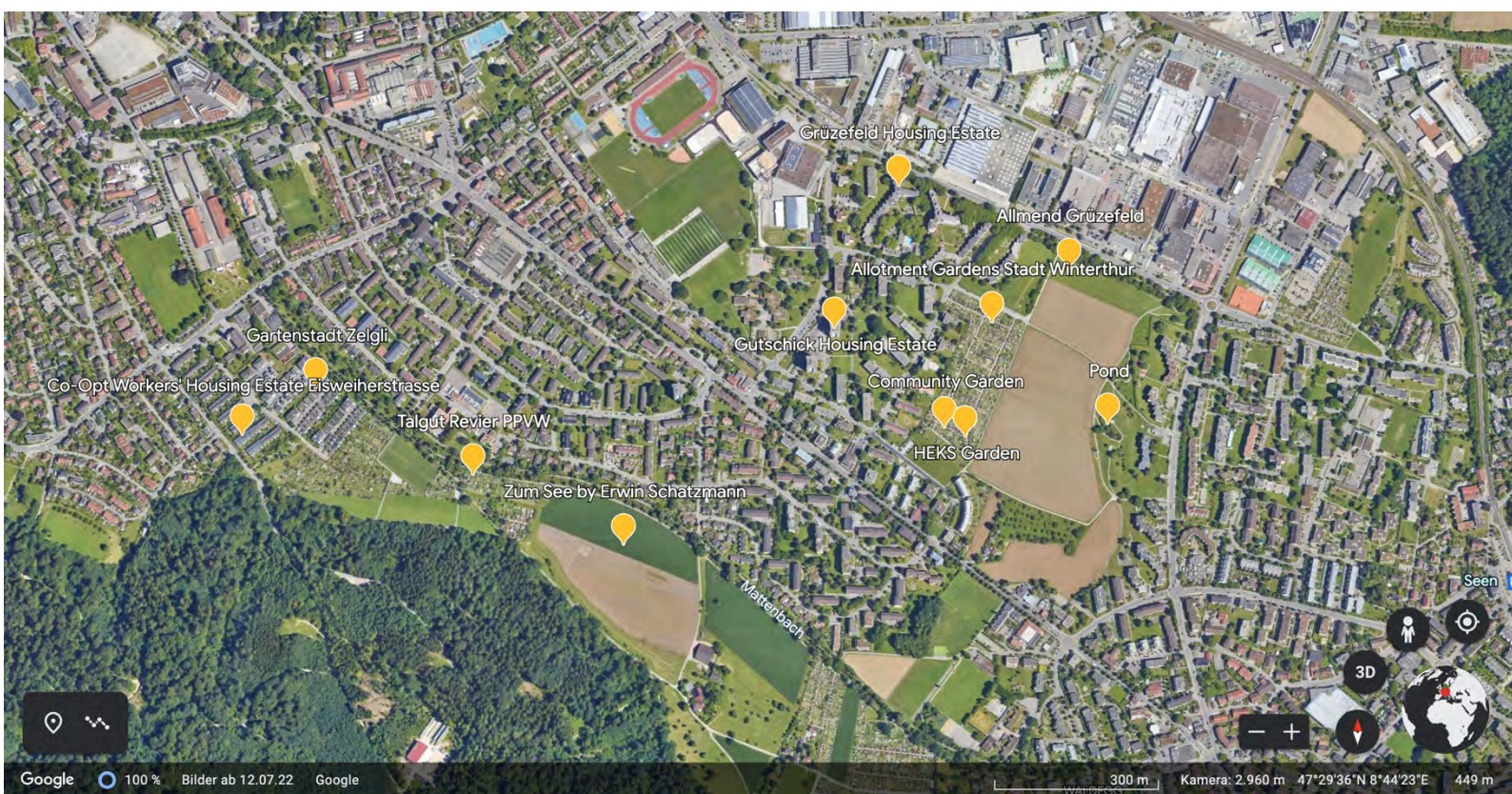
Figure 1 Satellite Image situating the Allmend Grüzefeld in the Mattenbach district.
Image retrieved from Google Earth and edited by Saskia Bryner, 2023.

My thesis will be structured as follows: I start by with an overview of the theoretical lenses that provide the backbone for my work. The first section focuses on the evolution of the understanding of nature, linked with literature on nature in the city followed by a part about the Garden City model and the Smart City to embed the Allmend Grüzefeld in the concrete spatial dimension of utopian imagination through a planning lens. The third section is a discussion of urban commons and the act of *commoning* since I propose to view the Allmend as a truly common space and to include humans as well as more-than-humans in the participatory process to assess its future. The theory chapter ends with politics around urban gardening as on the one hand, allotment gardening has a long and important standing in Winterthur and on the other hand, the current land usage in the Allmend is urban agriculture as well as urban gardening. The methodology chapter shows how I aim to dissect the (normative) ideas behind the imaginaries by *digging* in the 'Utopia'. Afterwards, I place the Allmend Grüzefeld in the historicity of Winterthur's settlement structure to illustrate how the place is socially, economically, and politically embedded within the district. The first imaginaries I explore focus on the Garden City Winterthur and its housing specters, as well as the creation of the Mattenbach district, divided by the canalized Mattenbach stream. I look at what societal norms and ideas are embedded in city planning and implemented through housing and how the

perception and utilization of nature in the urban context has evolved over time. Then I cross the Mattenbach stream and introduce the Allmend Grüzefeld where I discuss the possible imaginaries for the future of this site, such as a nature reserve, and the dream of the unbuilt lake which represents a longstanding utopian dream of Winterthur's residents. I end the chapter on the Allmend's future with a discussion around legal subjecthood for nature. As one part of the Allmend is currently designated for allotment gardens, I investigate the perceived benefits of urban gardening in terms of social cohesion, interaction, and community building (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019) in the subsequent chapter. By focusing on the Allmend Grüzefeld, I bring together specters of the Garden City, the current use of gardens and the unbuilt lake embedded in a sustainability turn. I thereby encompass multiple imaginaries of urban land use which are brought together in the last chapter, where I propose a participatory approach with more-than-human actors for the Allmend's future.

EPISTEMOLOGIES

For my thesis, I draw on four main bodies of literature which will provide me with the necessary tools I need for the analysis of the imaginaries of urban nature. First, I critically question the multilayered meanings of nature in the urban by adopting an Urban Political Framework (UPE). Second, I focus on the sociopolitical history of the urban form by taking a closer look at planning utopias such as the Garden City and the Smart City, which will help me understand Winterthur's settlement structures before I turn to a discussion of urban commons as the Allmend Grüzefeld represents the last inner-city common in Winterthur. Last, I explore the politics around urban agriculture because I not only dissect urban garden practices embedded in the recent western 'sustainability environmental turn' but also use *digging* as a methodological approach.

Nature in the City

In this section, I first provide an overview of the evolving understanding of nature in philosophy before I turn to nature in urban spaces by adopting an Urban Political Ecology (UPE) perspective.

Shifting Understandings of Nature

> *"The 'myth' of nature is a system of arbitrary signs which relies on a social consensus for meaning. Neither the concept of nature nor that of culture is 'given', and they cannot be free from the biases of the culture in which the concepts were constructed." (MacCormack 1980, 6)*

The idea of what nature is and how it can be classified and ordered influenced the relationship of Western society with nature. Therefore, our understanding of nature is always a reflection of the current norms and values. The following section is based on Tyradellis (2023) work as he explored the ideas of philosophers and thinkers influential in defining what nature is. He starts his work with Greek philosophers like Plato (427-347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) who described nature as a hierarchical system with gradual sequence, with which the emergence of ecclesiastical institutions is solidified in late antiquity. The belief then was that humans stand between the natural and the supernatural and nature is the expression of a higher will, without immanent laws inherent in it. Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) was one of the first to challenge

the idea of a fixed hierarchical order in nature, as for him, nothing, not even God, is of itself noble or inferior but becomes so only in a certain context. With time, Christian institutions and explanations started to lose their influence. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) called for a return to a 'harmonious' relationship between humans and nature. He criticized social hierarchies, and he unmasked the church as well as the education system as they served purely to make people accept the unjust social order. Yet, the fact that Rousseau simultaneously adopts numerous questionable hierarchies, such as the role patterns in gender relations, indicates that this orientation towards a supposed 'nature' remains shaped by the interpreter's worldview. The philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) also criticizes the fixed *Scala Naturae*. According to him, no individual can see through nature as a whole, thus nature cannot be put into an ordering scheme. The theory of evolution, proposed by Charles Darwin (1802-1882) is based on the idea of a sequence of stages, which is the result of two principles of nature: *trial and error* and *survival of the fittest*. This idea led Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) to the conclusion that for humans to reach the next sequence of stages, they need to become part of nature again (Tyradellis 2023).

The 20th century was coined with a belief in the controllability of nature as scientific progress tempted one to believe that nature would soon be decoded. Yet, the increasing destruction of nature led to a reevaluation of the Western concept of nature as it proved to be dysfunctional and part of the problem of natural disasters. Haraway (1991) proposes the concept of 'naturecultures' to overcome the traditional nature/culture binary as it perpetuates hierarchical and oppressive power structures. She further emphasizes the entanglement of human and non-human actors as they co-constitute each other and form intricate networks of relationships. According to her, nature is not a static entity but rather a complex web of interactions and 'hybridities' and she recognizes the diverse and multiple ways in which nature is constructed, experienced, and understood across different cultural, social, and historical contexts. Latour's (1993) understanding of nature also challenges tradition conceptualizations of nature as a separate and objective realm. He argues that nature is actively constructed through social and cultural practices instead of it being a pre-existing and fixed entity. Latour proposes the concept of 'nature-culture-hybrids' to highlight the entanglement of natural and social elements. He further advocates for a plurality of nature's manifestations across different contexts and a situated and localized understanding of nature, thereby recognizing the specific socio-cultural perspectives and practices in shaping our understanding of nature. Therefore, both Haraway (1991) and Latour (1993) criticize the dominance of Western perspectives of a homogeneous

and universal notion of nature and encourage a more inclusive, diverse, and situated understanding of nature.

A decolonial framework questions the dominant narratives, perspectives, and methodologies, which are often centered around the perspectives, interests, and values of the West. Therefore, it is important to contrast the Western dominance in the interpretation and production of knowledge with alternative concepts about what nature is because voices, experiences, and knowledge of marginalized groups have historically been silenced and erased. In considering our mistreatment of nature, it is important to closely examine how certain actions and perceptions contribute to it, which involves exploring the tendency to view the world in binary terms and linear temporalities. Decoloniality as a conceptual lens engages in a critical analysis of modernity and acknowledges its inseparable link to the 'coloniality of power' (Quijano 2000), which is rooted in the understanding that power relations in the form of control and oppression constitute a hierarchical system. Therefore, a decolonial approach involves exposing the persisting coloniality within the modern world system and a process of delinking which refers to a disengagement from an epistemological framework that marginalizes and suppresses non-Western perspectives, knowledges, and languages within the overarching hierarchy of a singular modernity (Mignolo 2007). In my work, decolonial thought explores how we perceive, understand, and exist in relation to nature and entails a reimagination of our relationship with nature.

As I have shown in this section, for centuries Western science has viewed the relationship between humans and nature as one directional, with nature as a passive protagonist in the background of human action. Humans have controlled and managed nature for their purposes, and this asymmetrical relationship has been at the core of progress and growth which has shaped Western societies until catastrophes such as floods, tornados and fires began to accumulate due to climate change. Thus, attempts to deconstruct these beliefs became louder, pointing to the power hierarchies inherent in them. Now I turn to a more in-depth discussion about nature in urban space.

Nature in the Urban: An Urban Political Perspective

"[I]n a fundamental sense, there is in the final analysis nothing unnatural about New York City." (Harvey 1993, 28)

In the 19th century, the urban beautification movement emerged, which aimed to reintroduce nature into cities by introducing public parks, botanical gardens, and tree-lined boulevards (Gandy 2006). Gardens and parks have historically symbolized liberation from the rational urban grid and urban design has become a beautification of urban life whether in the geometric arrangement of space or through gardens, fountains, and other careful appropriations of nature in the urban fabric. In Europe, two types of parks have long been prevalent. On the one hand, the ideal of the French park existed, in which nature is geometrically laid out, thus rendering nature inferior to humans in terms of planning. On the other hand, the English landscape park stages nature as it would present itself (Chilla 2005).

Figure 2 English Landscape Park. Image retrieved from Garten Europa on August 2nd, 2023.

Figure 3 Castle Rundāle. Image retrieved from Schlossmuseum Rundāle on August 3rd, 2023.

Building on Harvey's (2001) concept of the 'spatial fix,' which involves geographic rescaling to address capitalism's crises, Loughran (2020) illustrates how urban park development additionally serves as a cultural fix. Parks and green spaces not only influence property values but also provide spaces for political exchange, recreation, cultural production, and social control as they were also intended to have an educational and civilizing effect on the lower classes. The provision of green spaces aimed to pacify workers and maintain social stability (Petrow 2012) and to provide benefits in terms of public health, as evidenced by the park movement of the 19th century and the work of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (1870-1957).

Scholars such as Braun, Gandy, Heynen, and Kaika have highlighted that just as humans, urban landscapes are intimately intertwined with the broader natural world, which emphasizes the co-evolution of urban and rural landscapes, involving the agency of more-than-human actors. The aim of the more-than-human approach is to challenge the anthropocentric view prevailing in urban studies, which tends to prioritize human interests and overlooks the contribution of more-than-human actors in urban systems (Braun 2005). Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (2006) view cities as part of a 'metabolic' relationship between society and nature, with urbanization processes transforming local and global environments in new ways. Braun (2005) draws attention to the danger to view cities as spatially bound and homogenous, and to overlook the networks that connect places and actors to other places and actors. Taking Massey's (1994, 2005) notion of space, I view space as a dynamic and contested social construct that is shaped and produced by power relations and social processes. Massey recognizes space as a relational concept, thereby defining space by its connections and relationships to other spaces, people, and social infrastructures. Furthermore, Massey highlights the importance of intersectionality in understanding spatial relationships as different social identities such as race, gender, and class intersect and shape spatial experiences. Therefore, places structure our interactions, determine our norms of behavior and shape our identities as they are always interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined (Gieryn 2000). Hence, to fully comprehend social life, a comprehensive study of place is essential.

Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (2006) examine how the spatiality of nature is shaped by capitalist relations at the urban scale, establishing a strong neo-Marxist foundation for the field of Urban Political Ecology (UPE). The authors build upon Lefebvre's theory of the dominance of capitalist economic processes over urban society and Harvey's perspective of the city as a site of labor, capital, and class struggle. Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (2006) argue that there still is a prevailing tendency to externalize nature from the urban even though the urban is the significant scale at which the production of nature can be explored. Urbanization has long been discussed as a process of replacing the 'natural' environment with a much cruder 'built' environment and former perspectives that have attempted to overcome the nature/culture binary find themselves trapped in an urban/rural dichotomy. Lefebvre (1974) defines urban environments as socially produced which paves the way for understanding the complex mix of political, economic, and social processes which shape urban landscapes. Moreover, the urban for Lefebvre (1974) constitutes the central embodiment of capitalist social relations through which modern life is culturally and materially produced. In capitalist cities, 'nature' is being commodified which obscures and hides the multiple ways of domination and subordination as

well as the exploitation and oppression that feed the capitalist urbanization process and transform the city into a metabolic socio-ecological process (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). The social power relations through which metabolic processes operate are of particular importance since these power geometries ultimately determine who has access to or control over environmental resources and who is excluded from them. Therefore, they shape the particular social and political environments in which we live (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). While UPE has drawn light on how 'nature' emerges within capitalist urban development and class conflicts, there has been less focus on understanding how urban dwellers perceive the capitalist city itself, how environmental subjects in urban areas are constructed and the ideas, desires, and practices involved in shaping it (Gabriel 2011). Furthermore, Tzaninis et al. (2021) shift the focus away from the urban 'core' and instead propose a research agenda for UPE that extends beyond the confines of the city, thereby drawing attention to the multiplicity inherent in the urban condition, both at its core and its periphery. Thus, I look at the imaginaries involved in shaping urban nature in peripheric district of Winterthur, itself a city of moderate importance in Switzerland.

To conclude this review on nature in the urban, the perception of nature is highly political and shaped by social expectations of what is declared as nature and what is not. The romantic understanding of nature still prevalent in the West accentuate the purity, innocence, and aesthetic perfection of nature that is supposedly lacking in contemporary society. To imagine other ways of how nature can be understood requires recognizing that 'nature' is created within social discourses. Therefore, it is less important whether nature in the city is seen as specifically urban than urban spaces being perceived beyond the urban/rural and nature/urban dichotomies that have allowed the urban to be seen as the antithesis of nature (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). Therefore, I view nature as an empty signifier since there exists a multiplicity of urban natures rather than one nature around which urban environmental policy can be constructed. Borrowed from Kaika and Swyngedouw (2011), "nature is a tapestry, a *montage* of meanings" (102). According to UPE, every element of a city is intertwined with socioecological processes, resulting in intricate socio-natural interactions. Consequently, it is crucial to analyze both the social and ecological aspects that shape Winterthur's urban environments and to gain a broad understanding of the interactions between human and more-than-human actors. Therefore, I consider both historical and contemporary material and geographic processes that influence the city. In the next section, I discuss the Garden City, a planning utopia which strongly shaped the nature/urban binary in Winterthur.

Utopian Thinking in Planning Tools

I now look at the origins of the Garden City, which are rooted in anarchist thinking, examine the utopia core inherent in its vision and investigate how these ideas have been incorporated into planning practices. Additionally, I draw a link to a contemporary urban planning model, the Smart City, as it is a newer solution for current problems and there are surprising similarities. This synthesis will be useful for analyzing the historical, as well as the ongoing developments in Winterthur, since my aim is to dissect the underlying assumptions about urban nature embedded in discourses, policies, and knowledge.

Going back to the 19th century, visionaries were concerned with the poor living conditions of modern cities and gardens were proposed to remedy the socioecological dystopias. The idea was that they would contain the negative effects of industrial pollution (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). The Garden City movement started as a quest for a better synthesis between nature and urban spaces. Ebenezer Howard's utopia was put forward in *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898). In 1902, he revised his ideas in *The Garden Cities of To-morrow*. For Howard, the Garden City was a utopian vision of a planned community where nature served as a tool to transform the capitalist society into cooperative communities according to the principles of anarchism. The core of his socioeconomic system was self-governance and community ownership of land in line with anarchist thinking (Hall 2014). Howard illustrated the advantages and disadvantages of urban and rural life in the Three Magnet Diagram (see Figure 4). His argument was that urban overcrowding will remain because people will continue to move to already crowed cities due to the pull of the urban magnet (first magnet). The rural magnet (second magnet), which offers a peaceful and quite life in the countryside, is not able to counteract the first magnet's attraction. The town-country magnet (third magnet) therefore combines the best of both worlds. People are able to live in an environment which offers the advantages of urban and rural areas without their major disadvantages (Howard [1898, 1902], 2014). To achieve the third magnet, Howard's proposition was to build cities of limited size which are surrounded by a permanent green belt of agricultural land and self-managed by its citizens. Each Garden City would be connected to others by a rapid transit system, providing the citizens with all the economic and social opportunities of a big city.
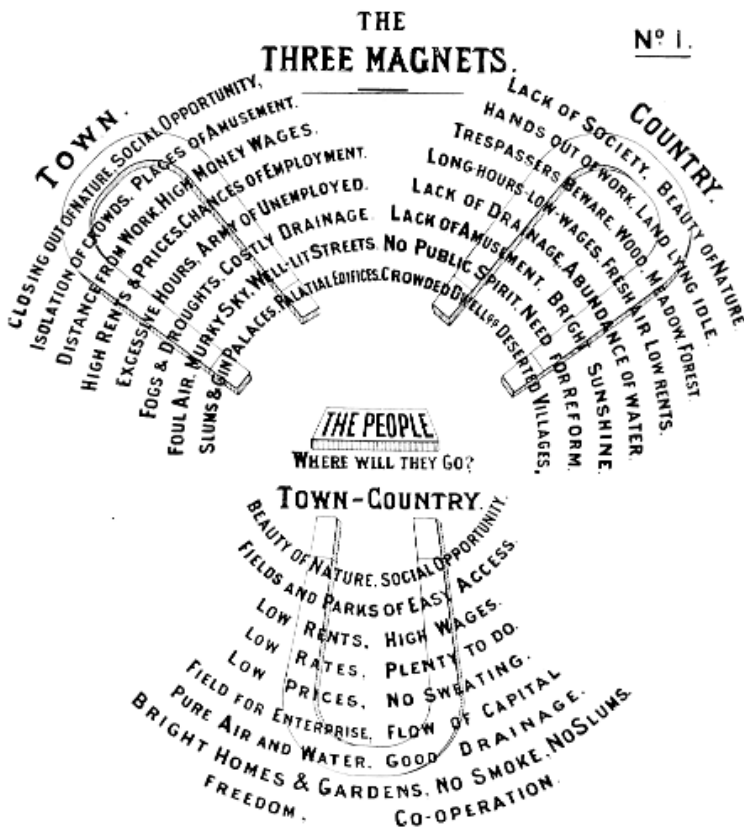
Figure 4 The Three Magnet Diagram
(Howard [1898, 1902], 2014).
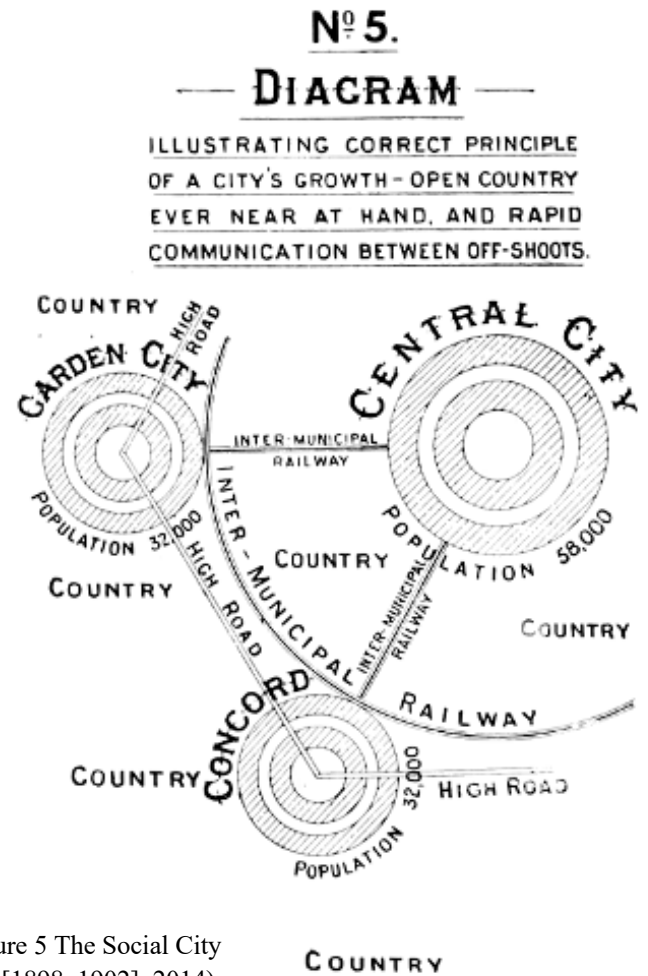
Figure 5 The Social City
(Howard [1898, 1902], 2014).

This polycentric vision was called *The Social City* (see Figure 5), which was the physical realization of the town-country relationship rather than the individual Garden City. Howard's central idea was to leave land ownership in the hands of the community, while residential buildings could be sold or leased to individuals to control price increases and counteract land speculation. The residents would cooperatively manage the city's affairs, actively participate in civic activities, and be committed to the common benefit (Sharif 2021). Howard's vision of planned communities was, especially in England, widely practiced (Sharif 2021). The first implementation of the Garden City idea was in Letchworth, UK, in 1903. The founders, Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, purchased land on favorable terms to release it to community members as building land. The community-oriented form of ownership made it possible to avoid high rents while keeping wages low, and to finance schools or hospitals. However, the principal idea of the Garden City lost its completeness and coherence in the worldwide imitation after the Second World War, especially in terms of land ownership and

self-governance (Kühne 2015). The compromised form lost its anarchistic core as it was taken up by the Garden City movement and over time, various influences, such as the Romantic and Beaux Arts tradition, transformed the utopia into a comprehensive approach to urban planning (Diogo and Simões 2019). Everywhere, an ideal of 'living in the green' prevailed – but individualism took the place of the communal idea and communal land ownership (Sharifi 2016). Some of Howard's ideas such as single-family residential units and street patterns have recurred in later city plans, which is also the case for Winterthur. Yet, the apparent reconciliation between 'urban' and 'nature' obscured the actual transformation of nature under the influence of capitalist urbanization, as Gandy (2006) argues. The attempt to synthesize nature and urban led to increasing spatial polarization due to the growth of suburbs and peripheral housing development in the following decades. Sharifi (2016) wrote that "[i]n terms of social reform, although Howard's purpose was to create communities that cater for the needs of various social groups, in reality Garden City experiments failed to address the needs of the working poor and equitable development was traded off for soliciting market support" (5). Yet, the example of Letchworth illustrates that there might be a possibility to rethink and update the Garden City model as in 1995, the Garden City Corporation in Letchworth became the Garden City Letchworth Heritage Foundation, now a self-sustaining nonprofit organization. The land of the housing created at the beginning is still in the hands of the Community Land Trust (CLT). Nowadays, more than 33,000 people live in Letchworth, on land owned by the CLT, which is an inspiration for gaining experience with community-based, trust-based forms of organization (Kühne 2015).

Moving to the 21st century, the discourse of Smart Cities fits well within the contemporary phase of urban imaginaries. For long, nature has either been described as unpredictable and chaotic, contrasting the 'orderly' city, or it is being perceived as vulnerable and in dire need of protection and preservation, particularly reinforced due to the socio-ecological impacts of global warming. Climate change has compelled political leaders to prioritize building resilient cities capable of dealing with crises (Gotham and Greenberg 2014). Consequently, new infrastructure has emerged to enable urban areas to adapt to or mitigate the effects of global warming (Klinenberg 2016) as well as new imaginaries such as the Smart City, which advocates for technological solutions to address global crises, and undermines the pursuit of environmental justice as a radical political project. According to (Swyngedouw 2009) the Smart City establishes a 'post-political' moment instead in which maintaining the status quo becomes the sole rational objective. Townsend (2014) defines the Smart City as "places where information technology is combined with infrastructure, architecture, everyday objects, and

even our bodies to address social, economic, and environmental problems" (15). Thus, this model encompasses the concept of 'green cities' as well as technological futurism, to encapsulate a technocentric imaginary of the future urban landscape. In this process, however, nature is constantly being reduced to the recipient of action, without agency. Vanolo (2014) identifies two potential dangers associated with the Smart City. First, the Smart City can present objectives, strategies, ideologies, as well as political choices as inherently natural approaches, which will inevitably lead to restructuring processes. In turn, this can generate included or excluded subjects, visible or invisible individuals. Second, there is a potential risk that the Smart City leads to one single technology-centered perspective of the future city, and thus restricting the range of possible imaginaries of planning approaches. The Garden City and the Smart City model both illustrate how planning can be a response of our capitalist system to the dilemma of persistent crises. A vision or utopia is precisely then adopted when the system needs it (Hall 2014). Therefore, borrowing from Vanolo (2014), an examination of the mechanisms involved in the production of sustainable urban spaces, which is embedded in current discourses around urban nature, entails an analysis of power dynamics and social positions of different actors. City modeling processes are far from unbiased as they are developed within economic, political, and cultural frameworks. Vainer (2014) argues that these approaches often overlook the unique realities, social challenges, and territorial complexities of the cities they are meant to serve. Instead, they are presented as solutions that are considered universally applicable, even when implemented in vastly different situations and contexts from their original intentions. Vainer (2014) asserts that engaging in dialogue, debate, and adopting alternative practices of involvement and urban development could facilitate the decolonization of knowledge and reshape the production of cities to be more inclusive. In this context, it is important to critically question how nature has been used as a symbol, a narrative, or a spatial tool in urban planning and for what purpose. For Howard, nature was commodified and primarily used as 'techné' (Diogo and Simões 2019) as he appropriated and used nature to achieve specific goals; in his case, the transformation of society. This rational for thinking about nature is a distinctive feature of the Anthropocene[1] following Diogo and Simões (2019). For them, the core of the debate is how nature is disempowered and loses its independence from human actions as part of a global agency. One of the main pillars of the 'Age of Humanity' is the belief that nature is exclusively a resource that can be used to solve problems as it justifies the right to use 'nature' unrestrictedly. Howard could not foresee the extent to which nature would be used in the 20th

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[1] The Anthropocene refers to the proposed geological epoch that signifies the period in Earth's history when human activities have had a significant and pervasive impact on the planet's ecosystems and geology (Merriam-Webster n.d).

and 21st centuries as he had a somewhat naïve vision of nature's ability to regenerate and thus endlessly serve human interests (Diogo and Simões 2019). Engaging with his utopia offers me the possibility to better understand current debates in Winterthur as the Garden City's specters are still prevailing.

In the next section I will explore the role of commons, specifically the act of *commoning* as it draws attention to the socio-ecological processes that are deeply rooted in the political economy of cities and influence the establishment, governance, and preservation of urban nature (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006).

Debating Commons

In the first part of this section, I review literature on commons before I turn to a discussion about urban commons. This will support my analysis of green spaces and open spaces as they are categorized as 'new' commons according to Feinberg, Ghorbani, and Herder (2021). Hardin's seminal work *The Tragedy of the Commons*, published in 1968, started the contemporary debate of commons. He used the framework of the *homo economicus* to support his argument of the overuse and destruction of the freely accessible commons because the rational user of a common will claim the resource until the expected benefits of their actions outweigh the expected costs, while ignoring the costs imposed on others. Therefore, to avoid the tragedy of the commons, they must either be controlled by the government or privatized. Some years later, Ostrom et al. (1999) demonstrated that nevertheless, there are other ways to collectively manage resources that are neither private nor public, as both state and private ownership are eventually doomed to failure. Her main argument is that people have self-organized to manage commons for thousands of years. Ostrom et al. (1999) identified several principles essential for an effective management of the commons, including a restricted access and incentives for users to invest in the resource rather than exploit it as a high priority must be placed on its future sustainability. Further, she proposes monitoring and accountability mechanisms as well as a system for conflict resolution. Ostrom et al. (1999) drew attention to the importance of tailoring solutions to the specific context of the common and to incorporate local knowledge and community participation in the management of commons, as she argues that a top-down solution imposed from the outside often remains ineffective. Their examination sparked a surge in community-centered resource management during the 1990s and 2000s. While the 'institutional commons' model remains relevant to environmental policy, critical scholars have expressed reservations since this approach to commons retains fundamental

assumptions rooted in liberalism, including notions of rational individuals, utilitarian gains, and the essential requirement of governing institutions (Turner 2017).

Moving now to the urban, which has been a particular focus as a space for resistance against neoliberal enclosure (Harvey 2013), Feinberg, Ghorbani, and Herder (2021) stress the need to rethink the meaning of commons in the urban context due of the complexity of cities. They distinguish three commonly used terms. ***Common*** describes the basis of shared material and symbolic resources by which humans can live together. Therefore, it is a perspective for social transformation that includes practices of mutual sharing and collaboration. ***Commons***, singular, represents shared goods that are built on the foundation of the *common*. And ***commoning*** is the practice that links a resource to its proximate community of users and leads to the emergence of the *commons*. *Commoning* was coined by Linebaugh (2008) and involves the collective management of shared resources based on the principles of cooperation, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. Foster and Iaione (2016) view the city itself as a *commons* in the sense that it is a shared resource that should belong to all residents, which is consistent with the Right to the City movement. For Lefebvre (1967), the right to the city means access for all residents to actively shape urban life. Harvey (2008) extends this view by relating it to collective subjects and emphasizes their agency:

> *"The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights." (Harvey 2008, 23)*

The Right to the City movement demands the right to participate in the decision-making processes and to be involved in the decisions about the collective resources that the residents share. In this perspective, urban *commons* must remain accessible, yet neoliberalism affects them in many ways: resource foreclosure, privatization, commercialization, gentrification, displacement, and alienation, which serve as arguments for citizens to claim spaces in the city (Feinberg, Ghorbani, and Herder 2021). Many struggles over *commons* have turned into social movements that demand democracy, and their importance should not be underestimated as its creative force can give rise to new forms of urban spatiality exceeding processes of individual

or market enclosure (Hardt and Negri 2009) and thereby offering a resistance to the foreclosure of public spaces and the commodification of urban life (Gidwani and Baviskar 2011; Łapniewska 2017; Pusey and Chatterton 2017). Furthermore, *commons* regenerate a sense of place that forms and sustains communities as the resources are collectively managed which can create a more equitable and sustainable urban environment. Therefore, *commoning* can lead a political imaginary that can simultaneously be anti, despite, and post life under capitalism (Dawney, Kirwan, and Brigstocke 2016). Yet, I want to give a look beyond the idealized perception of commons as they are closely intertwined with broader enclosure processes as Ginn and Ascensão (2018) show. Within urban areas, many commons are found in regions with low land value, whereas rural commons tend to emerge in areas where pressures for commercialization are minimal (Turner 2017). Tsing (2015) illustrates how the matsutake mushroom forests across Japan, China, Finland, and the US Northwest highlights the reintroduction of a communal way of life to landscapes that have been devastated by extensive state forestry projects. These commons arise where state-capital extraction moves elsewhere and leaves the space vacant. The resurgence of forest commons in Japan became feasible only after the country shifted from domestic timber production to importing from Southeast Asia following the 1960s. Consequently, even though commons hold potential for future ways of living, they often follow the movements of capital, finding their place in areas of decline or abandoned land. Moreover, there is an element of anthropocentrism in the analysis of commons, as non-human entities are often seen as resources to be preserved rather than integral components of interconnected existence (Ginn and Ascensão 2018).

To summarize this section, I argue that *commons* are not particular objects but rather social relations between social groups and their social and/or physical environment. *Commons* do not simply exist, nor are they inherent to a particular resource or thing, because it is a set of social practices, which explains how space can become a *commons*. In the following section, I examine the politics around urban gardening since it represents a field where political activism and the act of creating a sense of place come together, and thereby offering an opportunity to address the impacts of current urban planning methods from a bottom-up approach (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019). However, this perspective can reinforce the romanticization of urban nature (Angelo 2017), thus I aim to position urban gardening commons within their contested and contradictory specificity (Ginn and Ascensão 2018).

Politics around Urban Gardening

Gardens, rather than being mere plots of land, can be seen as projects that address social, cultural, or economic concerns (Tornaghi and Certomà 2019). The emergence of the social justice movement during the 1960s and 1970s led to an expansion of the green guerilla movement[2] and community gardens as they represented a shift towards a bottom-up politics in response to urban disinvestment (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019). By exploring the link between gardening and justice, Milbourne (2019) proposes to adapt an everyday perspective, which offers a new approach for envisioning ordinary forms of socio-ecological justice and strategies to address mundane forms of disadvantages. The theory of everyday urbanisms draws attention to the significance of understanding the daily experiences, routines and, practices shaping urban life and challenges the dominant narratives of urban development by highlighting the importance of ordinary aspects and the mundane in the urban. Everyday life is seen as a catalyst for resistance, creativity, and social change that actively contributes to the ongoing processes of shaping places within a society (Kärrholm et al. 2023). Urban gardening can thus be interpreted as a political gesture of dissent and presented as part of the Right to the City movement by pointing to its spontaneous nature, and its demand to fight for the right to shape and develop the city, as well as its power to challenge institutional planning (Thomas 2016). The need to leave traces in the city or to make the space one's own is not diminishing. New forms of urban gardening, such as community gardens, try to create an alternative place beyond neoliberal logic since they can address the consequences of neoliberal governmentality such as the erasure of public spaces and commons or the decline of social cohesion (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019). Urban gardening can further be a form of democratic and participatory urban development transmitting values such as social cohesion, inclusivity, and equality (Certomà and Notteboom 2017). Urban gardening, in this sense, can be seen as an arena where political activism and place-making intersect, which prompts a reevaluation of how the politics of urban space are shaped (Tornaghi and Certomà 2019) as in the current post-political age, politics no longer solely emerges from parliamentary activities but also through negotiations among networks of actors with shared interests (Mouffe 2005; Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). In response to the unequal distribution of green spaces, urban gardeners are implementing self-designing and collaborative processes that influence the urban agenda

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[2] The green guerilla movement has been initiated by the activism of a group of people including the artist Liz Christy in New York City in the 1970s. Christy, together with several others, began planting flowers in various spots and leaving flowerpots on windowsills of empty buildings. The idea of improving the urban surroundings such as abandoned houses and neglected garden plots quickly became prevalent and encouraged locals to co-operate (Tracey 2007).

from below (Certomà 2016) and thereby transcending the classic public/private dichotomy, both spatially and in terms of ownership, management, and planning practices. While most citizens have long had little knowledge of how planning affects their daily lives, and institution planners themselves having offered few opportunities for people to participate, with the recognition of the political nature of planning (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019), it has become imperative to consider their role in shaping urban life. The direct engagement in the material transformation of urban space and the (often) implicit alliances built with the more-than-human actors to reconceptualize and transform the 'nature' of urban space can promote a political engagement that materializes through the practical design of material as well as living things in urban space, thereby bringing together heterogenous actors who work towards an ideal future city that they want to build together (Certomà 2011; Tornaghi and Certomà 2019).

However, there are also critical voices, such as Angelo (2017) who draws attention to the romanticization of nature. Angelo (2017) argues that these forms are often treated not just as materially opposed to conventional understanding of urban textures, but also socially and politically outside of it, which I counteract by understanding them within the social and political urban realm in which they are located. I acknowledge that urban garden projects can be reappropriated by neoliberal institutions (Pudup 2008) and therefore possibly reinforce unequal capitalist development. Furthermore, such projects can contribute to gentrification (Quastel 2009) and possibly lead to new spatial inequalities, as well as the exclusion of formerly publicly accessible land. The perception of urban gardening as detached from social dynamics and political influences exemplifies the problematic notion that integrating nature into cities creates spaces devoid of conventional urban social relations. This lens suggests that natural environments can foster community, transcending social and economic divisions, and assumes that the advantages gained from engaging with nature are universally applicable, thereby undermining a one-size-fits-all approach (Angelo 2017). These assumptions are a specific conception of the role of nature in the city, in contrast to it, and in relation to the political and social relations of a city. Angelo (2017) stresses the importance of closely examining the categories of urban lenses and how they underpin practice and social analysis that do not specifically address disciplinary questions about what constitutes a city and how it should be studied.

To conclude this section, I will critically reflect on the importance of urban gardening as a micro-politic of everyday life that impacts the ability to re-read urban spaces (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019), while exploring what notions of nature and belonging in urban gardening embodies. The everyday lens will guide me while assessing the tensions in and around the Allmend Grüzefeld. However, I acknowledge that there is a risk of focusing exclusively on the local level, and neglecting broader, more global areas of action and engagement (Cirolia and Scheba 2019). To address these issues, I propose a transdisciplinary methodology that combines the analysis of gardening for its leisure benefits, its embeddedness within Winterthur in terms of governance with the exploration of how urban gardening is related to the creation of commons. As I not only look into urban gardening as the current usage of the Allmend Grüzefeld but also use *digging* as a methodological approach, I now turn to the methodology chapter to illustrate how I collected and assessed the data.

METHODOLOGY

To follow the shifting understanding of urban nature over time in and around the Allmend Grüzefeld, I employed a qualitative multi-method research design. This entails an intersection of disciplines as my work relies on methods and approaches moving between history, anthropology, and critical urbanisms. Qualitative research offers me the opportunity to grasp more profoundly the ways in which people think and talk about the places in which they reside, which in my opinion are shaped by our cultural understanding of nature. While not generalizable, these findings offer important insight into the diversity of experiences present in the seemingly mundane everyday life of the Mattenbach district. In this chapter, I start by explaining what I mean by *digging* as a method before I turn to discuss the framework of utopia as a method[3]. I conclude with a critical reflection on the outcomes of my research on the site to explore what aligned with my expectations and what did not.

Digging as a Method

I use *digging* as a metaphor for a way of learning, knowing, and engaging with the research site and the research participants, including multiple different approaches, which I describe in the following section.

Over the past nine months, I extensively *dug* into the Mattenbach district, by spending numerous hours immersing myself in the space, which I shortly introduce now but will more profoundly embed historically in the chapter *Allmend Grüzefeld: Embedded in Winterthur's Planning History*. The Mattenbach district is situated between the Stadt and Seen districts, separated from Seen by a deliberately preserved green belt during development. The Mattenbach district comprises the Endliker, Gutschick, and Deutweg neighborhood and is crossed by the Eulach and the Mattenbach stream. Gutschick and Endliker, constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly consist of residential blocks that shape the district's landscapes. The remaining part of the city district belongs to the Deutweg neighborhood, encompassing the older sections closer to the city of Winterthur and the portion of the Eschenberg Forest within the city district. The two neighborhoods I focus on are the Gutschick and the Deutweg because on the one hand, the last inner-city common Allmend Grüzefeld lies in the Gutschick neighborhood, and the specters of the Garden City, as well as the unbuilt lake, are to be found in the Deutweg neighborhood.

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[3] Some parts of the methodology chapter, such as the section on Utopia as a Method are partially adapted from the preliminary written seminar paper *Digging as a Way of Knowing* by Saskia Bryner, University of Basel.

I drew inspiration from the approach of deep 'hanging out,' coined by Geertz (1998) which describes a method of physically and informally immersing oneself in a cultural environment. The aim is to gain knowledge and insights by understanding the actors and their actions within their respective environment and perspective. According to Browne and McBride (2015), 'hanging out' is not merely a means of extracting insights; it is a delicate process that plays a vital role in establishing the researcher's positionality before and during fieldwork. By calling it *digging* in a space instead of 'hanging out,' I want to emphasize the more active role I played while being on the site. I was not a passive bystander who purely observed (which I did as well but not solely) but I tried to get involved by moving in and on the sites the same way as the people around me. Therefore, I went for a run, walked with a dog, sat on a bench reading a book, and dug into the soil in a community garden. Through this engagement with the environment of the Mattenbach district, I had the opportunity to observe the gradual transition from winter to spring and eventually to summer. This immersive experience allowed me to deeply comprehend the dynamic interplay between the environment and the individuals residing there, and how they live with the planned realities of imaginaries of urban nature. I witnessed how they interacted with their surroundings and observed the evolving use and (re)appropriation of open spaces and gardens throughout the changing seasons.

Additionally, I went twice to the Winterthur city archive to *dig* into history: into old maps, past government resolutions, and newspaper articles to engage with former visions for the Mattenbach district; some were realized, some remain unrealized. I am aware of the selective choices that archiving involves (Mbembe 2002) and I tried being conscious of the keywords I chose within the archive as well as those I used in my online search engine, yet it remains a subjective choice. *Digging* in the history throughout this research journey has given me profound insights into tracing the manifestations of cultural values and the ways in which discourse constructs a distinct understanding of nature not only representative of a particular time but also reflecting institutional and state aspirations more broadly. Close reading directs the focus towards the influence of language in shaping a particular reality and influencing our perceptions, thoughts, and discussions about the world, with a specific emphasis on urban nature in my case. As a methodological approach, close reading entails analyzing discourse to understand how both textual and visual representations construct our understanding of the world (Sheppard, Leitner, and Peck 2019). In addition to this definition, I expand the concept of close reading to include an examination of imaginaries and utopias, which I will delve into further in the subsequent section.

In attempts to deepen my research, I further *dug* into other perspectives than just my own by talking to 11 individuals, ranging from residents in the Garden City housing units, to city council members as well as landscape architects and members of the allotment garden association. I conducted semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in official positions, whereas with the (former) residents, gardeners, and members of the community garden, it was more a conversation, which helped me to explore how the people who live and work with the (un)realized imaginaries have appropriated them. In this sense, through meaningful encounters and conversations, I was able to gain an insight into the lived reality and the memories surrounding the Allmend Grüzefeld as well as bridging the past to the present (Sheppard, Leitner, and Peck 2019).

Lastly, I also actively *dug* as a way of participating in gardening activities to gain insights into place-making and *commoning*. By actively digging in the community garden, I employed the method as an embodied form of engaging and connecting with people. Embodied practices challenge the long-standing mind-body dualism prevalent in the social sciences and shed light on the limitations of current research methods in comprehending the lived reality of bodies. Embodied methodology calls for a reevaluation of how bodies are influenced by social and discursive practices and offers suitable approaches for studying the experiences of individuals within specific social contexts (Pink 2015; Thanem and Knights 2019). Since we perceive our environment through all senses, such as seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, and hearing, I drew attention to how I could feel and sense my surrounding by the help of the embodied framework, as well as how the gardeners approach the gardens through actions and how they interact with others in face-to-face encounters. As I observed their bodies to understand how they relate to themselves and to others, they were able to observe me and see how I relate to them. This sometimes made me uncomfortable and especially before the first time of gardening, I realized how little I know about gardening and feared being in the way more than being helpful, which gladly was not the case in the end. In essence, embodied research cultivates a heightened awareness of coexistence with both human and more-than-human actors, generating knowledge that encompasses diverse embodied subjectivities (Chadwick 2017). However, it is crucial to practice embodied reflexivity as the autoethnographic dimension positions the researcher as both the object and subject of inquiry, acknowledging their involvement in the subject being studied (Thanem and Knights 2019). Thus, being mindful of my role as a researcher, making it visible to others, and practicing embodied reflexivity were integral aspects of my research.

Utopia as a Lens

Imaginaries seeking to explore the integration of 'nature' into urban spaces shape their realities as their discourses contribute to the construction of subjects, practices, and cityscapes, and are therefore intrinsically spatial (Chevalier and Tzaninis 2022). Thus, I argue that it is important to dissect these urban nature imaginaries, which are an assemblage of aspirations, inspirations, and imaginations for an alternative future to learn from what humans have done with and to nature in the past in regards of urban planning. In this section, I discuss how utopia can be used as a methodology, which allows me to dissect these imaginaries and illuminate the normative representations inherent within them.

Utopia is often associated with either a totalitarian violence or a dreamy ineffectuality, yet Gartforth (2018) argues that utopias should be understand differently as the field of utopian studies has generated new definitions and approaches over the last thirty years. Utopian scholars such as Levitas (2013) insist that utopias are not reducible to blueprints or pipedreams. Rather, utopia is as an expression of the human desire for a better way of living and being together as utopian thought frequently arises from a sense of dissatisfaction and provides a critique of the current society. It thus involves, a capacity to creatively imagine alternatives, no matter how briefly or superficially (Garforth 2018). Therefore, Levitas (2013) considers utopia as a method that serves as a critical tool for exposing the limitations of existing political discourses. It exists between the present and the future and allows for a dual perspective as it enables us to not only envision the future from the present, but also to view the present from the perspective of the imagined future (Levitas 2013). Waterman (2022) emphasizes the importance of carefully analyzing imaginaries to question the practices and systems by which physical and cultural worlds are constructed, with the aim of effecting change and improving upon them. The spatialization of utopia therefore offers a window on societies blind spots, the reality they deal with as well as ideals and values they hold, thereby providing a firm base for further imaginations (Chevalier and Tzaninis 2022). Imaginaries shape the stories people tell themselves and the lives they lead, as the imagination contains cultural meanings that manifest into reality. Simultaneously, reality influences cultural meanings, which then feed back into the imaginary realm. Thus, the imaginaries of a lived city- and or landscape constitute a form of knowledge that must be understood to grasp how people interact with their environment. People inhabit their surroundings not only through direct experiences but also through imaginary constructions (Waterman 2022). UPE has long been recognizing the significance of urban imaginaries in shaping the collective perception and material realities of urban spaces, including the ways in which environmental discourse contributes to the construction of subjects, practices,

and specific landscapes (Gabriel 2014). As humans modify the world around them on an enormous scale, all landscapes with which humans interact are thus culturally shape. Landscapes are not mere objects but processes through which social and subjective identities are constructed (Mitchell 2002). Thus, they encompass not only the physical environment but also the relationships formed in creating and inhabiting a place, the connections between individuals, and the various representations projected onto and encountered within the landscape (Waterman 2022), which can be extended to the cultural understanding of nature in the urban as well.

Levitas (2017) provides a framework for the utopian method, which she refers to as the *Imaginary Reconstruction of Society*, consisting of three modes. The *archaeological* mode allows to dig up implicit visions of the 'good life' in political and policy programs which might not be explicit utopias and subject them to in-depth critique. The *ontological* mode is concerned with the agents and subjects that make up society as it is imagined, which reveals underlying assumptions about human nature. All utopias, whether explicit or implicit, contain embedded notions of what it means to be human and what is considered beneficial for us. The *architectural* mode looks forward, as it involves envisioning an alternative society in concrete terms that stimulates critical responses. The architectural mode thus refers to how utopia is translated into spatial structures. In the analytical chapters focusing on the Allmend Grüzefeld, I shift between the archaeological and ontological modes which allows me to critically examine the different imaginaries of urban natures and normative values associated with these spaces. In contrast, the last chapter, *More-Than-Human Participation*, predominantly relies on the architectural mode, where I explore alternative ways to assess the Allmend's future.

Reflecting on the Outcomes

During my research, I encountered several limitations primarily related to my interactions with individuals during visits to archives, interviews, and observations. In my seminar paper, I extensively discussed the concept of embodied methodology and planned to employ it as my primary approach. However, due to time constraints on both my part and the availability of the individuals I intended to speak with, not all conversations could be conducted in person. I tried to pay attention to nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language, as conversations are inherently social and embodied experiences. However, this became challenging when I found myself limited to speaking with someone solely over the phone. Furthermore, I was unable to fully engage in gardening activities as initially planned and as my time in the field progressed, the research questions of my work also underwent a shift. While it

initially revolved solely around gardening, it evolved into a broader exploration of the Mattenbach district itself and a deeper investigation of imaginaries of urban nature. Consequently, this shift in focus also influenced my methodology away from a primary focus on embodied methodology. Nevertheless, my familiarity with embodied methodology, gained through reading and writing about it, proved to be valuable as the experience of gardening alongside members of the community garden remains one of my most cherished memories. I did not want to neglect embodied methodology altogether since the alternative would have been disembodied research which in my opinion fails to connect with the everyday concerns and problems people experience (Thanem and Knights 2019).

In summary, by employing the method of *digging*, I observed how the imaginaries of urban nature are experienced and reappropriated by the residents. My time in the field comprised various methods, including archival research, observational walks, immersive experiences in the space, and participatory research involving conversations and engagement with individuals, particularly in communal gardening activities. In qualitative research, the significance of being present in the field and establishing relationships cannot be overstated as it is during this phase that I immersed myself mentally and physically into the environment, both as a researcher and as an individual. Adopting the lens of utopia enables the analysis and interpretation of diverse perspectives on the utilization of nature as a 'techné' (Diogo and Simões 2019) in the Mattenbach district. These combined approaches serve to uncover gaps between different imaginaries, their planning, implementation, and the actual lived experiences that ensue. Situated within the framework of UPE, my work focuses on investigating a context where overt conflict or visible change may not be immediately apparent. Instead, my attention is directed towards examining what is considered normal within prevailing political, economic, and social conditions, often disregarded, or overlooked. The dynamic socio-ecological relationships that shape urban space involve human and more-than-human actors across various spatial scales. This approach entails the inclusion of historical-geographical insights into these evolving urban configurations to address future environmental developments (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006).

ALLMEND GRÜZEFELD:
EMBEDDED IN WINTERTHUR'S PLANNING HISTORY

"The river has taught me to listen; you will learn from it, too. The river knows everything; one can learn everything from it." (Hesse 1951, 105)

Following the traces of the Mattenbach stream takes me back to the era of industrialization and its impact on the settlement structure in Winterthur. In the latter half of the 19th century, Winterthur transformed into an industrial city and flourished economically mainly in the extraction, processing, and trade of cotton[4]. The pioneering steps were taken in 1803 with the establishment of the Hard spinning mill in Wülflingen, Switzerland's of its kind. Heinrich Rieter founded the Rieter spinning mill in 1810, and the Sulzer brothers laid the foundation stone for the Sulzer Group in 1834. By 1870, Sulzer had employed 1,300 individuals, and its factory facilities on Zürcherstrasse expanded to encompass an area equivalent to the entire old town of Winterthur. Subsequently, Sulzer further expanded to Oberwinterthur, occupying an additional 600,000 square meters. Meanwhile, Rieter, the city's second dominant industrial force, developed in Töss. The district is named after Winterthur's largest river, which powered the spinning and weaving mills. The Töss' importance for the city has changed but not diminished as 97% of Winterthur's drinking water nowadays is sourced from its groundwater. Between 1870 and 1920, the machine industry's contribution to Winterthur's economy surged from 11% to 33% (Bänziger n.d.). Consequently, Winterthur experienced an economic boom and population growth. A pivotal tool for proactive urban planning was the enactment of the first cantonal building law in 1863, which empowered authorities in the canton of Zurich with the legal means to regulate the city's development. Faced with an influx of workers, the prominent textile and machine manufacturers recognized the need to provide housing for their labor force, which just like the industries had an impact on the water bodies in Winterthur. Once a freely meandering brook, the Mattenbach stream flows within the confines of a rigid framework since the 1950s. Lowered and straightened, its course was altered to prevent flood damage in the increasingly urbanized Mattenbach district. The Mattenbach is not the only stream subjected to

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[4] Winterthur has a colonial history, hollwever as the colonial legacies of Winterthur is not part of my research focus, I will not go into any further detail.

human intervention in Winterthur. As the city expanded, the Eulach hindered the development of transportation routes and caused property damage during floods. Between 1910 and 1912, a 650m long section of the Eulach river in the city center was lowered and concealed underground and predominantly exists as a channelized body of water.

Figure 6
Sulzer workshops at Zürcherstrasse around 1870.
Retrieved from Winterthurer Bibliotheken Image Archive.

As Winterthur's urban landscape was shaped by its industrial success more than any other Swiss city (Hofer 2014), this chapter digs in the historicity of Winterthur's settlement structure which is strongly influenced by utopian planning ideas and social engineering, which account for the implementation of modernist concepts of health and functionality to urban living space as well as for citizens' deprivation of the right to shape their living environments (Tornaghi 2014). At the same time, I dissect the Garden City Winterthur in an archaeological and ontological mode (Levitas 2013) and trace the remembrance of the Garden City in the present to look at contemporary thinking on how utopias can be planned. Spatial planning is intrinsically linked to imaginations of a (better) future and at the same time contextually embedded in current social, economic, and political dynamics. Thus, looking at planning offers an opportunity to look at the reality society deals with and which ideals it holds (Chevalier and Tzaninis 2022). Furthermore, I am setting the scene for my case study: the Allmend Grüzefeld as to fully understand a space a comprehensive study of place is essential which entails how it is embedded

within Winterthur's history. The Mattenbach stream will run like a thread through the past, the present and the future, and I try to learn and to understand the site with and through the river, starting with the industrialization's impact on the housing policies in Winterthur.

Social Controlling through Housing

In 1865, Rieter constructed Switzerland's first workers' settlement in Niedertöss, a site that attained historic monument status in 2011 (Rothenbühler 2014). The common good and self-interest went hand in hand in the construction of such housing: The entrepreneurs wanted to provide decent housing for the workforce - and concurrently increase the dependence of the workforce on the factory owner (Rothenbühler 2014). Rieter was inspired by the model of the *Cité ouvrière* in Mulhouse built in 1851, which Kostourou (2019) examined in-depth in terms of the historical use of working-class housing for social reform, highlighting its role in social control. Company towns were typically large-scale, low-density settlements situated on the outskirts, characterized by standardized architecture. While presenting a noble purpose on paper, these towns primarily served as political and economic measures to address the working class's social and moral conditions. The aim was to reduce tensions between employees and employers and to discourage radical activities by tying workers to property, thus reducing their mobility and independence. For the employers it was a comfortable position as they also operated as landlords and could therefore impose restrictions on residents, and tenancy duration, whereas workers, paying rent to their employers, faced an inferior bargaining position in terms of their labor rights. The reflection of all these goals can be witnessed in the spatial engineering of the company towns. Working and spatial arrangements followed the logic of production, from the architecture of the houses to the different organized spaces of entertainment and leisure. Company towns were prime sites of paternalism and contested terrains of negotiations and confrontations between capital and labor. However, they were also at the forefront of urban experimentation in terms of imaginaries of hygiene, progress and welfare practices (Borges and Torres 2012). Rieter firmly believed that providing the workers with good housing would result in more motivated, more satisfied, and thus more loyal employees, which embodies an implicitly paternalistic approach (Rothenbühler 2014). The garden enabled the workers to be self-sufficient and to relieve the strain on the tight family budget. The aim of educating the workers to a settled, and regulated life by providing housing can also be regarded as an example of social engineering (Borges and Torres 2012).

In Winterhur, the Rieter housing example in Niedertöss, was followed by other factory owners. The houses and especially the gardens were thus a means of tying the workers to the factories

and preventing a proletarianization of the workforce as tenement houses were feared to be a breeding ground leading to social and political uprisings among the working classes. As I have mentioned in the literature review, there was a widespread housing crisis in European cities at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, driven by rapid growth, economic changes, and social transformations. Reform movements such as Howard's Garden City concept sought new approaches to urban development. Winterthur, by contrast, had already embraced principles such as open construction in the 19th century, making the Garden City idea less revolutionary. Alexander Isler, head of the building department until 1919, recognized Winterthur as a Garden City *avant la lettre* and advocated for open development and single-family houses through land acquisition by the city (Rothenbühler 2014). Regulations on outer quarter development were enacted in July 1909, making open development a legal requirement. Yet, the focus was more on protecting villa neighborhoods from the influx of tenements rather than improving housing conditions for the lower class (Rothenbühler 2014). Therefore, I adapt Osborne and Rose's (1999) perspective that the European city of the late 19th and early 20th century served as a space of governance where the residents, especially the workers, were guided by top-down urban planning ideals. Although the Garden City has critical parameters such as community ownership mechanisms including a community land trust or a community land bank that would be worth reconsidering as these mechanisms not only encourage participation in the planning, development, and management of the city, but also strengthen civic spirit among residents, Howard's radical ideas were never fully implemented, and the resulting top-down planning approach served mainly the middle and upper classes.

Figure 7
View from NW into
Rieterstrasse.
Picture taken by Saskia
Bryner, 2023.

Figure 8
View from NW into
Rieterstrasse.
Picture taken by
Saskia Bryner, 2023.

Address	Rieterstrasse 18-32, 34-45
Building Contractors	Spinnerei und Zwirnerei J. J. Rieter & Co.
Years of Construction	1865–1872
Description	Seven buildings with a saddle roof are lined up with their gardens on the northeast and southwest sides along Rieterstrasse. The supervisor house is situated at the northwestern end of the street. In the middle of the complex, on the southwest side, is the bathhouse that served all the residents and was later converted into a residential house.

In 20th century urban planning in Winterthur, Albert Bodmer played a crucial role. Starting in 1923 as a development planning engineer, Bodmer was inspired by the Garden City movement and implemented some of its principles in Winterthur by emphasizing single-family houses and small apartment buildings with their own gardens. To ensure that this ideal spacious housing was accessible to various segments of the population, Bodmer actively promoted social housing, and established the Heimstättengenossenschaft Winterthur (HGW) in 1923 (Pettannice 2022). However, Howard's radical planning ideas for a progressive transformation of capitalist society into cooperative communities were not realized. Bodmer envisioned Winterthur having a population of 150,000 inhabitants by 2030 and planned the city's growth accordingly (see Figure 9). He divided the entire city area into utilization zones: historical center, industrial areas, mixed areas, settlement areas, agricultural areas, green areas, and forest. Of particular importance to Bodmer was that the industrial areas would be encircled with green spaces and that the settlement areas would not extend all the way to the city limits but would be surrounded by a green forest ring, creating a boundary between the built-up areas and the natural surroundings (Pettannice 2022), which indicates a strong urban/nature binary prevailing at the time.
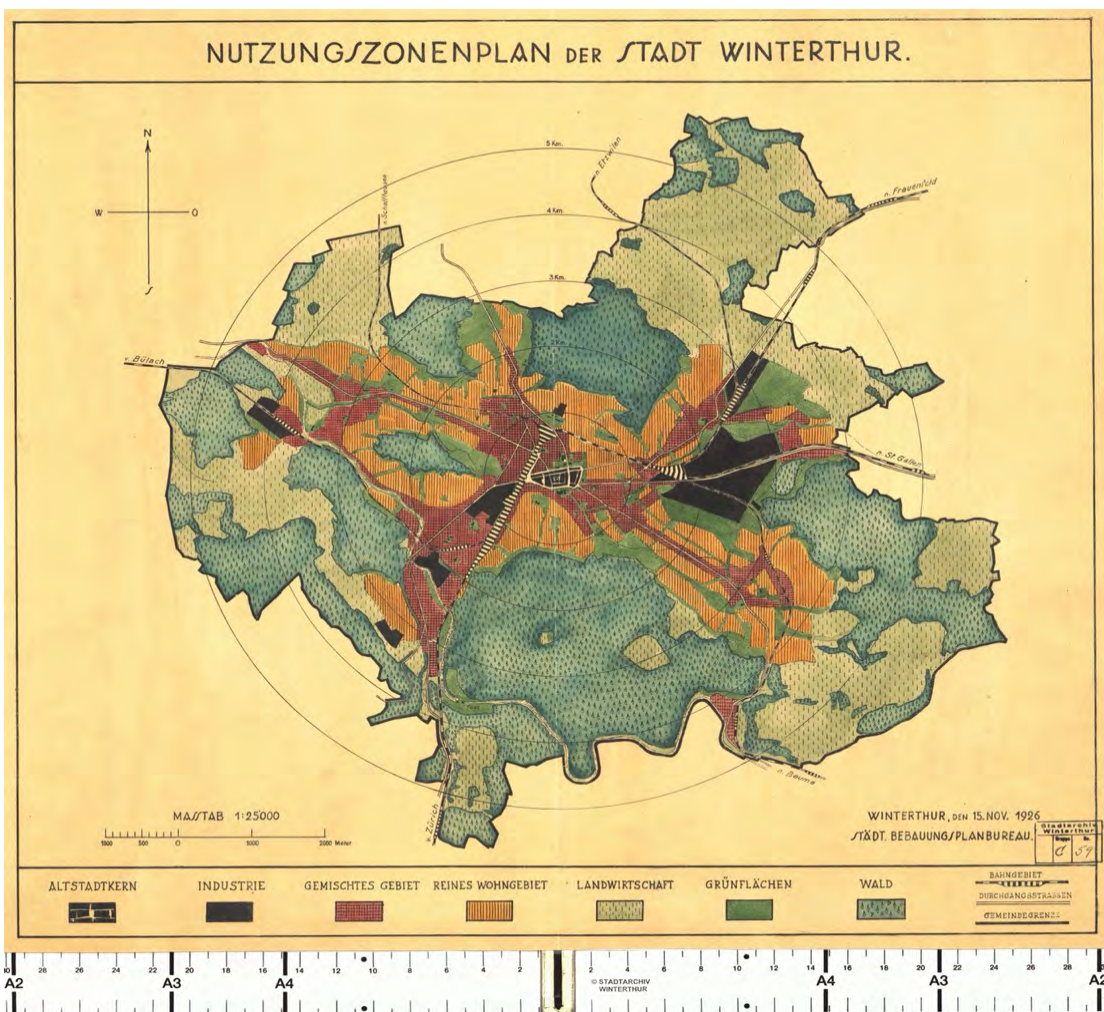

Figure 9
Bodmer Plan, 1926.
Retrieved from the City
Archive Winterthur.

Winterthur faced another housing shortage during and after World War I, and to address this, the city subsidized building societies and cooperatives, becoming a pioneer in social housing construction during the interwar period. The city also pursued an active land policy, by systematically acquiring large building land reserves, such as the land for the Allmend Grüzefeld. As part of these housing subsidies, several settlements according to the Garden City idea were established in Winterthur, targeting the working class, and promoting their integration into middle-class society through homeownership. The same mechanisms as in the 19th century with the industrial factory housing are working again: social rise through housing ownership and a garden as a means to an end. However, the built houses were not enough and after World War II, Winterthur faced another housing shortage due to significant population growth and the renewed economic boom, leading to an unprecedented expansion in housing development policies (Pettannice 2022). Most of today's cooperative apartments were built between 1940 and 1950 in the Garden City zeitgeist, including the Deutweg neighborhood. In 1944, the workers' housing estate, was built by the Gemeinnützige Wohnbaugenossenschaft (GWG) on Eisweiherstrasse. The *Winterthurer Arbeiterzeitung* (worker's newspaper) praised it as a successful element of the Garden City and as a settlement that embodied a piece of progressive residential culture for working-class families far away from the noisy, nervous hustle and bustle of the city in a special supplement with the programmatic title *'Gesundes Wohnen auch für das arbeitende Volk!'* (Healthy housing for the working people, too!) (GWG 2015). By the 1950s, the era of single-family and small multi-family housing developments came to an end as rising land prices and construction costs shifted the focus towards high-rise buildings. Beginning in the 1960s, rapid building development triggered an expansion of development, among others in the Gutschick neighborhood[5] (see Figure 10) which underwent significant urban development with the construction of multiple housing estates for around 6,000 people on the former greenfield site between the city and Seen. In particular, the Grüzefeld and the Gutschick housing estate, which encircle the Allmend Grüzefeld, became an experimental field for architectural and urban planning imaginaries. At the beginning, the new high-rises of the Gutschick housing estate were perceived as a foreign body in the neighborhood and spoiling the landscape. The residents feared that Winterthur would lose its character as a Garden City. As the new type of high-rise buildings sparked debates on housing policy and urban development, the city of Winterthur held its first urban planning competition for the Grüzefeld estate in 1960; recognizing the importance of public participation. The result out of the

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[5] The Mattenbach district consists of three neighborhoods: Deutweg, Gutschick and Endliker. In my work, I focus mainly on Deutweg and Gutschick.

participative competition was the 'Galgen' project by the architects Cramer, Jaray, Paillard, and Leemann with four buildings of varying heights. Due to the emphasis on green spaces in between the blocks, elemental construction was chosen as a cost-saving measure and the Grüzefeld superstructure became Winterthur's first panel building and is considered a pioneering urban planning achievement (Rothenbühler 2014). The project was embedded within a technological euphoria and the spirit of optimism of the 1950s and 1960s. Innovative elements such as underground garages allowed for generous green spaces between the blocks. Landscape architect Ernst Cramer contributed to the avant-garde exterior design, in which the staggered heights were visually represented by ramps and lawn steps (Garcia and Westermann 2022). The cooperatives HGW, GWG, and WGW, which joined together for this project to form the *Miteigentumsgemeinschaft Grüzefeld* (MEG), made it into Winterthur's largest cooperative building project at the time. The MEG played and still plays an important role in ensuring the affordability of the apartments.

Figure 10 Grüzefeld (in the front) and Gutschick (in the back) housing estates, aerial view in 1967 by Werner Friedli. Retrieved from Winterthurer Bibliotheken Image Archive.

The two distinct housing settlements incorporate nature in unique ways, represent a specter of the Garden City and have given rise to two contrasting neighborhoods with a distinct sense of place. The Deutweg features traditional Garden City houses with private gardens either in the front or back and predominantly inhabited by the middle-class. Adjacent and separated by the Mattenbach stream is situated the Gutschick with Winterthur's first panel-buildings and its first large housing developments.

The Mattenbach is canalized, a district is created.

After having introduced Winterthur's settlement historicity, the Mattenbach stream leads me to the emergence of the Mattenbach district and the lived specters of the Garden City which embed the Allmend Grüzefeld in the social, economic, and political structures within the district. The Mattenbach district, located between Winterthur's city center and Seen, stands out as the only city district without a rural-village past. It was only designated as an independent urban district in 1973. The settlement of the Sidi silk weaving mill and the textile refinement factory Schleife initially created workers' colonies on the former greenfield site in the 19th century. However, the significant development of the area began only in the 20th century when the course of the Mattenbach was altered, and the area was drained between the 1940s and 1950s.

Figure 11
Gutschick housing estate.
Picture taken by Saskia Bryner, 2023.

The original project envisioned a straight 1.3-kilometer course between Seen and the Mattenbach district, yet the plans were revised, and the new alignment introduced three shallow bends, forming a smooth path resembling an elongated 'S' which was deemed more visually appealing from a landscape perspective. Today, very little of the original river course remains visible, as the Mattenbach correction involved the construction of an entirely new stretch. The original goal of straightening the Mattenbach for flood prevention and land development now faced opposition in favor of restoration, aligning with the growing environmental awareness and aesthetic preferences of the population (Bächinger 2022).

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on pursuing sustainability goals through neighborhood development (Luederitz, Lang, and Von Wehrden 2013). Sustainable neighborhood initiatives can be seen as a continuation of earlier trends in urban planning aiming to create livable and environmentally friendly neighborhoods which can be traced back to the Howard's Garden City (Sharifi 2016). The overarching term eco-urbanism encompasses various movements that not only address the traditional defiance of urbanization but also tackle the challenges posed by climate change and resource limitations (Sharifi 2016). Therefore, in my opinion, it is important to provide more detail about the neighborhood structure in the Mattenbach district, because I will show how the earlier utopias of the neighborhood structure have developed into the present, as well as with the Vision 2040 (Stadt Winterthur 2021), how the idea of the 5-minute neighborhoods for sustainable urban development is presented and how it influences the district. In the report, the Allmend Grüzefeld is highlighted as an important, central green space and development potential is seen in the renaturation of the Mattenbach. Thus, the understanding of nature is very closely linked to the topic of sustainability and shows what the city of Winterthur currently understands by urban nature.

Alongside the concern of high-rise buildings disrupting the cityscape, social coexistence in the Gutschick quarter has been a topic of contentious discussions since the beginning. The growth euphoria of the post-WWII period increasingly gave way to a mood of crisis, characterized by the economic and oil crises of 1973. It was also directed against the anonymity in the large urban settlements and the architectural landmarks of modernism served as projection surfaces for social anxieties. More and more, newspaper articles bemoaned the isolation and alienation in the Grüzefeld estate (Garcia and Westermann 2022). While for children in the Gutschick neighborhood, numerous playgrounds offered space for playing with their peers; there were no common spaces for adults. By infrastructure that should be available to a neighborhood, city planners at the time understood a bus stop, a grocery store, kindergartens, and schools (Garcia and Westermann 2022). Since communal spaces were lacking, the residents organized

themselves and founded the neighborhood association in 1972, as well as the neighborhood newspaper, *Sprachrohr*, and in 1976, the current neighborhood center was inaugurated. This can be interpreted as an illustration of the practice of *commoning* (Linebaugh 2008), wherein the neighbors engaged in collective management to establish the neighborhood center. The majority of the first tenants were workers and employees from the region with their families. Over time, the structure of the residents changed. Tenants who could afford to move out, moved to single-family houses and the incoming residents increasingly came from lower socio-economic classes and immigrant backgrounds by virtue of the availability and price of (cheap) rental stock. This downward process, as Casarin, MacLeavy, and Manley (2023) call it, results in concentration of deprivation which can lead to processes of decline and territorial stigmatization. In addition, state actors play a significant role in the discourse by describing them as problematic zones. The Gutschick is marked as one of the neighborhoods in Winterthur with the highest stress indexes: wealth and average income are lower, unemployment is higher, as is the number of people on social assistance compared to other neighborhoods in Winterthur (Hirsekorn 2019; Garcia and Westermann 2022). The Gutschick neighborhood struggles with stigmatization, but by moving through the area, it becomes clear that there is a big discrepancy between the external and internal view. An unpublished survey by the cooperatives MEG underlines my observation: A large proportion of people like living in the Grüzefeld housing estate[6]. Unlike other massive housing complexes like *Gropiusstadt* in Berlin, which has lost the status of Berlin's biggest social hotspot (Mulke n.d.), the Grüzefeld housing estate maintains a balanced presence without being overwhelming. Comparing it to the Stefanini[7] houses, the cooperative-owned properties in Gutschick receive better care, they are well-maintained and show no signs of neglect. The Stefanini houses are currently threatened by mass terminations and upgrading because Stefanini's daughter Bettina Stefanini took over the properties after his death and is pursuing a different strategy. Their current value of central affordable housing is thereby threatened.

The current attempt is to highlight the qualities of the Gutschick neighborhood internally and externally to demonstrate its and develop more pride and identification within the residents. For example, the Gutschick housing estate is listed in the municipal inventory of buildings worthy of protection, and the Grüzefeld settlement is listed in the supra-municipal inventory. In the inventory, it is noted that the Grüzefeld housing development is the first prefabricated housing

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[6] Sonja Bolla gave me the unpublished survey.
[7] Bruno Stefanini (1924-2018) was a prominent Swiss real estate owner and art collector. He held ownership of numerous properties in the city, including a significant portion of Steinberggasse in Winterthur's old town and the Sulzer high-rise. However, Stefanini gained notoriety for allowing his properties to deteriorate over time, leading to frequent clashes with the city of Winterthur due to his reluctance to collaborate and address the issues at hand.

estate in Winterthur. Therefore, not only isi it a manifesto of urban densification at the time of post-war modernism, but at the same time a prime example of industrialized mass housing construction; one of the most important such developments in the canton of Zurich, if not in Switzerland (Kanton Zürich Baudirektion 2018). Thus, both developments enjoy architectural appreciation, but this is not perceived or heard by the residents. Bringing together these two levels of outsider and insider perspective is crucial. However, it is important to note that upgrading a neighborhood can also lead to displacement due to rising rents. The old bus depot, located in the Mattenbach district, will be redeveloped into a place with co-op housing and a gathering space for residents by the GWG and thereby 'revitalize the neighborhood'. However, it remains uncertain whether the interim users such as ateliers, a woodworking workshop, as well as *Kunst im Depot* will be able to return after the renovation. Furthermore, such a project may possibly lead to gentrification of the neighborhood. Yet, Sonja Bolla, working for MEG, emphasizes that most appartements in the Grüzefeld housing development are rented by cooperatives, thereby guaranteeing that the rents will not rise as quickly as on the private market.

At the beginning of 2022, the umbrella organization *Mattenbach-Alllianz* was founded because of ongoing attempts to organize networking meetings for active stakeholders in the district since the neighborhood association became somewhat dormant, and compared to other city districts in Winterthur, there are relatively few meeting points. The alliance's aim is to work politically and strategically for overriding concerns of the district since there is not a proper voice for the neighborhood. At the beginning, the idea was to organize a *Dorfet*[8] (village festival) since Mattenbach, unlike many other neighborhoods, did not have its own *Dorfet*. The Gutschick Lobby, as they were called at the time, transitioned from organizing a *Dorfet* to becoming an umbrella organization, Since the district is not really a single neighborhood but rather a mix of different quarters, it was decided that the association would be renamed *Mattenbach-Alllianz* and thereby representing and acting for a common neighborhood. One of the working groups successfully impeded the implementation of the initial plan for a bike expressway along the Mattenbach stream, which the city of Winterthur proposed in June 2022. This proposal aroused the displeasure of residents, but also beyond, because the Mattenbach stream in Waldegg is a highly valued recreational area. As 99 objections were received, the city withdrew the project for a bicycle route to carry out a reassessment. In addition, the city is currently working on a project for the revitalization of the Mattenbach, which is also intended to ensure flood protection along the Mattenbach (Stadt Winterthur 2022b). According to the city's statement,

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[8] A Swiss German term from Winterthur.

an overall consideration of the two projects on the Mattenbach is now being carried out. The working group aims for an early involvement and comprehensive participation in the design of the overall project (Mattenbach-Allianz n.d.). The *Mattenbach-Alllianz* tries to strengthen the community and to foster a sense of togetherness since the two quarters Mattenbach and Gutschick do have different characteristics.

Furthermore, in the Vision 2040 for Winterthur, the idea of 5-minute neighborhoods is put forward which includes reaching important amenities that cater to daily needs, educational and childcare facilities, recreational and sports offerings, as well as spaces to gather and linger in public areas without the pressure to consume within a 5-minute walk or bike ride (Stadt Winterthur 2021). To fulfill these ideas, flexible uses of buildings and open spaces need to be considered. In the report, it is written that public green and open spaces should provide pleasant environments for all age groups and should therefore offer shade during the summer, ample seating, and integration into the cityscape. Furthermore, the flexible uses of buildings and open spaces should be considered, which includes outdoor areas of schools, senior centers, and other social institutions as they will play an even stronger role in providing green spaces, and in adapting to climate change in the future (Stadt Winterthur 2021). The overall aim of the 5-minute neighborhood is to fosters a sense of belonging, which should result in a more livable and accessible local environment. By leveraging digital technologies to enhance service provision and facilitate local and remote connections for urban residents links the 5-minute neighborhood to the Smart City, as well as to the idea of the 15-minute city. While discussions on the 15-minute city have explored the impacts of past urban planning efforts on city branding and overall quality of urban life, the connection between this utopian ideal and initiatives to promote social diversity has been overlooked (Casarin, MacLeavy, and Manley 2023). This is surprising considering that the 15-minute city primarily focuses on revitalizing marginalized neighborhoods. Casarin, MacLeavy, and Manley (2023) demonstrate that even seemingly grassroots approaches that promote social and tenure mix can inadvertently disrupt communities, exclude certain groups, and perpetuate social divisions on a small scale. Therefore, they argue that instead of pursuing further utopian visions that neglect the spatial aspects of urban challenges, a comprehensive analysis is necessary over time and across different contexts, combined with a Right to the City perspective, to ensure policies that aim, but ultimately fail, to achieve neighborhood-scale equality are not being replicated (Casarin, MacLeavy, and Manley 2023). In the Gutschick neighborhood, there have been and continue to be many top-down planning decisions, as well as grassroots movements.

Garden City Winterthur: What remains in the 21ˢᵗ century?

While Winterthur still embraces its identity as a Garden City and retains certain legal protections, such as the *Vorgartenpraxis*[9], the city's interpretation and approach have experienced significant transformations, shifting from an industrial city to a hub for the service industry. In the 1960s, Sulzer and Rieter were the major employers, yet Sulzer's workforce significantly decreased in the following decades, primarily due to the relocation of production facilities to the USA, the UK, and China. This relocation left a vast 27-hectare wasteland in the city center, which underwent a transformation into the Lokstadt, demonstrating the revitalization of a former industrial site into a gentrified, expensive neighborhood. During the mid-1990s, the Sulzer site in Oberwinterthur also became available and was subsequently developed into Neuhegi, which along with the Sulzerareal Lokstadt, has been identified as significant areas for residential expansion in the canton of Zurich (Stadt Winterthur n.d.). Winterthur is one of the regions in the canton of Zurich selected for growth and thus faces the challenges of densification and the need for more vertical growth. To preserve its character, the city aims for targeted densification in areas where it can enhance quality of life, while also ensuring the proximity of green spaces. Winterthur's narrative nowadays embraces a desire for greater biodiversity in urban design, recognizing the importance of maintaining ecological balance in the face of habitat loss, environmental degradation, and climate change. According to Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling (2018), there has been a growing awareness of the interdependence of human settlements and nature in the urban sustainability debate. Nature is viewed as a resource contributing to the livability of cities, which is a rather functional understanding of nature (Certomà, Noori, and Sondermann 2019). It creates an imaginary of urban green space as a resource for ways of working and living in the post-industrial city. Yet, at the same time, the idea of nature as compensation for the ills of the city has shifted to nature as an integral part of the city (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018). Tornaghi (2014) called it the 'green-turn' in the urban development debate which has produced a renewed interest in greening cities and urban green spaces since the phenomenon known as the 'urban heat island effect' (Burgstall et al. 2021) leads to significantly higher temperatures compared to

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[9] Since 1988, Winterthur's municipal building authority has implemented a practice that regulates the allocation of parking spaces in the area between buildings and the street. Front gardens, which are private green spaces facing the public and shaping the street's overall appearance, play a crucial role in creating green neighborhoods and are integral to Winterthur's identity as a Garden City. Due to their prominent visibility, the city places particular emphasis on meeting the 'satisfactory overall effect' requirement stated in Section 238 of the Planning and Building Act, prioritizing the public interest in the appearance of these front gardens over garden areas that face away from the street. According to the one-third rule, a maximum of one-third of the front garden's width can be used for traffic-related purposes, such as access roads and parking spaces. The remaining two-thirds are designated for individually customizable green and garden areas.

surrounding rural areas during summer. The sealed surfaces absorb solar radiation and heat up the surrounding area. To mitigate this effect, urban planning adapts outdoor space design to the changing climate, which includes planning and securing sufficient open spaces with green areas and shaded spots, as well as ensuring fresh air supply and circulation from the surrounding environment (Weber et al. 2018). The perceived functions and meanings of urban green space have evolved over time and they are rather multiple and contextual than fixed and urban green spaces have been increasingly recognized for their ecological, social, and economic importance (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018), which is also the case for Winterthur. When comparing the Bodmer Plan to the 'Winterthur 2040' visions outlined by Stadt Winterthur (2021), it becomes evident that Bodmer's visions of the encircled settlement areas by green spaces have endured. The inner landscape (see Figure 12) that encompasses parks, squares, green areas, streets, and river spaces remains and its importance is highlighted in the report as it serves urban quality of life but also ecological connectivity. With the renaturation of river spaces such as the Eulach and the Mattenbach, these sections should become even more livable according to the city planners. The urban area is encircled by the *Stadtrandpark*, a so-called city periphery park, characterized by the fringes of forests, open spaces, and agricultural land which connects the inner and outer landscape. It is envisioned to optimize this already multipurpose settlement edge for local recreation and nature conservation areas. The outer landscape becomes apparent when all the forests, recreational areas, and agricultural spaces in the vicinity are marked on the plan, which illustrates a connected landscape that extends beyond the city limits. This *Regiopark* (region park) is considered a valuable recreational area, a common asset for Winterthur and its neighboring communities and supports biodiversity with high ecological qualities. A close reading of the report illustrates the current discourse and understanding of nature as something that exists and can be integrated into urban landscapes, and in turn used by its residents as a recreational area, thus a similar perspective than in the 1930s. Furthermore, in my opinion, the term 'optimization' already carries connotations of maximizing efficiency within an economic framework, which is being extended to our approach towards nature in the urban.

Figure 12 Vision Winterthur 2040. Retrieved from Winterthur 2040. Räumliche
Entwicklungsperspektive (Stadt Winterthur 2021).

Another current project is to plant 1,000 fruit and nut trees within three years for the residents
to harvest, with 700 trees already planted as of May 2023. While trees are currently the primary
focus, Stadtgrün Winterthur intends to expand its efforts in the future by incorporating wild
hedges and wet sites to make the city more appealing to its residents, who increasingly prefer
'nature-oriented' garden designs. Additionally, these endeavors contribute to the fight against
global warming since the trees provide shade and facilitate water absorption, acting as sponges
in the city (de Roguin 2022). However, trees in the city center face challenges due to factors
like heavy foot traffic and winter salt, which cause stress and some trees had to be removed on
Stadthausstrasse due to the density stress, prompting Winterthur to explore alternative
approaches such as vertical and façade greenery and roof greening, with the latter being
mandatory for new buildings of 15 m2 or extensive remodeling. Nevertheless, there is
uncertainty regarding whether façade greening is merely a superficial solution that offers
aesthetic appeal but demands substantial water and maintenance, and in the worst scenario, fails
to survive harsh winters. Consequently, it becomes challenging to sustain and requires frequent

plant replacements, potentially rendering façade greening more of a luxury than a genuine problem-solving approach (Harting 2018). As Boris Flügge from Stadtgrün assured me, their focus is on sustainable and long-lasting approaches which includes the preservation of trees as much as possible.

Another imaginary to contribute to a sustainable development and the city's 2000-watt target is the project Smart City Winterthur, which has been launched in collaboration with the Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW. On their website, the Smart City Winterthur is defined as "an innovative, progressive and connected city that puts people and the environment at the center. It is characterized by a high quality of life and efficient use of resources. This is achieved by intelligently networking infrastructures with modern technologies and by involving relevant stakeholders. Social, economic, ecological and cultural requirements are taken into account" (Stadt Winterthur n.d.). Yet by closely examining projects such as the current idea of the Mattenbach stream restoration, it shows that the imaginary of designing spaces by implementing more nature to improve the quality of life remains, illustrates a strong romanticization of nature as a fix for urban problems as demonstrated by Angelo (2017).

In terms of housing, between 2005 and 2009 the Gartenstadt Zelgli was built on a former ice rink. The site was originally a pond called Eisweiher bordering the Mattenbach stream. PARK Architects designed the project as a contemporary interpretation of the historic worker's settlement development, by reimagining and emphasizing the idea of a Garden City. They initially focused on developing the open spaces to prioritize openness and spaciousness, and only later placed houses on remaining spaces. After the competition the landscape architects Rotzler Krebs Partner (now Krebs und Herde) joined in. An intensive collaboration began. With several projects, it continues to this day. The intention was for 'nature' to reclaim the plot, allowing plants to grow around the houses in various forms. Neighbors come together to participate in activities like communal haying, fostering opportunities for organization and social interaction. Only a community room inside is missing, but now very much desired. The design of green spaces has an impact on the social dynamics among residents, as nature which in this example produces a common space by the act of commoning. Lüscher and Herde believe that the integration of 'nature' as a guiding parameter in building and planning like they did in the Zelgli design could potentially be one of the futures for urban spaces. However, both acknowledge that the idea of nature itself is ultimately a social construct and is subject to changes and developments.

"Our image of nature is culturally shaped and constantly changing. During the design of the Garden City Zelgli, we envisioned an intensive interlocking of the open spaces with the with the houses. The plants should take over the area. Until the houses are no longer visible. Perhaps we were inspired by Franz Hohler's book Die Rückeroberung from 1982." (Markus Lüscher, PARK Architects 2023)

Figure 13
Zelgli (blue houses) behind a Pünten district.
Picture taken by Saskia Bryner, 2023.

Access to communal outside spaces and to a small garden are highly valued assets, all current and former Zelgli residents I spoke to agreed. Be part of a community and owning a small plot of land that you can shape according to your needs is hugely appreciated. But in times of urban densification and the housing and climate crises, the aspiration for a private garden becomes increasingly unrealizable, making urban commons and spaces for *commoning* more important than ever.

To conclude this chapter, I gave a comprehensive study of the historicity surrounding the Allmend Grüzefeld to its embeddedness in the social, economic, and political realm of Winterthur to better understand the place and its connection to the city, as well as other places as described in the literature review on Massey's (1994; 2005) understanding of place and space. During industrialization the provision of housing and gardens were used to control the working class and to prevent social resistance. The settlement structure with small single-family houses and private gardens was preserved by Bodmer and his Garden City interpretation, but the intended social change from a capitalist society to a system of self-management and communal ownership did not travel to Winterthur. Bodmer used the Garden City primarily as a planning tool rather than an anarchist approach to changing society even if he promoted social housing. Housing units in this style were built until the 1940s. The top-down approach of planning settlements with nature as a 'techné' (Diogo and Simões 2019) for social control have nowadays become widely appreciated neighborhoods, as each house offers access to a private garden. However, my observations suggest that these former workers' houses are mostly inhabited by the middle class nowadays. And although the settlements of the 1950s and 1960s differed significantly from the working-class settlements and no longer corresponded to Howard's ideal, as he was a well-known opponent of high-rise buildings, it was argued that through their density, the high-rise buildings allowed for more green spaces in between and thus preserved the Garden City character of Winterthur (Garcia and Westermann 2022). Nowadays, the neighborhood is remarkably green, especially due to the growth of the trees. Winterthur's history of urban nature imaginaries thus ranges from the workers' settlement to the implementation of Howard's vision to today's strategies for more sustainable urban development. Yet in the utopia of the 'ecopolis' (Koskiaho 1994), I argue that nature again serves as 'techné' to deal with the human-induced climate change (Van Der Linden et al. 2015).

As I have learned in conversations with residents in the Deutweg and Gutschick neighborhoods, the Mattenbach district lacks a sense of community, because a center, a meeting place for the two neighborhoods is missing. Yet, there might be a possibility to reconnect around the Mattenbach stream since opinion to restore the stream where it originally ran through the Allmend Grüzefeld is growing. This premise leads me to the next chapter where I assess past, current, and future imaginaries surrounding the Allmend Grüzefeld.

ALLMEND GRÜZEFELD:
THE LAST OF ITS KIND.

After having introduced the Mattenbach district and examined the historical, as well as current, imaginaries of urban nature in relation to urban planning and housing, I now turn to the Allmend Grüzefeld. Once traversed by the Mattenbach stream, a fragment of the former green meadow[10] remains as the last inner-city common in Winterthur. By focusing on this site, I discuss the shifting imaginaries of urban nature regarding leisure and recreational behavior in green space as the changing attitudes toward nature reshape the urban green spaces accordingly. Loughran (2020) illustrates how the distinct nexus of normative cultural meanings related to nature, power relations embedded in landscape aesthetics, and direct links to the economy through the structuring of land values make green space a powerful means of organizing urban space. Although parks and green spaces have not been the focus of attention in critical urban theory, Loughran (2020) argues that they should be, as they are important components of urban master plans such as the Garden City. They have also helped to configure and reconfigure the race and class geographies of cities (Taylor 2009 in Loughran 2020), and in times of urban redevelopment, such as after World War II, green spaces have been important components of new residential communities, such as the Gutschick and Grüzefeld housing development. In addition, green spaces are seen as a fundamental part of urban sustainable development, yet these approaches compete with the densification of urban settlements as means for sustainable urban growth. In Winterthur, a 20-hectare parcel of land was designated as a recreational zone in 1964 after the city administration proactively acquired land to establish a green corridor between industrial and residential areas as a buffer zone despite facing substantial development pressures. This decision was a strategic move derived from the Bodmer Plan. The transformation of one part of the land into an Allmend occurred in 1984 (see Figure 14), as extensive preparations were undertaken for the Federal Gymnastics Festival during a two-year period, which included notifying all farmers and making necessary adaptations to the area for the festival. After the event, residents demanded that a part of the land should be available and accessible to everyone.

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[10] In the 20th century the accentuated contrast between the 'gray city' and the 'green meadow' became known, with the latter gaining notoriety as a settlement area for new industrial plants and satellite towns.

Figure 14
View from S with the
Gutschick High-Rises
in the Back.
Picture taken by
Saskia Bryner, 2023.

Figure 15
View from E with the
Pond in the front and the
Gutschick High-Rises in
the Back.
Picture taken by Saskia
Bryner, 2023.

Presently, the Allmend Grüzefeld features a meticulously planned meadow landscape with gentle hills, a pond, and a network of curving paths. Approximately two-thirds of the land is dedicated to agriculture, while the remaining one-third functions as a common. The western boundaries of the area are demarcated by the *Pünten* (allotment gardens), behind which the Gutschick and Grüzefeld housing estates are situated. However, it is important to state that the term *Allmend* is somewhat imprecise as the agricultural land is not used according to the principles of an *Allmend* and the designated common area is not defined by exclusivity, but rather as a recreational space for the community, which aligns with the modern interpretation of the term as an open space. In the feudal system, the term *Allmend* referred to land, such as pasture, forest, and wasteland, set aside for collective economic use. The *Allmend* represents the third economic-legal zone alongside arable land and residential areas (Leonhard and Mattmüller 2001). The community established rules for the commons' usage to prevent overuse. For example, the grazing period for livestock was limited. Additionally, the *Allmend* was accessible solely for the resident farmers and their successors. Violations of such rules were punished by the community (Leonhard and Mattmüller 2001). Hardly any of the land that originally served as a common is nowadays used in the traditional sense. The transformation of the *Allmend* was driven by structural changes during industrialization as on the one hand, many farmers moved to the cities to work in the factories. On the other hand, land for agronomy was more and more privatized due to the dominant rational approach that individuals would take better care of something that belonged to them privately. The *Allmend* was perceived to foster a selfish overuse of the common land for the farmers' own ends. This belief aligns with Hardin's thesis of *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968). However, as mentioned in the literature review on commons, Ostrom et al. (1999) proved that people self-organized for years to manage commons, thus rebutting Hardin's argumentation. The modern interpretation of the term *Allmend* is often a synonym for open space or green space. According to Petrow (2012), the typology of open space is specifically urban as it was life in cities that first produced it, and each new phase of urbanization has left its mark on it by changing the shape and practice of its usage. Unlike public space, which is a physical-spatial category, urban open space is the 'outside' in the city, its unbuilt space. The amount of open space in a city, and the resources allocated to maintaining it, depend on factors such as economic pressures for land exploitation, the intended functions of open spaces, and the value society places on them (Petrow 2012). These ideas, needs, and demands toward green spaces lead me to argue that the Allmend Grüzefeld can be understood as a site interwoven with power dynamics and requires further investigation.

The lease agreements for the agricultural land within the Allmend Grüzefeld are set to expire in a two-year timeframe, which presents opportunities for potential changes in land utilization. Since the land is publicly owned, the Allmend Grüzefeld is protected against speculation and will remain a recreational site as its value for Winterthur and its residents is recognized by the city administration. Already, numerous dreams, plans, and imaginaries have been proposed for the future of the Allmend. This prompts an inquiry into the forthcoming trajectory of this common space and to assess the possible tensions regarding its future. I first present the ideas of turning the Allmend into a nature reserve before I discuss the utopia of creating a lake in Winterthur and the implications it entails, such as the risks of green gentrification. Last, I turn to a discussion on nature's rights within the legal system in Switzerland. This section is therefore a play with imaginaries for the Allmend's future.

Nature Conservation

The first imaginary of nature I look at revolves around the notion of its protection since the idea came about to designate the Allmend Grüzefeld as a nature reserve, which prompts an exploration of the significance of safeguarding the natural environment. Having in mind Markus Lüscher's statement of nature as a social construct and given the high expectations placed on environmental protection, it is important to evaluate the underlying normative assumptions in this discourse, especially since there are links to nationalist and far-right ideologies. The protection of the natural environment is often seen as a recent phenomenon tied to climate change and is primarily associated with left-leaning political forces and influenced by enlightenment ideals of universal responsibility. However, environmental protection can be dated back to the 19th century when the negative effects of industrialization and urbanization became apparent and the debate on the scarcity of wood and potential forest destruction emerged. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, there were instances of organic ethno-nationalist, fascist, and National Socialist concerns for the environment. These ideologies drew on interpretations of the relationship between land and people rooted in Romantic and nationalist thinking. Nationalism often incorporates views of nature and the environment, portraying them as uncorrupted by civilization and territorially specific to the homeland. The alignment between national and environmental discourse can lead to the rejection of 'invasive species' and is particularly prevalent in far-right ideologies, which perceive foreign species, races, and cultures as threats to native populations (Forchtner 2020). An example of this discourse is the transformation of the Calais 'Jungle' which after immigrated people were evicted and their homes demolished gave way to a restored natural landscape and a natural

habitat for rare animal species. The dunes, sand-cliffs, and moors are supposed to form a natural habitat for native plants and birds and the construction of a large-scale green belt project is currently underway. Once finished, there will be a hiking trail and an observatory to allow the public to experience views of the natural landscape. The site will further consist of natural barriers and anti-trespassing interventions to prevent unauthorized access for future migrant settlement. Landscape architecture thus possesses the power to challenge official narratives and create new truths. By shifting the focus from the physical intervention to recognizing the landscape's social and architectural development, both the intervention itself and the underlying imagination behind it can be interrogated and contested (Haendeler, Ioannou, and Athique 2019). Feminist geographer Katz (1998) adds that "[e]nvironmental restoration and preservation projects combine imperatives of absolution and accumulation" (54) as it turns on an intrinsic contradiction. It requires that a particular patch of nature is being cordoned off as an "island in space and time […] in the interests of a supposedly pristine nature" (54). According to Katz (1998), preservation is argued to be unecological, as it goes against the principles of natural history and the dynamic interplay of evolution, change, and challenges within both nature and culture. The problematic aspect lies in the contrasting relationship between preserved and non-preserved areas, as the act of preserving certain sites often legitimizes and obscures the continued or even intensified destructive use of everything outside the boundaries of these preserves. The division between 'wilderness' and 'non-wilderness' reinforces the imaginary that nature can be isolated, fixed, and protected separately from human culture, which, at a larger scale, often results in arbitrary partitioning of landscapes, making certain inhabited areas off-limits to future habitation. This approach not only displaces marginalized communities but also puts additional stress on the non-preserved environments. When biodiversity is confined to specific locations without considering the broader social, economic, cultural, and political context of resource utilization, it leads to compensatory exploitation elsewhere and has ultimately proven ineffective, even within the preserved site. History is disregarded in this process, and landscapes are mistakenly perceived as solely natural artifacts (Katz 1998). Even if I do not know exactly who is behind the idea of turning the Allmend Grüzefeld into a nature reserve, I find it important to show how nature can be instrumentalized and played on a political level and the question of what is worth protecting always includes an exclusion of what is not worth protecting.

Dreaming of a Lake

A second imaginary is the desire for a water source in Winterthur as the idea of creating a lake has resurfaced. By modifying the course of the Mattenbach stream to flow through the Allmend, the existing pond could potentially be expanded. This proposition goes back to the historical trajectory of the Mattenbach, which originally traversed it before being straightened and rerouted near Waldegg. By delving into the recurring dream of a lake, I aim to explore the ideas and necessities associated with incorporating a water source in Winterthur. Through the adoption of a UPE perspective, which considers the interconnectedness of nature and society as a dialectic relationship, where human-nature interactions are shaped by historical geographical materialisms and unequal power dynamics, I can explore the production of the urban landscape (Fernández Álvarez 2012).

The idea of a lake is not new. In February 1999, there was a popular initiative in Winterthur regarding the construction of a lake in Waldegg with the water inflow provided by the stream of the canalized Mattenbach. The initiative was spearheaded by the local artist Erwin Schatzmann, whom I met at his workplace and residence, Off Space Morgenland in Hegi, Winterthur, where he told me how he came up with the idea of a lake for Winterthur. He was once strolling in the Eschenberg Forest and upon his descent to Waldegg, he simply had a vision saw the lake clearly in front of him. Since there was widespread support for his idea, he founded an association and launched a municipal initiative. However, the initiative was rejected, with 74.7% of the votes opposing it (Fernández Álvarez 2012). Following the negative outcome, Schatzmann put the dream of a lake on hold for some time. In 2011, he presented seven potential locations for a lake in an exhibition titled *Der See – Teil 2*. This second exhibition is insofar interesting as Schatzmann dug in the archives to find former ponds that have been drained, mostly for agricultural and settlement land, and to imagine a different future for them. Schatzmann's exhibition is clearly a play with the dream of the lake, yet at the same time I suggest to consider the unbuilt Waldegg-Lake as an infrastructural manifestation of the 'nostalgic future' (Carse and Kneas 2019), characterized by its remembrance and occasional reemergence in dreams and conversations.

Figure 16 'Zum See' Collage by Erwin Schatzmann 1997.

Drawing inspiration from Arjun Appadurai's (2013) work on the future, infrastructures materialize future visions in concrete form as they communicate aspirations, anticipations, and imaginaries. Viewing the unbuilt lake as a nostalgic future acknowledges the yearning for the unrealized potential it once held. By engaging with the various ways in which the lake is remembered enables me to consider the multiple dimensions through which the past is encoded in the present. Having grown up in Winterthur, I have personally witnessed how the idea of diving into a lake is a collective memory shared among the inhabitants. The unbuilt lake represents an idealized vision of what could have been and embodies a sense of longing and anticipation for a future that remains unrealized. The dream of a lake is still lingering around in the minds of Winterthur's residents as it would provide a different experience than diving into a swimming pool and it would be an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors without the obligation to consume anything, a place to meet, and to connect with each other and with 'nature' – or in

other words with human and more-than-human actors. In Winterthur, accessibility to water bodies is rare and the success of the Eulachpark in Neuhegi, where the Eulach stream has been revitalized and made accessible, shows that people enjoy such green spaces for leisure and recreational purposes. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the lake would have been more like a park area with water access than to a real lake and I am not sure if it would have been an enhancement for all residents of Winterthur. I now delve the construction of an artificial lake within the broader social, political, and environmental context of the urban environment. Taking on a UPE perspective, I acknowledge that the decision to build a lake is a political process influenced by various stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to analyze power relations and interest shaping the decision-making process and who benefits or loses from the construction of a lake.

The lake would have been built for Winterthur as a recreational outlet that benefits the collective but possibly evicting the residents nearby due to potential gentrification effects and impacts on housing affordability, local business, and community dynamics in the area. Green gentrification has emerged as a concerning phenomenon in urban areas, where environmental improvements and sustainability initiatives contribute to the displacement and marginalization of low-income communities by rising property value (Quastel 2009). At first glance, green gentrification may appear positive as it promotes environmental sustainability and revitalization of urban spaces as green infrastructure can enhance the aesthetics of neighborhoods, attract investments and thereby improving the quality of life for some residents. However, one of its major downsides is the displacement of long-term, low-income residents due to property values rising, which make it difficult for low-income households to afford housing (Loughran 2020). In the case of the Gutschick neighborhood, the system of housing cooperatives can counter some of the negative impacts of green gentrification as they are not profit-oriented. Nevertheless, green gentrification can exacerbate existing social inequalities as affluent residents have greater access to resources and influence, enabling them to shape the direction and outcomes of green projects to suit their interests. This leads to the neglect or exclusion of marginalized communities, who often face barriers to participating in decision-making processes, which to some extend nowadays is counteracted by the *Mattenbach-Allianz*. At the time however, the association did not yet exist. In addition, green initiatives may be used as a marketing tool to attract investors, tourists, and affluent residents, rather than addressing the needs and aspirations of local communities, resulting in superficial, cosmetic changes without addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and social inequality. Nature, in this case, is becoming a tool for economic purposes as capitalism has established an economic view of nature as a source

of value (Katz 1998). Furthermore, Loughran (2020) notes that in the last several years, green gentrification has taken another complexion "as urban communities and political leaders reckon with the magnitude of climate change. Initially justified on civic or recreational grounds, new parks and other green spaces now have an additional justification: they will help cities save the planet" (2324), thereby rendering nature to a fix for environmental challenges.

During my conversations with residents of the Mattenbach neighborhood, another argument arose suggesting that they would no longer feel a sense of connection, possibly leading to a feeling of alienation with their neighborhood if the landscape were to undergo significant alterations and remodeling. They further feared an overrun neighborhood. If you go to the Eschenberg at the weekend, the cars of the visitors from the Wildlife Park Bruderholz are jamming the street and the forest is overcrowded. A lake (or park with water) would have had a similar attraction. If the imaginary of turning the Allmend Grüzefeld into a lake will become more prominent, an inclusive decision-making process and community participation would be key for the residents to feel more involved and to be part of the process. It is essential to ensure that their voices and interests are considered (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). Furthermore, the construction of a lake involves alterations to the existing ecosystem, water sources, and natural habitats. Evaluating the potential environmental impacts is crucial in understanding the broader implications of the project. UPE emphasizes the need to consider long-term sustainability (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006), such as assessing the project's impact on water resources, energy consumption, and overall environmental sustainability. I do not have any information regarding whether such analyses were made before the vote in 1999, however, should the idea of a lake in Winterthur become more concrete again, it is mandatory to carry out detailed analyses on how such a project would influence the ecosystem.

A last argument against the lake was that the current state was 'natural,' while the lake would be artificial. However, the Mattenbach stream had already been concreted and channeled, highlighting that nature is not inherently straight. Grill et al. (2019) have revealed the extent of human intervention in the water cycle and its impact on Earth's lifelines. Most rivers worldwide have been straightened, canalized, and dammed, drastically altering their former state. No more than 37% of the largest rivers remain relatively unobstructed, and only in remote regions such as the Arctic, Amazon, and Congo basins, some long rivers still flow largely unhindered. The authors underscore the importance of free-flowing rivers for both ecosystems and human well-being as disrupting the lifelines, which facilitate the exchange of species, nutrients, and sediments between upstream and downstream areas has adverse effects on water cycles and the

entire ecosystem. Healthy rivers not only sustain large fish stocks, providing food for millions of people, but also help mitigate the impact of rising water levels by preserving river deltas with sediment transport. However, the idyllic image of meandering rivers is also a romanticized idealization of nature. Walter and Merritts (2008) have shown that rivers in Europe were heavily modified centuries ago, with the construction of numerous mills and dams resulting in the emergence of larger rivers from smaller branches. The spirit of the late 18th and 19th centuries was marked by a prevailing belief in progress and the notion of technocracy, with a significant emphasis on controlling and manipulating nature. The act of conquering nature was seen as heroic and served as the foundation for the emergence of cultural landscapes. The overall aim was to enhance the people's quality of life by taming nature to protect villages and settlements from floods and to drain wetlands to build more infrastructure. The improvement also extended to health and hygiene conditions, which saw advancements through the drainage of swamp areas (Hook 2006). Thus, the regulation of rivers by humans is not a recent phenomenon, but its effects have become increasingly evident in recent times. This is a good example of how the shifting imaginary of nature, which was once artificially channelized, is now the status quo and thus 'natural' and any alteration would become 'unnatural,' which illustrates the lunacy of these terms. As a reminder from the discussion on Urban Nature in the epistemology chapter, shifting the perspective to recognize that the distinction between urban and natural spaces is less significant than understanding urban environments beyond the conventional urban/rural and nature/urban divisions, the categorization of what is artificial versus natural becomes less relevant.

In a postulate in 2019, Urs Glättli, co-president of the Green Liberal Party Winterthur, demanded a revitalization of the Mattenbach and to dam the stream near the Zeughaus for a natural swimming (Dworschak 2020), illustrating that there is no lack of creative ideas for what one could do with the Mattenbach. The city council rejected the idea, arguing that on the one hand the canton would hardly approve the project, as it would give higher priority to river restoration and species protection, since a natural swimming pool would get in the way of nature conservation interests. On the other hand, local residents would feel inconvenienced by traffic, noise and waste (Dworschak 2020). Nowadays, the emphasis has shifted, and river restoration has gained significant attention in recent years to address the environmental and social challenges. Katz (1998) notes that the politics of ecological restoration is built upon the recognition that landscaping is a social activity. It offers an alternative to preservation since rather than saving what is left, it centers on repairing ruptures in the landscape since the intention is to reproduce natural systems. Therefore, according to Katz (1998), it offers more

promising environmental politics than preservation, which I have addressed above. From a UPE perspective, river restoration is viewed not only as an ecological endeavor but also as a deeply political process that reflects and shapes power relations, social inequalities, and urban development dynamics (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). The decision-making processes surrounding river restoration projects are shaped by political and economic interests, often influenced by developers and policymakers. This can lead to the marginalization of communities, as their voices and needs may be overheard or ignored. Moreover, when urban rivers are restored and beautified, property values tend to increase, leading to the green gentrification process as described above. Lastly, rivers should not be seen as a standalone project but as part of a holistic approach to urban planning and management as they are part of larger ecosystems, interconnected with various socio-economic, cultural, and ecological processes. Yet, restoration also has its limits, as Katz (1998) emphasizes, as "[i]t operates on a smaller scale than that in which many environmental problems are generated; [and] it can still be driven by deeply romantic notions of nature" (56-57). Furthermore, restoration does tend to privilege certain landscapes and land use practices. Restoration ecologists appeal to nature to answer to which period the political ecology is being restored, which inevitably advocates, valorizes, and fixes a specific historical landscape as idealized and ahistorical. In addition, it is often locally focused and fails to jump scale, which limits the viability of restoration as an environmental politics at the transnational scale. In addition, river restoration tends to naturalize the produced and produce the natural at the same time. Therefore, "the production of wholly new political ecologies is inevitable" (Katz 1998, 57). Brierley (2020) explores a holistic approach to river ecosystems, going beyond traditional restoration and management strategies by emphasizing the importance of understanding rivers as complex systems with their own inherent value and voices. Brierley (2020) argues that conventional approaches to river management often prioritize human needs and engineering solutions, overlooking the intrinsic value and ecological integrity of rivers. Instead, he advocates for a shift in mindset towards a more inclusive and respectful approach that acknowledges rivers as living entities with their own voice and agency. Thus, giving the Mattenbach an agency might be a first step toward a different relationship with the stream so heavily modified over the years, which leads me to a discussion about the shifting legal system concerning rights for more-than-human actors.
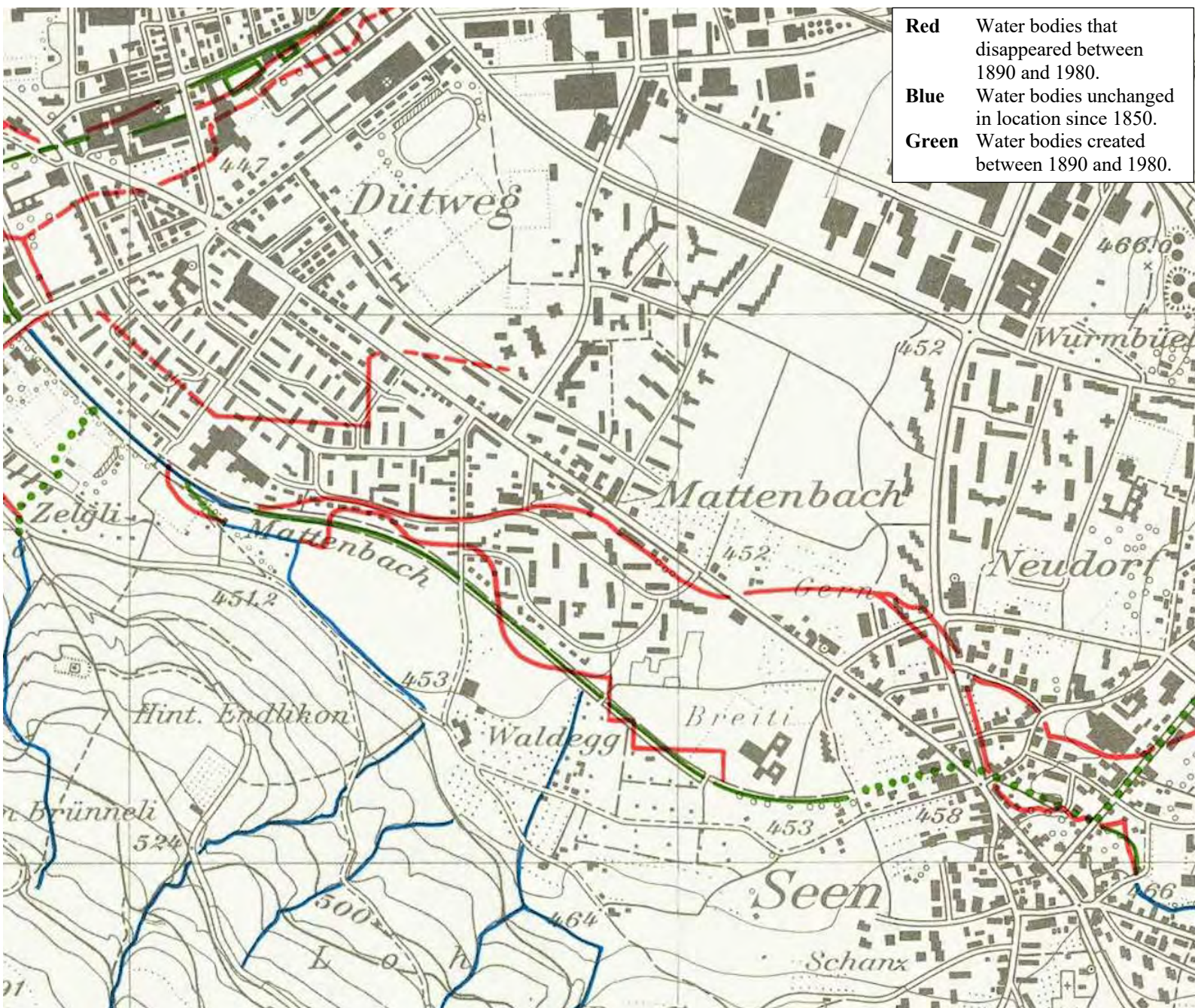
Figure 17 Historical Map of Water Bodies in the Mattenbach district. Retrieved from GIS-ZH and edited by Saskia Bryner, 2023.

"Across much of the planet, rivers have been marginalized from the lives of many people—they have been 'othered'. Many urban streams have been 'buried alive' in underground pipes. Elsewhere, channelized and canalized are bereft of life, acting as 'zombie' forms, behaving like the living dead as clean water flows through a sterile but tidy channel." (Brierley 2020, 9)

Nature's Rights

The discussion of legal personhood has been predominantly shaped by an anthropocentric perspective. For instance, most of the contemporary approaches concerning the legal systems for water management are designed to regulate water resources, safeguard river health, and preserve the economic benefits that water provides for human societies. Thus, the deconstruction of the Western definition of nature must therefore go beyond expanding perspectives and actors and demand for nature's political voice within a legally codified framework. This emerging eco-centric approach within courts and legislative bodies acknowledges that rivers and other natural entities possess an inherent right to protection and preservation (O'Donnell and Macpherson 2019). Stone (2010) proposed a paradigm shift to recognize the rights of nature, allowing nature itself to seek legal redress on its own behalf. He argues that the lack of broader acceptance for legal personhood for more-than-human entities is rooted in a cultural and legal belief in human and more-than-human binary. The determination of who is considered a legal person is ultimately shaped by the values and influence of society and its powerful entities. Therefore, there is no inherent reason why the legal fiction of personhood cannot be extended to animals and the environment since many legal systems recognize corporations as legal persons. According to Stone (2010), the denial of legal personhood for more-than-humans indicates the contemporary western societies' profit-driven perspective toward nature. Consequently, nature is often seen as mere property to be exploited and controlled, leading to the continued perception of animals, rivers, and trees as resources solely for human use (Katz 1998; Hutchison 2014).

Therefore, the notion of granting legal rights to more-than-human entities is not a novel concept, as Stone published the first edition in 1972, but its application to nature has just recently gained momentum. In 2008, Ecuador took a groundbreaking step by including legal rights for nature in its constitution which acknowledges the rights of nature and empowers all individuals, communities, peoples, and nations to enforce these rights. Similarly, in 2010, Bolivia passed the *Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra* (the Law of Mother Earth), which establishes comprehensive legal rights for nature (O'Donnell and Talbot-Jones 2018). In 2017, the New Zealand Parliament recognized the Whanganui River as a legal person possessing "all the rights, powers, duties and liabilities of a legal person" (O'Donnell and Macpherson 2019, 35). India and Colombia have followed a similar path, although the Indian case for the Ganges and Yamuna River has faced challenges through appeals. The Victorian Environmental Water Holder in Australia and the *Juntas de Vigilancia* (Water Monitoring Boards) in Chile are two other approaches which include legal personhood in the governance framework yet without an

explicit legal personality for the river itself. The recognition of legal personality for rivers represents a step towards an eco-centric framework. However, it is still embedded within anthropocentric tools such as legal rights, leading to potential tensions between the two perspectives (O'Donnell and Macpherson 2019) and challenges are to be found in their enforceability. Enforcing legal rights for more-than-human actors involves practical factors, such as the designation of an individual or organization to act as an advocate for the more-than-human entity and adequate capacity in terms of time, financial resources, and expertise is needed to effectively defend its rights in a court. Lastly, representatives and funding sources for more-than-human may require some level of independence from state and national governments to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure the ability to act, especially when political controversies arise. Historically, these factors have been lacking in cases where legal rights have been granted to nature, making it challenging to enforce such rights. For instance, in the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia, few successful instances of upholding these rights have been seen, and even when legal decisions have recognized the rights, local actors responsible for enforcement have often lacked the necessary capacity to translate those decisions into tangible outcomes on the ground (O'Donnell and Talbot-Jones 2018). As a result, the enforcement of legal rights for nature has been hindered, highlighting the need to address these practical considerations to effectively protect and uphold the rights of the environment (O'Donnell and Talbot-Jones 2018). Therefore, in New Zealand, the Te Awa Tupua Act introduces a guardian, known as *Te Pou Tupua*, to embody the Whanganui River and act on its behalf, recognizing the value of indigenous communities' connections to the river. It symbolizes a crucial step forward in promoting collaboration and understanding between different stakeholders in the governance of natural resources like rivers (O'Donnell and Macpherson 2019). From a legal point of view, this concept shares similarities with the idea of corporate personality, where a corporation's legal personhood arises from the individuals involved in it. Corporations remain the only other non-human entities recognized as legal persons, endowed with their own rights and liabilities. Despite being artificial entities, they possess the same legal capacity and powers as human beings. The river, as a legal person, can own property, but it cannot be fully own itself. Just like a corporation represents the financial interests of its shareholders, the guardians now can hold property on behalf of the river. However, portions of the river that were privately owned will remain under private ownership. This dual status of the river as both a person and property draws parallels between the personhood of corporations and the river. Understanding this connection helps clarify how the river's legal personhood fits into the existing legal framework. The extension of legal personhood to a natural object like the river means that its interests may

sometimes clash with human rights and interests. The act stipulates that the river's legal personhood will not affect private property owners' interests in the riverbed or the public's access rights. Thus the river's newfound legal personhood dos not supersede pre-existing property interests in the river (Hutchison 2014). This raises questions about how the Te Awa Tupua model can be considered an 'indivisible and living whole from the mountains to the sea' (Ministry of Justice New Zealand 2017), while simultaneously being divided into different proprietary regimes for the riverbed and water (O'Donnell and Macpherson 2019). A significant concern arises from the failure to recognize the river's right to its own water, impacting the output legitimacy of the arrangement which relies on demonstrating that the new management approach can achieve the desired outcomes. The strength of the Te Awa Tupua model lies in its ability to bring diverse interests concerning the river together, fostering policy discussions that view the river as a unified interconnected entity. However, its success depends on all parties engaging in good faith and seeking consensus-based solutions to future challenges. Yet, reaching an agreement may not always be feasible, and in such cases, the river's guardians are legally obligated to act in its best interests (O'Donnell and Macpherson 2019). Ensuring legitimacy and success for these new arrangements requires ongoing commitment from policymakers and water resource managers to manage rivers sustainably within existing regulatory frameworks.

In Switzerland, Lisa Mazzone from the Green Group instructed the Federal Council in a postulate in 2017 to submit a report on the question of whether it might be possible to endow Swiss glaciers with legal personality and to establish legal channels that would allow the violation of these legal entities' rights to be enforced in court. Mazzone argued that glaciers are part of the Swiss identity and have a very special natural heritage value. According to scientists, half of the glaciers counted in 2000 will have disappeared by 2050. Their disappearance entails dangers for the population living in their vicinity as the accelerated melting of glaciers increases the volume of eroded debris in alpine watercourses, which can lead to debris flows. In the place of melted glaciers, large lakes will form in the coming decades, which pose the risk of flooding and landslides. Mazzone argued that a legal personality for Swiss glaciers would strengthen their protection (Das Parlament n.d.). The Federal Council replied that, from a legal point of view, glaciers in Switzerland are considered 'property without ownership' (Art. 664 CC in *Schweizerisches Zivilgesetzbuch* 1912) and are subject to cantonal law (Art. 664 para. 3 CC in *Schweizerisches Zivilgesetzbuch* 1912). According to the Swiss legal system, existence alone does not establish legal personality which is inseparably linked to the natural person as an individual and to exercising their civil rights. Further, the Federal Council argued that legal

persons always have an inherent purpose, which is the sole reason for their personification, and that a glacier or other more-than-human actors have no such inherent purpose. Therefore, it would be contrary to the understanding of Swiss law to give them a legal personality (Das Parlament n.d.). This shows how the Federal Council still views nature in an anthropocentric perspective unable to move beyond the cultural and legal belief in the humans and more-than-humans dichotomy.

To conclude the analysis on the imaginaries for the Allmend Grüzefeld's future, I have attempted to highlight the areas of tension encompassing the various possibilities for its future which point out the diverse perspectives and conceptions regarding the utilization of nature in urban spaces[11]. Without dreams, there would be no thinking about a different life, whether on an individual nor on a societal level. The unbuilt lake holds the power of thinking visionary, exploring boundaries, and creating possibilities to imagine a world beyond our reality. However, after critically examining the different dimensions of power dynamics, environmental impacts, socio-economic considerations, governance, and participation as well as sustainability and long-term planning, maybe it is good that it remains a utopia for now because I am unsure whether the creation of the lake would have been approached in a way that it promotes social justice, environmental sustainability, or equitable access to the resource. Moreover, the last section showed that in Switzerland nature is not yet regarded as an equal in terms of legal personhood. Perhaps Winterthur and its residents must focus more on what there already is, but without stopping to dream. For instance, Winterthur does not have a lake, but it does have many gardens. Preserving the agricultural land and the allotments is another suggestion for the future of the Allmend as they are both been highly valued by the residents and the city administration. The arguments are that it ensures the preservation of an unbuilt zone and plays a role in educating people about food production. This perspective has been criticized by Angelo (2017) as it reinforces the romantic view on nature. Urban agriculture, she argues is being used to reverse social and environmental alienation in capitalist societies by helping to re-establish a conscious relationship between humans and their environment. Intrigued by this perspective, I dug into the past and current use of the *Pünten* to assess the current usage of the Allmend Grüzefeld in the next chapter: urban gardening.

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[11] There exist also more imaginaries, such as turning the Allmend Grüzefeld into a soccer field, which I did not delve into due to time and space constraints in my thesis.

ALLMEND GRÜZEFELD:
DIGGIN' THE PÜNTEN

In Winterthur, the history of allotment gardens, which are commonly referred to as *Pünten*, can be traced back to 1494. The term is derived from *Bijinti*, signifying privately used agricultural land which is separated from the *Allmend* (Kirchheim 2000). The establishment of *Pünten* was viewed as a municipal responsibility and vacant parcels were published. By impartial drawing of lots, they were given to poorer individuals for life (Kirchheim 2000). As I have noted previously, the rapid growth of European cities in the early 20th century led to the perception of cities as dangers to health and morality for its citizens. One solution to tackle these 'social problems' was to bring social transformation through gardening. The prevailing belief was that engaging with horticulture would contribute to public health and the primary objective was to foster better and happier individuals. Or, in other words, workers were expected to become more productive, to be less interested in alcohol consumption and to be less susceptible to the influence of the 'dangerous' socialist ideas, which is heavily embedded in a paternalistic perspective. A prevalent saying at the time was that rural laborers were inseparable from their land and the presence of gardens would provide compensation for the long hours spent in factories. Gardening further served as a self-help tool for the impoverished and marginalized populations (Kirchheim 2000). Consequently, the company owners were able to claim themselves as fair and good superiors as they devised a 'meaningful' recreational activity for their workers. In 1925, every third family in Winterthur had access to a parcel, which was more than in any other Swiss city (Keller 1975). Therefore, from a historical perspective, Winterthur and its *Pünten* share an entanglement dating long before the invention of *Schrebergärten*[12]. The *Pünten* fulfilled mainly three functions: regeneration, compensation, and socio-communication. However, their multi-functionality shrank in times of crisis and war in the 20th century to their solely economic function as food provision (Gallati and Schiller 2011).

During the two World Wars, the cultivation of vegetables gained existential importance as food imports were limited. Thus, throughout Switzerland, green strips of land, such as the city park of Winterthur were turned into agricultural land. This was called *Anbauschlacht* (Tanner 2021), where as much food as possible had to be wrested from the soil. Seeds were given away for free and lectures for the citizens were held regarding cultivation, pest control, and fertilization

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[12] In 1864, the first allotment gardens, named after Moritz Schreber, who is considered the spiritual father, were realized in Leipzig. Schreber promoted the idea of physical exercise and the value of family life. Ernst Hausschild took up these values and founded a pedagogical association and named it *Schreberverein*. The association built gardens on a meadow and when the cultivated greenery were separated by fences and garden rules were issued, the name *Schrebergärten* was given to the parcels (Kirchheim 2000).

(Kirchheim 2000). In the post-war years, the *Pünten* remained in demand and the city of Winterthur provided more land for the allotment gardens. However, they lost their economic necessity due to a generally improved economic situation. The above-mentioned multi-functionality of the allotment gardens was reestablished in the middle of the 1960s. Evidence is provided by the increasing synonymous use of the terms such as leisure garden, family garden, and allotment garden, as Gallati and Schiller (2011) have found in textual sources. The land for allotment gardens was noticeably reduced due to a strong promotion of housing construction because of rapid population and economic development in the 1950s and 1960s. In a report from 1980, it is written that in the phase of planning and approval of new buildings, 'unfortunately' many things that belong to the well-being of a family were forgotten, including not only playgrounds but also nearby family gardens (Bauverwaltung Winterthur 1980), which again embodies a paternalistic undertone. For the city of Winterthur, the *Pünten* were and remain a loss-making affair, but because they have become a characteristic and valuable institution for the city, the *Pünten* are being protected and preserved. Allotment gardens were repeatedly relocated or abandoned when necessary and in 1983, the *Püntenzüglete* (relocation of allotment gardens) in Oberwinterthur attracted attention as the small houses were transported to the new location by helicopter (Kirchheim 2000).

The provision of green spaces in urban spaces is widely recognized as a public benefit, however, the ongoing reorganization of urban areas, which involves densification of settlements while attempting to preserve and incorporate green spaces in the urban landscape puts pressure on them. Allotment gardens in particular have increasingly been framed as private spaces that cater to the needs and interests of a small portion of the population, rather than contributing to the common welfare. Consequently, their legitimacy in highly densified urban areas is progressively called into question (Gallati and Schiller 2011). This portrayal devalues urban gardens in my opinion and neglects their importance to urban space, as my observations in Winterthur demonstrate. Since the early 20th century, allotment gardens have been subjected to top-down methods of organizing land and nature, as well as accommodating low-income communities through political initiatives that aim to address both environmental and social objectives. Nowadays, gardens offer a retreat or an escape from the constraints of everyday city life as they are viewed as a sanctuary where individuals can experience tranquility and a sense of harmony with 'nature'. However, this understanding creates a specific imaginary of what nature is and what it is not, reinforcing the dichotomy between nature and urban, as well as its romanticization that I highlighted in the literature review. To reveal how individuals perceive and interact with local ecosystems, parks, and gardens, as they hold valuable information about

socioecological dynamics, includes the exploration of historical ideas, political discussions, and social and environmental policies (Quastel 2009). By looking at allotment gardens, a community garden, and a garden intended as an integration project, I dug in the changing nature of urban gardening as they embody symbolic meanings and cultural values since in a garden 'nature' is controlled, shaped, and cultivated according to human intentions. Allotment gardens, therefore, possess a unique spatial character and can, in this sense, be seen as microcosms that express larger social, political, or ideological systems linked to questions of governance. One question regarding governance is how cities are shaped and influenced and, borrowing from McCann (2017), this occurs "through the concerted actions of the state, other public and private institutions, social movements, civil society and the practices of everyday life" (313). The everyday use and appropriation of space creates opportunities for a politics of change to emerge (Hilbrandt 2019) and the socio-political aspect of urban gardening has gained recognition as it emphasizes a broader understanding of politics encompassing the micro-level dynamics of everyday life. The increasing transfer of duties from governments to urban communities has put the responsibility of creating livable environments on its residents, which highlights the need for a deeper understanding of everyday life. In their pursuit of socio-environmental objectives, I argue that urban gardeners can draw attention to the often overlooked and hidden aspects of urban governance, planning, and management and by shaping the physical arrangement in everyday urban spaces, they have the capacity to question the unequal distribution and functioning of social structures. In what follows, I explore the aspects of ownership, accessibility, place-making, micro-governance, as well as *commoning* within urban gardening. But first, let me introduce the three different types of gardens I focus on in Winterthur and the people with whom I spoke.

Figure 18 Community Garden (above) and HEKS Garden (below). Pictures taken by Saskia Bryner, 2023.

I first met with Walter, the treasurer of the Talgut district, which is one of the six districts that the *Püntenpächterverein* PPV oversees in Winterthur. The PPPVW was founded during WWI, and in 1925, the different family garden associations in Switzerland were organized into an umbrella organization, *Schweizer Familiengärtner-Verband* (Bauverwaltung Winterthur 1980). Walter had his own garden for 17 years, however, two years ago, he had to give it up due to his age. The effort became too much, and he had physical difficulties in maintaining the plot. Nevertheless, he is still a very active member of the association. The community garden association was established in 2015, initiated by a civil society group. The founding members approached the city of Winterthur requesting land for their community garden, which the city department responsible for real estate provided them on the Allmend Grüzefeld. In addition, the city of Winterthur created certain guidelines, including the requirement to remain open to new members and to organize at least one public event each year. Just as important as the social idea is the ecological one and with organic cultivation, bee-friendly rare varieties, and permaculture, the community gardeners want to inspire the idea of sustainable gardening. The association currently has seven members, all of whom I met while gardening together. Before the collective gardening, I met Marta, the board president of the association, for a conversation. Marta has been a member since 2016. The HEKS Garden is located next to the community garden and has served as a dedicated space for individuals who immigrated or have a refugee background since 2016. In total, there are 20 plots available to cultivate, however, the demand exceeds the supply which results in a waiting list. I talked with Patricia a trained naturopath, who is responsible for the functioning of the HEKS Garden in Winterthur and a member of the *Mattenbach-Allianz*.

The Question of Ownership

Delving into land ownership is crucial as it determines the distribution of power and control over urban spaces, which in turn affects residents' access to urban green areas and their ability to benefit from them. In Winterthur, the land where the *Pünten*, the community garden, and the HEKS Garden are situated is mostly owned by the city and the management of the land is carried out either directly by the city of Winterthur or the associations *Püntenpächterverein* (PPVW), *Union*, or the *Pünten in Vogelsang*. Therefore, the responsibilities and leasing arrangements for each parcel of land are clearly defined, with the PPVW managing 1942 parcels, followed by the city of Winterthur with 664 parcels. The community garden, as well as the HEKS garden, are leasing a *Pünt* within a district managed by the city of Winterthur, as mentioned above. Hansjörg Felix and Philipp Onori, who work for the city's real estate

department and who are responsible for managing the land, validate the success of both the community garden and the HEKS Garden. Even though the PPVW, the community garden, and the HEKS garden are all private associations, they are tightly linked with the city in terms of land use and receiving support such as material or expertise, funding, and training opportunities. I had initially anticipated a more prominent conflict concerning land use because, at the beginning of 2022, a negative incident occurred in Oberwinterthur, where the area Talacker was terminated by the Swiss Federal Railways SBB to build the new crossing Grüze. The SBB provided late notice and inadequate communication to the tenants, which resulted in the need to clear out the *Pünten* within a month. Forty allotment gardens were lost and could not be replaced (von Allmen 2023). Despite the noticeable decline in available areas for allotment gardens, their importance in Winterthur is widely acknowledged due to their contribution to the overall image of the city (Stadt Winterthur 2021), as it was consistently emphasized during my conversations with various stakeholders working for the city of Winterthur. However, the concept of densifying urban areas, based on compact city planning principles, aims to optimize land usage and urban allotment gardens are seen as potential resources for housing, public infrastructure, and commercial and industrial areas. Consequently, gardens in the inner-city are frequently shut down or relocated to the outskirts and converted if it is used for public interest development projects aligned with sustainable urban growth (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018). In Winterthur, the land where the *Pünten* are situated are mostly designated as recreational zones and therefore non-building land which minimizes the risk of eviction. However, by leasing the land from the city, a potential vulnerability between the city and the associations is established. In the event of a paradigm shift within the city government, the land could be rezoned, which could result in the eviction of the allotment gardens. Thus, governments play a significant role in regulating land ownership through zoning laws, planning regulations, and property taxation, which either reinforce existing power dynamics or are utilized as tools to promote more equitable and sustainable urban development.

The Question of Accessibility

Private land can be informally used as public land whereas public land may be more heavily utilized by others, leading to sociocultural power dynamics, which become visible in the more prominent conflict of accessibility as some residents would prefer park areas rather than allotment gardens (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018). As a result, urban allotment gardens undergo transformations. The Winterthur 2040 vision (Stadt Winterthur 2021) aims to enhance accessibility and to open the allotment areas by constructing public pathways and eliminating

some of the fences. However, the *Püntiker* (allotment gardeners) I talked to were not supportive of these ideas. They fear increased foot traffic and potential theft of their vegetables. For the *Püntiker*, the parcels serve as a refuge from their small apartments and provide them with a piece of land – the parcels can be considered as a space extension for people who cannot acquire a garden. Therefore, the subjective value of the gardens contrast with the objective of redesigning and opening up these areas, which poses challenges for the allotment garden communities. I concur with Thomas, Oehler, and Huber (2017) in their argument that a complete rejection of new development ideas could jeopardize the long-term existence of these gardens, as it may fuel opposition. How then can they be redesigned while preserving their quality as a refuge?

As *Pünten* are currently undergoing a revival, it is crucial to assess who has the right to garden in order to decide how to redesign these spaces. The application process for obtaining a *Pünt* is open for all and involves registering via an online application form, which places them on a waiting list. When a *Pünt* becomes available, individuals are contacted in sequential order from the top of the list. The parcels differ in size, yet the prevailing trend leans toward smaller gardens, as they require less maintenance. The land is available for lease at an economical cost, and in theory, everyone possesses the right to engage in gardening. Nevertheless, financial resources are still required for the practice of gardening. A *Pünt* at the PPVW costs CHF 0.90 per square meter. In addition, there is a rental fee for the small houses which vary based on their size and age. The oldest houses in the Talgut district are available for the modest sum of CHF 15 per month. Some districts have increased the deposit fees, which the president of the Neuwiesen district Wolf considers hardly socially acceptable, since gardening must remain a hobby open to everyone (Hirsekorn 2015). Therefore, it is crucial for new development ideas to consider the financial constraints and needs of current tenants, as the *Pünten* are offering affordable spaces accessible to those with lower incomes. The community garden is also open for everybody to participate, even without any knowledge about gardening, as the idea is a continuous learning process through hands-on experience and mutual exchange, as well as participating in workshops together. To become a member of the association, all one needs to do is pay an annual fee. The HEKS Garden operates on the principle that everyone is welcome to participate and can withdraw if they are unable to attend. The weekly meetings organized by Patricia are exclusively for women, providing them with a dedicated space for gathering. This arrangement aims to address the tendency for men to dominate public spaces, while women often assume caregiving responsibilities. Undocumented individuals are also encouraged to join, with no requirement for residency status verification.

My findings suggest that thanks to the different possibilities of gardening available, one can garden if they have enough time and financial means to rent a parcel or to participate in a community garden and enough patience to wait, since during the pandemic a strong increase in interest was noticeable. The PPVW waiting list has grown consistently since pre-pandemic, from around 30 people to around 60 resulting in a two-year waiting period. For the past 12 years, the plots have been fully leased in the Talgut district. The regulation for the PPVW states that only people who live in the city of Winterthur can lease a parcel. Those from outside the city are rejected, yet if people move, they are allowed to keep their *Pünt*. The high number of people waiting for significant periods of time on waiting lists to obtain a parcel suggests a greater need for this amenity. The pandemic also led to an initial surge in membership at the community garden yet, the interest has since decreased, resulting in a stagnant rather than growing number of members. Most individuals join the association through targeted searches for community gardens indicating that they are looking especially for the communal aspect of gardening. However, many do not remain members for an extended period due to the significant time and commitment required to be a part of the association. All the decisions are being taken together and by employing collective decision-making processes and shared responsibilities, I witnessed how the Community Garden functions as space for democratic practices to unfold, if one is willing to put time and energy into it. It does in fact take an enormous amount of time, as I noticed while drinking coffee with members of the community garden. They talked about how often they want to hold a meeting and on which weekdays and how to facilitate the communication among the members. Additionally, the decision of where to put the tree that I was allowed to plant was discussed by all the members and several options were considered, resulting in a ping-pong of suggestions. Yet, overall, the advantages of gardening together outweigh the disadvantages according to the members of the community garden with whom I spoke.

Allotment gardeners can be viewed as informal managers, and drawing on their knowledge of urban nature and their deep connection to specific places (Haase and Gaeva 2023), a distinction between using and appropriating space can be made. Conscious use and design of space and incorporating one's own ideas and needs differentiate the appropriation of space from mere use. While using space is grounded in practical utilization, appropriating space involves a reinterpretation of spatial structures and contents, which leads me to a discussion of how gardening can be understood as a form of place-making.

The Question of Place-Making

The allotment gardens are generally referred to as a melting pot on a small scale as there is a mix of nationalities, generations, and religious beliefs. *Our Garden of Eden*, a 2010 documentary directed by Mano Khalil, addresses this very issue, and reflects the changes in society as allotment gardens, once the stronghold of the Swiss bourgeoisie, have become a mosaic of our diverse society. I was also repeatedly made aware by my conversation partners that the compositions of gardeners have changed. In the past, allotment gardens were mainly used individuals from a lower socio-economic background. However, more recently, there has been an increase in the number those from a higher socio-economic status engaging in urban gardening. Furthermore, most new applicants are between 25 and 30 years old.

The HEKS Garden offers immigrated people an opportunity to cultivate their own fruits and vegetables, maintaining a connection to their homeland as individuals can bring their knowledge from their home countries, including insights about plants and other related aspects. The claim to shape one's own environment can start with a simple vegetable patch. Each individual is allocated a separate plot and additionally, there are two communal beds specifically designated for growing berries and medicinal herbs. Collaboratively, the gardeners produce tea and herbal salts, which are distributed to all members of the community. The practice of sharing and exchanging harvested produce among the gardeners is a common occurrence. The involvement of individuals are crucial in establishing a strong sense of community and as part of their community-building efforts, small celebrations are organized three times a year, marking the beginning, middle, and end of the gardening season. During these events, attendees contribute food to share, and the gatherings are open to friends and family members, as well as former participants, thereby promoting social exchanges and continuity. During the inactive winter period, monthly meetings are arranged, which may involve cultural visits to museums or recreational outings like swimming. The garden area remains accessible at all times. One of the strengths of gardening is that it does not require specific skills, which provides low-threshold access. Patricia emphasizes that there exists a profound sense of appreciation for the provided garden space, which grants individuals the freedom and autonomy to engage in activities according to their preferences, even if it involves cultivating a simple bed of Afghan leeks. The emphasis in this setting lies not on achieving specific outcomes, but rather on the sense of belonging and being present within the group.

I argue that the occupation and redefinition of spaces, as well as the organized efforts to protect green areas, transcend the traditional understanding of open spaces as solely designated for 'use' according to planning and administrative frameworks. Instead, it involves a material and

symbolic appropriation of these spaces. Through the act of appropriating space, a group asserts dominance over a space and imparts their own symbolic meanings, resulting in what Bourdieu (2018) refers to as 'spatial profits.' The inscription of social relationships and dynamics within the physical environment is further fostered by *commoning* as it promotes the development of both individual and collective identities, shaping a social consciousness and a progressive system of values rooted in shared experiences among individuals (Feinberg, Ghorbani, and Herder 2021). Marta's fondest memories are the conversations during communal gardening or when the group completes a project, such as building a pergola or a greenhouse for tomatoes. Even though I only spent one morning gardening with other members, I could feel how good it made me feel to first plant an apple tree and have a chat around the fireplace with them afterwards. Marta's motivation for joining the community garden was not the longing for rural life, but rather a yearning for a sense of community, for creating encounters rather than tending to their allotment plots in isolation. By actively seeking out individuals who shared her passion for organic farming, Marta has found a sense of belonging and integration within the city.

The Question of Micro-Governance

Let me enter an allotment garden district to set the tone for what comes next. The Talgut district is enclosed by a fence, and as one approaches it, an entrance gate serves as a boundary between the outside and the inside and signifies the transition into a new territory. Despite initially feeling unsure about entry, I soon realized that the gate is open. Upon stepping inside, I entered a miniature world. The plots, huts, and even the trees are on a smaller scale, and a grid of paths connects the plots. While strolling along the district, I observed the remarkable diversity of the huts. Even though the huts' parameters are heavily regulated, the gardeners find thresholds to adapt them to their needs. As the laws of the state regulate everyday life, the regulations of the PPVW regulate the miniature world.

There are numerous rules and regulations governing the use of allotments, and every aspect is meticulously regulated. For instance, a tomato house must adhere to size limitations, not exceeding 10 square meters in area and 2.2 meters in height and even for seemingly minor additions like a pergola, obtaining a permit is required (PPV 2021). The aim is to maintain order and prevent uncontrolled growth and to avoid the creation of monocultures or excessive privacy due to overly tall fences, as well as the potential shading caused by fruit trees (Hirsekorn 2015). Vegetable cultivation predominates, while flowers and fruits are less prevalent. The rule that stood out the most for me is the requirement for well-maintained plots, as failure of which could lead to lease termination. One third of the land can remain unproductive, yet two-thirds must

be productive in the sense of cultivated land. However, the Talgut district maintains a relatively orderly state due to a proper implementation of the rules and regular control. Only three to four parcels which Walter showed me pose concerns.

Hilbrandt (2019) explores the mechanisms through which gardeners maneuvered the presence of the state to enforce informal practices of dwelling in the allotment gardens. Long-term dwelling in allotment huts is illegal by German law. However, living in these sites is part of, and embedded in mundane practices that exceed the law. These practices are not intentionally used to shape structures of power by the residents, but they affect how order takes shape. In the Talgut district, short-term dwelling occurred from time to time, yet, as soon as people noticed it, it was stopped.

Lastly, I would like to add how the rules of the PPVW shape the understanding of nature. In the PPV regulations (2021), it is stated that the biological crop production is to be aimed at and just recently, an education officer has been appointed to organize training and events on topics for the PPV such as composting, sustainability, and biodiversity. However, the *Püntiker* are not generally known for practicing organic farming. The use of chemicals is prevalent, which is partly reflected in the quality of the soil. Despite the absence of official soil tests, there is an inclination to conduct them, particularly following the Neuwiesen incident (Stadt Winterthur 2022a). Elevated levels of contaminants were identified in the Neuwiesen district, resulting from previous plot owners employing chemical industry sand as fertilizer, thereby leaving residual traces. The trend is however shifting towards organic farming; as the Swiss allotment gardeners' association pursues the goal of organic management of allotment gardens (Jahrl et al. 2015). By engaging in the management of urban gardens, individuals contribute to an imaginary of 'nature' as urban gardens can be seen as benefiting both human well-being and the natural environment by providing a refuge for rare animal and plant species.

The Question of Urban Gardening as an Act of *Commoning*

> *"More community than individualization, more togetherness than displacement." (Walter von Allmen, 2023)*

To conclude my analysis of urban gardening, I now situate it within the realm of commons theory and conceptualize it as an act of *commoning*. In my opinion, *commoning* emphasizes the improvisational, continuous, and enduring nature fostered by urban gardening, which is

particularly evident in the multiple applications of gardening commons. The HEKS Garden, for instance, provides a space for immigrated people to express and embody their cultural identity and allows them to explore the dynamics of belonging in Winterthur. This stands in contrast to guerilla gardening, which is often seen as an environmentally-driven activist endeavor, which again differs from Community Gardens associated with middle-class environmentalism. Yet what I could observe was a feeling of belonging, no matter if it was in the HEKS Garden, in the allotment garden, or in the Community Garden. As commons and those who participate in communal creation shape each other, they can counter individualism and the anthropocentric view of modernity. Commons provide an avenue for the emergence, maintenance, and questioning of subjectivities through their spatial claims (Ginn and Ascensão 2018). However, urban gardening should not be positioned as the sole solution to systemic challenges, as this reinforces the romanticization of nature (Angelo 2017; Ginn and Ascensão 2018). Thus, when commons are not thought of as an abstract model universally applicable across time and space, they help capture the contested historical and geographic specificities of urban gardening because they shape shared environments in contemporary spaces and are actively in the process of commons-making (Ginn and Ascensão 2018). Undoubtedly, gardens provide recreational opportunities, preservation of cultural heritage, subsistence, and the foundations for the perception of ownership of the city. However, "[g]ardens do not simply appear in the interstices of urban fabric, nor do they suddenly sprout from ground exposed as capital drains away to more fertile markets" (Ginn and Ascensão 2018, 947). Unlike many other urban commons, urban gardening is an evolving collective ecology that requires time, soil, sunlight, and personal labor to cultivate life in existence (Ginn and Ascensão 2018). Therefore, gardening takes on a role that is less like a universally prescribed practice and more like a latent, multi-layered connection to the more-than-human world. Rather than perceiving the environment as a separate realm from society, commons allow us to understand our integration with nature by emphasizing that harm to nature ultimately harms us (Helfrich and Bollier 2015). Such a view can capture that we are not only architects of the world but merely its inhabitants, therefore shaped, produced, and reproduced by these same forces.

Looking Forward

In this chapter, I looked at the imaginary of urban gardening, which has evolved from a means for self-sufficiency and a tool for educating the impoverished population to a space that serves as a refuge from urban life and that has the potential to foster communal ownership and participation. I elaborated the potential of urban gardening and how it is embedded within the

urban landscape. In times of densification, private gardens are increasingly under pressure, and it is important to consider the various factors that constitute them when planning for new models. The development plan Winterthur 2040 (Stadt Winterthur 2021) envisions the Allmend Grüzefeld to evolve even more into a recreational space by accommodating a broader range of activities. Its role as a site for leisure is prominently emphasized, which highlights the current demand for nature as a recreational site for urban residents. Currently, the open space is being utilized both as agricultural land and as a recreational area for walkers, joggers, and residents and one idea is for it to remain as it is now. A last imaginary of urban nature that I have not yet mentioned is the notion of 'accessibility' to nature. Access to nature is no longer limited to areas outside the city; it has become a crucial aspect of urban quality of life within recreational infrastructure. According to Petrow (2012), the primary aspect of open spaces is its accessibility to nature which is considered to be a fundamental human need. Nature is being presented as everything that the city lacks, offering peace, fresh air, and a sense of indifference in contrast to the value systems and structured order of urbanized society (Petrow 2012). The combination of location, scenic environment, built environment, quality of life, recreational value, and image and emotional identification power is referred to as 'geographic capital' (Petrow 2012). Therefore, nature in neoliberal cities has become an economic commodity to enhance the attractiveness of cities as residential locations (Katz 1998). This is also visible in the Vision Winterthur 2040 (Stadt Winterthur 2021), where a permeable and green connection from the Deutweg sports park to the Allmend and further into the city fringe park is envisioned, which would lead to positive effect on the population, but also on nature due to a networking corridor. In addition, the Allmend Grüzefeld also contributes to bioclimatic and hygienic functions. The Allmend acts as a protective barrier against noise, pollutants, and wind, and plays a crucial role in the city's cold air supply, as acknowledged in the Vision Winterthur 2040 (Stadt Winterthur 2021). The Eschenberg Forest produces cold air, which can flow through the Allmend into the city during the night, mitigating temperature increases. Without the presence of the Allmend, the city's temperature would be two to three degrees warmer. This exemplifies the contributions of nature and physics in shaping urban environments, especially in times of climate crisis, yet reducing 'nature' to a fix for sustainability goals (Loughran 2020). Consequently, the Winterthur 2040 report (Stadt Winterthur 2021) acknowledges the significance of preserving the Allmend Grüzefeld as the largest contiguous inner-city open space reserve, seamlessly connected to the *Stadtrandpark*. Thus, preserving the Allmend Grüzefeld as an open space is valued by the community, as it offers access to nature and serves as a counter-image to the urban environment. Yet, this imaginary of 'access to' nature reinforces the urban/nature binary

that is still deeply entrenched in people's minds, as I have observed and noticed during my conversations and tried to illustrate in this section. How then can the Allmend Grüzefeld be understood beyond this dichotomy? I argue that it is essential to abandon the notion that space is merely a tangible commodity that can be used, bought, sold, and represented as a static container existing independently from its usage as it encompasses more than its physicality (Stavrides 2016). The Allmend shapes encounters and interactions and is influenced by the individuals involved in it. Therefore, to recognize that the Allmend Grüzefeld is not solely defined by its natural or urban characteristics, but rather as a dynamic and interconnected social-ecological system, is a first step to overcome the dichotomy. This perspective recognizes that urban areas are not devoid of nature but rather incorporate and integrate natural elements into the fabric of the city. To assess the multiple needs and demands of all for the future of the Allmend Grüzefeld, participation - a term that repeatedly came up in my conversations and in my work – could be a possibility. In the next and last chapter, I critically dissect this approach.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN PARTICIPATION

"Worlds of commoning are not simply worlds of shared beliefs and habits but are strongly connected to ways of sharing that open the circle of belonging and develop forms of active participation in the shaping of the rules that sustain them. Worlds of commoning are worlds in movement." (Stavrides 2016, 32)

After having carefully assessed the past, current, and future imaginaries in and around the Allmend Grüzefeld in an archaeological and ontological mode (Levitas 2013), I now turn to the architectural mode where I propose an imaginary for the Allmend Grüzefeld to transform it, as its name actually implies, into a truly common space, where humans and more-than-humans come together to collaboratively create the common space. The key point is that commons can be established on properties owned by the state, collectively owned, individually owned, or accessible to all (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). Stavrides (2016), argues that if the intention behind *commoning* is to continually broaden the scope of communal activities, it is imperative to maintain methods of preventing any potential concentration of authority, whether by individuals or specific groups since power resides in the ability to make decisions. However, if the capacity to make decisions is equitably distributed through participatory methods, then this power no longer grants certain individuals the ability to impose their desires upon others (Stavrides 2016). If the fundamental principle guiding self-management practices is sharing, then the sharing of authority becomes both the prerequisite for equitable distribution and the ultimate objective. Therefore, I propose that on the one hand, to mitigate the negative impacts of green gentrification in the Gutschick neighborhood, social equity and community participation need to be prioritized in urban sustainability planning. On the other hand, to overcome the idea of nature as a fix in an anthropocentric perspective (Loughran 2020), I argue that more-than-human needs to be included in participation approaches. I now critically assess the buzz word, 'participation' - a term that promises a world in which everyone has the chance to participate in the production of city.

The 'participatory turn' (Krivý and Kaminer 2013) has emerged from a movement that advocates for participation as a radical form of direct democracy, beyond traditional institutional politics. Krivý and Kaminer (2013) argue that while the call for participation in the 1960s was driven by a commitment to equality and empowering marginalized groups, it also

included an anti-statist attitude, with the centralized and powerful welfare state as the main adversary. Over the following decades, as the state scaled back its involvement in areas such as urban development and social housing, many of the original advocacy groups from the 1960s were invited by the planning bureaucracies to participate in planning processes. However, the empowerment of these advocacy groups also led to their co-optation since they were required to compete for funding and effectively function as entities within the private market according to Krivý and Kaminer (2013). Nowadays, participatory urbanism has been introduced into mainstream planning. The actors range from activists to neighbors, social groups, non-profits, developers, businesses, and city governments, which represents a continuum of action, from the illegal and unsanctioned to those codified into regulatory processes and laws (Krivý and Kaminer 2013. The scholars add that the participatory turn has primarily strengthened citizens as self-entrepreneurs rather than empowering them as political actors. Thus, the co-optation of participatory processes by planning departments requires a critical evaluation. Krivý and Kaminer (2013) ask if participation truly addresses and challenges inequalities and what the response should be to the frustrating realization that the promises of equality inherent in every participatory act are repeatedly compromised by the inequality between those who orchestrate the participatory process and those who are invited to participate. The *Mattenbach-Allianz* was founded for the precise reason that the Mattenbach district was often excluded from decision-making processes and lacked a voice for the community. The *Mattenbach-Allianz* is increasingly involved in development projects and can contribute to shaping these processes. In stigmatized neighborhoods, a common issue arises where residents are often excluded from consultation processes. This exclusion can be attributed to planners' lack of interest in seeking residents' opinions or a lack of representation and financial resources to support a participatory approach. Presently, the *Allmend Grüzefeld* working group, part of the *Mattenbach-Allianz*, is involved in the development plans for the Allmend Grüzefeld. Thus, the association advocates in the interest of the neighborhood, yet one needs to remain aware that it can be a partial perspective as the people who participate are already politically engaged and interested in actively shaping the neighborhood. Another important thing to keep in mind is that participation can lead to exclusion, even when carefully taken seriously and implemented as part of a planning process, as Sachs Olsen and Tödtli (2016) have observed. For instance, the dominant language, expression, rationality, aesthetic sensibilities, argumentative skills, and willingness to polarize in a participatory process exclude participants who do not conform to these norms. Sachs Olsen and Tödtli (2016) further note how participation often becomes a token exercise that does not seriously desire the local knowledge, consultation, and participation of

participants, but only seeks a broader support of a development process that has already been planned through. The prevailing idea is that residents share an existing local knowledge of their situation and needs, and a growing number of different participatory tools are available to research, planning and policy makers to integrate such local values and expertise into urban projects. However, when such tools are evaluated for their utility, effectiveness, and potential, processes are targeted for specific outcomes as it is often seen in the status of transmission - as if there is something that can be transferred from one body to another body. Therefore, Sach Olsen and Tödtli (2016) propose a multiplicity of knowledge which directs attention to knowledge as a process rather than as a resource to be tapped.

The idea of a multiplicity of knowledge bridges this section about participatory processes to my work as it allows for an understanding of a discursive construction of nature. Haraway's (1988) concept of 'Situated Knowledges' focuses on locating and situating the knowing subject and acknowledges that knowledge is always partial, but nevertheless true and to be taken seriously. Sachs Olsen and Tödtli's (2016) idea of a multiplicity of knowledge is not solely concerned with 'knower' but emphasizes the material, social, and political conditions that produce knowledge. An understanding of the multiplicity of partial knowledge and of (urban) space as a sphere of multiplicity therefore means that participation cannot only be about the organization of human coexistence, but that participation must also be an ongoing intervention in spatial, physical, material, more-than-human contexts as it is crucial to give greater attention to the role of more-than-human in the interplay between humans and space (Akama, Light, and Kamihira 2020). As Stavrides (2016) wrote, "participation is a process which produces and educates at the same time" (p. 107). And by learning with a collective of human and more-than-human entities a process of co-transformation starts which can reconstitute the world (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2010). Modern efforts to reclaim urban spaces are not just a result that is collectively shared, but also a process that is collectively developed through sharing. Embedded within such collaborative innovation lies a collective capability inherent to urban life itself. This capability extends beyond mere adaptation to existing spaces; it encompasses the capacity to forge new spaces and, even more impressively, to imagine potential spaces. Within this multifaceted ability, individuals can transcend both the confines of urban structure and the limitations of the perceptible world. Consequently, shared environments can be forged without imposing uniformity. In its quest for novel forms of 'we', commoning avoids uniformity and homogeneity by opting for the more daring route of an all-encompassing, communal existence that embraces differences as valuable contributions to its formation (Stavrides 2016; 2020). Agreeing with Sachs Olsen and Tödtli (2016), I see great potential in the practice of imagination

for collective urban research, as imagination can help us to make visible a multiplicity of space, as well as knowledge and thereby opening space to all possible futures. An intermediate step to imagining and re-imagining our cities is the method of de-construction of associations and prejudices, a breaking of thought patterns, a careful unfolding into smallest parts which I aimed at doing in my work by deconstructing the imaginaries around urban nature in Winterthur. Considering that once an idea is deconstructed, it can be reconstructed, that is, imagined or re-imagined. A participatory re-imagination of the Allmend Grüzefeld's future should lead to a rethinking of our urban geographies and our coexistence with the more-than-human actors, and by that a spatial diversity becomes conceivable, which is finally planned, built, and lived (Sachs Olsen and Tödtli 2016). By recognizing and balancing the needs of both human and more-than-human actors, a holistic perspective emerges, as I have repeatedly observed that nature lacks agency and is continually required to fulfil a purpose. Therefore, I wonder, what would a world look like where we moved beyond the human and more-than-human dichotomy; where more-than-human entities have the same rights, obligations and duties as human actors and are co-constituting urban spaces? Is this perhaps my utopia?

CONCLUSION

To use the metaphor of the river again, I let myself drift with the stream of the Mattenbach. I started with the historicity of the Garden City in Winterthur and ended up in a discussion of imagination and participation. While there are legitimate reasons, both physical and social, to advocate for more parks and green spaces in cities, I argue that it is important to emphasize that the use of nature to improve the urban environment is an example of how specific interventions in the built environment are determined by the dominant discourses, and thus shape urban practice. As I have written in the methodology chapter, the question of utopia is a spatial question, and the ways in which utopia is envisioned is reflective of society in all its complexity. And thereby its planning in space is also a reflection of its time, rendering the question of utopia not only to its spatiality but also to its temporality (Chevalier and Tzaninis 2022). Being aware of and critically questioning the normative assumptions and values of these discourses is of enormous importance. Since my work revolves around the deconstruction of the different notions of urban nature and examining their underlying means, I have pointed out in the first chapter on Winterthur's settlement structure that, historically, urban nature has been used as a tool for educational initiatives, starting in the 19th century with Rieter's vision to tie workers to the company and to prevent a proletarianization. In the 20th century, Bodmer implemented the Garden City ideas and specters of it still characterize Winterthur's neighborhoods. For Howard, the concept of community building was the core of his Garden City utopia, which, however, was not adapted by Bodmer in Winterthur. Furthermore, newer utopian ideas such as the Grüzefeld estate in the Mattenbach neighborhood was planned and built in the 1960s without communal spaces. As I have illustrated in my work, common space emerges as a result of *commoning*, which was the case for the neighborhood center as it emerged because the residents organized themselves. Space and access to it plays a crucial role for the practice of *commoning* as it is the fundamental resource from which other commons emerge (Feinberg, Ghorbani, and Herder 2021). In the last section of this chapter, I looked at the contemporary imaginary of Winterthur as a Smart City, aiming to adapt to climate change and to promote high-quality recreational areas in times of densification. Accompanied with a reintroduction of more biodiversity, the goal is to create a more 'natural,' better environment and open spaces for the citizens which reintroduces a romantic notion of nature as a means to save the urban landscape. In the second analysis chapter I moved to the Allmend Grüzefeld, which emerged due to the Bodmer Plan, and is encircled by the different housing imaginaries I looked at. I assessed the different ideas for the future of the Allmend Grüzefeld because, as I have written in the literature review on Nature in the Urban, UPE emphasize how environmental discussions shape our

perception and experience of urban spaces, which offers a tool for their redesign. The first imaginary I looked at revolved around protecting nature by designating the Allmend as a nature reserve which raises questions about the historical and current connections between environmental protection, nationalism, and far-right ideologies. I argued that it is crucial to examine the instrumentalization of nature and its potential alignment with exclusionary narratives. The second imaginary I dissected is the utopia of constructing an artificial lake in Winterthur, since it has generated diverse perspectives and debates regarding the relationship between urban nature, social dynamics, and sustainability. I highlighted the importance of evaluating the lake's potential impacts regarding the potential displacement of communities, gentrification effects, and the loss of connection to the existing landscape and identity. I ended the chapter with a discussion on nature's status in the legal system globally and in Switzerland, which is still shaped by the inability to move beyond the human and more-than-human binary. I then turned to the current usage of the site, namely urban gardening which plays a long and important role in Winterthur's cityscape. I analyzed how urban gardening has transformed from a means for self-sufficiency to a space that has the potential to foster *commoning* and participation. I argued that *commoning* enables the reimagining and reappropriation of the city as a collective project that prioritizes social justice, democratic governance, and ecological sustainability. Those who engage in the act of *commoning* can appropriate the city's history to make their own story out of it. However, the prevalence of neoliberal policies has resulted in a reduction of public goods, thereby limiting the availability of common goods. For commons to emerge and to effectively expand and enhance their quality, the state must be compelled to provide a greater number of public goods. Citizens, in return, must organize themselves to assert ownership over these both privately and publicly provided goods, and to ensure their sustainable management and preservation for the benefit of all (Harvey 2013). A new understanding of the collective urban space could emerge, and an understanding of the city can be coproduced that defines urban space through radical openness and allows for diverse and varied realities and futures. And maybe, just maybe growing *commoning* leads to growing reimagination of the urban and recognizes that the Allmend Grüzefeld is a socio-cultural construct that is shaped by social practices, cultural values, and human as well as more-than human interactions. To create more just environments, I proposed participation processes which includes humans and more-than-humans. The potential of participatory research lies in creating a collaborative space for knowledge-sharing, enabling the exposure of diverging perspectives, and seeking ways to overcome these differences. In my work I focused more on nature and less on other co-actors in the Allmend such as animals. It would be interesting to investigate what kind of animals use

the space and how they contribute to the cityscape of the Allmend Grüzefeld. I must confess, it was difficult to decide what to focus on because the more time I spent on the Allmend, the more questions arose and the more people I would have liked to talk too. Furthermore, as my focus shifted during and after the research period, some intersections only came to light later, when time to dig into it more profoundly was too short such as the question of who proposed the imaginary for a nature reserve in the Allmend Grüzefeld or to look into urban agriculture more generally. While recognizing that the process of participatory research in policy making requires caution, I nevertheless conclude that the time seems ripe for experimenting with seeding change outside of conventional boundaries and expanding participation to planning with more than human actors (Akama, Light, and Kamihira 2020) in pursuit of a more inclusive and transformative approach to urban nature.

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APPENDIX

List of Interview and Conversation Partners

(In chronological order)

March 16th, 2023	Boris Flügge, working for Stadtgrün Winterthur and part of the working group Gartenstadt
March 26th, 2023	Marta, board president of the Community Garden Winterthur
March 30th, 2023	Hansjörg Felix (owner of an allotment garden) and Philipp Onori, Püntenwesen Stadt Winterthur
April 13th, 2023	Erwin Schatzmann, local artist
April 14th, 2023	Walter von Allmen, treasurer of the Talgut Revier PPVW
April 18th, 2023	Beat, Gabriella and Clelio Burkart, former residents of Eisweiherstrassse
April 18th, 2023	Chantal Schmid, resident of the workers houses at Eisweiherstrasse
April 20th, 2023	Sabine Binder, working in the executive board of the HGW
April 25th, 2023	Stefan Fritschi, Head of the Technical Operations Department Winterthur and a resident at Zelgli
April 27th, 2023	Patricia Vogelsang, coordinator of the HEKS Garden Winterthur
April 29th, 2023	Digging in the Community Garden together with Marta, Monika, Chantal, Martina, Peer, Embolo, and Peter
May 3rd, 2023	Barbara Serratore, former resident of the Grüzefeld housing estate
May 11th, 2023	Sonja Bolla, working for MEG and part of the Mattenbach-Allianz
June 2nd, 2023	Markus Lüscher, PARK architect and Stephan Herde, Krebs und Herde landscape architect and a resident at Zelgli as well as owner of an allotment garden